



**Critical Issues Affecting the Service Quality in Water-based Tour
Operator: A case Study of Marine Leisure Tourist Guide in Andaman
Cluster, Thailand**

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Master of Business Administration in Hospitality and Tourism Management
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Thesis Title Critical Issues Affecting the Service Quality in Water-based Tour
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บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ในการศึกษาครั้งนี้คือ 1) เพื่อประเมินคุณภาพการบริการของมัคคุเทศก์นำเที่ยวทางทะเลในกลุ่มจังหวัดภาคใต้ฝั่งทะเลอันดามันต่อการให้บริการนักท่องเที่ยว 2) เพื่อศึกษาผลกระทบของลักษณะประชากรศาสตร์ต่อการรับรู้คุณภาพการให้บริการของมัคคุเทศก์ และ 3) เพื่อระบุปัญหาสำคัญที่มีผลต่อคุณภาพการให้บริการของมัคคุเทศก์นำเที่ยวทางทะเลกลุ่มจังหวัดอันดามัน มีการเก็บข้อมูลโดยใช้แบบสอบถามจากนักท่องเที่ยวจำนวน 400 คนที่เข้าร่วมกิจกรรมสันทนนาการท่องเที่ยวทางทะเลฝั่งอันดามันและใกล้เคียง ผลจากการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่านักท่องเที่ยวให้ความสำคัญต่อคุณภาพการบริการของมัคคุเทศก์นำเที่ยวทางทะเล 3 ประการแรกคือ "การที่มัคคุเทศก์ทางทะเลสามารถบอกนักท่องเที่ยวได้ว่าเขาจะได้รับบริการอย่างไร" "มัคคุเทศก์สามารถอธิบายได้ชัดเจนถูกต้องเกี่ยวกับสถานที่นั้นๆ ในระหว่างสันทนนาการ" และ "มัคคุเทศก์สามารถให้ข้อมูลและคำแนะนำที่ถูกต้องทั้งในเรื่องความปลอดภัยและการช่วยเหลือหากเกิดอุบัติเหตุบนท้องทะเล" และมีความพึงพอใจสูงสุด 3 อันดับแรกของการให้บริการคือ "มัคคุเทศก์ตรงต่อเวลา" "มัคคุเทศก์นำเที่ยวมีความเคารพต่อนักท่องเที่ยว" และ "มัคคุเทศก์นำเที่ยวได้อธิบายเกี่ยวกับโปรแกรมระหว่างการเดินทางได้อย่างถูกต้อง" ผลศึกษาครั้งนี้ยังชี้ให้เห็นช่องว่างระหว่างความคาดหวังของนักท่องเที่ยวต่อการบริการและการบริการที่ได้รับจากผู้ให้บริการคือ โปรแกรมการท่องเที่ยวและกิจกรรมสันทนการนั้นไม่ได้ตอบสนองความต้องการอย่างสม่ำเสมอ และคุณภาพของการบริการที่ได้รับไม่ตรงกับที่โฆษณา ผลการศึกษาที่ได้สามารถนำไปใช้ประโยชน์ในการบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรในด้านต่างๆ เพื่อปรับปรุงและเพิ่มคุณภาพการให้บริการของมัคคุเทศก์ทางทะเลและกลุ่มบริษัทนำเที่ยวทางทะเล

คำสำคัญ: คุณภาพการบริการ, SERVQUAL Model, มัคคุเทศก์นำเที่ยวทางทะเล, กลุ่มจังหวัดอันดามัน, IPA

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study are 1) to assess the quality of service by Marine Leisure tourist guide performed in water-based tourism in Andaman Cluster 2) To examine the impact of demographics to the perception toward service quality of Water- based tourism in Andaman Cluster. 3) To identify the critical issues affecting service quality for the marine leisure tourist guide in the water based tourism in Andaman Cluster. 400 questionnaires were conducted with tourists who participated in water base tourism and leisure activities in major marinas in the relevant sector. The results illustrate that the top three most important attributes were “The marine leisure tour guide can tell you exactly when a service will be provided”, “Accurately informed us about areas of interest” “Gave us the information and instructions to properly to protect us in case of an accident on the sea”, indicating the consumers perceived the performance of these attributes as crucial to service quality. Visitors gave the top ratings to “tour guide was punctual”, “the tour guide demonstrated respect for the customer” and “the tour guide briefed us on the daily itinerary. The results of study suggest that the relative gaps between consumer expectations of a service to be provided and the actual service provided, namely the programs tours and activities provided to guests did not consistently meet expectations. The reality of the service quality did not match with what was advertised. The findings demonstrated in this study can be a useful managerial tool and can be applied to the challenge of identifying areas to which resources can and should be allocated in order to improve and enhance the quality of services provided by tour guides and service providers throughout the industry.

Keywords: Service quality, SERVQUAL Model, Marine Leisure Tour Guide, Andaman Cluster, Important –Performance Analysis (IPA)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Asia Pacific region is by far the fastest growing region in the world for tourism, both international and domestic. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), forecasts continued growth for the region over the next decade. Accurate long term forecasting regarding tourism can be difficult to achieve due to unforeseen economic and political factors as well as changing trends and global attitudes. The UNWTO expects, however, that the Asia Pacific region will continue to maintain a breakneck pace of expansion in the tourism sector, eventually accounting for over a quarter of global market share by the year 2020. Few countries in the region have as large of a stake in the tourism sector as Thailand. Despite recent political turmoil and the devastating Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, Thailand has maintained a steady growth rate in tourism (UNWTO, 2008).

The Andaman Cluster which includes the coastal provinces of Phang Nga, Satun, Ranong, Trang and Krabi, as well as the island province of Phuket is particularly large stake holders in Thailand's tourist sector. The tourist mecca of Phuket is arguably the largest tourist attraction in Thailand. Phuket has seen a massive increase in the number of travelers in recent years. Tourist numbers for the peak season during De January increased almost 12.% from 2010 to 2011. (Aaccording to the latest statistics by the Thai Department of Toursiom). The beauty of the local marine environment and the accessibility of hundreds of islands and beaches make the region a major draw for tourists' worldwide. Phuket and Andaman region has benefitted from an increases in travelers from every region in the world over recent years, including countries in the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) region, in particular Malaysia and Singapore. The recent expansion of low cost regional carriers such as Air Asia and an increase in short haul international flights to Phuket International Airport, has helped to brand regionally as a great holiday destination. Tourist numbers from ASEAN countries have increased in volume since 2005. (Tourism Authority of Thailand, TAT, region 4, 2007).

As a tourism generator and an employer, the importance of the water based tourism sector to the economy of the Andaman region cannot be overstated. The development of

industries such as scuba diving and water sports in the region has been swift and shows no signs of slowing down. With the benefit of successful marketing campaigns from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT, 2008) as well as private interests, Southern Thailand and in particular the Andaman region, has become well known internationally as an attractive destination for water sports and marine leisure. In many of the main travel destinations in the region, such as The Marine parks of Mu Koh Phi Phi and Koh Lanta, water sports centers, boat charter services and scuba diving training centers are essential facilities of most resorts and hotels.

Increasingly overseas tourists are choosing to do much of their trip planning on line (TAT, region 4, 2007). This trend is beginning to change the dynamics of the industry from the perspective of sales, as many live aboard diving operators and water sports businesses which have always relied heavily on internet sales and recommendations, are often now acting as the first point of reference for many potential tourists on line. This has increased the importance of these businesses as sales generators for their partners. Often scuba diving training centers are handling all of their clients travel itineraries including accommodation for the length of their stay, thus acting as online travel agents as well as providing diving instruction and itineraries. In the past the water sports centers in the region relied primarily on hotels and travel agents to provide customers and did little in terms of direct sales. This shift in sales trends only serves to illustrate how important marine tourism is to the tourist industry in the region and to the regional economy in general. Large scale events like the Kings Cup sailing regatta bring international recognition to Phuket, as a world class destination for marine sports and give a yearly boost to tourist numbers and hotel bookings, supporting the local economy. (TAT, 2007).

Many of the careers offered in the marine tourism sector such as scuba diving instructor, underwater videographer, marine engineer or yacht skipper are unique compared to many jobs in the hospitality industry, in that they require high levels of technical and specialized skills. For the most part employers in the industry demand a high degree of personal responsibility from essential employees. These jobs often require a knowledge and understanding of safety procedures and environmental conditions as well. Often the safety and well being of customers is dependent on the level of attention to detail, preparation and general professionalism of employees. This level of responsibility and technical skill is rewarded by financial compensation

that is high, relative to many other careers in the hospitality and tourism industry in the region. The average annual salaries commanded by a scuba diving instructor in a busy resort for example, far outweigh those earned by food and beverage or guest services employees in the same area. Considering the significance of the marine leisure industry to tourism in Phuket, as well as the challenges of maintaining a work force to manage the growth of the regional economy, career focused education and technical training is crucial. An area of some concern, considering the recent trends towards water based tour operators increasing their market share in the region as well as evolving to become all inclusive service providers, has been developing a standard level of quality service that can be maintained and monitored effectively by all stakeholders. All relevant (Rust and Oliver 1994), (Ap and Wong, 2001), (Wang et al., 2000) and (Zhang and Chow, 2004). Sheldon (1989) (Ap and Wong, 2001, Heung, 2008 and Mak et al., 2010) (King et al., 2006), (Zhang et al., 2009) (Mak et al., 2010) and (Steege et al., 1999). Kelly and Turley (2001) (Howat et al., 1999, Ko and Pastore, 2005 and Petrick, 2004) research suggests that consumer perceptions of service quality and guest satisfaction are the main generators of repurchase behavior among all customers, in every industry. The inherent intangibility of services increases the importance of service quality even more. With other products, consumer feelings of disappointment in regards to their service encounter with an organization can be temper significantly by the quality of a separate product purchased. Concrete products can be held up against other tangible products and compared. The service industry is unique in that the service encounter *is* the product. In many ways a feeling of satisfaction is the only product that a consumer may take away from a service encounter. With the growth of many water based tour operators in the region, the organization is beginning to control more and more of the complete consumer experience. The guest service encounter experience in the region may have changed already, and is changing significantly. Whereas in the past, guests may have had separate service providers handling different aspects of their holiday. One service provider for accommodation and one for scuba diving for example, larger water based tour operators are beginning to offer their guests all of their leisure options in complete packages that include transport and accommodation as well. This has inherent advantages for consumers and service providers as it may increase profitability for organizations by opening multiple revenue streams and at the same time increase consumer convenience at the point of sale. The challenge for organizations and for

the industry as a whole is maintaining service standards while providing services that may be far removed from their individual areas of expertise. If service providers are willing to move out of their traditional comfort zones in order to increase revenues and streamline services, they must also be aware of guest expectations in regards to these new areas of exploration. As the research of (Parasunaman et al ,1985) and countless others have attested to, some of the main difficulties organizations run into while attempting to provide quality service are created when service providers fail to see or are unable to remedy the relative gaps between consumer expectations of a service to be provided and their perceptions of the actual service as provided to them. It is easier to miss these gaps in perception and satisfaction when there are the increasingly common variables that many businesses in Phuket are currently dealing with. For the most part the industry is dominated by small to medium sized enterprises, which are expanding rapidly. These, often family run businesses have to overcome the challenges of expansion in size and scale of operations, as well as increased consumer volume, expanding human resources, and opening up of new markets and new areas of expertise. Local businesses must handle these transformations, while attempting to maintain service standards, often in areas where they are relative new comers. These organizations run the risk of increasing new business, but being forced to sacrifice return customers, due to the difficulty in maintaining service standards as expected by consumers who may of patronized the organization when it was much smaller and more individually focused.

The importance of the water based tourism sector to the local economy as well as the importance of guest satisfaction to increasing repeat business, lays bare the need to address service quality standards in the region. Models and metrics such as SERVQUAL, Important-Performance analysis (IPA) may be useful to local operators, but they may be more effective if they are tailored to local needs and perspectives, so that they can be properly applied. Business owners, management and employees in the local water based tourism market are already dealing several challenges, and systems and processes that should be put in place to increase or maintain service quality, should be as seamless as possible, and tailored to their individual needs and experiences. Research will only be valuable if it acknowledges the unique situation that service providers in the region, at this point of time, find themselves in. Expansion can be difficult and challenging. It should also be rewarding to all stakeholders. The local industry may be in danger of suffering the pitfalls of expansion, without being able to fully reap the benefits.

The importance of developing professional employee behavior and service standards is becoming more recognized in the sectors of the water based tourism market where competition is the most intense. Increased competition between operators of group snorkeling tours in the Phuket area, has forced many of the competing businesses to change their practices. In Phuket, businesses in this sector are already suffering the effects of market saturation. There are currently over 25 competing businesses operating group tours by speedboat, to local islands around Phuket. Despite the efforts of the "Speedboat Operators Club Of Phuket", which was formed in 2008, to regulate prices, several of the member businesses have been forced to resort to price cutting to maintain a competitive edge. Faced with the unenviable option of having to lower fees in order to compete, some operators have chosen to try and differentiate themselves by upgrading service or environmental standards. As various research investigated in the literature review has uncovered, one of the inherent advantages of maintaining quality service is being able to maintain volume of sales without being forced to resort to lower prices, or even incurring higher advertising costs. In a few cases these companies have attempted to form strategic partnerships with training bodies such as Greenfins Thailand. These operators are gambling that the investment in time or money required to retain staff will pay off by improving service standards and increasing brand recognition and competitiveness without lowering fees. These companies may face obstacles however, as the focus on training is not industry wide and there is little support or recognition for their efforts, thus far.

In keeping with most facets of the hospitality industry in the Asia Pacific Region in general and in Southern Thailand in particular, marine tourism has seen a steady rate of growth over the last decade. To support the expansion of marine tourism regionally, there has been a boom in boat building, just in the last three years, with over 2500 new vessels registered locally, since 2005. Each of these vessels is larger than 700 gross tons and designed specifically for tourism (Marine regional office 5, 2007). As the industry develops and grows proportionately with the expected increase of tourism in Phuket and the region over the next decade. (WTO, 2008), a shortage of skilled labor and a dependence on foreign workers in the most skilled and highest paid careers is untenable. Without correcting the discrepancies between the volume of tourism and the level of skilled human resources the industry may have difficulty obtaining many long term goals. Is a lack of available training programs or opportunities to blame? Or is there

simply not enough incentive for those who wish to pursue careers in the industry? Increased competition from destinations such as Malaysia and the Philippines, countries which offer visitors coral reefs and dive sites equal to Phuket and Andaman Cluster in beauty and accessibility, make it imperative that Marine Tourism businesses in Andaman Cluster maintain a high reputation in terms of professionalism, guest services, safety standards and environmental responsibility. An international perception of low service quality standards would put operators in the region at a distinct competitive disadvantage. The danger of this needs to be addressed if the region hopes to maintain the breakneck pace of expansion and profit from the industry over decades and even longer.

Perceiving consumer needs and meeting or exceeding them is the most effective way to avert these dangers and increase sales. Businesses must be equipped with the proper tools to measure guest perceptions and apply processes that can remedy any gaps they perceive. This is a difficult challenge, but one that conquering holds enormous value, for the entire region, and the local economy.

Studies would suggest that one of the main challenges for marine leisure tour guides in all countries and all facets of the tourism industry is the unequalled burden of work that they take on in their everyday tasks. (Pond 1993). Tour guides usually represent the main point of continuous contact with guests and therefore take on a portion of all of the duties of other employees. (Parasuraman et al 1988). In Thailand, where the use of licensed guides is not only a point of sale but the government's attempt at standardizing the service encounter for all visitors (TAT, 2012). Weiler and Ham (2001) suggest that measures such as professional certification, licensing, training, and codes of conduct, can be used to improve tourguides' performance. This may create a high pressure situation for guides in the industry where they are the representatives for other people's work habits, which may not be held to as high standards and may often, have to not only complete their own tasks, but be apologists for others. These challenges are multiplied in the water based tourism industry, due to the diverse variety of human resources and the diversification of specialized skill sets involved in the industry. (Orams, 1999). Another study recommended about improvement on foreign language skill especially by Russia and Scandinavia market shown that paying attention in each detail and performing well in every step on the service is very crucial in marketing tourist satisfaction (Muangkwa, 2003). As Phuket, Andaman Cluster

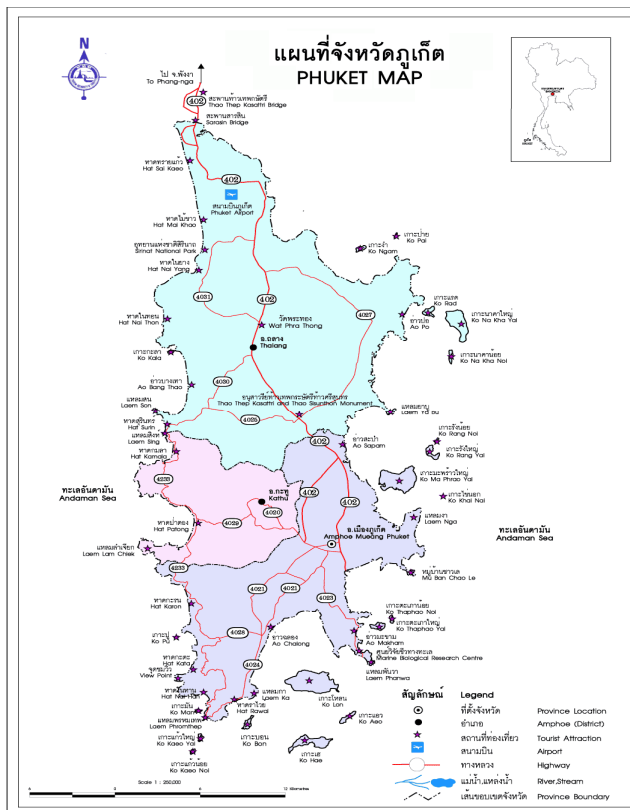
attracts consumers from all parts of the world and from a variety of demographics the situation becomes even more delicate. Previous research has already established that demographic and cultural perceptions and biases may affect expectations of service quality (Lin et al 2001). In effect, the guide involved in water based tourism in the Phuket region must act as a sort of interpreter, service provider and binding agent between, employees from a variety of backgrounds with a variety of expertise and deliver their products effectively to a consumer based that is extremely varied. All of this suggests that the more information that guides can obtain to arm themselves with better knowledge of guest expectations and standards would be helpful (Ap & Wong 2001, Zhang & Chow, 2004).

Figure 1.1 Map of Andaman Sea (Thailand)



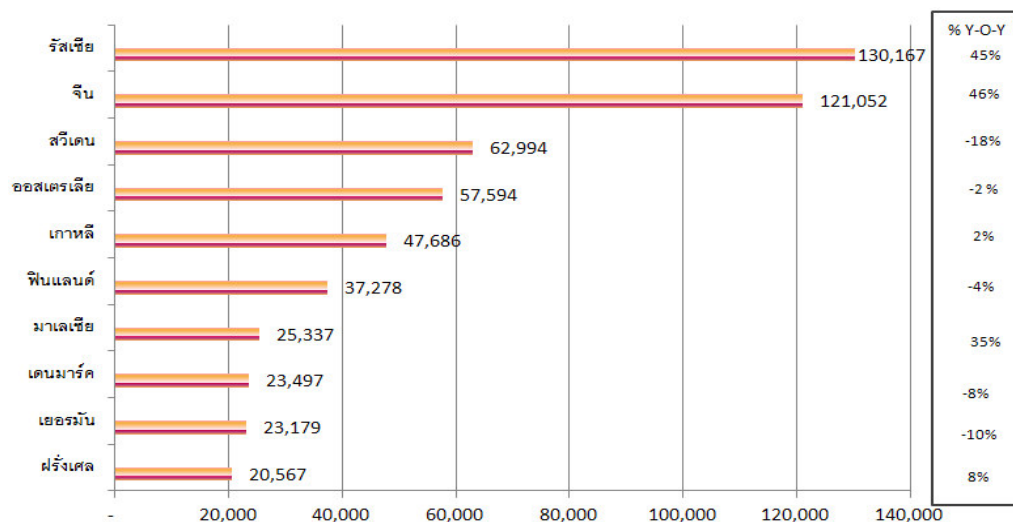
Source: Andaman Sea Club (<http://andamaneclub.com/maps.html>)

Figure 1.2 Map of Phuket



Source: Phuket Provincial Governor's Office, (http://www.phuket.go.th/webpk/contents.php?str=introduce_map)

Figure 1.3 Group of foreign tourists who travel through immigration Phuket during the first quarter of 2011 compared with the same period of 2012.



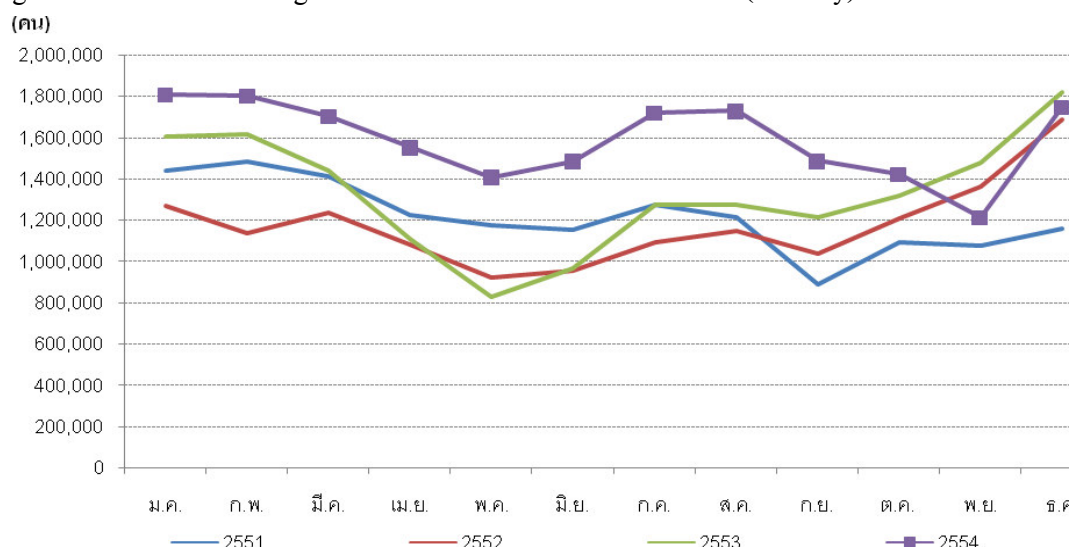
Source: Summary of Economic Trade - Phuket Provincial Governor's office (2011 : 2)

Table 1.1 Number of International tourist arrivals between 2011-2012.

Foreign tourist arrivals.	2012	2011	2012/2011
Number of (people).	19,230,470	15,936,400	+20.67
Stay (Days)	9.64	9.12	+0.52
Average cost (U.S. \$ / person / day).	4,187.12	4,078.67	+2.66
Tourism revenue (Million Baht)	776,217.20	592,794.09	+30.94

Source: The tourism statistics : Department of tourism, Thailand (2012: 1)

Figure 1.4 Number of foreign tourists in Thailand Year 2007-2010 (monthly)



Source: Office of Immigration and Department of Tourism (2011 : 7)

1.2. Objectives

The purpose of this study is to define service quality for water based tourism organizations in Andaman Cluster and suggest ways to apply processes to improve the performance of service providers in the regional water based tourism market and improve overall consumer satisfaction.

1. To assess the quality of service perform by Coastal guide in Andaman Cluster.
2. To examine the impact of demographics in terms of nationality and gender to water base tourism in Andaman Cluster
3. To identify the critical issues affecting service quality for coastal guide in the water base tourism in Andaman Cluster

1.3 Significance of the Study

The results of this study aim to resolve currently relevant human resources challenges, related to service quality, especially but not limited to the local water based tourism market of Phuket and Andaman region. The technical skills and knowledge demanded by many of the careers in the industry and the increasing volume of marine tourism in the area requires an increase in the level of career focused and on the job training, in order to maintain the current levels of growth. The benefits of exploring strategies for improving and maintaining quality service standards cannot be overstated. Hopefully the results of this study may help to contribute to the overall knowledge of the subject and hopefully encourage further research, either from independent observers or possibly from relevant bodies with some power of action to address related issues. An added benefit of this research may be to encourage further research by other parties and add to the increasingly large and varied fields of study related to service and guest satisfaction. The reason we feel this study in particular is significant is the specificity to a market that contributes a large portion of the economy, locally. Service standards will always be a factor in consumer repurchasing behaviors and organizational behaviors in general. The more research contributed towards this topic, specifically for locally significant markets such as tourism and water based tourism in particular, may help Andaman Cluster to achieve and maintain standards that directly correlate to economic growth in the region. Due to the relative intangibility of services and the difficulty previous researchers have had in creating a concrete definition of the topic, the field of study is constantly evolving and new contributions are being added and used to push the limits of previous research. This study will hold some significance for the overall body of research if it can be added to and expanded on by others in the future.

1.4 Limitations of the study

The scope of this study is limited by the period of research as well as the limited population of research and by the restraints of money, time and geography. Further research, perhaps conducted on larger or more diverse population groups and over an extended period of time may help to achieve more insight. Applying the methodology of this study over a wider geography is recommended.

1.4.1 The times constrain, especially in collecting data between October to December 2012, which is peak season period of Andaman Sea.

1.4.2 Population Limits. This research conducted is limited to populations involved in the marine tourism industry in the Andaman cluster. Tourists participating in water based tourism activities in the area, employees currently working in marine tourism in the area of research recommended.

1.4.3. Geographical Limitations. This study was limited to the area of Andaman Cluster. For the purposes of this study, this geographic region was appropriate, as it is local and therefore accessible and as the region has a large hospitality industry as well as water based tourism surveyed. Research conducted over a broader geography is recommended.

1.5 Definitions of Key Terms

1.5.1 Water-base tourism

A widely accepted definition is hospitality and tourism activity based around water sports and leisure. This term includes but is not limited to water sports such as sailing, surfing and diving. It encompasses a broad range of activities and is usually understood to mean activities specific to a marine environment. One of the largest forms of water based tourism in the Phuket region is scuba diving. The ever expanding industry is one of the main engines of economic growth in the region, supporting countless package holidays that support not only dive schools, but resorts and various support businesses as well.

1.5.2 Service quality

For the purpose of this study service quality is best defined as the relative gap between consumer expectations of a service and the consumer perception of the service once it is delivered.

1.5.3 Service Gap Model

Model created by (Parasunaman et al 1985), to better measure the most important factors in consumer satisfaction and perceptions of service quality. The researchers proposed 5 major gaps in service encounters that may add to guest perceptions regarding services delivered by a service provider. These relative gaps provide the basis for the SERVQUAL model, widely used to this day as a metric for defining service quality.

1.5.4 SERVQUAL

Widely accepted and frequently used model by researchers and organizations to both define and attempt to apply processes for service quality. The SERVQUAL construct is still accepted as the gold standard in defining service quality even nearly three decades after its inception.

1.5.5 Marine Leisure Tourist Guide

A person who has knowledge in specific fields, in term of marine leisure tour guides is the person can conduct tour for both Thai and foreigner tourist emphasizing on providing specific information about marine life, climate, safe guard, first aid and equipment instructions in marine areas.

1.5.6 Important-Performance Analysis (IPA Model)

IPA involves assessing different aspects of an organization's features in terms of customers' perceptions of performance and of the importance of these performances. Usually such features are represented in a 2x2 grid, where each quadrant can be summarized into a specific suggestion for management. It use has the importance marketing and the management implications for decision makings, and one of the major benefits of using IPA is the identifications of areas for service quality improvements.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Defining Water Based Tourism

The commonly accepted definition of water based or marine tourism is that it involves those leisure activities that are focused on or hosted in the marine environment (Orams, 1999). It is often assumed that the marine environment is defined by the oceans. That is of course a matter of opinion and debate. Since the focus of this study will be marine tourism in Phuket and the surrounding region, where the marine leisure activities are focused on or hosted by the marine eco-system of the Andaman Sea, we will use this definition in the interest of clarity.

Marine tourism involves a wide range of activities. Everything from sailing, scuba diving, fishing, wind surfing, snorkeling, kayaking, island hopping, surfing and even white water rafting and whale watching are all popular leisure activities in different parts of the world. Because marine tourism includes so many different types of activities and is so far reaching it presents unique challenges to stakeholders. Ryan (2001) suggests that enforcement of standards and practices may be especially difficult for communities hoping to regulate marine tourism, due to a lack of man power and due to the fact that irresponsible behavior often occurs off shore and out of sight. In many communities, regulations such as limits on fishing, or acceptable distances to keep away from marine wild life are often slow to develop. Sometimes helpful regulations are enforced years after a boom in marine tourism in a specific area. (Ryan, 2001) This may be because of a lack of understanding of or misinterpretation of international standards regarding marine practices. (Garrod & Wilson, 2003). As much as it can be a detriment, water based tourism can also be a powerful force however, in motivating people to respect the marine environment and to understand it. Often it is an increase in marine tourism that can draw attention to environmental, or zoning issues that were ignored in the past (Siegelbaum, 2005).

2.2. Service quality

2.2.1 Service quality Defined

Service quality has always been a difficult concept to create a concrete definition for. Scholars define service quality based on multiple assumptions. The inherent subjectivity of the concept, makes debate inevitable. Customers define quality in service differently, as each one may have their own standards and may not even have similar needs or expectations. (Oliver, 1993b).

Numerous attempts have been made to define service and related concepts of customer satisfaction (Oliver, 1980; Tse and Wilton, 1988). The search for a working definition of service quality is further complicated by the highly intangible qualities of some services. Product quality lends itself more readily to uniform definition as a tangible product can be held up against another of a universally accepted standard and compared.

Service quality has been described as the relative gap between customer expectations regarding a particular service, and their perception of the actual service being received (Grönroos, 2001; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). More simply put, service quality may be thought of as how well a service meets customers' expectations (Lewis & Mitchell, 1990; Dotchin & Oakland, 1994). It has also been related to the consumer's overall impression of the relative inferiority or superiority of the services (Zeithaml Berry, & Parasuraman, 1990). Obviously, these interpretations lend themselves to a fair amount of subjectivity, as consumer bias and differing points of reference may color each particular customer's perspective.'

Kotler, Chandlet, Gibbs, and Mccoll (1998) attempted to define service concisely, as any activity or benefit one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. The supplier is selling essentially a feeling of satisfaction to the client. Production may or may not be tied to a physical product (Kotler et al., 1989, p 735). This makes services unique, in that a perception of quality by the purchaser, in many ways can be considered the product. According to Parasuraman et al (1998), it may be assumed that it is more difficult for the buyers of services, such as tourists or dinners, or the people who provide them with said services, to determine if the service meets a standard of quality, than it is in regards to a tangible product. While it is contentious and difficult enough to define and assess product quality, due in part to the returning concept of consumer bias and differing standards, the perceived

quality of services provides an even greater obstacle. Products are concrete and can be measured using the quality of other products as metrics. Although, it should be noted, not all parties have faith in the same metrics. Not all parties may value the same things. Still it is easy to hold up two products produced using the same methods, and for the same purposes, and notice where they are similar and different. Services, however, are recognized for having several unique defining characteristics. Reparability (produced and consumed at the same time) perish ability (cannot be stored), and high degree of variability (Kotler, 1997).

Peter (1987) defines quality as “the customer’s perception of excellence’ (Gronroos, 1990a) offered a fairly broad definition of a service; an activity or series of activities that take place in interactions between the customer and service employees and/or physical resources or goods and/or systems of the service provider, which are provided as solutions to customer problems. This, fairly vague, yet all encompassing definition, may be the best that we have to work with. The one universal theme that can be garnered from all of these definitions, in all of these studies, is that perceptions of quality service are contextual and subjective, yet are of the utmost importance if you consider that the perception of quality and a feeling of satisfaction are really the product in and of itself. Bitner and Hubbert, (1994), eluded to this point, when they defined service quality as the consumers overall impression of the relative inferiority or superiority of an organization and the services it offers.

There is a plethora of relevant literature dedicated to the study of and understanding within the definitions of service quality. Subsequently, if we are able to hold down a working definition of quality service. One that is universally accepted. The question then becomes, why is it relevant? Why is it important? And how does it fit within the goals of an organization? Lastly, how can it be delivered effectively and consistently, in order to achieve the benefits that it should provide all parties, if any? If we assume that the main objective of companies is profitability, than service quality, must be seen as one of the elements that is necessary to maintain and achieve that objective. We can assume that service quality is fundamental, if we accept that the perception of quality service standards, is one of the main expectations for paying customers. It can be assumed that it is much easier for a company to remain profitable if they have the ability to attract and retain customers, because they meet consumer expectations and demands. (Parasuraman, 1985).

Service quality in tourism

2.2.2 Service Quality Challenges for Local Water-Based Tourism Service Providers

As the marine tourism sector in Phuket and Andaman region incorporate many different types of careers, each requiring different skill sets and technical knowledge it is important to consider that the standards associated with different types of jobs in the industry may not be universal. Scuba diving businesses for example, which are regulated by an international training authority, tend to distribute literature and training statistics that are generally standardized (Joiner, 2008). Marine standards and regulations may be quite different from one region to the next. Marine zoning laws, such as what is an acceptable distance of shore to fish and where are leisure boats permitted to moor, may be enforced by local authorities and may change from one area to the next (Ryan, 2001). It is important that training programs teach both internationally acceptable methods but also teach locally useful knowledge.

In *Balancing Tourism Education and Training* (Zagonari, Fabio, 2008) the researchers referred to the importance of training and education in the hospitality industry, as well as the involvement of government agencies in the educational process. Their research would suggest that placing an emphasis on education is beneficial to all those involved from employers to employees, as well as other less directly involved stakeholders.

It is one thing to pay lip service to the importance of providing good service. One must apply and understand how to define consumer expectations and measure consumer satisfaction accurately before being able to move forward effectively. Thus far the industry appears to lack a universally accepted measure for these crucial elements.

2.2.3 Creating Universal Metrics; the Development of The Servqual Measurement

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) related quality to “a global judgment, or attitude relating to the superiority of a service” (p. 16). Based on the definition, the authors developed SERVQUAL, A measurement technique or metric that has been used by many organizations attempting to establish service standards that can be translated effectively into action and understanding among all levels of the organization. This represents one of the most important evolutions of the understanding of excellence in service, and one of the most crucial innovations affecting its practical application. Parasuraman (1985) et al. applied the service

quality gap model. Ueno (2010) was one of many to expand on this concept further, studying the aforementioned author's groundbreaking study.

According to Ueno (2010), the authors observe that the service quality gaps model is that the very definition of service quality is the gap between customer expectations of services to be rendered and perceptions of the actual service performance. Furthermore, there are four major areas contributing to service quality gaps, and each of the four gaps in turn relates to the existence of gap 5 (Ueno, 2010).

The first gap is between consumer expectations and management perceptions of consumer expectations. Often, without effective grassroots research at the point of sale, management may have little idea what the consumers perceive to be valuable or as crucial components to their service experience. In the Parasuraman et al. (1985) study, they determined that confidentiality during transactions emerged as a pivotal quality attribute in every banking and securities brokerage focus group; however this was rarely mentioned by executives.

The second major gap is between management perceptions of customer expectation and actual service quality specifications. Even though the executives attempt to match or exceed customer expectations, they find it difficult to deliver what the customer demands. (Parasuraman et al., 1985). It is self evident that knowing what consumer expectations are and actually being able to set up systems and logistics that can meet these needs are two completely different concepts. Guidelines may be difficult to establish do to gaps in training and a lack of experienced staff for instance.

They identified the third gap as the gap between service quality specifications and services actually rendered. Quality service cannot be guaranteed even when there are predetermined guidelines and standards developed by an organization. Parasuraman et al. (1985) theorized that the human factor may play an exceedingly large role in this service gap. Individual performance obviously comes down to the individual performing a set task. Even an organization with clear and concisely established standards, cannot guarantee the performance of an individual employee, day in and day out.

Interestingly, the fourth gap is between service delivery and what is communicated to customers about the service. Parasuraman et al. (1985) discovered that promising more than can be delivered has a detrimental effect on the satisfaction of consumers because it raises a

customer' expectations but may lower their perception of whether an acceptable quality of service has been achieved. This presents interesting dilemmas in advertising and marketing of products, as well as the difference in the perception of quality between producers and consumers, as well as often the gap in perceptions of quality across cultural lines.

The fifth gap is an end product of the first four gaps in service quality and an overall indicator of the presence of any of the first four as well. It is the gap between the customer's perceptions of the quality of services delivered and their expectations. Parasuraman et al. (1985) discovered that the essence of service quality is to meet or exceed consumer expectations. Subsequently, based on the gap model in their exploratory study, Parasuraman et al. (1985) used this methodology to identify five dimensions of service quality. Namely; tangibility, reliability, assurance, responsiveness and empathy. The authors condensed these dimensions of quality under the banner of "SERVQUAL". For the purpose of this study and subsequent studies this definition has been held up as the gold standard. It has stood the test of time, and although other researchers have expanded upon it, it has remained the defining study and an essential beginning for the expansion of the topic. The reason it is so useful is that it relies on empirical verification and provides a tangible starting point for a relatively intangible subject. Various researchers speak to the intangibility of the subject. Zeithami et al (2006), relate services to processes and performance that are not in and of itself a tangible product. SERVQUAL, however, offers a level of tangibility and concrete metrics to study the subject, easing the burden for researchers and organizations wishing to benefit from the application of an abstract concept, in a real world setting.

2.2.4 The SERVQUAL Model (Parasuraman 1985)

Gap 1: is the gap between what the customer expects and what the company's management thinks customers expect.

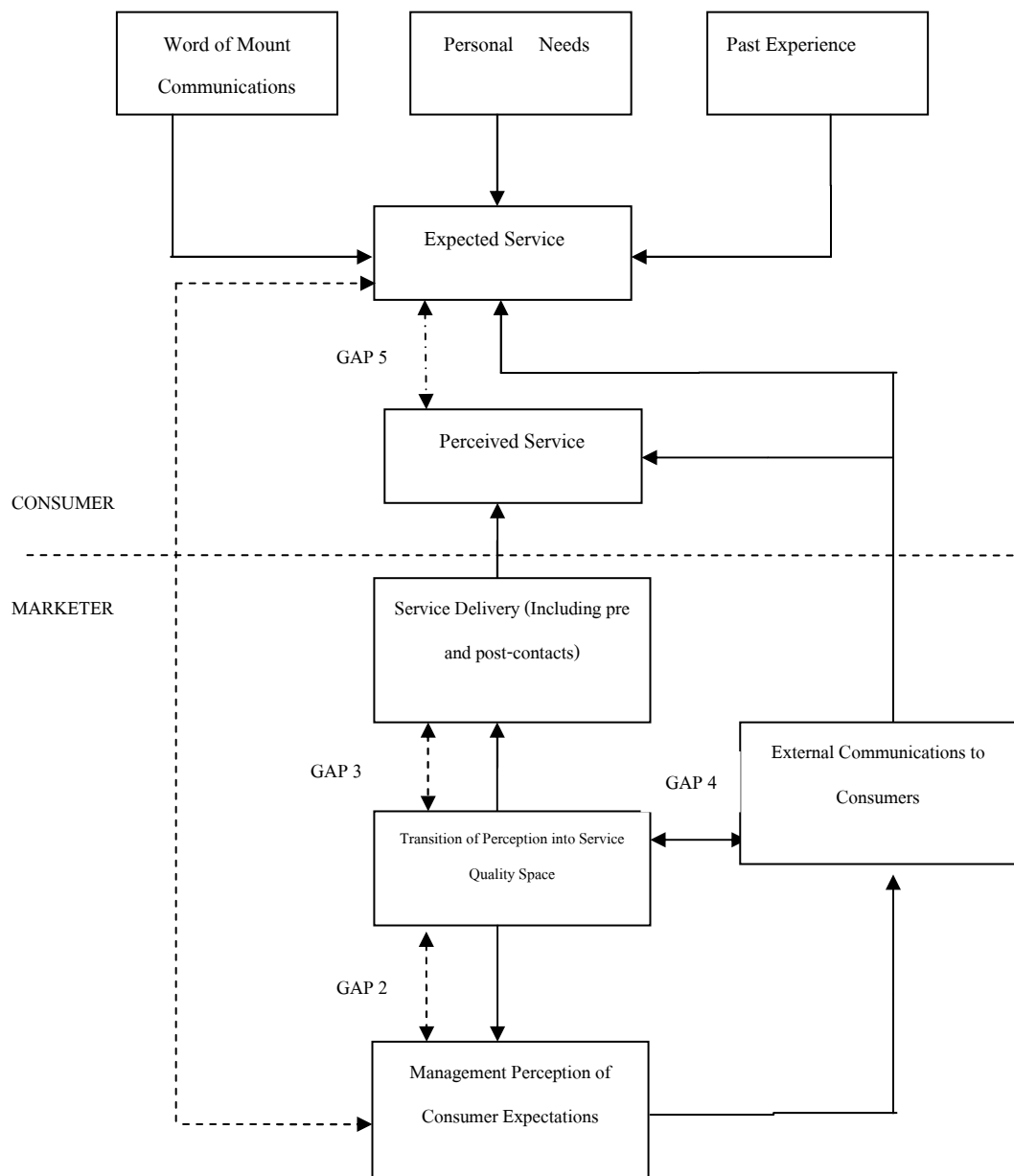
Gap 2: is the gap that occurs when management fails to design service standards that meet customer expectations.

Gap 3: occurs when the company's service delivery systems – people, technology and processes – fail to deliver to the specified standard

Gap 4: occurs when the company's communications with customers promise a level of service performance that people, technology and processes cannot deliver.

Gap 5: Difference between consumer's expectation and perceived service. This gap depends on size and direction of the four gaps associated with the delivery of service quality on the marketer's side.

Figure 2.1 Service Quality Model



Source: Parasuraman et al., (1985 : 44)

To find the level and extent of the Gap 5, authors developed 22 or 21 item SERVQUAL scale. The model's authors identified five core components of service quality: reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness.

1. Tangibles involve appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel appearance and communication materials.

2. Reliability is ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

3. Responsiveness means willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service, whilst capturing the notion of flexibility and the ability to customize the service to customer needs

4. Assurance means competence and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence. (This category includes this measured components: competence, courtesy, credibility and security)

5. Empathy represents provision of caring, individualized attention to customers. (Includes access, communication and understanding the customer)

The relative importance of these variables is also measured. This enables you to compute the relative importance of any gaps between expectation and perceptions. Management can then focus on strategies and tactics to close the most important gaps. SERVQUAL can be used or adapted to measure service quality in variety of service settings. Another advantage is that it can be used for compare competitors and wide range of services.

This method could be used for internal marketing. It is based on the idea that every individual in an organization, particularly a service organization, should recognize that they have customers to serve. There is a positive link between internal service quality and external service quality and hence customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and the profitability of the organization. Market research can be adopted for use with employees. Personnel can be given the opportunity to give feedback to management about working conditions, company policy in general and workers' own understanding about what comprises quality for the customer. The relationship between organizational subunits and their relationship to top management are also important. This can be assessed by a variation of the SERVQUAL instrument.

2.3 Importance-performance analysis (IPA Model)

Importance-performance analysis (IPA) is widely used by researchers in various areas and has been proven to be a popular managerial tool. It is based on the comparison of importance and performance of service quality attributes developed by Martilla and James (1977). They found the IPA to be a useful technique for addressing both importance and performance attribute questions. Martilla and James (1977) applied the IPA technique to analyze the performance of an automobile dealer's service department. They declared IPA to be a low-cost, easily understood technique for exploring different aspects of the marketing mix, and enabling managers to reallocate resources according to the four areas identified (Martilla and James (1977), quote in Chang & Zhou 2004).

Duke and Persia (1996) surveyed the performance of national escorted tours using IPA. They suggest that performance-importance analysis can provide an insight into customer evaluations on critical issues in the tourism industry. Evans used the IPA technique to develop and assess tourism policy in two destinations in the United States, and found IPA to be an effective tool. Another research, Hudson et al., (2004) stated that using the IPA has important marketing and managerial tool to improve an areas for service quality improvement. Cheron, McTavish, and Perrien (1989) also using IPA to examine bank financial services in three business segments, while Almanza, Jaffe, and Lin (1994) applied it to evaluate customer satisfactions in foodservice. The comparison between perceived importance and performance on the IPA grid allows managers to identify the relative features of successful tours. Chu and Choi (2000) compared the importance and performance of 26 hotel attributes as perceived by business and leisure travelers in Hong Kong. They point out that hotel managers can tailor-make marketing strategies according to the findings displayed in the four quadrants of IPA. They also adapted information from Evans and Chon (1989), Hemmasi, Strong, and Taylor (1994), Keyt, Yavas, and Riecken (1994), Martilla and James (1977) and Martin (1995), and then presented an illustration and interpretation of the IPA grid divided into four quadrants

In tourism studies, the IPA model has been used to analyse the performance of tour guides (Zhang and Chow, 2004), escorted tours (Almanza, Jaffe & Lin 1994), a ski resort (Uysal, Howard & Jamrozny 1991; Hudson & Shephard 1998), a marine park (Tonge & Moore 2007), tourism policy issues (Evans & Chon, 1989), and destination image and attractiveness (Chon,

Weaver, and Kim 1991; Go & Zhang 1997; Joppe, Martin & Waalen 2001; Litvin & Ling 2001; Enright and Newton 2004). An extension of the IPA was introduced by several authors who have applied the model to develop an importance–performance gap analysis by contrasting the perspectives of different respondents (Brown & Swartz 1989; Oppermann 1998; Litvin & Ling 2001). Evans and Chon (1989) represented an early application of the IPA analysis and used the IPA technique to develop and assess tourism policy in two destinations in the United States. Their research found the IPA model to be an effective tool. The relevant tourism research in relation to IPA application, mainly focused on assessing aspects of travel destinations, tourism practices and industrial competition. The representative research includes that of Zhang and Chow (2004) who employed IPA to assess the performance of Hong Kong’s tour guides as perceived by mainland Chinese outbound visitors. Their study illustrated that the IPA model is a useful managerial tool to be applied in identifying areas to which marketing resources should be allocated in order to improve and enhance the quality of tour guide services provided. Wen (2007) applied IPA to systematically analyze the data, which in turn guides the researcher in advancing reasonable suggestions for the Kunming travel service. Zhang and Yang (2007) conducted an empirical study on the Xujiahui District in Shanghai through IPA and analyzed its competitiveness as a destination for business travel. Song and Zheng (2006) used IPA to analyze Xian tourists’ perceptions of Hainan as a tourism destination. Zhang and Zhang (2007) explored the service quality of travel agencies from tourists’ points of view with IPA and further deduced, that tourists’ perceptions of travel agencies’ performance is the theoretical base for the practical improvement of travel agencies’ service quality and for consumer satisfaction. Huang (2006) used IPA to examine the competitiveness of the Fujian Province as an inbound travel destination in the Chinese market. Liu and Wu (2006) used IPA to analyze the service attributes that influence tourists’ satisfaction with travel products and compared the common and different perceptions of two groups taking business travel and leisure tours respectively.

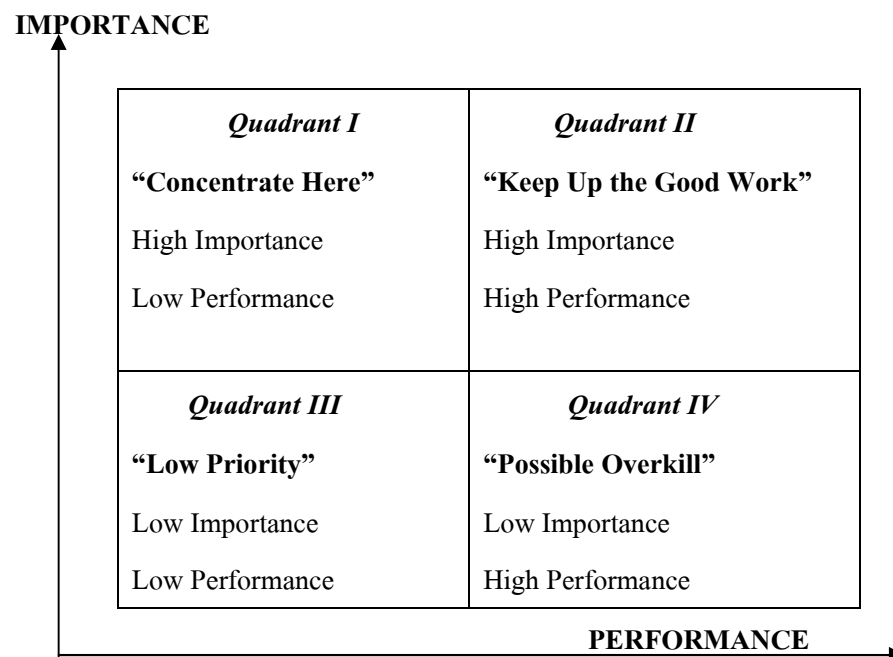
IPA is a two-dimensional grid based on customer-perceived importance and the performance of an attribute being analyzed. The *x*-axis and *y*-axis presents attribute performance and attribute importance, respectively. These two axes divide the IPA grid into four quadrants. Results are displayed graphically on a two-dimensional grid, and the through a simple visual analysis of this matrix, policy-makers can identify where the resources and programmers needs

to be concentrated. In essence, IPA involves the importance individuals attach to a given set of attributes and their judgment of performance in relation to these attributes, thus enabling a comparison of importance and performance of certain attributes. The relationship of the mean values of the importance and performance scores of each attribute is then graphically presented on a grid. The Y-axis represents the perceived importance of certain attributes, and the X-axis reports the perceived performance of those attributes, typically equated to degrees of satisfaction. The location of each attribute within a particular quadrant implies a specific management response, as described below:

Figure 2.2 Importance-performance analysis grid.

The mean average of performance and importance, commonly utilized in practice, divide the matrix into four quadrants

Importance-Performance Analysis Grid



Source: Martilla and James (1977 : 78)

Table 2.1 Importance – Performance Quadrant

Quadrant I *Concentrate Here* Attributes are perceived to be very important to respondents, but performance levels are fairly low. This suggests that improvement efforts should be concentrated here.

Quadrant II *Keep up the good work* Attributes are perceived to be very important to respondents, and at the same time, the organization seems to have high levels of performance in these activities. The message here is to keep up the good work.

Quadrant III *Lower priority* Attributes here are rated as having low importance and low performance. Although performance levels may be low in this cell, managers should not be overly concerned, since the attributes in this cell are not perceived to be very important. Limited resources should be expended on this low prior cell

Quadrant IV *Possible overkill* This cell contains attributes of low importance, but where performance is relatively high. Respondents are satisfied with performance of the organization, but managers should possibly reconsider present efforts and resources focused on an area of less relevance to consumers and stakeholders.

2.4 Applying and Delivering Quality Service

Evidence suggests that successful organizations are able to analyze their customer expectations fully and satisfy them during the majority of service encounters. (Zemke and Schaaf, 1990). Industry leaders have the ability of understanding implicate and even latent customer requirements. These latent requirements may be described as features that customers want but do not know are available and therefore are unable to articulate in discussions with service suppliers. Subsequently, there is no way to guarantee their delivery. When delivered, however, they present the provider with the opportunity to not only satisfy, but also exceed customer expectations'. Ramaswamy (1996) suggested that while non delivery of such needs may not necessary dissatisfy the customer, a company that does manage to address them even partially may experience a nonlinear increase in customer satisfaction. Clearly the onus in this case is on identifying what these needs and wants are and how and why they manifest themselves. This relates once again to the importance of research and the service quality gaps as we have related in the previous paragraphs. Application of processes is only effective if the proper knowledge and

understanding of implement and latent wants and needs is available. Processes must be developed to meet proper targets and effectively deliver services. This information most likely will come from customers themselves and also from frontline employees. Research would suggest that like in most other industries, “knowledge is power”, the more prepared a management team can be in terms of understanding the needs of consumers, the more likely that organization is to provide quality service. Perceiving consumer satisfaction at the point of sale and during service processes is crucial. Kelly and Turley (2001) inferred that uncovering how customers perceive their service experience with an organization has always been, and will continue to be important to, the success of service organizations. Managers should attempt to develop processes that can help to examine current services from their customers’ perspectives. In a highly competitive industry they must realign their service products and the environment in which their services are delivered, to meet the expectations of their target consumers (Rust & Oliver, 1994). Providing experiences tailored to the needs of a specific niche market is extremely important for customer perceptions of satisfaction and also customer retention

The increasing number of publications devoted to such topics as service quality and satisfaction research represents the increased importance of service marketing and management (Howat et al., 1999, Ko and Pastore, 2005 and Petrick, 2004)

2.5 Cultural and Demographic Factors in Establishing Service Expectations

We have already established that there is a substantial amount of research which has been and will continue to be conducted on the topic of service quality. All authors have suggested that being able to meet consumer expectations is among the most crucial elements of providing quality service for the purpose of gaining and retaining market share. But how can cultural or individual perspectives diversify expectations? If we accept that differences in people may affect their individual perspectives, how can organizations prepare for all of their differing views on service quality? Any organization that wishes to improve or retain consistent service quality standards must be aware of consumer demographics, and the role they may play on customer expectations. (Tan and Kek, 2004).

Snipes et al, (2004), suggested that one demographic factor in particular that has been measured has clearly uncovered this fact. In their research, and the research of several other

parties, (Lin et al, 2001), female consumers, on average seem to tend to rate service quality lower, when compared with their male counterparts. Assuming that both parties have experienced the same or at least, comparable levels of service, as they were patronizing the same businesses at the same time periods, why the variable gap in consumer satisfaction? The organizations involved in all studies were varied and had different management teams and philosophies of service. (Snipes et al, 2004, Tan and Kek, 2004). Due to these factors, it's not necessarily safe to assume that the service has been delivered to the guests satisfaction, just because a previous consumer was satisfied by the same service, delivered in the same way. According to Van Der Wagen (1994, p.4), individual " customers have many deferent perceptions which are influence by their education , upbringing, experience and many other factor standards of the organizations were geared towards certain clientele or processes that may have been designed with a certain bias. That may be the case but the diversity in service providers would suggest that it's not. It is more likely that female consumers have different expectations than male consumers. If one considers, for a minute, the diversity in demographics and the unlimited variability in humanity, then we come to an interesting dilemma. Gender differences are but one small demographic difference between consumer groups. But studies have shown how this difference makes providing consistently acceptable service difficult for service providers. (Zeithami et al, 2006). Now consider, for a moment, the enormous diversity of consumer groups. Organizations must meet the expectations of a plethora of demographics. Most service providers can assume that they must meet the expectations of customers that will vary culturally, in gender, in age; in physical fitness etc. etc. The list is virtually endless. Cultural differences between consumers may affect virtually every aspect of their perception of a service encounter. A good example was related in the research of Gronroos, (1990). One demographic group may assess the service attitudes of a resort employee asking relatively personal questions in order to make conversation with guests as "friendly", while another demographic group may regard the same employee as " too intrusive". In their groundbreaking work (Parasuraman et al 1985), standardized a system of processes and metrics that organizations can use to define quality service and attempt to apply it to the everyday service environment. " SERVQUAL", as narrowed down by the researchers, encompasses only five major gaps in service quality expectations and the services actually delivered. One of the purposes of their research was to nail down a standardized definition of

service, broad enough to relate to diverse organizations and service environments. Few could argue that they haven't accomplished this goal. Twenty seven years later their research is still highly regarded and used by service providers all over the world. Organizations that wish to deliver quality service to specific demographic groups may need to research their clients more thoroughly, and expand on the tenants of SERVQUAL, to cater to particular consumer groups. (Rust and Oliver, 1994). This may give service providers the biggest advantage for to survive and thrive in a highly competitive service environment.

Ryan and Dewar (1995) emphasize and evaluate the communicative competency of tour guides. They conclude that effective communication skills enhance tourist satisfaction. This skill is extended to intercultural communication, which tour guides encounter when dealing with different cultures. Yu et al. (2001) propose a conceptual framework to examine the intercultural communication competence of Chinese tour guides in Australia. In this framework, an interculturally competent tour guide in the areas of behavioral, cognitive, and affective skills must be empathetic, non-judgmental, and sensitive to others' needs in order to increase visitors' satisfaction. Behavioral skills involve the ability to initiate interaction between tourist and host, solve problems, develop rapport with the group, display respect for different cultures, and handle unexpected situations. Both affective and cognitive skills provide the necessary tools for tour guides to improve their social interaction. Similarly.

2.6 Applying Processes to Increase Return Business

Numerous studies examine both the concrete and theoretical relationships between service quality and other consumer variables such as, customer purchase intention, and retaining customer value (Cho et al., 2004),(Kotler, 2003) (Murray and Howat, 2002) (Tian-Cole et al., 2002) and (Zeithaml et al., 2006). Research has established that customer perceptions of service quality and overall consumer satisfaction are among the most reliable indicators of consumer intentions to repurchase and organization or repurchase a certain product. (Yoo et al., 2003). Customer loyalty may be among the most difficult qualities to obtain for a service provider, in an age when consumers are bombarded with advertising and presented with all of the purchase options in detail, and competition is intense in most service industries. Research would

suggest that the most effective, and realistically, the only way to establish consumer loyalty is to satisfy consumer needs and expectations.

There is a recurring trend in very competitive markets, in regards to consumer loyalty and brand loyalty. Satisfied customers tend to be highly committed to the service organization and their services (Cho et al., 2004), (Cronin et al., 2000, Kelly and Turley, 2001) Service quality perceptions, would seem to be the most important factor in positively impacting the repurchase intentions of a customer (Cronin and Taylor, 1992, Cronin et al., 2000, Patterson and Spreng,1997, Rust and Oliver, 1994 and Tian-Cole et al., 2002) Since it can be fairly and reasonably assessed that repeat purchasing is one of the most crucial elements involved in creating a consistent profit stream, it is necessary for a service provider to identify all of the variables that may affect a consumers intention to repurchase a product. The most commonly accepted and studied benefits of customer retention for most organizations include reduced marketing and costs, the ability to maintain and even increase profit margins without reducing prices or being forced to price cut competitors, lowered administrative expenses, increased purchases over a period of time and severally reduced costs related to the need to attract new consumers. (Zeithami et al, 2006). O'Conner and Shewchuk (1989) found that among most customers, the individual intention to return was primarily influenced by the perception of service quality as related to guest satisfaction. Crotts and Pizam, (2003) discovered that a tourism organizations can earn their customers' repeat business only when and if they are able to consistently meet or exceed customer expectations. This would suggest that the need to develop processes that can be used to obtain consumer feedback, is among the most crucial goals for any company, that wishes to be successful (Crotts & Pizam, 2003). Consumers esteem those service providers who can provide the highest level of quality consistently. This is true in both profit and non-profit service industries. Education is a non-profit service industry (Wright and O'Neill, 2002), as are arguably nongovernmental organizations such as habitat for humanity, for example, that provide a service for altruistic intentions.

2.7 Relevance to the Industry: The Uniformity of Tour Guides

If stakeholders agree that the aforementioned service quality constructs are relevant and applicable to their industry and their particular businesses, they must first address what areas in their organizations to target for implementation. As mentioned earlier the industry offers many different careers and requires a plethora of specific skill sets. One area that may be easiest for service providers to target for implementation of new processes and metrics regarding service quality may be licensed tour guides (Ap & Wong 2001). The main reason that this is a prime area for developing new standards is a level of continuity throughout the industry. Tour guides are widely considered to be a crucial element to the success of many hospitality businesses as they are among the first employees to interact with consumers and often maintain a rapport with guests throughout all facets of and the entire length of the service encounter. (Ap and Wong 2001). They are of particular importance to water based tourism operators in the region as all group tours in the region including water sports related tours such as snorkeling and island hopping tours are required to have licensed tour guides on board at all times. (TAT, 2012). This was firmly entrenched in law with the passing of the Tourist Business Guide Act in 1992. This elevates the tour guide to a unique position when held up against other human resources in the industry. Water Based Tourism is a broad term covering a host of activities and employing a wide range of varying skill sets (Orams 1999). Standardization, by nature requires a certain amount of continuity in order to be effective. Tour guides may be the best starting point to target in terms of standardizing service quality in the local water based tourism market, because they are one of the only areas of continuity in the industry. Although the industry is made up of many different service providers offering many varieties of services, one of the only constants that all organizations share is that they are all required to work in some capacity with licensed tour guides. (TAT, 2012).

There may be intrinsic value in determining what areas of the service encounter, specifically are the most dependent on the quality of guide services and targeting these areas for measuring gaps in service quality. Affecting positive change in these specific areas may lift service standards industry wide. Tourist guides are generally considered the “face of the company” and the most qualified representative of the organizations products and services to consumers (Mossberg 1995, Zhang & Show, 2004, Bowie & Chang, 2005). Most studies also

suggest that customers perception of guide “quality is an essential element in repurchase activity” (Mossberg, 1995). If guides are such crucial actors in the initial contact with the consumer as well as a factor in repurchase it suggests that information gained from consumers on the ground regarding the services provided by tour guides versus the consumers initial expectations and if a consumer plans to repurchase or not based on these factors, would be helpful to service providers. There is another constant that can be exploited to gain insight into improving service quality from guides in the industry and that is in regards to their training. All guides in the water based tourism sector are required to have a standardized level of training. These requirements are the same for all Marine guides. (Office of Immigration and Department of Tourism ministry of tourism & Sport, 2012). This provides us with another concrete measure we can use to gain insight into any gaps in the relevance and effectiveness of the training that guides receive, as compared to their experiences on the job.

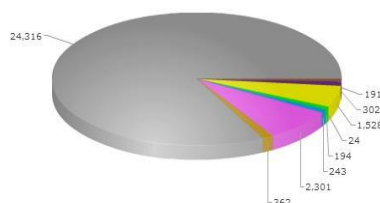
Another advantage of targeting guides as an area of measuring service quality is that many guides work freelance for several companies. Considering this, it is safe to assume that one guide can take changes that they have made in their service delivery skills, to several organizations, thus improving the industry as whole performances (Ap and Wong, 2001, Heung, 2008 and Mak et al., 2010)

2.8 Tourist Guides in Thailand

Tour guides act intermediaries between tourists and an unfamiliar environment, thus playing an important role in the success or failure of a guests experience and influencing tourists’ perceptions of the host destination (Hughes, 1991; Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Leclerc & Martin, 2004; Zhang & Chow, 2004).

Figure 2.3 The Applicant for the licenses guide.

Between 6 April 2008 to the 2012 total of 20,910 people.



Source: Bureau of Tourism Business and Guide Registration, Department of Thailand

(<http://122.155.9.59:8081/stm4/NewReport/report506.jsp>)

Table 2.2 The Applicant of the licenses guide.

Between 6 April 2008 to the 2012 total of 20,910

No	General (international)	Number 20,910
1	General (Thailand).	362.
2	Specific areas (overseas).	2,274.
3	Specific areas (Thailand).	243
4	Only (hiking).	194
5	(The sea).	24
6	Specific (coastal)	1,527
7	Specific (natural attractions)	302
8	Specific (local culture).	190
9	Specific (cultural).	1

Source: Bureau of Tourism Business and Guide Registration, Department of Thailand

(<http://122.155.9.59:8081/stm4/NewReport/report506.jsp>)

From the above listed, statistics of tourist guide who applied to be certified and registered in Thailand, the marine leisure tourist guide make up 1,527 successful applicants from 2008 until 2012. This is an especially large portion of the total tour guide applicants in the country, overall. A total of 29,253 guide applicants were registered for all disciplines, in the entire country. Conversely, trekking guides, for example made up only 194 applicants out of this total. Cultural tour guides only 1 applicant. This demonstrates both the growth in the marine tourism sector and the importance of the sector to the economy and as an economic generator as well as

the perception by applicants, that the sector offers the best opportunities for employment. As these statistics demonstrate an interest from Thais as a good starting point in their careers, and reflects the overall growth in the sector, the research must reflect this importance and focus on this area.

2.8.1 Types of Tourist Guide in Thailand

The 2 main types of tour guides in Thailand

The Thai government separates the classification of licensed general guides into Thai language and foreign language guides.

1. General guide: A tour guide who is licensed to and possess the knowledge to conduct tours in every relevant field and often has the ability to use foreign languages during the course of their duties.

1.1 The Thai government separates the classification of licensed general guides into Thai language and foreign language guides.

1.2 General guide (Thai) A tourist guide which conducts tours in any kind of and all destinations only for Thai guests.

2. Specific guides. Specific guides are tour guides who have specific skill sets related to different aspects of the tourism industry and specialize in different activities and different areas of expertise.

2.1 Specific guide : (foreign language –specific areas) tourist guides who can conduct the tour for Thai or international tourists, by using general information in the area specific to the province and borders (Ranong, Phang Nga, Krabi and Trang

2.2 Thai language- specific areas. : tour guides who can conduct the same types of specific tours but only for Thai tourists, in the Thai language

2.3 Forest trekking guides: Guides who can conduct tours for both Thai and foreign guests related to forest trekking activities. They must possess knowledge, and be able to communicate said knowledge to the guest of geography, flora & fauna, area mapping , forest survival techniques etc.

2.4 Art & Cultural guides ; guides who are licensed to and who can effectively conduct tours related to history, archeology, art, culture or Thai literature throughout the country

2.5 Marine Guides : tourist guides who can conduct tours for both Thais and foreigners focused on and providing information in regards to the safety and instruction on regulations, safety and practices in the marine environment.

2.6 Natural destination guides: guides who can conduct tour for both Thais and foreigners to natural sites around the country.

2.7 Local Culture guides ; guides who can conduct tours for both Thai and foreigners to specific cultural sites as identified on the license card, they can provide information in regards to the traditions, culture, history, geography and archeology, limited to specific local sites.

2.8 Marine Leisure tourist guide: These guides are licensed to conduct tours on the seashore and islands not exceeding 40 miles from the coast, and posses specific skill sets related to conducting these sorts of activities safely and effectively.

2.8.2 Tourist Guide Qualifications.

Zhang & Chow, (2004) researched to access tourist guides' performance, identified the following twenty attributes:

1. Punctuality
2. Problem solving ability
3. Knowledge of the destination
4. Honesty and trustworthiness
5. Knowledge of information about safety regulations
6. Ability to deliver the services promised in the itinerary
7. Politeness
8. Being good at presentation skills
9. Well-Trained
10. Ability to brief visitors on daily itinerary
11. Ability to demonstrate respect for customers
12. Ability to communicate in foreign languages
13. Demonstrating friendliness
14. Neat and tidy appearance
15. Always being available to help

16. Demonstrating an attention to detail
17. Introducing reliable shops and partner businesses to guests
18. Demonstrating a sense of humor

In addition to accepted Tourist's guide qualifications, Wannathanom (2003), quote by Sujitra 2005) Believed that to be an effective tourist guide, one should have some specific qualifications since it is career for those who have to interact with many people coming from different cultures. 18 attributes were identified in their research, which are as follows, 1) Good personality 2) Human relations 3) Being a knowledgeable person 4) Eloquence 5) Perceptiveness 6) Service 7) mentality 8) Travel experience 9) Punctually & a High level of responsibility 10) Patience and a Sense of humor 11) Good mentality and good health 12) Good memory 13) Leadership 14) Honesty. 15) Foreign language skills and to be enthusiastic in Problem Solving.

2.9. Demonstrating Professionalism in tour guiding

Zhang & Chow, (2004), suggest that guide professionalism is the primary attribute of a successful tour (Geva & Goldman, 1991). Conversely, an unsatisfactory tour guide may ruin the tourists' enjoyment of their holiday experience (Lopez, 1980), and may even damage the image of a tourist destination (Ap & Wong, 2001). The understanding of professionalism lies in the basic concept of profession. Cogan (1953, p. 48) defined a profession as "a vocation whose practice is founded upon an understanding of the theoretical structure of some department of learning or science, and upon the abilities accompanying such understanding." Barber (1963, p. 672) suggests that professional behavior may be defined in terms of four essential attributes:

- (1) a high degree of generalized and systematic knowledge,
- (2) a primary orientation to community interest rather than to individual self-interest,
- (3) a high degree of self-control of behavior through codes of ethics, and
- (4) a system of rewards (monetary and honorary) that is primarily a set of symbols of work achievement.

The fundamental conclusion from the literature was that no discipline could truly be identified as a profession unless there was clear articulation and delineation of standards and credentialing, the group exhibited autonomous control over these, and societal legitimacy was

granted. It is an issue each occupation must face, and if most members aspire for and work towards these new ethics, standards, and educational norms, the group will move towards professionalism.

Sheldon (1989) Conducted 12 dimensions of professionalism to assess perceived professionalism from the perspectives of both employers and employees of five sectors in Hawaii, namely, accommodation, food service, transportation, travel agents/tour operators, and attractions/entertainment. The 12 dimensions adopted were as follows:

- (1) the length of training required,
- (2) the existence of a code of ethics,
- (3) whether the occupation is organized,
- (4) the complexity of the occupation,
- (5) whether the occupation involves altruistic service,
- (6) the existence of a body of knowledge relevant to the occupation,
- (7) whether the occupation is people-oriented,
- (8) whether it is licensed,
- (9) the level of prestige that the occupation holds,
- (10) whether employee competence is tested,
- (11) whether the occupation lends itself to self-employment, and
- (12) the level of income received.

The results reveal that the accommodation sector was perceived to be the most professional sector, whereas the travel agents/tour operators sector was perceived to be the least professional one. On the other hand, Ap and Wong (2001) found that the professionalism of tour guides is reflected in their attitude towards the job, specifically pertaining to the fact as to whether they are mostly motivated by self-economic interest or genuine provision of high-quality customer service to tourists. Evidence from their study confirmed that good product knowledge, good communication skills, and the right attitude with respect to service are considered to be the most important attributes for a professional tour guide (quoted by Chang & Chow, 2001)

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study *Critical Issues affecting the service quality in Water-base tour operators: A Case Study of the Marine Leisure tour guide In the Andaman Cluster*; The study was developed based on previous studies: Sukumaan,K (2005), AP, j.& Wong, K.F. (2001), Wong, Ap (1998), Zhang and Chow(2003), Piti T(2000), Wang and Shien (2006) Lam, T., & Zhang, H. Q. (1999), Surat S (2012). Quantitative methods were used to collect data for achieving the objectives of this research. This chapter reviews the methodology utilized in conducting this study. First, a description of population, sample size and selection of this study is described. Data collection and how data was analyzed is also reviewed, followed by how the researcher collected said data. Lastly, the analysis of the data was presented and discussed.

3.1 Population and sampling.

3.1.1 Population

The primary research in this study will be obtained from populations from tourists who participated in Water-based tourism in Andaman Cluster. Currently, there are no exact statistics of tourist participation for water-based tourism activities. Therefore, the researcher compiled the statistics of the year 2011 from thirty five marine tour operators, which are currently operating and registered with the Ministry of Tourism. Region 2, This constitutes an average population of 4,467,228 (N)

3.1.2 Sampling

Study samples of 400 questionnaires were conducted with tourists who participated in water base tourism and leisure activities in major marinas in the relevant sector such as Royal Phuket Marina , Rassada Pier, Phuket town, Tap-lamu, Similan Ialand and the Aopor marina located at the base of Phangha Bay to collect the data.

The Yamane formula (1967) was used for sampling size groups for the statistic populations:

Calculations of the sample size of Taro Yamane methods (1973) as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

When n : Sample size

N : Size of target population which is the number of the tourist visiting Andaman Cluster during year in 2012

e : The level of precision (the confidence level at 95%), 0.05 population variable

Calculation of the sample size of tourists visits in Andaman Cluster in the year 2012:

$$n = \frac{4,467,228}{1 + 4,467,228(0.05^2)}$$

$$n = 399.96$$

Therefore, the sample size was 400.

3.2 Research Instruments

The questionnaire (Appendix) was adapted from previous research and literature which was related to service quality. Before conducting the main survey, a pre-test was conducted for thirty tourists to maximize the validity of the result and clarity of the instrumentation.

The questionnaire instrument consisted of the three following sections:

Part 1: Personal Demographic Information

Part 2: Research Specific Information

Part 3: Service quality

The questionnaires will be distributed to tourists participating in water sports and leisure and patronizing marine tourist related businesses in the Andaman Cluster region. The questions are both closed - end and multiple choice. Twenty four pertinent tour guide service quality attributes and important performance goals are identified. Likert rating scale type questions were used, in order to obtain a response on each of the survey questions. The scales ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for the perception of the service quality among subjects in this study.

In the first section, basic details about a tourist's demographic characteristic were created by the researcher. This section composed of seven questions: age, marital status, current occupation and first trip to Thailand.

The second section composed of seven questions which were also designed by the researcher. It related to how an individual holiday will be spent in the Andaman region, activities during your Trip, activities you have participated in, level of satisfaction with these activities, perceptions of the level of overall service and professionalism of the Marine leisure tour guide, factors involved in choosing The Andaman region for your holiday, and whether or not guests would choose to return to the Region again.

The third section composed of twenty four questions, and it was designed to determine the service quality for The marine leisure tour guide in Andaman Cluster. a Likert five-point rating scale was used as the response format for motivation variables. They were as follows: very unimportant (1), unimportant (2), neutral (3), important (4), and very important (5) and required respondents to evaluate the same 24 attributes, using the same rating scale from “strongly disagree (1)” to “strongly agree (5)”.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Primary data

The study was carried out during peak season, which runs from October until December 2012. Study samples of 400 questionnaires were conducted with tourists who participated in water base tourism and leisure activities in major marinas in the relevant sector in Andaman Cluster. Twenty four pertinent tour guide service quality attributes and important performance goals were identified.

3.3.2 Secondary data

The researcher collected further information from the following:

- Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)
- Phuket Municipality
- Academic journals
- Textbooks

- Newspapers
- Websites

3.4 Data Analysis-Statistics used to analyze the Data

The data in this study was analyzed using the SPSS program. The researcher decided to use descriptive statistics (e.g. frequencies, percentages), the independent sample t - test, one way ANOVA, and regression analysis. Each section of the questionnaire was applied with the proper statistics to analyze the data. Mean scores rated the perceived features of the service quality and performance of the Marine Leisure tour guide. Then, the mean scores of the 24 attributes were plotted on the IPA grid according to their perceived importance and the performance the performance levels as perceived by tourists..

An IPA grid was used in order to check with quadrants on each of the tourist opinions about the relationship directions between importance and performance attribute levels as perceived by tourists. IPA is a two-dimensional grid based on consumer-perceived importance and performance of the attributes analyzed. The *x*-axis and *y*-axis presents attribute performance and attribute importance, respectively. These two axes divide the IPA grid into four quadrants.

For the data analysis, the mean was based on the interval level that is calculated as:

$$\text{The interval level} = \frac{[Maximum - Minimum]}{n}$$

$$\text{The interval level} = \frac{[5 - 1]}{5}$$

$$\text{The interval level} = 0.80$$

Therefore, the researcher arranged the results of each sub - level as follows:

Score Points	Meaning
4.21-5.00	Very high importance/ performance'
3.41-4.20	High importance/ performance'
2.61-3.40	Moderate importance/ performance'
1.81-2.60	Low importance/ performance'
1.00-1.80	Very low importance/ performance'

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study used a mixed method: both qualitative and quantitative. The primary research in this study will be obtained from populations from a business owners group. The survey instruments were developed and translated into the local language to collect primary quantitative data. SPSS version 15.0 for Windows facilitated data analysis

The results were divided into several specific sections concerning with the site opinion of people who answered, plus the observations. Significant results and Discussions were as follows:

1. Personal Information
2. Research Specific Information
3. Marine Leisure Tourist guide performed on service

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of respondents were analyzed individually into frequency and percentage. There were: (1) Age, (2) Marital status, (3) Occupation (4) Country of residence and (5) your first trip to Thailand. From the study, the demographic characteristics of respondents are illustrated in Table 3.1 as follows:

4.1.1 Age group

The majority of respondents were in the age range of 30-39 years old (183 persons out of 400 or 45.8%). There were 23.5% or 94 persons in the age group 20-29 years. The age group 40-49 years old represented 18.0% or 72 persons, respondents from age group younger than 20 years old had only 7.5% or 30 persons. The reason was that when the researcher administered the survey to the sampled households, the adult family members who were literate in the family carried out the questionnaire. Neither too young nor too old age groups participated in the survey. When there were more than one adult in the family at the time of the survey, the family was free to choose the representative to answer the questionnaire. Therefore, the majority of respondents were in the 30-39 years old age group. However, they sometimes decided to answer after discussing with all family members.

4.1.2 Marital status

The majority of respondents were in the married group. There were (72.0%) or 288 married persons, 22.8%, or 91 persons were unmarried and divorced respondents were only 5.2% or 21 persons which proved that in this society people get married early.

4.1.3 Occupation

The majority of respondents (38.0% or 152) were in employee, 26.8% or 107 persons were entrepreneur, 17.2% or 69 persons were in Housewife, 8.2% or 33 persons were students. For Government: 7.0% or 28 persons, 2.8% or 11 persons were in other. Likewise, unemployed/retired in the sample

4.1.4 Country of residence

The majority of respondents (15.2% or 61) were in Australia, 9.0% or 36 persons were England, 8.2% or 33 persons were in Russia 8.2%, 30 persons were German. For New Zealand: 6.2% or 25 persons, 5.8% or 23 persons were Korea.

4.1.5 Your first trip to Thailand

The majority of respondents (58.2% or 233) were in Yes, 41.8% or 167 persons were No.

Table 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

No.	Personal Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age group		
	a. Younger than 20 years old	30	7.5
	b. 20-29 years old	94	23.5
	c. 30-39 years old	183	45.8
	d. 40-49 years old	72	18.0
	e. 50 years old and above	21	5.2
	Total	400	100.0
2	Marital status		
	a. Married	288	72.0
	b. Unmarried	91	22.8

Table 4.1 Continue

No.	Personal Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
	c. Divorced	21	5.2
	Total	400	100.0
3	Occupation		
	a. Government	28	7.0
	b. Entrepreneur	107	26.8
	c. Employee	152	38.0
	d. Housewife	69	17.2
	e. Student	33	8.2
	f. Other	11	2.8
	Total	400	100.0
4	Country of residence		
	a. Australia	61	15.2
	b. England	36	9.0
	c. Russia	33	8.2
	d. New Zealand	25	6.2
	e. German	30	7.5
	f. France	22	5.5
	g. Korea	23	5.8
	h. Malaysia	21	5.2
	i. Taiwan	33	8.2
	j. Canada	18	4.5
	k. China	12	3.0
	l. Other	86	21.5
	Total	400	100.0
5	First trip to Thailand		
	a. Yes	233	58.2
	b. No	167	41.8
	Total	400	100.0

4. 2 Research Specific Information

4.2.1 Your holiday will be spent in the Andaman region.

The majority of respondents (48.0% or 192) were spent 2 -3 weeks, 17.8% or 71 persons were spent 3 weeks - 1 months, 11.8% or 47 persons were spent 1 week or less, 8.2% or 33 persons were spent 1 -2 months. For 1 day-6 days: 8.0% or 32 persons, 3.2% or 13 persons were spent in 3 months or more.

4.2.2 You have participated in any Marine Leisure activities during your Trip.

All of respondents (100.0% or 400) have participated in any Marine Leisure activities during their trip.

4.2.3 You rate your overall level of satisfaction with these activities

The majority of respondents (41.2% or 165) were Average level of satisfaction with these activities, 27.2% or 109 persons were Satisfied level, 21.5% or 86 persons were Very Satisfied level, 5.5% or 22 persons were Not Satisfied level. For Not at all satisfied: 4.5% or 18 persons.

4.2.4 You rate the level of overall service and professionalism of Coastal Tourist Guide in Marine Leisure in the region.

The majority of respondents (51.0% or 204) were Fair level of service and professionalism of Marine tourist guides in Marine Leisure in the region, 30.2% or 121 persons were Good level, 16.0% or 64 persons were Excellent level. For poor level: 2.8% or 11 persons.

4.2.5 Marine activities a factor in choosing The Andaman region for your holiday.

The majority of respondents (71.5% or 286) were Yes Marine activities a factor in choosing The Andaman region for their holiday. For No: 28.5% or 114 persons.

4.2.6 Approximately what percentage of your holiday budget will be allocated for marine leisure activities.

The majority of respondents (24.2% or 97) were more than 50 % of their holiday budget, 23.5% or 94 persons were 31%-40 %, 17.2% or 69 persons were 41-50 %. For Less than 10 %: 15.2% or 61 persons, 12.8% or 51 persons were 21-30% of their holiday budget will be allocated for marine leisure activities.

4.2.7 In the future, you plan to retune to the Region again.

The all of respondents (100% or 400) plan to retune to the Region again, in the future.

Table 4.2 Specific Information of the Respondents

No.	Specific Information	Frequency	Percentage
1	Your holiday will be spent in the Andaman region.		
	a. 1 day-6 days	32	8.0
	b. 1 week or less	47	11.8
	c. 2 -3 weeks	192	48.0
	d. 3 weeks - 1 months	71	17.8
	e. 1 -2 months	33	8.2
	f. 2 - 3 months	12	3.0
	g. 3 months or more	13	3.2
	Total	400	100.0
2	Have you participated in any Marine Leisure activities during your Trip		
	a. Yes	400	100.0
	b. No	-	-
	Total	400	100.0
3	You rate your overall level of satisfaction with these activities		
	a. Very Satisfied	86	21.5
	b. Satisfied	109	27.2
	c. Average	165	41.2
	d. Not Satisfied	22	5.5
	e. Not at all satisfied	18	4.5
	Total	400	100.0
4	You rate the level of overall service and professionalism of Coastal Tourist Guide in Marine Leisure in the region		
	a. Excellent	64	16.0
	b. Good	121	30.2
	c. Fair	204	51.0
	d. Poor	11	2.8
	Total	400	100.0

Table 4.2 Continue

No.	Specific Information	Frequency	Percentage
5	Marine activities a factor in choosing The Andaman region for your holiday		
	a. Yes	286	71.5
	b. No	114	28.5
	Total	400	100.0
6	Approximately what percentage of your holiday budget will be allocated for marine leisure activities		
	a. Less than 10 %	61	15.2
	b. 11-20%	28	7.0
	c. 21-30%	51	12.8
	d. 31-40 %	94	23.5
	e. 41-50 %	69	17.2
	f. More than 50 %	97	24.2
	Total	400	100.0
7	In the future, you plan to return to the Region again		
	a. Yes	400	100.0
	b. No	-	-
	Total	400	100.0

4.3 Marine Leisure Tourist guide performed on service

4.3.1 Important Level of Marine Leisure Tourist guides as shown in Table 3.3.1, the 3 indicator that was related at Important level was: “Marine Leisure tourist guides never too busy to respond to your request” (mean = 4.19). “The Marine Leisure tourist guides re punctual” (mean = 4.12). And “The Marine Leisure tour guide have a neat in appearance” (mean = 3.99).

Most important, there were 22 indicators at the extremely important level: “Marine Leisure tourist guides can tell you exactly when a service” (mean=4.82), “The Marine Leisure tourist guide gave us the information and instructions to property us in case of an accident at sea” (mean=4.70), “Marine Leisure tourist guide never too busy to respond to your request” (mean=4.53), “If you had a problem, Marine Leisure tourist guide would show a sincere interest

in solve it” (mean= 4.49), “The Marine Leisure tourist guide provided clear information on safety regulations” (mean= 4.48), “The Marine Leisure tourist guide accurately informed us about the area of interest” (mean= 4.48), “The Marine Leisure tourist guide presentation was informative and clear” (mean= 4.46), “The Marine Leisure tourist guide have a sense of humor ” (mean= 4.45), “The Marine Leisure tourist guide seemed well trained about his or her job” (mean= 4.40), “The Marine Leisure tourist guide appears to have a knowledge of first aid” (mean= 4.38), “The Marine Leisure tour guide appeared to demonstrate good ethical behavior” (mean= 4.36), “You feel safe in your transaction with the Marine Leisure tour guide” (mean= 4.35), “The Marine Leisure tour guide was friendly” (mean= 4.30), “The Marine Leisure tour guide briefed us on daily itinerary” (mean= 4.30), “The behavior of Marine Leisure tour guide employees instills confidence in the guests” (mean= 4.28), “The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrated good attention to detail during the trip” (mean= 4.28), “Marine Leisure tourist guide seem to have enough knowledge to answer your inquiries” (mean= 4.27), “The Marine Leisure tourist guide seemed well trained about his or her job” (mean= 4.24), “The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrate respect for the customer” (mean= 4.23) and “The Marine Leisure tourist guide tour guide is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign language” (mean=4.21).

Table 4.3 Important factors for Marine Leisure Tourist guide performed on service.

No.	Key indicator	N	Mean	SD	Level Opinion
1	The Marine Leisure tourist guide have a neat in appearance	400	3.99	.627	Important
2	The Marine Leisure tourist guide re punctual	400	4.12	.683	Important
3	The Marine Leisure tourist guide was friendly	400	4.30	.653	Extremely important
4	The Marine Leisure tourist guide presentation was informative and clear	400	4.46	.628	Extremely important
5	The Marine Leisure tourist guide briefed us on daily itinerary	400	4.30	.672	Extremely important
6	The Marine Leisure tourist guide provided clear information on safety regulations	400	4.48	.588	Extremely important

Table 4.3 Continue

No.	Key indicator	N	Mean	SD	Level Opinion
7	If you had a problem, Marine Leisure tourist guide would show a sincere interest in solve it	400	4.49	.609	Extremely important
8	Marine Leisure tourist guide can tell you exactly when a service will be provided	400	4.82	.481	Extremely important
9	Marine Leisure tourist guide never too busy to respond to your request	400	4.53	.592	Extremely important
10	The behavior of Marine Leisure tourist guide employees instills confidence in the guests	400	4.28	.657	Extremely important
11	You feel safe in your transaction with the Marine Leisure tourist guide	400	4.35	.622	Extremely important
12	Marine Leisure tourist guide seem to have enough knowledge to answer your inquiries	400	4.27	.667	Extremely important
13	The Marine Leisure tourist guide give your individual attention	400	4.40	.634	Extremely important
14	The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrate respect for the customer	400	4.23	.665	Extremely important
15	The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrate a knowledge of the area interest	400	4.40	.675	Extremely important
16	Tour Marine Leisure tourist guide appears to have a knowledge of first aid	400	4.38	.593	Extremely important
17	The Marine Leisure tourist guide tour guide is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign language	400	4.21	.643	Extremely important
18	The Marine Leisure tourist guide appeared to demonstrate good ethical behavior	400	4.36	.618	Extremely important
19	The Marine Leisure tourist guide accurately informed us about the area of interest	400	4.48	.575	Extremely important
20	The Marine Leisure tourist guide gave us the information and instructions to property us in case of an accident at sea	400	4.70	.557	Extremely important

Table 4.3 Continue

No.	Key indicator	N	Mean	SD	Level Opinion
21	The Marine Leisure tourist guide have a sense of humor	400	4.45	.573	Extremely important
22	The Marine Leisure tourist guide gave us the information and instructions to properly protect us in case of an accident on the sea	400	4.19	.676	Important
23	The Marine Leisure tourist guide seemed well trained about his or her job	400	4.24	.704	Extremely important
24	The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrated good attention to detail during the trip	400	4.28	.671	Extremely important

Remarks: N = number, Mean = mean value, SD = standard deviation

4.3.2 Perceived Service of Marine Leisure Tourist guide as shown in Table 3.3.2, the 2 indicator that was related at Excellent level was: “The Marine Leisure tour guide accurately informed us about the area of interest” (mean = 4.43). And “The Marine Leisure tour guide gave us the information and instructions to property us in case of an accident at sea” (mean = 4.28).

There were 12 indicators at good level: “The Marine Leisure tour guide tour guide is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign language” (mean=4.19), “The Marine Leisure tour guide seemed well trained about his or her job” (mean=4.10), “The Marine Leisure tour guide have a neat in appearance” (mean=4.06), “Marine Leisure tour guide never too busy to respond to your request” (mean= 4.04), “Tour Marine Leisure tour guide appears to have a knowledge of first aid” (mean= 4.02), “The Marine Leisure tour guide demonstrate respect for the customer” (mean= 3.95), “The Marine Leisure tour guide presentation was informative and clear” (mean= 3.92), “If you had a problem, Marine Leisure tour guide would show a sincere interest in solve it” (mean= 3.92), “The Marine Leisure tour guide tour guide gave us the information and instructions to properly protect us in case of an accident on the sea” (mean= 3.91), “Marine Leisure tour guide can tell you exactly when a service will be provided” (mean= 3.90), “Marine Leisure tour guide seem to have enough knowledge to answer your inquiries” (mean= 3.87) and “The Marine Leisure tour guide briefed us on daily itinerary” (mean=3.72).

There were 10 indicators at fair level: “The Marine Leisure tour guide give your individual attention” (mean=3.29), “The Marine Leisure tour guide demonstrate a knowledge of the area interest” (mean=3.22), “The Marine Leisure tour guide provided clear information on safety regulations” (mean=3.17), “The Marine Leisure tour guide was friendly” (mean= 3.14), “The Marine Leisure tour guide appeared to demonstrate good ethical behavior” (mean= 3.13), “The Marine Leisure tour guide re punctual” (mean= 3.08), “You feel safe in your transaction with the Marine Leisure tour guide” (mean= 2.94), “The Marine Leisure tour guide seemed well trained about his or her job” (mean= 2.92), “The Marine Leisure tour guide demonstrated good attention to detail during the trip” (mean= 2.91) and “The behavior of Marine Leisure tour guide employees instills confidence in the guests” (mean=2.89).

Table 4.4 Perceived Service factors for Marine Leisure Tourist guide performed on service.

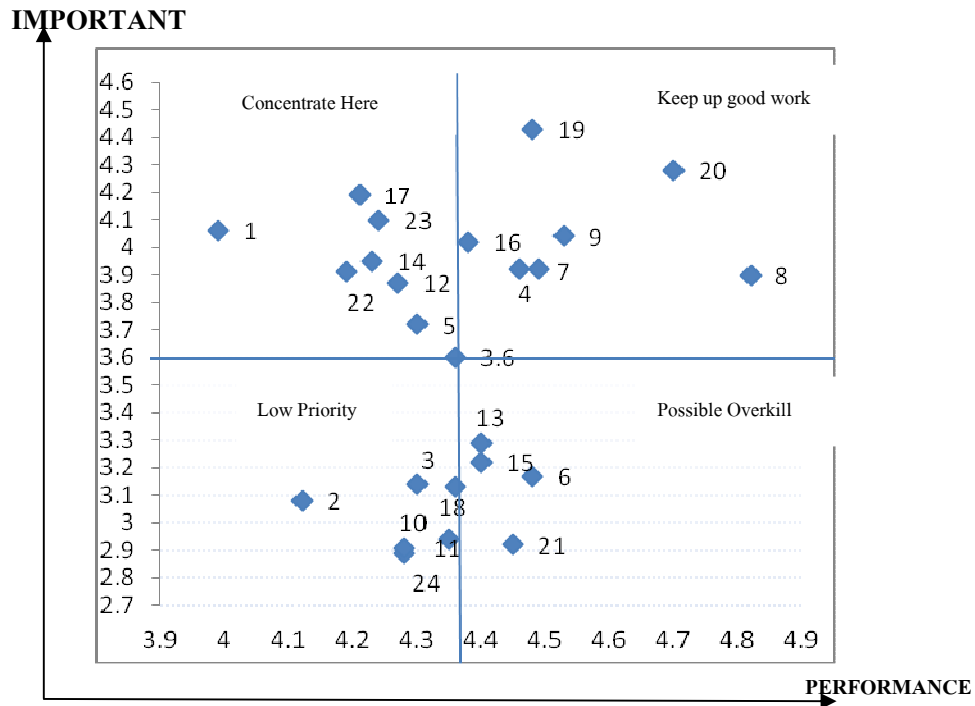
No.	Key indicator	N	Mean	SD	Level Opinion
1	The Marine Leisure tourist guide have a neat in appearance	400	4.06	.695	Good
2	The Marine Leisure tourist guide re punctual	400	3.08	.985	Fair
3	The Marine Leisure tourist guide was friendly	400	3.14	.990	Fair
4	The Marine Leisure tourist guide presentation was informative and clear	400	3.92	.622	Good
5	The Marine Leisure tourist guide briefed us on daily itinerary	400	3.72	.741	Good
6	The Marine Leisure tourist guide provided clear information on safety regulations	400	3.17	1.002	Fair
7	If you had a problem, Marine Leisure tourist guide would show a sincere interest in solve it	400	3.92	.691	Good
8	The Marine Leisure tourist guide can tell you exactly when a service will be provided	400	3.90	.748	Good
9	The Marine Leisure tourist guide never too busy to respond to your request	400	4.04	.638	Good
10	The behavior of Marine Leisure tourist guide employees instills confidence in the guests	400	2.89	1.177	Fair
11	You feel safe in your transaction with the Marine Leisure tourist guide	400	2.94	1.106	Fair

Table 4.4 Continue

No.	Key indicator	N	Mean	SD	Level Opinion
12	The Marine Leisure tourist guide seem to have enough knowledge to answer your inquiries	400	3.87	.660	Good
13	The Marine Leisure tourist guide give your individual attention	400	3.29	1.062	Fair
14	The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrate respect for the customer	400	3.95	.674	Good
15	The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrate a knowledge of the area interest	400	3.22	1.133	Fair
16	Tour Marine Leisure tourist guide appears to have a knowledge of first aid	400	4.02	.623	Good
17	The Marine Leisure tourist guide tour guide is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign language	400	4.19	.576	Good
18	The Marine Leisure tourist guide appeared to demonstrate good ethical behavior	400	3.13	1.102	Fair
19	The Marine Leisure tourist guide accurately informed us about the area of interest	400	4.43	.558	Excellent
20	The Marine Leisure tourist guide gave us the information and instructions to property us in case of an accident at sea	400	4.28	.614	Excellent
21	The Marine Leisure tourist guide have a sense of humor	400	2.92	1.135	Fair
22	The Marine Leisure tourist guide gave us the information and instructions to properly protect us in case of an accident on the sea	400	3.91	.738	Good
23	The Marine Leisure tourist guide seemed well trained about his or her job	400	4.10	.573	Good
24	The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrated good attention to detail during the trip	400	2.91	1.079	Fair

Remarks: N = number, Mean = mean value, SD = standard deviation

Figure 4.1. IPA grid illustrate for Marine leisure tourist guide in Andaman Cluster.



Notes :

- 1.The Marine Leisure tour guide have a neat in appearance
- 2.The Marine Leisure tour guide re punctual
- 3.The Marine Leisure tour guide was friendly
- 4.The Marine Leisure tour guide presentation was informative and clear
- 5.The Marine Leisure tour guide briefed us on daily itinerary
- 6.The Marine Leisure tour guide provided clear information on safety regulations
- 7.If you had a problem, Marine Leisure tour guide would show a sincere interest in solve it
- 8.TheMarine Leisure tour guide tour guide tell you exactly when a service will be provided
- 9.The Marine Leisure tour guide never too busy to respond to your request
- 10.The behavior of Marine Leisure tour guide employees instills confidence in the guests
- 11.You feel safe in your transaction with the Marine Leisure tour guide
- 12.The Marine Leisure tour guide seem to have enough knowledge to answer your inquiries
- 13.The Marine Leisure tour guide give your individual attention
- 14.The Marine Leisure tour guide demonstrate respect for the customer
- 15.The Marine Leisure tour guide demonstrate a knowledge of the area interest
- 16.Tour Marine Leisure tour guide appears to have a knowledge of first aid
- 17.The Marine Leisure tour guide tour guide is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign language
- 18.The Marine Leisure tour guide appeared to demonstrate good ethical behavior
- 19.The Marine Leisure tour guide accurately informed us about the area of interest
- 20.The Marine Leisure tour guide gave us the information and instructions to property us in case of an accident at sea
- 21.The Marine Leisure tour guide have a sense of humor

22.The Marine Leisure tour guide gave us the information and instructions to properly protect us in case of an accident on the sea

23.The Marine Leisure tour guide seemed well trained about his or her job

24.The Marine Leisure tour guide demonstrated good attention to detail during the trip

4.4 Importance of tour guides' service quality attribute and performance of tour guides in Andaman Cluster

IPA was applied to compare the importance of Marine leisure tour guides' service quality attributes and the performance of tour guides in Andaman Cluster as perceived by visitors, and to recommend proper allocation of resources to areas requiring future improvement. The mean scores and standard deviations of the perceived importance of the 24 service quality attributes and the performance of tour guides in Andaman Cluster were calculated (see Table 6). The results were plotted in the IPA grid (in Fig. 2). The grand means for importance and performance were used for the placement of the axes on the grid. As shown in Fig. 2. Seven attribute was identified in the Concentrate Here quadrant, seven in the Keep up the Good Work quadrant, six in the Low Priority quadrant and four in the Possible Overkill quadrant.

4.4.1 Concentrate here quadrant

The seven (29%) service quality attributes loaded in the concentrate here quadrant were "neat in appearance", "briefed on daily itinerary", "enough knowledge to answer inquiry", "respect the customer", "able to communicate in language", "informed and instructions properly in case of accident", and "well trained". It was rated above average for importance but below average on performance. It is suggested that improvement efforts and special attention should be directed at train skill For example, regarding language ability, If employee which involves with client are competent in a foreign language, they may be at an advantage for many posts. That we could do more to welcome tourists if staff across the leisure and hospitality industry had better language skills. Language skills can be an excellent way to get more noticed and working build a career. In Tour Company, to accompany client and ensure all arrangements throughout the trip run smoothly. Language skills would be useful when liaising with accommodation, attractions and excursions and knowledge of culture, Therefore, Concern should be raised and concentrated on tour guides' ability to speak in a language in order to handle and deal with situation and

information during tours, more language skill training courses should be provided to tour guides in order to improve their languages.

4.4.2 Keep up the good work quadrant

Among twenty-four tour guide's service quality factors, seven were identified in the *keep up the good work* quadrant. These were “informative is clear”, “show a sincere interest to solve a problem” “can tell exactly when service will be provided”, “responds to your request”, appears to have knowledge on first aid”, “inform us about areas of interest”, gave us information and instruction properly in case of accident on the sea”. These attributes were rated above average for both importance and performance. These results convey the message that in general, tour guides in Andaman Cluster have performed well in the above respects. As all the mean score ratings of performance were lower than those of the importance ratings, efforts should be made to maintain and improve quality services in these areas.

4.4.3 Low priority quadrant

The six (25%) service quality attributes loaded in the *low priority* quadrant were “punctual”, “friendly”, “pay attention to detail instill confident in the guest”, “feel safe in transaction”, “attention to details during the trip”, and “demonstrate to have a good ethical” They were rated as below average for both importance and performance. This implies that relatively fewer resources should be expended in this low priority cell. Although the performance of tour guides in Andaman Cluster was below average in this quadrant, efforts should not be overly concentrated on these areas, as attributes identified here are rated as low importance by respondents compared with other service quality attributes. However, this does not mean that the industry should reduce its efforts to improve on these aspects. In general, all these service quality attributes had mean scores over 4.12, indicating that respondents rated them as important to extremely important. In other words, poor performance on these areas would cause unhappy experiences and generate dissatisfaction.

4.4.4 Possible overkill quadrant

There was four attributes “provided clear information on safety regulations”, “give your individual attention”, “demonstrate are of interest”, “sense of humor” allocated to the *possible overkill* quadrant. This indicated that the attribute was rated as lower than the average of

importance, and that the performance of Andaman Cluster's marine leisure tour guides on this area was higher than the average. In fact, tourist visitors might consider this attribute as less important compared with other attributes. Good performance was observed from tour guides in Andaman Cluster in this area. Efforts should be towards maintaining high standards without over-utilizing resources in this area.

4.5 Statistical Analysis of Key Opinion Indicators

The results of statistical analysis are as follows:

4.5.1 Statistical Comparisons of Key Opinion Indicators between Age Groups

A comparison of mean scores among the groups of respondents identified the opinion level. The test result of One- Way ANOVA was used to indicate the significant difference between age groups and key indicators.

From the Table 3.4.1 we can see that the test age group of respondents who were Younger than 20 years old (mean score **4.43**), 20-29 years old (mean score **4.32**), 30-39 years old (mean score **4.45**), 40-49 years old (mean score **4.51**) and 50 years old and above had (**4.48** mean score) were "high" in terms of feeling: "The Marine Leisure tour guide gave us the information and instructions to property us in case of an accident at sea".

Interestingly, age groups 40-49 years old, the majority of respondents, had the highest "Excellent level" opinion for: "The Marine Leisure tour guide tour guide is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign language" (mean score **4.24**), "The Marine Leisure tour guide accurately informed us about the area of interest" (mean score **4.51**), "The Marine Leisure tour guide gave us the information and instructions to property us in case of an accident at sea" (mean score **4.40**) and "The Marine Leisure tour guide seemed well trained about his or her job" (mean score **4.25**).

The P-Values of only one indicators "The Marine Leisure tour guide seemed well trained about his or her job" were less 0.05. That shows there were statistically significant similarities among these five age groups.

Table 4.5 Statistical Comparisons of Key Opinion Indicators among Age Groups of the Respondents

No.	Indicator	Age Group (Mean value)					ANOVA	
		1	2	3	4	5	F-value	p-value
1	The Marine Leisure tourist guide have a neat in appearance	4.07	4.03	4.05	4.11	3.95	.258	.905
2	The Marine Leisure tourist guide re punctual	3.10	3.05	3.13	2.96	3.29	.618	.650
3	The Marine Leisure tourist guide was friendly	2.93	3.03	3.18	3.12	3.52	1.482	.207
4	The Marine Leisure tourist guide presentation was informative and clear	4.07	3.84	3.90	3.99	4.05	1.266	.283
5	The Marine Leisure tourist guide briefed us on daily itinerary	3.73	3.74	3.68	3.81	3.62	.512	.727
6	The Marine Leisure tourist guide provided clear information on safety regulations	2.97	3.22	3.21	3.03	3.33	.962	.428
7	If you had a problem, Marine Leisure tourist guide would show a sincere interest in solve it	4.00	3.90	3.91	3.92	4.00	.186	.946
8	Marine Leisure tourist guide can tell you exactly when a service will be provided	4.00	3.91	3.90	3.85	3.90	.231	.921
9	Marine Leisure tourist guide never too busy to respond to your request	4.07	4.10	3.99	4.11	4.00	.725	.575
10	The behavior of Marine Leisure tourist guide employees instills confidence in the guests	2.60	2.88	2.98	2.74	3.10	1.181	.318
11	You feel safe in your transaction with the Marine Leisure tourist guide	3.03	2.98	2.93	2.89	2.90	.126	.973

Table 4.5 Continue

No.	Indicator	Age Group (Mean value)					ANOVA	
		1	2	3	4	5	F-value	p-value
12	Marine Leisure tourist guide seem to have enough knowledge to answer your inquiries	4.03	3.84	3.89	3.88	3.52	2.014	.092
13	The Marine Leisure tourist guide give your individual attention	3.00	3.55	3.23	3.24	3.14	2.302	.058
14	The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrate respect for the customer	<u>4.23</u>	3.94	3.89	4.04	3.86	2.220	.066
15	The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrate a knowledge of the area interest	3.20	3.30	3.20	3.21	3.14	.157	.960
16	Tour Marine Leisure tourist guide appears to have a knowledge of first aid	4.10	3.94	4.01	4.12	4.00	1.090	.361
17	The Marine Leisure tourist guide tour guide is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign language	4.20	4.17	4.19	<u>4.24</u>	4.19	.145	.965
18	The Marine Leisure tourist guide appeared to demonstrate good ethical behavior	3.03	3.32	3.06	3.00	3.43	1.579	.179
19	The Marine Leisure tourist guide accurately informed us about the area of interest	<u>4.43</u>	<u>4.32</u>	<u>4.45</u>	<u>4.51</u>	<u>4.48</u>	1.427	.224
20	The Marine Leisure tourist guide gave us the information and instructions to property us in case of an accident at sea	<u>4.23</u>	<u>4.22</u>	<u>4.26</u>	<u>4.40</u>	<u>4.38</u>	1.170	.323
21	The Marine Leisure tourist guide have a sense of humor	2.77	2.83	2.97	2.93	3.05	.429	.788

Table 4.5 Continue

No.	Indicator	Age Group (Mean value)					ANOVA	
		1	2	3	4	5	F-value	p-value
22	The Marine Leisure tour guide tour guide gave us the information and instructions to properly protect us in case of an accident on the sea	3.67	3.82	3.93	4.07	4.05	2.250	.063
23	The Marine Leisure tour guide seemed well trained about his or her job	4.10	3.99	4.08	4.25	4.33	3.125	.015*
24	The Marine Leisure tour guide demonstrated good attention to detail during the trip	3.23	2.84	2.89	2.96	2.67	1.088	.362

Remarks: There were statistically significant differences between groups at

$p \leq 0.05$

1= Younger than 20 years old, 2= 20-29 years old, 3= 30-39 years old, 4= 40-49 years old and 5= 50 years old and above.

1: F -value = One-Way ANOVA (computed) value

2: p-value = Level of statistically significant

3: The “bolded” number showed highest mean value for each indicator among the groups, the “bolded underlined” numbers showed the indicator with the highest mean score and numbers showed “Excellent level”.

4.5.2 Statistical Comparisons of Key Opinion Indicators between marital status

A comparison of mean scores among the groups of respondents identified the opinion level. The test result of One- Way ANOVA was used to indicate the significant difference between marital status and key indicators.

From the Table 3.4.2 we can see that the test marital status of respondents who were Married (mean score 4.43), Unmarried (mean score 4.32) and Divorced had (4.48 mean score) were “high” in terms of feeling: “The Marine Leisure tour guide accurately informed us about the area of interest”.

Interestingly, marital status Divorced, the majority of respondents, had the highest “Excellent level” opinion for: “The Marine Leisure tour guide tour guide is able to communicate

well in English or other specific foreign language” (mean score 4.24), “The Marine Leisure tour guide accurately informed us about the area of interest” (mean score 4.57) and “The Marine Leisure tour guide gave us the information and instructions to property us in case of an accident at sea” (mean score 4.29).

The P-Values of only one indicators “The Marine Leisure tour guide re punctual” were less 0.05. That shows there were statistically significant similarities among these five age groups.

Table 4.6 Statistical Comparisons of Key Opinion Indicators among Marital status of the Respondents

No.	Indicator	Marital status (Mean value)			ANOVA	
		1	2	3	F-value	p-value
1	The Marine Leisure tourist guide have a neat in appearance	4.06	4.03	4.10	.085	.918
2	The Marine Leisure tourist guide re punctual	3.06	3.27	2.62	4.204	.016*
3	The Marine Leisure tourist guide was friendly	3.16	3.09	3.00	.387	.679
4	The Marine Leisure tourist guide presentation was informative and clear	3.92	3.89	4.14	1.455	.235
5	The Marine Leisure tourist guide briefed us on daily itinerary	3.72	3.69	3.76	.096	.909
6	The Marine Leisure tourist guide provided clear information on safety regulations	3.17	3.19	3.10	.071	.932
7	If you had a problem, Marine Leisure tourist guide would show a sincere interest in solve it	3.94	3.82	4.14	2.067	.128
8	Marine Leisure tourist guide can tell you exactly when a service will be provided	3.91	3.86	4.05	.565	.569
9	Marine Leisure tourist guide never too busy to respond to your request	4.02	4.08	4.14	.509	.602

Table 4.6 Continue

No.	Indicator	Marital status (Mean value)			ANOVA	
		1	2	3	F-value	p-value
10	The behavior of Marine Leisure tourist guide employees instills confidence in the guests	2.90	2.91	2.62	.588	.556
11	You feel safe in your transaction with the Marine Leisure tourist guide	2.94	3.02	2.67	.891	.411
12	Marine Leisure tourist guide seem to have enough knowledge to answer your inquiries	3.89	3.80	3.90	.583	.559
13	The Marine Leisure tourist guide give your individual attention	3.31	3.34	2.81	2.298	.102
14	The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrate respect for the customer	3.96	3.92	3.95	.094	.910
15	The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrate a knowledge of the area interest	3.21	3.26	3.19	.090	.914
16	Tour Marine Leisure tourist guide appears to have a knowledge of first aid	4.01	4.02	4.14	.468	.627
17	The Marine Leisure tourist guide tour guide is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign language	4.18	4.21	4.24	.133	.876
18	The Marine Leisure tourist guide appeared to demonstrate good ethical behavior	3.09	3.31	2.81	2.240	.108
19	The Marine Leisure tourist guide accurately informed us about the area of interest	4.43	4.40	4.57	.848	.429
20	The Marine Leisure tourist guide gave us the information and instructions to property us in case of an accident at sea	4.27	4.30	4.29	.047	.954
21	The Marine Leisure tourist guide have a sense of humor	2.89	3.03	2.86	.614	.542

Table 4.6 Continue

No.	Indicator	Marital status (Mean value)			ANOVA	
		1	2	3	F-value	p-value
22	The Marine Leisure tourist guide gave us the information and instructions to properly protect us in case of an accident on the sea	3.92	3.89	3.90	.073	.930
23	The Marine Leisure tourist guide seemed well trained about his or her job	4.09	4.11	4.19	.288	.750
24	The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrated good attention to detail during the trip	2.90	2.92	2.86	.034	.967

Remarks: There were statistically significant differences between groups at $p \leq 0.05$

1= Married, 2= Unmarried, 3= Divorced.

1: F -value = One-Way ANOVA (computed) value

2: p-value = Level of statistically significant

3: The “**bolded**” number showed highest mean value for each indicator among the groups, the “**bolded underlined**” numbers showed the indicator with the highest mean score and numbers showed “Excellent level”.

4.6 Statistical Comparisons of Key Opinion Indicators between occupation

A comparison of mean scores among the groups of respondents identified the opinion level. The test result of One- Way ANOVA was used to indicate the significant difference between occupation and key indicators.

From the Table 3.4.3 we can see that the test occupation of respondents who were Government (mean score 4.43), Entrepreneur (mean score 4.33) Employee (mean score 4.42), Housewife (mean score 4.51) Student (mean score 4.67) and Other had (4.36mean score) were “high” in terms of feeling: “The Marine Leisure tour guide accurately informed us about the area of interest”.

Interestingly, Other occupation, the majority of respondents, had the highest “Excellent level” opinion for: “The Marine Leisure tour guide have a neat in appearance” (mean score 4.36),

“Marine Leisure tour guide never too busy to respond to your request” (mean score 4.27) “The Marine Leisure tour guide tour guide is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign language” (mean score 4.45), “The Marine Leisure tour guide accurately informed us about the area of interest” (mean score 4.36)” “The Marine Leisure tour guide gave us the information and instructions to property us in case of an accident at sea” (mean score 4.36) “The Marine Leisure tour guide tour guide gave us the information and instructions to properly protect us in case of an accident on the sea” (mean score 4.27) and “The Marine Leisure tour guide seemed well trained about his or her job” (mean score 4.27).

The P-Values of 2 indicators “The Marine Leisure tour guide was friendly” and “The Marine Leisure tour guide accurately informed us about the area of interest” were less 0.05. That shows there were statistically significant similarities among these five age groups.

Table 4.7 Statistical Comparisons of Key Opinion Indicators among Occupation of the Respondents

No.	Indicator	Occupation (Mean value)						ANOVA	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	F-value	p-value
1	The Marine Leisure tourist guide have a neat in appearance	4.07	4.00	4.07	4.07	4.00	4.36	.637	.672
2	The Marine Leisure tourist guide re punctual	3.18	2.97	3.16	3.10	2.97	3.18	.611	.691
3	The Marine Leisure tourist guide was friendly	3.39	2.96	3.25	2.94	3.27	3.36	2.245	.049*
4	The Marine Leisure tourist guide presentation was informative and clear	3.96	3.90	3.88	3.99	4.12	3.73	1.272	.275
5	The Marine Leisure tourist guide briefed us on daily itinerary	3.82	3.65	3.73	3.80	3.61	3.73	.581	.714
6	The Marine Leisure tourist guide provided clear information on safety regulations	3.43	3.21	3.08	3.12	3.45	2.82	1.521	.182
7	If you had a problem, Marine Leisure tourist guide would show a sincere interest in solve it	3.86	3.82	3.95	4.00	3.97	4.00	.792	.556
8	Marine Leisure tourist guide can tell you exactly when a service will be provided	3.68	3.78	3.95	4.04	3.91	4.18	2.051	.071
9	Marine Leisure tourist guide never too busy to respond to your request	4.04	3.95	4.04	4.12	4.12	4.27	.990	.423
10	The behavior of Marine Leisure tourist guide employees instills confidence in the guests	3.04	2.77	2.95	2.84	2.91	3.18	.552	.737
11	You feel safe in your transaction with the Marine Leisure tourist guide	2.71	2.87	3.00	2.94	3.09	3.00	.537	.748
12	Marine Leisure tourist guide seem to have enough knowledge to answer your inquiries	2.71	2.87	3.00	2.94	3.09	3.00	.288	.920

Table 4.7 Continue

No.	Indicator	Occupation (Mean value)						ANOVA	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	F-value	p-value
13	The Marine Leisure tourist guide give your individual attention	3.57	3.41	3.25	3.13	3.24	3.00	1.207	.305
14	The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrate respect for the customer	4.04	3.80	3.97	4.04	4.06	4.00	1.587	.163
15	The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrate a knowledge of the area interest	3.11	3.10	3.28	3.20	3.21	3.91	1.197	.310
16	Tour Marine Leisure tourist guide appears to have a knowledge of first aid	4.07	3.95	3.97	4.10	4.18	4.18	1.337	.248
17	The Marine Leisure tourist guide tour guide is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign language	4.29	4.13	4.18	4.20	4.27	4.45	1.002	.416
18	The Marine Leisure tourist guide appeared to demonstrate good ethical behavior	3.43	3.07	3.14	3.06	3.21	2.91	.647	.664
19	The Marine Leisure tourist guide accurately informed us about the area of interest	4.43	4.33	4.42	4.51	4.67	4.36	2.257	.048*
20	The Marine Leisure tourist guide gave us the information and instructions to property us in case of an accident at sea	4.36	4.16	4.26	4.39	4.42	4.36	1.818	.108
21	The Marine Leisure tourist guide have a sense of humor	3.14	2.72	2.91	2.99	3.30	2.73	1.760	.120
22	The Marine Leisure tourist guide gave us the information and instructions to properly protect us in case of an accident on the sea	3.89	3.79	3.91	4.04	3.97	4.27	1.655	.144

Table 4.7 Continue

No.	Indicator	Occupation (Mean value)						ANOVA	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	F-value	p-value
23	The Marine Leisure tourist guide seemed well trained about his or her job	4.11	4.04	4.09	4.19	4.15	4.27	.856	.511
24	The Marine Leisure tourist guide demonstrated good attention to detail during the trip	2.75	2.78	3.11	2.71	2.91	2.91	2.016	.075

Remarks: There were statistically significant differences between groups at $p \leq 0.05$

1= Government, 2= Entrepreneur, 3= Employee, 4= Housewife, 5= Student, 6= Other.

1: F -value = One-Way ANOVA (computed) value

2: p-value = Level of statistically significant

3: The “**bolded**” number showed highest mean value for each indicator among the groups, the “**bolded underlined**” numbers showed the indicator with the highest mean score and numbers showed “Excellent level”

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to define service quality for water based tourism organizations in Andaman Cluster and suggest ways to apply processes to improve the performance of service providers in the regional water based tourism market and improve overall consumer satisfaction. 1) To assess the quality of service performed by Coastal guides in the Andaman Cluster. 2) To examine the impact of demographics in term of nationality, gender etc. to water-based tourism in the Andaman Cluster 3) To identify the critical issues affecting service quality for coastal guides in the water base tourism market in the Andaman Cluster

5.1 Conclusion

Four hundred questionnaires were administered to collect primary quantitative data. The data collection items included: age group, marital status, Occupation, Country of residence, and was this your First trip to Thailand. SPSS version 15.0 was applied to analyze collected data. The frequencies, percentage, means, standard deviation, one-way ANOVA and independent samples T-test. A Likert scale at 1 to 5 was used to assess the level of population opinions in all sets of questionnaires.

5.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The finding of demographic characteristics of respondents was as follows: The majority of respondents were in the age range of 30-39 years old (45.8%). The majority of respondents were in the married group. There were (72.0%) married. The majority of respondents (38.0%) were employed. The majority of respondents (15.2) were from the Australia.

5.1.2 Research Specific Information.

The majority of respondents spent an average holiday of 2 -3 weeks (48.0%). All of the respondents (100.0% or 400) have participated in Marine Leisure activities during their trip. The majority of respondents demonstrated an Average level of satisfaction with these activities (41.2%). The majority of respondents' perceived a Fair level of service and professionalism of Marine leisure tourist guides in Marine Leisure in the region (51.0%). The majority of

respondents stated that Marine activities were a factor in choosing The Andaman region for their holiday (71.5%), The majority of respondents spent more than 50 % of their holiday budget (24.2%), all of the respondents plan to return to the Region again, in the future (100%).

5.1.3 Marine Leisure Tourist guide service performance

Important Level of Marine Leisure Tourist guide, the 3 indicators that were reassuringly related by respondents as being at Important levels were: “Marine Leisure tour guides are never too busy to respond to your request”. “The Marine Leisure tour guides are punctual”. And “The Marine Leisure tour guides have a neat appearance”.

Most tellingly, there were 22 indicators related at the extremely important level: “Marine Leisure tourist guides can tell you exactly when a service will be provided”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides gave us the information and instructions to properly assist us in case of an accident at sea”, “Marine Leisure tourist guides were never too busy to respond to your request”, “If you had a problem, Marine Leisure tourist guides would show a sincere interest in solve it”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides provided clear information on safety regulations”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides accurately informed us about the area of interest”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides presentation was informative and clear”), “The Marine Leisure tourist guides seemed well trained about his or her job”, Marine Leisure tourist guides appears to have a knowledge of first aid”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides appeared to demonstrate good ethical behavior”, “You feel safe in your transaction with the Marine Leisure tourist guides”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides was friendly”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides briefed us on our daily itinerary”, “The behavior of Marine Leisure tourist guides employees instills confidence in the guests”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides demonstrated good attention to detail during the trip”, “Marine Leisure tourist guides seemed to possess enough knowledge to answer your inquiries”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides seemed well trained about his or her job”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides demonstrate respect for the customer” and “The Marine Leisure tourist guides is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign languages”.

5.1.4 Perceived Service of Marine Leisure tourist guides, the 2 indicator that was related constantly at excellent levels was: “The Marine Leisure tourist guides accurately informed us about the area of interest”. And “The Marine Leisure tourist guides gave us the information and instructions to properly assist us in case of an accident at sea”.

There were 12 indicators at the good level: “The Marine Leisure tourist guides is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign languages”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides seemed well trained about his or her job”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides have a neat appearance”, “Marine Leisure tourist guides were never too busy to respond to your request”, Marine Leisure tourist guides appears to have a knowledge of first aid”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides demonstrated respect for the customer”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides presentation was informative and clear”, “If you had a problem, the Marine Leisure tourist guides would show a sincere interest in solving it”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides gave us the information and instructions to properly protect us in case of an accident on the sea”, “Marine Leisure tourist guides can tell you exactly when a service will be provided”, “Marine Leisure tourist guides seem to have enough knowledge to answer your inquiries” and “The Marine Leisure tourist guides briefed us on our daily itinerary” There were 10 indicators at fair levels: “The Marine Leisure tourist guides gave us individual attention”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides demonstrated a knowledge of the area of interest”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides provided clear information on safety regulations”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides was friendly”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides appeared to demonstrate good ethical behavior”, “The Marine Leisure tour guides are punctual”, “You feel safe in your transaction with the Marine Leisure tourist guides”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides seemed well trained about his or her job”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides demonstrated good attention to detail during the trip” and “The behavior of Marine Leisure tourist guides employees instills confidence in the guests”.

5.1.5 Statistical Analysis

Statistical comparisons of key indicators between and among the various demographic characteristics were as follows:

A comparison of mean scores among the groups of respondents identified opinion levels. The test result of One- Way ANOVA was used to indicate the significant difference between age groups and key indicators.

Interestingly, the majority of respondents in the 30-39 year old age group, had the highest “Excellent level” opinion for: “The Marine Leisure tourist guides is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign languages”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides

accurately informed us about the area of interest”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides gave us the information and instructions to properly assist us in case of an accident at sea” and “The Marine Leisure tourist guides seemed well trained about his or her job”. The P-Values of only one indicators “The Marine Leisure tour guide seemed well trained about his or her job” were less 0.05.

For test marital status respondents in the marital status Divorced category, had the highest “Excellent level” opinion for: “The Marine Leisure tourist guides is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign languages”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides accurately informed us about the area of interest” and “The Marine Leisure tourist guides gave us the information and instructions to properly assist us in case of an accident at sea”.

The P-Values of only one indicators “The Marine Leisure tourist guides are punctual” were less 0.05. For test occupation, Interestingly, Other occupation, the majority of respondents, had the highest “Excellent level” opinion for: “The Marine Leisure tourist guides have a neat appearance”, “Marine Leisure tourist guides are never too busy to respond to your request” “The Marine Leisure tourist guides tour is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign languages”, “The Marine Leisure tourist guides accurately informed us about the area of interest” “The Marine Leisure tourist guides gave us the information and instructions to properly assist us in case of an accident at sea” “The Marine Leisure tourist guides gave us the information and instructions to properly protect us in case of an accident on the sea” and “The Marine Leisure tourist guides seemed well trained about his or her job”. The P-Values of 2 indicators “The Marine Leisure tourist guide was friendly” and “The Marine Leisure tourist guide accurately informed us about the area of interest” were less 0.05. That shows there were statistically significant similarities among these five age groups.

5.2 Discussion

The purpose of this study is to define service quality for water- based tourism organizations in Andaman Cluster and suggest ways to apply processes to improve the performance of service providers in the region. This section involved a summary of critical findings of the study. The findings are discussed based on the objectives of the study.

5.2.1 To assess the quality of service performed by Marine leisure tourist guides in the Andaman Cluster

The inherent intangibility of services in general increases the importance of consumer perception as the product is perception in many senses. In many ways the only product taken home by consumers is the positive or negative feelings associated with services provided. This fact, which is well documented in many other studies, demonstrates why service quality is such an important area of focus. The study illustrated the majority of respondents perceived that the level of service and professionalism demonstrated by Marine Leisure tourist guides in the region was “Fair”. The majority of respondents showed an average level of satisfaction with these activities of (41.2%), In water-based tourism, which holds a lot of benefits for the marine environment, coral reefs, and for tourist destinations worldwide, this suggests that managers should attempt to develop processes that can help to evaluate current services from their customers’ perspectives. Providing experiences tailored to the needs of a specific niche market is extremely important for customer perceptions of satisfaction and also customer retention (Rust & Oliver, 1994). All relevant research suggests that consumer perceptions of service quality and guest satisfaction are the main generators of repurchase behavior among all customers, in every industry. The inherent intangibility of services increases the importance of service quality even more.

This study identified 24 pertinent attributes associated with service quality specifically for the Marine leisure tourist guides. The IPA model was used to compare them according to their perceived importance. The goal was to measure the performance of local guides from the perspective of visitors to the region. This study demonstrated that local guides in the marine tourism industry performed very well in some of the specific areas of interest. These areas included presenting an ‘informative and clear picture for guests’, “ brief on itinerary”, ‘demonstrating a sincere interest in solving client issues and concerns’, “making time to respond to requests”, “knowledge of crucial information such as first aid”, and “performing under stress such as an accident at sea”. It is self evident that stakeholders should work to maintain high standards in these areas in order to keep a competitive advantage, and increase repurchases activity and customer loyalty.

The results generally support positive relationships among service quality, satisfaction and revisit intention. However, the specific dimensions of service quality used in this study Parasuraman et al., (1988) showed different impacts on satisfaction and behavioral intention based on gender. With regard to the relationships between service quality and satisfaction, Empathy was found to be the most important factor in predicting customer satisfaction, for both male and female segments. In addition, the other four dimensions were found to play significant roles in predicting satisfaction except in one case (i.e., Assurance for female). This finding is consistent with the current literature that emphasized the quality of interaction where employee's knowledge, attitude and behavior are highlighted. Brady and Cronin, (2001), Zeithaml et al., (2006) Ko and Pastore, (2005). For example, prior research in the marketing literature suggested that reliability has been the most important determinant of customer satisfaction and repurchase intention Kotler, (2003), Murray and Howat, (2002), Patterson and Spreng, (1997) and Theodorakis et al., (2001).

The result of regression analysis also supports that service quality perceptions are associated with behavioral intention. In particular, study found that Tangibles are the most important factor of service quality in predicting future behavioral intention for both male and female. Tangibles refer to appearance of facilities, equipment, and written materials Zeithaml et al., (2006). Current service marketing literature highlights the importance of tangibles (e.g., providing comfortable, clean, and readily accessible facilities and equipment) in the process of service delivery and consumption evaluation Bitner, (1992), Kim and Lough, (2007), Ko and Pastore, (2005), Snipes et al., (2006) and Zeithaml et al., (2006). Interestingly, Tangibles were more important for females than their male counterparts. The results also suggest that the dimension of Empathy such as "neat in appearance" was identified to be the most significant predictor of important in perception among tourists. These findings may also provide possibilities for marketing specifically to male and female consumers through a service quality strategy as discussed in this section.

This study also demonstrated that outside of some key service areas, where guides performed very well, the overall perceptions of service quality from most respondents was fair. Most consumers rated the average service quality satisfaction levels at 42% this shows that the stakeholders should also concentrate on these areas. It would suggest that companies may put

themselves in danger of losing a competitive advantage if they ignore or are ignorant of these results. The inherent intangibility of services in general increases the importance of consumer perception as the product is perception in many senses. In many ways the only product taken home by consumers is the positive or negative feelings associated with services provided.

In Addition , the results indicated that 22 of 24 service quality attributes were related at Excellent levels: this means the consumer related all services to be very important to them (m=4.21-4.82) it means guests rated almost every pertinent is extremely important and at the same time, tourist guides performed their services lower than their expectations the third fair low in the areas of The Marine Leisure tour guide “seemed well trained about his or her job” (M= 2.92), “demonstrated good attention to detail during the trip” (M= 2.91) “The behavior of tour guide instills confidence in the guests”(M=2.89) Stakeholders should be aware of these attributes. Kelly and Turley (2001) inferred that uncovering how customers perceive their service experience with an organization has always been, and will continue to be important to, the success of service organizations. Howat et al., (1999), Ko and Pastore, (2005) and Petrick, (2004) Found competent tour guides in the areas of behavioral, cognitive, and affective skills must be empathetic, non-judgmental, and sensitive to others’ needs in order to increase visitors’ satisfaction. The experienced tour guides could be invited to share their experiences on how to deal with different emergency situations.

Increasingly, the IPA grid illustrates that on 4 quadrants the marine leisure tourIST guideS performed well in seven pertinent areas of interest “keep up good work” was commonly related on our survey. Research would suggest that like in most other industries, “ knowledge is power”, the more prepared a management team can be in terms of understanding the needs of consumers, the more likely that organization is to provide quality service. Perceiving consumer satisfaction at the point of sale and during service processes is crucial.

In contrast, seven important attributes were identified in the “Concentrate Here Quadrant”. Most of these attributes were related to dimensions of Empathy and Assurance , The Marine Leisure tour guide “must have a neat appearance” The Marine Leisure tour guide ‘briefed us on our daily itinerary” Marine Leisure tour guides “seemed to have enough knowledge to answer your inquiries’ The Marine Leisure tour guide “demonstrates respect for the customer”, The Marine Leisure tour guide tour guide “is able to communicate well in English or

other specific foreign languages”, The Marine Leisure tour guide tour guide “gave us the information and instructions to properly protect us in case of an accident on the sea”, The Marine leisure tourist guide ‘seemed well trained about his or her job’. Kelly and Turkey, (2001) inferred that uncovering how customers perceive their service experience with an organization has always been, and will continue to be important to, the success of service organizations. The increasing number of publications devoted to such topics as service quality and satisfaction research represents the increased importance of service marketing and management Howat et al., (1999), Ko and Pastore, (2005) and Petrick, (2004

In summary this study was an attempt to identify the most pertinent and important areas of interest for the improvement of service quality and to investigate the most critical issues affecting stakeholders in the industry in regards to service quality standards. The study may be of some additional importance as it helps to identify the 4 quadrants of tour guide attributes and , importantly the most important service quality factors in relation to consumer satisfaction and repurchase activity. Additionally the interesting avenue of study related to gender differences in service quality perceptions that were uncovered in this study may help to contribute to further avenues of study and later to developing systems and practices that may tangibly improve services across many industries in the future. others’ needs in order to increase visitors’ satisfaction.

5.2.2 To examine the impact of demographics in term of nationality, gender to water base tourism in Andaman Cluster.

The comparison of the mean score among groups of respondent who were younger than 20 give a rate lowest (M=4.43) where as 50 years old give a highest score (M=4.48) in terms of different opinion in service attributes. Interestingly, age groups 40-49 years old, the majority of respondents, the highest “Excellent level” opinion “able to communicate well in English or other” (M= 4.24), “The Marine Leisure tour guide gave us the information and instructions to properly assist us in case of an accident at sea” (M= 4.51) In addition, The majority in the age range of 30-39 years old (45.8%) were of the opinion that on the service performed by marine leisure tour guide “ fair” level of service quality by the tour guide

The study showed that there were four demographic factors that influenced perceptions of service quality. Any organization that wishes to improve or retain consistent service quality

standards must be aware of consumer demographics, and the role they may play on customer expectations. Tan and Kek, (2004). Snipes et al, (2004), suggested that one demographic factor in particular that has been measured has clearly uncovered this fact. In their research, and the research of several other parties, According to Van Der Wagen (1994, p.4), individual “customers have many different perceptions which are influence by their education , upbringing, experience and many other factor standards of the organizations were geared towards male clientele or processes were designed with a certain bias. A good example was related in the research of Gronroos, (1990). One demographic group may assess the service attitudes of a resort employee asking relatively personal questions in order to make conversation with guests as “friendly”, while another demographic group may regard the same employee as “to intrusive”

5.2.3 To identify the critical issues affecting the service quality for Marine leisure tourist guides in the water-based tourism in Andaman Cluster.

The findings reveal the fact that Marine leisure tourist guides must focus on some attributes that were illustrated as areas of Tangibility such as “being neat in appearance “, In hospitality, appearance is important. How you look reflects on the brand. Appearance and initial impressions influence consumer’s perceptions of you and whether they believe you to be credible, intelligent and professional. Hence, there are some simple rules to remember about presentation. Always have your clothes or uniform clean and neatly pressed. Also staff should demonstrate a winning personality, be well dressed and neat. Individuals who dress well suggest power and status; therefore, the first impression is only part of creating a positive relationship between the company and the customers. According to Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (1998 & 1994), front office staff must present an impeccable outward appearance to customers. The study also illustrated other pertinent areas on the IPA grid were related to dimension of “Empathy” which represents a provision of caring, individualized attention to customers (includes access, communication and understanding the customer), communication, there were a few areas of increased concern for consumers. “briefed us on daily itinerary”, “gave us information and instructions that could properly assist us in case of an accident at sea”, “able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign language” “seemed well trained about his or her job” appeared in the Concentrate Here Quadrant“ This suggests that managerial efforts should be concentrated on raising and improving tour guides’ ability to these areas. Since education and training are

important for maintaining a competitive advantage White & Williams, (2000), training courses focusing on trouble shooting skills could be tailor-made for the marine Leisure tour guides. Moreover, professional and experienced tour guides could be invited to share their experiences on how to deal with different emergency situations. For long-term strategy, more effort should also be devoted to English language training for potential tour guides. The findings also reveal the fact that local Marine tour guides “seem to have enough knowledge to answer inquiries”, Research would suggest that like in most other industries, “knowledge is power”, the more prepared a management team can be in terms of understanding the needs of consumers, the more likely that organization is to provide quality service. Perceiving consumer satisfaction at the point of sale and during service processes is crucial. This can be related to most industries and products.

Previous studies also shed light on this fact, Phenphun (2003) studied International tourist satisfaction with the quality of service in accommodations in Thailand and the factors related to satisfaction, problems and the requirements of international tourists. The research revealed the satisfaction of international tourists towards quality of service was at a high level. However, the most common problems were lack of employee knowledge and foreign language skills, therefore, tourists suggested language and convenient facility improvement. Therefore, Government policy suggests that the TAT and related organizations should create and develop a curriculum and training. Accordingly, they also have to focus on language skills. The increasing number of publications devoted to such topics as service quality and satisfaction research represents the increased importance of service marketing and management Howat et al., (1999, Ko and Pastore, (2005) and Petrick, (2004). For the same reason, Cristopher (2009) and Robert , (2000) emphasized that foreign language is an important vehicle for communicating important culture elements. Evidence from the study confirmed that good product knowledge, good communication skills, and the right attitude with respect to service are considered important attributes for a professional tour guide Chang & Chow, (2001). Based on the findings, this study suggests that customer orientation versus money orientation and altruistic orientation versus self-interest orientation are all equally important constructs in understanding the role conflict faced by tour guides. Ap and Wong (2001) found that the professionalism of tour guides is reflected in their attitude towards the job. Human resources managers should recognize that their behavior often speaks more loudly than the philosophy expressed in their organization’s mission statement,

code of ethics should play an important role in hospitality. Organizations typically develop codes of ethics. An important step before launching tour programs, or any product, is acquiring product knowledge. A tour guide must be fully aware of every aspect of products and service features. A customer loses interest if the tour guide is unable to supply accurate information. Misleading guests is also wrong and can be dangerous. Tour guides must constantly update themselves on products and services to be more effective. Sudhai Andrews, (2007)

According to Heung (2008), “core service delivery” is one of the critical dimensions in assessing the service quality of guides. As such, tourists should expect the tour guide to effectively perform his/her “core” roles and services, such as being the “interpreter,” “information-giver,” “caretaker,” and “leader” Ap and Wong, (2001) , Cohen, (1985) , Holloway, (1981) and Zhang and Chow, (2004). A conceptual model has been developed to illustrate this potential role conflict, Four major roles of the tour guide are depicted in the proposed conceptual model: (1) professional guide role, (2) ambassador role, (3) employee role, and (4) entrepreneur role. It is important to note that the roles depicted are not exhaustive, but they have been specially selected to illustrate the potential role conflicts faced by the tour guiding profession. First, the professional guide role refers to the essential functions of a tour guide (e.g., providing commentaries, information, and interpretation) (Cohen, 1985). The role has a greater proportion of altruistic orientation than self-interest orientation as altruistic orientation is one of the essential attributes of professionalism (Barber, 1963). Although the professional guide role bears a certain amount of customer orientation (Ap & Wong, 2001), it also has a money orientation as professionalism of tour guides is circumscribed by the need to receive monetary rewards for their professional services (Barber, 1963). Second, the ambassador role relates to a tour guide’s function as an ambassador entrusted with the public relations mission to encapsulate the essence of a place and serve as the window to the destination Holloway, (1981) and Pond, (1993). Hence, the role lies largely on the intersection of altruistic and customer orientation, typifying the need to have empathy for the tourists, as well as a primary orientation to the host community’s interests Holloway, (1981). Third, the employee role refers to the fact that a tour guide is most often an employee of a tour operator, thus functioning as a spokesperson representing the image and reputation of the company and also the salesperson selling the next tour Chang, (2006) , Fine and Speer, (1985) and Grönroos, (1978). This role situates mostly on the customer orientation

and self-interest orientation, reflecting the obligation to fulfill the company's interest and also tourguides' concern for their self-interests as employees. Finally, the entrepreneur role relates to a tourguide's need to make encounters with tourists profitable Mak et al., 2010 and Steege et al., (1999). The role inherently bears the largest proportion of money orientation compared to other roles Long, (1983), and also a fair share of self-interest orientation.

In a recent study, Heung (2008) suggests that the service quality of a tour guide can be evaluated through three main constructs: (1) core service delivery, (2) customer orientation, and (3) communication effectiveness. He further explicates that core service refers to the essence of a tour guide's service, which the guide must deliver with consistency (e.g., follows the agreed itinerary of the tour, and ensures that transportation, accommodation, dining and tour activities are arranged smoothly and safely). Customer orientation reflects the extent the guide puts tourists' needs and interests ahead of his or her own in providing superior value to tourists (e.g., assures customer satisfaction during the journey, focuses on what is valuable to the tourists and does as much as possible for them, and does not adopt a "hard" selling approach to tourists). Communication involves the exchange of information (e.g., communicates the itinerary of the trip to tourists, provides interpretation of attractions, and handles tourists' inquiries) which is another crucial function of the tour guide. Heung's (2008) notion encompasses critical service dimensions for understanding and assessing the service quality in tour guiding.

5. 3 Recommendations

From the result of the study the marine leisure tour guide they were some areas of concern for guests that the results of the IPA seem to bear out negatively, for instance the guests found these areas important but the Marine leisure tour guides were below acceptable standards were as follows; ."neatness of appearance", "satisfactorily briefing us on the itinerary", "possessing enough knowledge to answer inquiries", "demonstrating respect towards the customer", "the ability to communicate in English or other specific languages", "providing information and instruction properly in case of accident in the sea", "seem well trained overall about her or his job" Based on the results, summery, and discussion, the recommendations from these findings to tourism stake holders in the Andaman Cluster are as follows:

5.3.1 The Marine leisure tour guide:

The results show that the marine leisure tour guide in the Andaman Cluster on the average, were not “neat in appearance, therefore first impressions are lasting impressions seems equally true among tourism and hospitality facilities. Upon entering the grounds of hotel, lobby before the tour starts, prior or during minibus pick up, transportation, or other tourist facilities, consumers may develop their first impressions. When the guest first arrives, the service provider has the opportunity to interact face-to-face with the guest. Because guests experience service and facilities in a variety of ways and because many guests feel that any contact with employees is a service experience, all employees must be considered as part of the service equation. As guest arrives, they typically anticipate a most pleasant experience after all, that why they spend more than a little time in planning their travel or recreation. Guests expect their first encounter with the service provider to be consistent with their expectations. Efficient service at the point of entry or check-in must be consistent with guest expectations. Clients are becoming increasingly sophisticated. Many contemporary service firms now seek a competitive advantage by relying upon their employees to satisfy and delight clients. A key area attracting recent attention is that of the “service encounter” and where appropriate, the service “relationships”. There is now increased awareness that front-line staff may define the service product and impart an initial and long-lasting quality impression of the organization upon consumers.

An important feature of services, is that providers and consumers cannot be separated during delivery. Encounters and relationships have therefore become important issues for researchers and practitioners to understand and manage. ‘Learning organizations, now more than ever, recognize the importance of the “ambassadorial” role of their front-line workers and view them as assets rather than costs. Relying upon their staff to help effective product differentiation. therefore applying consistency to their changes and remaining focused on evolving evenly. For many of the businesses in the industry, Marine leisure tour guides were the one facet of their business that they shared with all of their competitors’ and were a constant throughout the entire market. The research would suggest that focusing on the service provided by licensed guides would be the best and most effective course of action. In business trust is viewed as one of the most relevant antecedents of stable and collaborative relationships. Researchers have established that trust is essential for building and maintaining long-term

relationships, the research stated that trust exists only when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity. While defining trust, Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman (1993) referred to the willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence advocated that trust is fundamental in developing customer. According to Lau and Lee (1999), if one party trusts another party that eventually engenders positive behavioral intentions towards the second party. From Anderson and Narus (1990) it can be safely deduced that if one party believes that the actions of the other party will bring positive outcomes to the first party, trust can be developed. Doney and Cannon (1997) added that the concerned party also must have the ability to continue to meet its obligations towards its customers within the cost-benefits relationship; so, the customer should not only foresee the positive outcomes but also believe that these positive outcomes will continue in the future.

However, in a market with suitable alternatives lack of trust might lead to negative loyalty. Therefore, Trust has a positive effect on customer loyalty. Trust must be fostered between clients and frontline staff to positively affect customer loyalty and repurchase behavior.

5.3.2 Government and related stakeholders

Government actors and other powerful stakeholders in the Thailand tourism industry also have to recognize practices affecting company images, affect the image of Thailand as a whole. Thus, regulation and licensing on both inbound tour operators and tour guides should be accelerated in order to upgrade professional service standards before it is too late. In addition, a licensing system similar to that of outbound tour escorts by the Travel industry council in Thailand, could be introduced for tour guides locally. All the tour guides would have to attend specific training courses and pass examinations before they could be granted guide passes or certificates. Inbound tour operators would be allowed to recruit licensed or registered tour guides only. In this way, acceptable service standards could be guaranteed. Furthermore, the institutes of Thailand Tourism should play a more active role in training, licensing and monitoring the inbound service. More urgently and importantly, a monitoring system should be in place to measure and monitor both tour operators and tour guides to ensure their qualifications and professionalism.

5.3.2.1 University and vocational training bodies

This study suggests that managerial efforts should be concentrated on raising and improving tour guides' ability to problem shoot and deal with challenges. Since education and training are important for maintaining a competitive advantage, training courses emphasizing problem-solving techniques could be tailor-made for local tour guides. Moreover, professional and experienced tour guides could be invited to share their experiences on how to deal with different emergency situations. For long-term strategy, more effort should also be devoted to language training for potential tour guides.

5.3.2.2 Managerial and business owner

Managing the customer interface is notoriously problematic because there is no easy or direct way of controlling what workers say and do. The ubiquitous managers is also something that both impractical and undesirable in busy service organization both from the employee and customer perspectives. Often the best manager can do is to try and influence service encounters indirectly by focusing on broader issues such as organizational culture, system design, selection and training. This is problematic because it fails to address specific scenarios encountered in everyday dealings between frontline staff and guests. They may also influence the performance of front-line employees by developing and maintaining a culture of support, an appropriate service delivery system and provide adequate training. However, the mix of variables is complex and failure at any point usually results in poor service quality.

Service firms can obtain information through research on service quality. Research facilitates inflow of required information from internal as well as external sources and may provide the right information in the right form at the right time to the right managers. With the support research, the management can take better decisions related to quality. Service companies use several approaches to ensure the inflow of information. Regulars customer surveys: Customer surveys on regular service quality is a useful approach for service firms. It provides customer feedback on various quality parameters and on innovations, In the case of business customers, a census study may be sufficient useful information can be obtained for the benefit of the organization. Use of consumer panels: consumer panels comprise selected customers and specific feedback that is solicited from them. The panels are also given the freedom to suggest various issues to the organization for future improvement in service quality. Transaction analysis:

Service organizations usually encounter grievous customers. The employee involved in the encounter should handle the aggrieved customer with care, concern and empathy. Transactional analysis is a technical approach that helps to identify the real reason for dissatisfaction. Transaction analysis is also used to obtain valuable suggestions from customers. Generally, the grievous customer puts forward the real inner feelings and dissatisfaction that accurate due to minor deficiencies in service, which might not have been noticed by the service organization. It is certainly an opportunity for service firms to broaden their understanding on customer perception of service quality.

The firms need to select the appropriate approach in order to suit in the organization Quality is the key element in the service business. The quality of services perceived during buyer seller interactions. Employer-customer interactions at service encounters need to be managed efficiently. Customers who participated in the service production process greatly influence service quality. Total Quality management is essentially a systemic perspective whereby organizations and process are viewed holistically on service delivery, in addition, customers are sovereign and employees are empowered, enjoying increased autonomy. Encounters are the essence of the service experience because they create an initial impression of the organization. In addition, this impression is likely to remain with the customer and influence subsequent dialoged with staff, ironically, the service encounter is also the point at which managers lose direct control over employee performance. In addition to other indirect encounter management techniques, it would seem reasonable for employees to implement quality assurance by ensuring there is optimum “fit” between service jobs and front-line workers, in other word, potential problems could be prevented to the employee selection stage by the interviewer concentrating on worker attitudes (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998; Singh & Sirdeshmukh 2000).

Human resources managers should recognize that their behavior often speaks more loudly than the philosophy expressed in their organization’s mission statement, code of ethic should play the important role in hospitality organizations typically develop codes of ecthic ... the important step before launch tour program is acquiring product knowledge. A tour guide must be fully aware of every aspect of products and service features. A customer loses interest if the tour guide is unable to supply accurate information. Misleading a guest is also wrong. Tour guide

must be constantly update themselves on product and service to be more effective. Sudhai Andrews, (2007)

5.4. Recommendation for future study

1. Researchers should examine in depth details for each item and also examine other factors of service quality.

2. Further study should be undertaken to apply the results of this study, research could be broadened to include other water-based in tourists locations as Thailand has many place for travelling to such as Trang, Pattaya, Samui Island for example, The Researches should investigates factors in those Ares that can be key success factors for tourist in order to make tourist fell impress and willing to comeback

3. If further research can be applied to improve the marine tourism and other relevant industries it may affect the entire economy of the region, improving standards and affecting the quality of living for many stakeholders and local people.

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Appendix



Questionnaire

Critical Issues Affecting Service Quality in Water Base Tourism Operator : A Case Study of Coastal Tour Guide in Andaman Cluster, Thailand

I am an MBA student in Hospitality and Tourism Management (International Program), Faculty of Service Industry at Prince of Songkhla University, Phuket Campus. This questionnaire has been designed for my MBA thesis research which will be used for academic purposes as well as a tool to improve hospitality service quality and development in Thailand. I would deeply appreciate it if you could spare a few minutes of your valuable time to participate in this survey.

Thank you very much for your participation.

Phimnada Fowler

Researcher

Part 1: Personal Demographic Information

Please write down your answer or check the which corresponds with your answer.

1) Age :

1) Younger than 20

2) 20-29

3) 30-39

4) 40-49

5) 50 +

2) Marital Status:

1) Married

2) Unmarried

3) Divorced

3) Current Occupation:

- 1) Government 2) Entrepreneur 3) Employee
 4) Housewife 5) Student
 6) Other (Please Specify)

4) Country of residence:

5) Is this your first trip to Thailand?

- 1) Yes 2) No

Part 2: Research Specific Information

6) How much of your holiday will be spent in the Andaman region?

- 1) 1 day-6 days 2) 1 week or less
 3) 2 -3 weeks 4) 3 weeks - 1 months
 5) 1 -2 months 6) 2 - 3 months
 7) 3 months or more

7) Have you participated in any Marine Leisure activities during your Trip?

- 1) Yes 2) No

8) If So, Please specify which activities you have participate in _____

9) How would you rate your overall level of satisfaction with these activities?

- 1) Very Satisfied 2) Satisfied 3) Average
 4) Not Satisfied 5) Not at all satisfied

10) How would you rate the level of overall service and professionalism of Coastal Tourist

Guide in Marine Leisure in the region?

- 1) Excellent 2) Good 3) Fair
 4) Below Average 5) Poor

11) Were Marine activities a factor in choosing The Andaman region for your holiday?

- 1) Yes 2) No

12) Approximately what percentage of your holiday budget will be allocated for marine leisure activities?

- 1) None 2) Less than 10 % 3) 11-20% 4) 21-30%
 5) 31-40 % 6) 41-50 % 7) More than 50 %

13) Do you plan to return to the Region again in the future?

- 1) Yes 2) No

Part 3) Please rate the following important measures in the box regards to Marine Leisure Tourist guide performed on service :

- **Important Level Score :** 5=Extremely important 4 = Important 3= Neutra 2= Not so important 1= Extremely unimportant
- **Perceived Service Score :** 1=Very poor 2=Poor 3=Fair 4=Good 5=Excellent

Important					Marine Leisure Tourist Guide Attribute	Performance				
Asserted Level →						← Asserted Level				
1	2	3	4	5	Measures	5	4	3	2	1
					The Marine Leisure tour guide have a neat in appearance					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide re punctual					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide was friendly					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide presentation was informative and clear					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide briefed us on daily itinerary					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide provided clear information on safety regulations					
					If you had a problem, Marine Leisure tour guide would show a sincere interest in solve it					
					Marine Leisure tour guide can tell you exactly when a service will be provided					
					Marine Leisure tour guide never too busy to respond to your request					
					The behavior of Marine Leisure tour guide employees instills confidence in the guests					
					You feel safe in your transaction with the Marine Leisure tour guide					

Important					Tourist's Guide Attribute	Attribute Performed				
Asserted Level —————→						Asserted Level ←————				
1	2	3	4	5	Measures	5	4	3	2	1
					Marine Leisure tour guide seem to have enough knowledge to answer your inquiries					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide give your individual attention					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide demonstrate respect for the customer					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide demonstrate a knowledge of the area interest					
					Tour Marine Leisure tour guide appears to have a knowledge of first aid					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide tour guide is able to communicate well in English or other specific foreign language					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide appeared to demonstrate good ethical behavior					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide accurately informed us about the area of interest					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide gave us the information and instructions to property us in case of an accident at sea					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide seemed well trained about his or her job					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide tour guide gave us the information and instructions to properly protect us in case of an accident on the sea					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide seemed well trained about his or her job					
					The Marine Leisure tour guide demonstrated good attention to detail during the trip					

Recommendations

14) Were there any relative gaps between your expectations and the service provided?

If yes, please explain.....

.....

VITEA

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