

GUEST SATISFACTION PLAN FOR MYSTICAL CAVE: A CASE IN ANTIPOLO, RIZAL

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ABSTRACT

Caves are one of the most important attractions the tourism industry has in a natural category. There are a lot of different caves within the country, but this study focused on the guest satisfaction of the Mystical Cave in Antipolo, Rizal about its guest' demographic profile, assessment on its level of guest satisfaction and significant differences with the use of the concept of tour quality dimension. The study is quantitative research with a descriptive research design that used convenience sampling. Survey questionnaires were used in the data gathering process and were verified using Cronbach Alpha. The variables examined were gender, age, type of tourist, educational attainment, religion using frequency, and percentage. The guest satisfaction rating based on the TOURQUAL dimension, namely access, environment, the human element, experience, safety, and technical quality was analyzed through mean. The significant difference in the demographic profile and TOURQUAL dimension were analyzed through ANOVA and T-test. The results of the study showed that the type of tourist has a significant difference between the demographic profile and some of the tour quality dimensions, namely access, environment, the human element, experience, and safety. The guest satisfaction program proposed was designed to help the management of the cave to improve their tour quality in terms of access, environment, the human element, experience, safety, and technical quality to boost the satisfaction of the guests.

Key words: Guest Satisfaction, TOURQUAL Dimension, Quantitative Research, Cave, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Caves are one of the most important attractions the tourism industry has in a natural category. These caves are famous for different rock formations that are formed through the stalagmites and stalactites, which make every cave different and unique. Since a lot of people tend to travel these days, caves are one of the attractions that guests go to. Undeniably, caves are very important natural resource of the country that is why it needs to be managed and protected as stated under Republic Act no. 9072, also known as National Caves and Cave Resources

Management and Protection Act which states that the State should conserve, protect, and manage caves and cave resources as part of the country's natural wealth. The State shall also strengthen cooperation between governmental authorities and people who utilize caves and cave resources for scientific, educational, recreational, tourism, and other purposes. Guest satisfaction has always been a necessary objective in all market sectors because it is assumed that satisfied guests will repurchase the service and are more likely to develop service loyalty (Della Corte et al., 2014). The loyalty of the guests will be manifested in their intention to re-visit the attraction and recommendation to others. Thus, this will be

important to destination marketers to sustain destination attractiveness. Mystical Cave is located in Barangay Puting Bato, Antipolo City in Rizal Province and discovered in 1970's. Inside the cave, there are rock formations being discovered such as the Image of Jesus Christ, Saint Anthony de Padua, as well as the Mother and Child and others to name a few that made the cave famous that people in the various places began to visit. Consequently, it became famous and making it a known pilgrimage destination today, especially during holy week. The research was considered novel because there was no recorded research about a proposed satisfaction plan for Mystical Cave in Antipolo, Rizal. Another would be the model the study that has been used was new, and there has not been any study that also used the TOURQUAL model. Moreover, this study showed what TOURQUAL is and how it helped the researchers determine the satisfaction of guest in Mystical Cave. The researchers also considered the need to devise a plan for the betterment of the attraction.

FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The research paradigm of the study had its age, gender, type of tourist, educational attainment, and religion under the demographic profile and access, environment, human element, experience, safety, and technical quality under the TOURQUAL model as the independent variables and the guest satisfaction plan as the dependent variable. The data that were gathered from the survey questionnaire, with the questions regarding the demographic profile and TORQUAL Model, became the basis for creating a guest satisfaction plan and for achieving the purpose of the study.

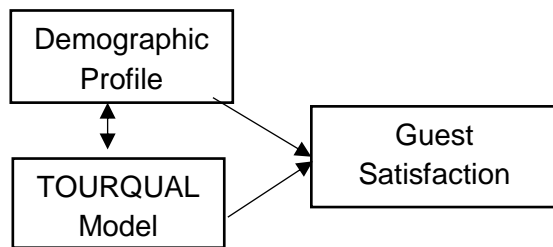


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The researchers sought to answer the following questions: 1) to determine the demographic profile of the respondents according to Gender, Age, Type of Tourist, Educational Attainment, and Religion; 2) to assess how the respondents, rate their satisfaction based on the following areas: Access, Environment, Human Element, Experience, Safety, and Technical Quality; 3) to analyze the significant difference when grouped according to profile and the guest satisfaction in Mystical Cave in Antipolo, Rizal; and 4) to propose a guest satisfaction plan to boost the guests' pleasure.

The researchers decided to conduct a study on Mystical Cave because it is a known pilgrimage site in Antipolo and has a lot of guests every Holy Week and there can be a lot of potential to the attraction. The researchers also wanted to find out if the guests were satisfied with the service that they get from the cave. From the responses gathered then became the basis to help boost their guests' satisfaction on the cave.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers used the quantitative research design in which the participants of the study were the guests of Mystical Cave. The non-probability sampling and convenience sampling were used in the study where a total population of 4000 came from the list that the caretaker has. From the list, a sample size of 351 with the use of Raosoft was arrived at. The margin of error was 5%, and the level of confidence was 95%. The researchers used a survey questionnaire for their data gathering, which was divided into two parts: the profile of the respondents and the guests' rating on guest satisfaction. A four-point Likert frame scale was used to score responses to the questionnaire items. Likewise, the researchers used Cronbach Alpha to validate the tool for the survey's reliability, which showed that the questionnaire was reliable, with Cronbach Alpha ranging from 0.709 to 0.87. The results showed that there was no need to revise the questionnaire. The researchers made use of the frequency and



percentage to determine the profile of the respondents and the level of guest satisfaction. ANOVA was also used to determine the significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and the ratings given by the respondents in the survey questionnaire to evaluate the satisfaction of guest in Mystical Cave while T-test was used to assess whether the means of the two groups were significantly different from each other.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

1.1 Gender

In terms of gender, most of the guests of the selected cave were female. This was in contrast to the study involving the marketing strategies for Cavinti Underground Cathedral Cave by Abalos et al., (2015), where they have female guests with 49.8% and the male guest with 50.2% that showed that male guests dominated the population of the study. On the present study, findings showed a greater number of female guests who visited the cave, which indicates that female guests were more interested in seeking adventures and that males were usually busy with working.

1.2 Age

Results showed that majority of the respondents were 18-28 years old with 63%. This was again in contrast to the study of Cavinti Underground Cathedral Cave, where most of the guests visiting the destination were 29-39 years old. The present findings imply that younger and stronger guests go to Mystical Cave for they are more active in discovering and experiencing new things like traveling. Likewise, mystical Cave is affordable to younger guests, especially students.

1.3 Type of Tourists

On this variable, most of the respondents' purpose was an adventure which had 49.9% while fewer people went there as an eco-tourist. According to Sulaiman & Wilson (2018), adventure

tourism is one of the quickest developing segments in the tourism industry and infers as a standout amongst the most imperative classes advertised and advanced comprehensively. It implies that adventure tourism has been quickly developing bringing a lot of adventure tourists that seek adventures like discovering new places, things, and experiences.

1.4 Educational Attainment

Majority of the guests that went to the Mystical Cave were college graduates with 32.2%. According to Mellina & Aballe (2013), people with college degrees tend to travel more and have better experiences in visiting a destination. This denotes that college graduates were matured enough to travel farther alone or with a group for they have the time and resources, unlike with the students.

1.5 Religion

Catholic respondents dominated the population of the research, as shown by 83.2%. Catholics were made up of 8 out of 10 Filipinos as stated by France-Press (2017). Findings indicate that Catholics dominate the number of guests who visits the cave for majority them was Catholics. The destination having religious images greatly attracts more Catholic guests for they greatly appreciate the rock formations. Despite the religious images, there were still non-Catholic guests who visit the cave out of curiosity and may want to discover new things.

2. Respondent's Satisfaction Rating

2.1 Access

The respondents were satisfied in terms of access. Cave hours of operation were deemed fair to the tourists, which ranked highest with the mean of 3.46. The cave is accessible as it is open the whole day and the whole week. However, the cave has no designated parking area as ranked lowest by respondents with the lowest weighted mean of 2.70. Nonetheless, the guests were still satisfied.

According to Visit England Visitor Attractions (2014), signage should be kept within the hours of operation, ranges of prices, and any rules or regulations. This denotes that the cave is accessible because of its availability and can be visited at any time of the day by the tourists or guests.

2.2 Environment

In terms of environment, respondents strongly agreed with the variable as it provided a relaxing atmosphere with a mean of 3.55 and got the highest rank. The cave offers a relaxing atmosphere for it is surrounded by trees, and the guests also have the option to hike above the cave and see the beautiful sight of the mountains of Antipolo. On the other hand, an indicator of it observes clean and green environment ranked the lowest with a mean of 3.41. The cave doesn't have a staff that regularly checks the area for garbage left by some of the guests. According to Abdellatif et al. (2014), the destination image influences the tourists' behavior, satisfaction, and revisit intentions. Having a good destination image gives the guests something to look forward to and anticipate the joy they would feel towards the attraction. This implies that the image that Mystical Cave gives to the guests is very satisfying as guests see this as a place to unwind.

2.3 Human Element

Respondents agreed and were satisfied with the human element. The cave has accommodated, and friendly staff ranked the highest with a mean of 3.48. It indicates that persons in charge of taking care of the cave extend warm welcome, accommodating, willing to assist, friendly and hospitable to the tourists. However, attending to the needs of tourists by employees had ranked lowest as shown by the mean of 3.41. On this, it can be surmised that caretakers may pay more attention to their guests' needs to ensure their satisfaction. Results suggest that accommodating and friendly staff is a great factor for guest satisfaction.

2.4 Experience

Findings revealed that respondents were satisfied with their experience in visiting the cave as they found that the cave is entertaining, and it provides a natural aesthetic image, garnering similar highest mean of 3.47. Wang (2016) stated that one unsatisfied tourism experience could lead to negative word of mouth, lead the tourist to another destination, and lessen the growth and competitiveness of the attraction. In contrast, the respondents were satisfied with their experience from the attraction. The cave, with its naturally formed rock formations through the stalagmites and stalactites give the cave its natural aesthetic image that draws guests to be curious with the attraction. Indicator the cave offers therapeutic water for the sick got the lowest rank with the mean 3.29. The locals and the caretakers believe that the water from the cave can cure illnesses, but it is not scientifically proven. It denotes that the cave gives the guests a lot to learn and look at because of its religious formations that make the cave very interesting to the guest and entertaining.

2.5 Safety

Findings showed that respondents were satisfied with the safety dimension. The attraction observing safety and security measures for the guests landed on the highest rank with the mean of 3.23. The management and the municipality work together to ensure the safety of the guests by having barangay officials secure the area and having an ambulance ready if ever an emergency occurs. The variable that got the lowest rank was the management provided safety equipment such as helmets, etc. with the mean of 2.80. The cave doesn't have that much equipment like a helmet to be used for the safety of the guests. Pratama's study (2015) states that safety equipment makes the tourists feel safe. This indicates that the cave practices safety measures to keep their guests safe while they were on the attraction and this what greatly affects the destination choices of tourists.

2.6 Technical Quality



The respondents were satisfied with the technical quality of the cave. Respondents cited that the cave is big enough to accommodate the guest ranked the highest with the mean of 3.36. Mystical Cave has a big holding area where the guests wait for their turn for the tour as they were arranged in groups, so the cave will not be too crowded. Meanwhile, the cave or management is prepared in case of any weather conditions ranked the lowest with the mean of 3.17. The cave does have a holding area but was not enough for the guests, especially during peak season, which was the holy week. Technical quality plays an important role with influence on service quality (Ali et al., 2016). It implies that technical quality is a very important factor to consider and to work on. Having a great technical quality would make the guests' stay more convenient and enhances their experience in the attraction which helps increase the satisfaction of the guests

3. Significant Difference When Grouped According to Profile and the Guest Satisfaction in Mystical Cave in Antipolo, Rizal

3.1 Grouped by Gender

Table 1. Grouped by Gender (T-Test)

Gender	t	sig (2-tailed)	Decision	Interpretation
Access	.551	.582	Accepted	Not Significant
Environment	.012	.990	Accepted	Not Significant
Human Element	1.011	.312	Accepted	Not Significant
Experience	1.399	.163	Accepted	Not Significant
Safety	.014	.989	Accepted	Not Significant
Technical Quality	.052	.959	Accepted	Not Significant

Verbal Interpretation: Not Significant if sig > 0.05, Significant if sig < 0.05

Table 1 shows that gender was not significant with the tour quality dimensions. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted. This implies that there was no relationship between the guests' gender and their satisfaction. In the study Impact of Gender on Customer Satisfaction for Service Quality: A Case Study of Hyper Stores (Deshwal, 2015), it similarly had the same result that gender has no significant difference in the satisfaction of the guests of Mystical Cave. It denotes that gender does not affect their satisfaction because either the male or the female guests were able to enjoy the cave regardless of their gender.

3.2 Grouped by Age

Table 2. Grouped by Age

Age	F	sig	Decision	Interpretation
Access	2.004	.094	Accepted	Not Significant
Environment	.217	.929	Accepted	Not Significant
Human Element	.371	.829	Accepted	Not Significant
Experience	.440	.779	Accepted	Not Significant
Safety	.714	.583	Accepted	Not Significant
Technical Quality	1.090	.361	Accepted	Not Significant

Verbal Interpretation: Not Significant if sig > 0.05, Significant if sig < 0.05

Age does not affect the satisfaction of the guests of Mystical Cave as seen on Table 2. There was no significant difference between the age and the evaluation of the respondents on access, environment, the human element, experience, safety, and technical quality when grouped by age. Hence, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted. In contrast to the study of Salleh et al. (2013) about Tourist Satisfaction in Malaysia, age showed no association in guest satisfaction. This implies that Mystical Cave can satisfy the guests regardless of their age group



and does not affect how they would enjoy the cave whether they were younger or older. The cave can be appreciated by everyone.

3.3 Grouped by Type of Tourist

Table 3. Grouped by Type of Tourist (ANOVA)

Variable	Weighted Mean			F	sig	Decision	Interpretation
	Adventure Tourist	Religious Tourists	Ecotourist				
Access	3.0762	3.1919	3.3681	3.583	.029	Rejected	Significant
Environment	3.3794	3.5592	3.4750	4.554	.011	Rejected	Significant
Human Element	3.2886	3.4342	3.5139	3.686	.026	Rejected	Significant
Experience	3.3109	3.4974	3.4583	5.067	.007	Rejected	Significant
Safety	2.9829	3.2303	3.0667	4.928	.008	Rejected	Significant
Technical Quality	3.2073	3.3637	3.1667	2.634	.073	Accepted	Not Significant

Verbal Interpretation: Not Significant if sig > 0.05, Significant if sig < 0.05

Table 3 shows that there was a significant difference between the assessment of the respondents in terms of access, environment, the human element, experience, and safety while technical quality showed no significant difference. Zhang & Yan (2016) stated that the religious tourists' motive to visit an attraction was to experience its religious atmosphere, the local culture, and rest. This indicates that eco-tourists were much more satisfied than adventure and religious tourists based on access and human element because eco-tourists love undisturbed places and they care less about the accessibility of

the cave since they care more about the attraction itself, they wanted to improve the well-being of locals and Mystical Cave being run by locals itself satisfies eco-tourists. Religious tourists were more satisfied than adventure tourists and eco-tourists based on environment, experience, and safety, considering that they go to the cave to connect with God. They were very much looking for a place where they can pray and appreciate God and the cave is a quiet, safe, and green with religious formations greatly helped their contemplation and greatly satisfied the guests.

3.4 Grouped by Educational Attainment

Table 4. Grouped by Educational Attainment (ANOVA)

Educational Attainment	F	Sig	Decision	Interpretation
Access	1.425	.215	Accepted	Not Significant
Environment	1.294	.266	Accepted	Not Significant
Human Element	.605	.696	Accepted	Not Significant
Experience	.962	.441	Accepted	Not Significant
Safety	.579	.716	Accepted	Not Significant
Technical Quality	1.449	.206	Accepted	Not Significant

Verbal Interpretation: Not Significant if sig > 0.05, Significant if sig < 0.05

There was no significant difference between educational attainment and guest satisfaction. Caves are very interesting to discover and offers a

lot of knowledge to the guests that everyone can enjoy. Similar to the study of Mburu (2014), they both shared the results of having no relationship



between educational attainment and guest satisfaction. It denotes that educational attainment does not influence in any way the satisfaction of

guests no matter what they have finished and what they know the guests were able to learn from the cave.

3.5 Grouped by Religion

Table 5. Grouped by Religion (T-Test)

Religion	t	sig (2-tailed)	Decision	Interpretation
Access	1.393	.165	Accepted	Not Significant
Environment	-.639	.523	Accepted	Not Significant
Human Element	-.088	.930	Accepted	Not Significant
Experience	-1.026	.305	Accepted	Not Significant
Safety	.564	.573	Accepted	Not Significant
Technical Quality	-.017	.987	Accepted	Not Significant

Verbal Interpretation: Not Significant if sig > 0.05, Significant if sig < 0.05

There was no significant difference when grouped by religion and the satisfaction of guests. The null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted. Raman (2014) study shares the same result that there was no significance between the religion and satisfaction of the guests. It indicates that religion does not have any impact on guest satisfaction, suggesting that Catholic and non-Catholic guests were satisfied with the cave regardless of what they believed in because it did not only cater to the religious formations but the amusement from the cave that brought entertainment and discoveries on both religions.

4. Guest Satisfaction Plan

Considering the consequences of the investigation, a guest satisfaction plan was recommended to help improve guests' satisfaction and tour quality of Mystical Cave in Antipolo, Rizal; a plan that will enhance the service and the quality of the cave itself. The researchers came up with the idea to focus on improving the quality of services the cave can give to the guests.

Access. The researchers made a plan that will help the advancement of Mystical Cave in Antipolo, Rizal by allotting a parking space for the guests. Also, more accessible roads are deemed to provide so it will be more accessible for them. Thus, more guests won't have to worry about their

vehicles for the cave has decent parking and a decent road.

Environment. The management should plan to hire someone who can clean the surroundings of the cave, including the parking area, and all its vicinities. Also, implement rules to regulate the attraction. The said plan will be done in about a month. The cleaning of surroundings will be done within the vicinity of the cave while the rules that will be posted will be located inside and upon entering the cave.

Human Element. The management should train more staff, as well as other tour guides for them to gain more knowledge and the different components of the cave. This will ensure that the information that is being given to the guests is accurate and informative. The seminars and training will most likely be done three times a year. They will be having their training in a conference room in the municipality of Antipolo, Rizal.

Experience. The management should provide a precaution sign stating that the therapeutic water is not scientifically proven, and it is only a belief by the locals. This will prevent the guests from expecting more than the specific water can cure their diseases, etc. This will be done in a week. The signage will be placed at the entrance



and inside the cave. The management of the Mystical cave will be in charge of this.

Safety. The management should provide safety equipment such as helmets for the guests, flashlights, and safety ropes. The preparation will be done in a month, and the safety equipment will be placed outside the cave, before the start of the tour. The management of the Mystical cave is the one involved in giving the equipment. Providing safety equipment will help prevent accidents.

Technical Quality. The management should provide sheds for the guests for them to have a place to stay whenever it is sunny or rainy. This will prevent the guests from getting UV rays from the sun or getting wet from the rain. The construction will be done in five months. The sheds will be placed outside the cave, where there is a clear area.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the researchers have concluded the following:

1. Majority of the guests that visit Mystical Cave are female with a percentage of 53.8%, their age bracket ranging from 18 to 28 years old, they are mostly comprised of adventure tourist. Moreover, the guests are mostly college graduates, and the Catholics dominated the population with 83.2%.
2. The guests showed agreement on the tour quality dimensions, namely access, environment, the human element, experience, safety, and technical quality, which mean they are satisfied.
3. There is no significant difference between the dimensions of tour quality and gender, age, educational attainment, technical quality when grouped according to the type of tourist, and religion which means that they are doing good practice for the cave which satisfies its guests. Another is that

the type of tourists posed that there is a significant difference in the assessment of guest satisfaction in the selected tour quality dimension, namely access, environment, the human element, and safety.

4. A guest satisfaction plan was proposed to boost the guests' pleasure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommended by the researchers based on the conclusions:

1. The management may focus on more making the cave more accessible to tourists by improving their roads and build a parking space allotted for the guests visiting the cave.
2. Keep the cave clean and green by hiring someone to maintain the area clean.
3. Train employees to be observant of their guests' needs through having seminars about guest satisfaction.
4. The management should inform their guests that the therapeutic water of the cave is not scientifically proven.
5. The cave needs more precautionary signages and equipment like helmets for the protection of the guests when entering the cave.
6. The management should build more shed for guests to take shelter from the rain and heat from the sun.

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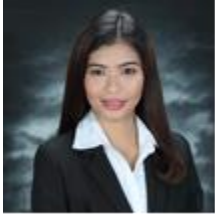
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AUTHORS' PROFILE

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Ernesto Cataquis Mandigma Jr. received the Bachelor of Science in Tourism in 2000, Master of Business Administration in March 2002, Master in Public Administration in October 2002, Master of Arts in Education major in Education Management in 2005, Master in Education in 2011 at the Golden Gate Colleges. He finished Doctor of Education major in Educational Management (2016), a candidate for Doctor in Business Administration and Doctor of Philosophy which is in progress at the Batangas State University. Currently, he is connected as a professor in Graduate School at Batangas State University, an undergraduate professor in both De La Salle University Dasmariñas and Malayan Colleges Laguna- A MAPUA School. He presented different researchers in both the



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