SATISFACTION WITH SERVICES IN HOMESTAY BUSINESS: THE CASE OF RANONG PROVINCE, THAILAND

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This research studies the satisfaction with the homestay services on the example Rayong province. Population of this research consists of tourists, questionnaires were collected randomly from 400 people. Data analysis and processing have been applied using the statistical packages, inter alia, this research operates such notions as percentage, average and standard deviation. After data analysis we have found that: 1) the majority of tourists in our group are male, between 31 and 40 y.o., with a bachelor's degree, managing own business, with income over 30,000 Baht, intending to come to homestay again in the period of nearest 6-12-months; 2) majority of tourists in our group travel on average about 1-2 times a year, selecting a homestay in a city, the key reason for this choice being to save around 1,000-2,000 Baht per person per night. From a homestay venue, the tourists usually need such services as computer, Internet and taking them to sightseeing sites. In the second part of our research we also measured satisfaction with the homestay services using several sets of the related variables.

Keywords: satisfaction with service; homestay business; tourists; Ranong province; Thailand.

Introduction

Homestay is a highly specific type of tourism focused cultural exchange during a tourist visit. This exchange takes place between a guest and a home owner, also called a homestay entrepreneur. Most of homestay entrepreneurs worldwide have their own main career path, and for them homestay is just a supplement, a way to get extra income for their families, and also to contribute to the local community's development and popularization at the same time. In Thailand, for example, homestay business helps disseminate information on Thai culture in its various forms among foreigners.

Even though homestay business, as of today, does not create much income, as compared to other forms of tourism, this subsector is growing continuously because it is still a business which has its own sale point and it also based on unique cultural identity.

According to the information provided by the Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism in Thailand, currently, there are more than 1,000 homestays in the country.

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Department of Tourism promotes the related government's policy of homestay business development because this type of activity creates value the whole society and is also the source of added value to national economy. Homestay business manages to support unique national lifestyle, culture and local wisdom, and at the same time it also creates extra jobs, products and services. Thus, it provokes the locals to be more creative and thus to bring income to the community.

Rayong province has quite high potential for tourism development, first of all, due to its natural environment and lifestyle, culture and traditions. Therefore, many communities in Rayong province, on the village level already, organize homestay businesses in order to welcome tourists, so that the latter can not only stay, but can also live like truly local people, learn the local lifestyle, engage in various activities, like ecotourism, other cultural or adventurous travel activities.

Travelling as such often involves rural culture, so when tourists are learning something new, get acquainted with the local lifestyle, courtesy, and kindness of people in Rayong province, their centuries old culture and traditions – this also can be considered as a type of tourism services. Moreover, this is a truly most unique type of services since it combines travelling with various other tourism activities, all within natural environment.

For all these reasons, we have been very much interested to study the satisfaction with all the services related to homestay in Rayong province, mostly because this sort of information can further serve as the guidance for raising the service quality of homestay business in Rayong province so that it can be more able to meet customer demand effectively.

Methodology

This research has been based on a survey. General population of this study covers all the tourists who used homestay services in Rayong province, and at the time of data preparation their number was 789,666 people. Thus, we have used the Taro Yamane's formula (Taro Yamane, 1970) at the significant level of 0.05, and found that we would need 400 samples for our random sampling method. The independent variables of this research include: gender, age, education level, income per month and the intention to come back to this or nearby homestay again. And the dependent variable is satisfaction with services of a homestay business in Rayong province. 7 components were measured in this regard, including: specific features of a homestay and meeting room in homestay style, service charges, service channel and marketing promotion, other processes related to management, service provider, and environment management.

Since we have decided to carry out a survey, questionnaire became our key tool. It was divided into two stages as follows:

Stage 1. General data was collected first, such as gender, age, education level, career, income per month and intending to come back to homestay again. Checklist was offered for this to each participant.

Stage 2. Satisfaction with the services provided by a particular homestay business in Rayong province was measured. This part of the survey contained 49 questions, and each respondent was asked to measure certain aspect of satisfaction with a service using Likert's scale with 5 levels.

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Inspection tools were first applied in relation to the research questions and structure so that to check the content validity. 3 professionals were invited for that, and then also a theater group of 30 people tested our instrument. The confirmation result was as high as .9807.

Statistical package was then used for data analysis, namely, descriptive statistics, including such features as Frequency and Percentage, and also Mean and Standard Deviation.

Results

Most tourists in our randomly selected group turned out to be male, in the age between 31 and 40, who graduated with Bachelor's degree, most of them had business of their own, and monthly income over 30,000 Baht, intending to come back to a homestay again in the nearest 6-12 months (see Table 1 for more details).

Table 1. General data on our randomly selected sample group
(coauthors' data)

General data	Amount	Percentage
Gender		
Male	205	51.2
Female	195	48.8
Age		
Less than 30 years	45	11.2
31-40 years	130	32.5
41-50 years	95	23.8
Over 50 years	130	32.5
Education Level		
Primary School	0	0
High School	18	4.5
High School/ Vocational Certificate	99	24.8
Bachelor's Degree	165	41.3
Higher than Bachelor's Degree	118	29.5
Career		
Governance Officer/State Enterprise	112	28
Employee	86	21.5
Student /undergraduate	30	7.5
Owner business	170	42.5
Other (please, specify)	2	0.5

General data	Amount	Percentage
Income per month		
Less than 5,000 Baht	2	0.5
5,001-10,000 Baht	32	8
10,001-15,000 Baht	71	17.8
15,000-20,000 Baht	144	36
More than 30,000 Baht	151	37.8

General data	Amount	Percentage
Intention to come back to homestay again		
Will not come back again	0	0
Coming back again in 3 months	43	

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Travelling behavior and Stay	Amount	Percentage
What is the reason why this time you have chosen homestay (for this, more than one answer was allowed)		
Close enough to a particular landmark	371	18.7
Many activities around	330	16.6
Low price	374	18.8
Like it because it is natural and calm	305	15.4
Homestay owner is courteous	315	15.9
Style/ Reliability of place	285	14.4
Other	6	0.3
How much the cost for your check-in at homestay?		
More than 5,000 Baht/person/night	10	2.5
2001 - 5000 Baht/person/night	128	32
1001 - 2000 Baht/person/night	240	60
Less than 1000 Baht/person/night	22	5.5
What services would you like to receive from homestay? (More than 1 answer was allowed)		
Computer / Internet connection	394	17
Singing karaoke	294	12.7
Food and beverages	362	15.6
Souvenir shop	296	12.8
Thai massage	301	13
Spa/Herbal steam bath	315	13.6
Laundry services	343	14.8
Other	14	0.6
What activities did you use and you generally want from a homestay? (More than 1 answer was allowed)		
Boating/Cruise sightseeing	352	16.7
Fire show	281	13.4
Hiking	251	11.9
Environment-related activities	269	12.8
Religious activities	205	9.8
Observation and participation in house duties	318	15.1
Visit to an archaeological site	358	17
Other	68	3.2

Satisfaction with homestay services in Rayong province concerns, first of all, the features of rooms and interior of a homestay facility overall ($\bar{x} = 3.90$, S.D. = 0.65) and all 8 variables in this category demonstrate high level of assessment: first goes the variable of size of the room provided for a stay ($\bar{x} = 4.44$, S.D. = 0.72), then goes the variable of facilities' sufficiency ($\bar{x} = 4.35$, S.D. = 0.73) and then – design and decor of both interior and exterior in a homestay ($\bar{x} = 3.87$, S.D. = 0.64), finally, cleanliness of the toilet was assessed ($\bar{x} = 3.62$, S.D. = 0.65) (Table 3).

Table 3. Average value and standard deviation of satisfaction with the services provided by homestays in Rayong province
(coauthors' data)

Features of accommodation and homestay’s style	Satisfaction Level						S.D.	Result
	Percentage							
	Very High	High	Middle	Low	Very Low			
1. Size of the room and its overall adequacy to your demands	0.0	0.0	13.5	29.0	57.5	4.44	0.72	High
2. Sufficiency of facilities	0.0	0.0	15.0	35.0	50.0	4.35	0.73	High
3. Design and decor of both interior and exterior of a homestay	0.0	0.5	26.5	58.7	14.3	3.87	0.64	High
4. How well is the local identity reflected in this place	0.0	1.0	36.0	53.5	9.5	3.72	0.64	High
5. Cleanliness of your room	0.0	1.0	28.7	63.3	7.0	3.76	0.58	High
6. Cleanliness of the toilet	0.0	1.0	44.5	46.0	8.5	3.62	0.65	High
7. Facilities provided, such as electrical equipment, furniture etc.	0.0	0.5	35.2	55.8	8.5	3.72	0.62	High
8. Supplementary services, including running water	0.0	0.0	39.5	49.2	11.3	3.72	0.65	High
Total						3.90	0.65	High

Satisfaction with the price level of the homestay service in Rayong province in general showed the following results: $\bar{x} = 3.84$, S.D. = 0.66. Thus, all 4 variables of this dimension demonstrated quite high level of satisfaction, however, the top priority rank got the room rate ($\bar{x} = 3.88$, S.D. = 0.57), then goes the service and beverages' fee ($\bar{x} = 3.87$, S.D. = 0.66), and then the fees for other operations and activities ($\bar{x} = 3.83$, S.D. = 0.70). The last one is the supplement fee for car or boat transportation ($\bar{x} = 3.76$, S.D. = 0.72) (see more details in Table 4).

Table 4. Average value and standard deviation of satisfaction with services' charges
(coauthors' data)

Services	Satisfaction Level						S.D.	Result
	Percentage							
	Very High	High	Middle	Low	Very Low	$\bar{x}$		
1. Room rates	0.0	0.0	23.0	66.2	10.8	3.88	0.57	High
2. Service and beverage fee	0.0	0.0	29.0	54.7	16.3	3.87	0.66	High
3. Supplement services such as car/boat transportation	0.0	0.0	41.0	42.2	16.8	3.76	0.72	High
4. Service charges for other operations and/or activities	0.0	0.0	36.5	48.5	17.0	3.83	0.70	High
Total						3.84	0.66	High

Satisfaction with channels of information concerning the homestay services in Rayong province got the following overall result: $\bar{x} = 3.84$, S.D. = 0.63. Thus, all 5 variables of this group were at high level of satisfaction assessment. The highest grade got the travelling information through government agencies ($\bar{x} = 3.98$, S.D. = 0.59), then goes advance

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booking and registration information ($\bar{x} = 3.95$, S.D. = 0.48) and then – signs or activities in the area ($\bar{x} = 3.80$, S.D. = 0.69). Finally, creating a travel service network in the local communities got the lowest, though still high result: $\bar{x} = 3.71$, S.D. = 0.69 (more details – in Table 5).

Table 5. Average value and standard deviation of satisfaction with the information channel on homestay services
(coauthors' data)

Service Channel	Satisfaction Level						S.D.	Result
	Percentage							
	Very High	High	Middle	Low	Very Low	$\bar{x}$		
1. Advance booking and registration	0.0	0.0	14.0	77.0	9.0	3.95	0.48	High
2. Travelling information provided by government agencies	0.0	0.0	18.5	65.5	16.0	3.98	0.59	High
3. Creating a travel service network in a community	0.0	0.0	42.7	44.0	13.3	3.71	0.69	High
4. Signs on how to reach accommodation	0.0	0.0	39.5	45.2	15.3	3.76	0.70	High
5. Other activities and directions in the area	0.0	0.0	35.7	48.5	15.8	3.80	0.69	High
Total						3.84	0.63	High

Table 6. Average value and standard deviation of satisfaction with marketing promotion of homestays
(coauthors' data)

Marketing Promotion Means	Satisfaction Level					$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Result
	Percentage							
	Very High	High	Middle	Low	Very Low			
1. Advertising through brochures	0.0	0.0	17.5	71.0	11.5	3.94	0.54	High
2. Advertising online	0.0	0.0	24.3	64.7	11.0	3.87	0.58	High
3. Word of mouth about the service	0.0	0.0	42.3	42.2	15.5	3.73	0.71	High
4. Labeling of signs	0.0	0.0	63.3	46.4	17.3	3.81	0.71	High
5. PR activities by the Travel & Tourism Authority Network Agencies of the Department of Local Administration	0.0	0.0	25.0	61.5	13.5	3.89	0.61	High
6. Special discounts for the returning customers	0.0	0.0	35.0	49.0	16.0	3.81	0.69	High
7. Promotion prices during the festival season or low season	0.0	0.0	38.5	46.8	14.7	3.76	0.69	High
Totals						3.83	0.65	High

Satisfaction with marketing promotion of homestay businesses in Rayong province has been measured with application of 7 variables, all of them scoring at high level. The best result got advertising via brochures ($\bar{x} = 3.94$, S.D. = 0.54), then goes advertising as PR actions taken by the Travel & Tourism Authority Network Agencies of the Department of Local Administration ($\bar{x} = 3.89$, S.D. = 0.61), the third in rank is online advertising with $\bar{x} =$

3.87, S.D. = 0.58. The lowest result got the word of mouth ($\bar{x} = 3.73$, S.D. = 0.71) (more details in Table 6 above).

Satisfaction with management processes in homestay businesses in Rayong province demonstrated the following result: $\bar{x} = 3.90$, S.D. = 0.82, and all 9 variables of this category were at quite high level. Firstly goes the security of a homestay ($\bar{x} = 4.28$, S.D. = 0.67). Second was readiness of the first-aid toolkit ($\bar{x} = 4.08$, S.D. = 0.76), while the third in rank was lighting ($\bar{x} = 3.91$, S.D. = 0.61). The lowest results, unfortunately, got such parameters as food and cleanliness ($\bar{x} = 3.80$, S.D. = 0.56). More details are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Average values and standard deviation for the process management aspects
(coauthors' data)

Processes	Satisfaction Level						$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Result
	Percentage								
	Very High	High	Middle	Low	Very Low				
1. Security of a homestay	0.0	0.0	23.0	41.0	36.0	4.28	0.67	High	
2. Availability of the first-aid toolkit	0.0	0.0	25.0	42.5	32.5	4.08	0.76	High	
3. Cleanness of food preparation and hygiene in the kitchen	0.0	0.0	31.0	55.5	13.5	3.83	0.64	High	
4. Food is clean, tastes good and is provided in a reasonable quantity	0.0	0.0	27.8	64.7	7.5	3.80	0.56	High	
5. Service is unique and reveals the local identity	0.0	0.5	37.8	49.2	12.5	3.74	0.67	High	
6. Lighting	0.0	0.0	23.5	62.0	14.5	3.91	0.61	High	
7. Bedding supplies are adequate and clean	0.0	0.0	27.5	59.5	13.0	3.86	0.62	High	
8. Vehicle to access the homestay	0.0	0.0	34.2	50.5	15.3	3.81	0.68	High	
9. Place and equipment for training/ seminar (when applicable)	0.0	0.0	33.5	52.0	14.5	3.81	0.67	High	
Total						3.90	0.82	High	

Satisfaction with servicing at a homestay demonstrated the following result: $\bar{x} = 3.89$, S.D. = 0.66. And again, all 9 variables separately demonstrated quite high results. The highest rank got good manners and gentle style ($\bar{x} = 3.96$, S.D. = 0.64). Second goes understanding tourists' demands ($\bar{x} = 3.96$, S.D. = 0.70) and then, being friendly overall ($\bar{x} = 3.95$, S.D. = 0.68). The lowest rank got providing suggestions and assistance ($\bar{x} = 3.79$, S.D. = 0.68). More details – in Table 8 below.

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Table 8. Average values and standard deviation for various aspects of servicing in a homestay (coauthors' data)

Services	Satisfaction Level						$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Result
	Percentage								
	Very High	High	Middle	Low	Very Low				
1. Warming welcome	0.0	0.0	17.0	73.0	10.0	3.93	0.52	High	
2. Good manners and gentle style	0.0	0.0	22.5	59.0	18.5	3.96	0.64	High	
3. Looking clean and accurate	0.0	0.0	30.0	49.2	20.8	3.91	0.71	High	
4. Understanding tourists' demands	0.0	0.0	26.5	51.0	22.5	3.96	0.70	High	
5. Friendly staff	0.0	0.5	23.8	55.7	20.0	3.95	0.68	High	
6. Suggestions and assistance	0.0	0.0	35.8	49.7	14.5	3.79	0.68	High	
7. Communication skills	0.0	0.0	29.0	57.5	13.5	3.85	0.63	High	
8. Speed of servicing	0.0	0.0	32.3	50.0	17.7	3.86	0.69	High	
9. Accuracy and prudence in servicing	0.0	0.0	33.5	50.3	16.2	3.83	0.68	High	
Total						3.89	0.66	High	

Table 9. Average value and standard deviation for the environment management parameters (coauthors' data)

Environment Management	Satisfaction Level					$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Result
	Percentage							
	Very High	High	Middle	Low	Very Low			
1. Air and lighting appropriately	0.0	0.0	17.5	71.8	10.8	3.93	0.53	High
2. Inside environment and clean surroundings	0.0	0.0	25.0	57.3	17.8	3.93	0.65	High
3. View from the room	0.0	0.0	34.5	51.8	13.8	3.79	0.66	High
4. Car park area or parking space	0.0	0.0	39.3	51.7	9.0	3.70	0.63	High
5. Having some shady space with trees and flowers	0.0	0.0	31.0	57.0	12.0	3.81	0.63	High
6. Natural food	0.0	0.0	31.0	52.0	17.0	3.86	0.68	High
7. Availability of a waste disposal system and sewage	0.0	0.0	34.8	50.0	15.2	3.81	0.68	High
Total						3.83	0.64	High

Satisfaction with the environment in and around the homestay overall got the following result: $\bar{x} = 3.83$, S.D. = 0.64, and all 7 variables scored quite high levels. Firstly goes air and lighting, with $\bar{x} = 3.93$, S.D. = 0.53. Then follows the variable of the inside environment and clean surroundings ($\bar{x} = 3.93$, S.D. = 0.65), then – natural food, free from additives ($\bar{x} = 3.86$, S.D. = 0.68) respectively. The lowest score got the factor of car park area or parking space availability ($\bar{x} = 3.70$, S.D. = 0.63) (for more details see Table 9 above).

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