

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Satisfaction of Tourists Towards Mae Fa Luang Garden

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ABSTARCT

Objectives of the study were to determine satisfaction levels and factors affecting the satisfaction of tourists towards Mae Fa Luang Garden, Mae Fa Luang District, Chiang Rai Province. The designed questionnaire was employed as a tool for gathering data by interviewing 400 sampled tourists visiting Mae Fa Luang Garden. The statistical analysis method used were percent, mean, minimum, maximum, t-test and F-test. The given significance level was at $p < 0.05$.

Results of the study indicated that the most respondent were female (52%) with the average age of 31.37 years. The educational level of the most (71%) were bachelor degree and higher. Marital status was mostly single (50%). Private company employee was the main occupation (25.3%). Their average salary was 13,351 baht. Central and east region were domicile of the most tourist (37.8%). The average number of group tour member was 24. This was the first trip of the most tourists (59.8%) and most of them (72.5%) had good comprehension about tourism. Based on a macro point of view, the satisfaction towards the recreational area was at high level. While the satisfaction level relating to the 4 aspects of the recreational area namely place, nature interpretation, facility and personnel were at a very high, high, high and high respectively. In addition, factors affecting satisfaction of tourists towards the recreational area were age, occupation, domicile and group tour size.

Key words: satisfaction, tourist, Chiang Rai

INTRODUCTION

Globalization caused severe competition and rush in daily life of the urban people, mainly due to the economic development and population pressure. Hence, the wilderness

areas were transformed to be cultivated land, residential and industrial zone etc. The environmental quality in the urban areas has been deteriorated. Thus, most people prefer to

spend their leisure time for relaxation in both of the natural calm site such as national park which comprises of mountainous areas, water fall, streams, sea, and man made recreational areas namely zoo, butterfly garden, park and flower garden etc. The demand for outdoor recreation has increased over time, causing the global tourism to become prosperous business and generate a lot of money to the active countries.

Mae Fa Luang Garden, Mae Fa Luang District, Chiang Rai Province, is a large flower garden with the aesthetic scenery located at Doi Tung behind Doi Tung Royal Palace which was the residence of Somdet Phra Srinagarindra Boromrajajonani. In the former time, this area belonged to the hill tribes. After relocation of the hill tribes, the recreational area was developed and tourists were permitted to visit. Mae Fa Luang Garden was beautifully designed and planted with various species of ornamental trees and flowers. The planting flowers are yearly replanted. Moreover, the flower garden was decorated with wooden path, bridge, rest-house, and various sculptural types, that motivate both of Thai and foreigner tourists to visit for touching the cool of the summit mountain as well as the flower garden with the aesthetic scenery. Based on the annual tourist statistics, the tourist number of this flower garden is yearly increased.

Thus, the researchers prefer to examine the satisfaction of tourists towards Mae Fa Lung Garden, Chiang Rai Province, in order to determine the real satisfaction of the both Thai and foreigner tourists. The finding from the

research could be used as a basic information for formulating the proper management plan for Mae Fa Luang Garden, and will lead to develop the garden to be the famous recreational area in the international level.

Objectives of the study were to determine the satisfaction level and factors affecting the satisfaction of tourists toward Mae Fa Luang Garden, Mae Fa Luang District, Chiang Rai Province.

Research Conceptual Framework

1. Independent variables were gender, age, education, occupation, income, domicile, group tour size, number of visits, tourism comprehension.

2. Dependent variables were satisfaction of tourists towards Mae Fa Luang Garden.

Research Hypothesis

The tourists with different gender, age, education, occupation, income, domicile, group tour size, number of visiting and tourism comprehension have indifferent satisfaction towards Mae Fa Luang Garden.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials

Questionnaire was used as a tool for the data collection. The designed questionnaire had been rectified by the 3 experts and the pre-test was then carried out by interviewing 30 sampled tourists visiting the targeted area. The obtained data was tested for its validity representing in term of Cronbrach's

alpha coefficient, and for its obtained value sufficient to be accepted (0.948).

Data Collection

The data was collected by using the questionnaire interviewed the sampled tourists with their ages no less than 15 years. The field survey was undertaken during November 2005-January 2006.

Sampling Scheme

The total number of tourists visiting Mae Fa Luang Garden in 2004 was 199,619 (Doi Tung Development Project Office, 2004). Thus, the desired optimal sample size could be computed by employing the Yamane formula as follows (Yamane, 1973).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

given:

N = population size

n = optimal sample size

e = sampling error (0.05)

The obtained sample size was 400. The accidental sampling method was employed for the study.

Data Analysis

1. The levels of tourism comprehension could be evaluated by using 10 questions. The regulation for recording the tourism comprehension score: correct answer = 1 and incorrect answer = 0. Those have their scores over than the mean indicated that their tourism comprehension were at a high level while the rest which their scores

were lower than the mean indicated that their tourism comprehension were at a low level.

2. The evaluation of satisfaction toward Mae Fa Luang Garden was carried out by using questions with Likert's scale including 5 levels as follows. Satisfaction level Score (positive question)

very high	5
high	4
moderate	3
low	2
very low	1

The obtained score could be used for describing the satisfaction level of the tourists which was divided into 5 levels (classes) as follows.

Class interval of scores

$$= \frac{(\text{Maximum} - \text{Minimum})}{\text{No. of Classes}}$$

$$= \frac{5 - 1}{5} = 0.8$$

Hence:

1.00-1.80	=	very low
1.81-2.60	=	low
2.61-3.40	=	moderate
3.41-4.20	=	high
4.21-5.00	=	very high

The satisfaction towards Mae Fa Luang Garden could be classified into 5 aspects, namely, place, nature interpretation, facility and personnel, totally 20 questions. Thus, the maximum and minimum scores will be 100 and 20 respectively. Hence, class interval of

the score in each satisfaction level could be computed as follows.

$$\text{Class interval of scores} = \frac{(100 - 20)}{5} = 16$$

<u>Score class</u>	<u>Satisfaction level</u>
20.0-36.0	very low
36.1-52.0	low
52.1-68.0	moderate
68.1-84.0	high
84.1-100	very high

3. The obtained data were analyzed by employing the statistical software package and representing the statistical values in term of frequency, percent, mean maximum and minimum. In order to determine factors affecting satisfaction of tourists toward Mae Fa Laung Garden, the proposed hypothesis will be tested by t-test and F-test methods, and with the given significance level of $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General information of tourist

Results of the study indicated that the respondents were female 52 percent and male 48 percent. Age of the most was ranging from 21-30 years (41.5%), the nexts were 31-40, 41-50, less than 20 and over than 50 years or 25.0, 14.0, 13.8 and 5.7 percent, respectively. The mean, maximum and minimum of the respondents age were 31.37, 64 and 15 years, respectively. Most educational levels was bachelor degree and higher, (71%), followed by pre-university or equivalence (14.5%),

secondary school or equivalence (8.5%), primary school (4.5%) and illiterate (1.5%) respectively. Most occupation was private company employees (25.3%), followed by government official (25%), student (19.7%), casual labour (8.7%), agriculture (8.5%), government enterprise official (7.0%) and others (5.8%) respectively. The monthly income of most tourist was 5,000 baht and lower (30%), followed by 5,001-1,000 baht (24.8%), over than 20,000 baht (15.4%), 10,001-15,000 baht (15.0%) and 15,001-20,000 baht (14.8%) respectively, while the mean, maximum and minimum of monthly income were 13,350.91, 100,000 and 2,000 baht, respectively. The domicile most tourists was in the various provinces of Central and East region (37.81%), followed by the North region (30.75%), Northeast region (21.5%) and South region (10%). The member number of the most group tour was 1-5 persons (30.5%), followed by 6-10 (22%), 16-20 (19.8%), 11-15 (14.8%) and over than 20 persons (13%), and the mean, maximum and minimum of group tour members were 24.18, 300 and 1 person, respectively. Most tourists had never visited Mae Fa Luang Garden before (59.8%), followed by those who had ever visited once (23.4%) and 3 times or over (16.8) respectively, the mean, maximum and minimum of the visiting times were 1.2, 12 and 1, respectively. The average score of tourism comprehension was 8.78 with the most (72.5%) having tourism comprehension at the high level.

Satisfaction Levels of Tourists towards Mae Fa Luang Garden

The determination of satisfaction levels of tourists towards Mae Fa Luang Garden were carried out by setting 20 questions related to the provision services in 4 aspects, namely, place, nature interpretation, facility and personnel. The number of questions in each aspect was 5 equally. Results of the study indicated that the satisfaction toward place was at a very high level. The satisfaction levels toward place by item indicated that the top 2 items were that the garden was appropriately decorated to be the aesthetic recreational area and the location of Mae Fa Luang Garden was proper, with their average score of 4.43 and 4.37, respectively. While the average score of satisfaction toward the place in term of durability was the lowest at 4.20.

The satisfaction towards nature interpretation in a macro point of view was at a high level. Moreover, the determination of satisfaction level toward nature interpretation by item indicated that the top 2 items were the satisfaction toward the sign for information provision was proper and sufficiency, and the sign location was proper and with their average score of 4.02 and 4.01, respectively. While the average score of satisfaction toward the prohibited sign was the lowest at 3.86.

The satisfaction towards the available facility was at high level. The determination of satisfaction level toward facility by item indicated the top 2 items were that the

location of service center was proper and harmonized with the environment, and the restroom was clean and sufficient, with their average score of 4.06 and 3.89. While the average score of satisfaction toward parking in term of proper and sufficiency was the lowest at 3.67.

The satisfaction towards personnel was at a high level. The determination of satisfaction level toward personnel by item indicated that the top 2 items were Mae Fa Luang Garden staff were dressed well and polite and they converse with beautiful speech, with their average score of 4.16 and 4.14, respectively. While the average score of the satisfaction toward the official consultation for the tourists was the lowest at 3.96.

The distribution of tourists by satisfaction levels towards Mae Fa Luang Garden in a macro point of view could be classified into 4 groups, namely, high (51%), followed by very high (36%), moderate (12.8%) and very low (0.3%), with the average score of the satisfaction of 81. This indicated that the satisfactions towards this recreational area was at high level.

Hypothesis Test

Results from hypothesis test indicated that factors significantly affecting satisfaction of tourists towards Mae Fa Luang Garden were age, occupation, domicile and group tour size, while the non-significant factors were gender, education, income, number of

visiting and tourism comprehension (Table 1).

Table 1 showed that factors significantly affecting satisfaction of tourists towards the recreational area was age. The tourist age was divided into 5 classes namely (1) not over than 20 years (2) 21-30 years (3) 31-40 years (4) 41-50 years and (5) over than 50 years. Results of the study indicated that the number of tourists by such age classes were 55, 166, 100, 56 and 23 respectively. In addition, the average of satisfaction score was 84.70, 77.92, 82.84, 82.25 and 83.56 respectively. Based on the F-test with the given significant level ($p < 0.05$), it indicated that the difference in tourists age significantly affected the difference in their satisfaction level toward the recreational area, this harmonized with the study of Wichaikul (2002). Thus, tourists with different age should have different satisfaction toward Mae Fa Luang

Garden. In addition, the analysis by each couple of 2 age classes were also conducted. The result indicated that the tourists with their ages ranging from 21-30 years was significantly different from that of the other age classes, difference because the tourists with age 21-30 years prefer to spend their leisure time for indoor recreation rather than natural outdoor recreation. Thus the satisfaction of the tourists in this age class was lower than all of the other age classes.

Occupation of the respondents was classified into 7 categories namely (1) agriculture (2) student (3) trade (4) government official (5) casual labour (6) private company employee and (7) government enterprise official. The results of the study indicated that the distributed number of tourists by such occupations was 28, 79, 34, 100, 35, 101 and

Table 1. Factors affecting satisfaction of tourists towards Mae Fa Luang Garden

Independent variable	t-test	F-test	P-Value
1. Gender	-0.868		0.386
2. Age		5.921	0.000*
3. Education		0.576	0.565
4. Occupation		2.624	0.017*
5. Income		1.192	0.314
6. Domicile		5.797	0.001*
7. Group tour size		5.268	0.000*
8. Number of visiting		1.811	0.165
9. Tourism comprehension	1.724		0.086

Remark: * significant level at $p < 0.05$

23 persons, and their average satisfaction score were 84.96, 82.21, 79.55, 82.80, 79.40, 79.55 and 75.39 respectively. F-test was employed for the hypothesis test and with the given significance level of $p < 0.05$. The study indicated that the tourists who were engaged in different occupation had significant different satisfaction toward the recreational area. Thus, the setting null hypothesis was rejected. Result of the study was harmonized with the study of Wichaikul (2002) and Puapadung (2003) due to the fact that Mae Fa Luang Garden was established for people to memorize the merit of Somdet Phra Srinagarindra Boromrajajonani for transforming the narcotic production areas in the previous time to be recreational area, flower garden, fruit orchard and cultivated area of various variety of temperate plants, which generated a lot of incomes to the local people. Hence, the satisfaction level of the tourists who were engaged in agriculture was higher than those who were engaged in the other occupations. In addition, the analysis for each couple of the 2 occupation was also carried out. The study indicated that the tourists who were engaged in agriculture was different from each other. For student group, their satisfaction was different from each other except for the government official group. Moreover, the satisfaction of trader group was different from each other, except group of labour. For the group of private company employee, their satisfaction was different from each other except for the labour group. In addition, the government enterprise official group, their

satisfaction was deficient from each other, mainly due to the duration of leisure time, and type of duty were absolutely different among such occupation groups.

The domicile of respondents was classified into 4 categories namely (1) North (2) Northeast (3) Central and East and (4) South. The study indicated that the distributions of tourist number by such domiciles were 123, 86, 151 and 40, and with their satisfaction scores of 80.00, 85.27, 79.27 and 81.55 percent respectively. F-test was employed for the hypothesis test which was provided the probability value of .001, indicating that the difference in domicile significantly affected the difference in the satisfactions towards this recreational area. Thus, the setting null hypothesis were rejected because the satisfaction level towards the recreational area of tourists from the Northeast region which is the area of the most drought, was higher than the others. In addition, the data analysis by each couple of domicile category indicated that the satisfaction of the Northeast tourists was different from the satisfaction of the tourists who came from the North, and Central and East.

The group tour size was divided into 5 categories namely (1) 1-5 (2) 6-10 (3) 11-15 (4) 16-20 and (5) over than 20. The distributions of tourist number by such group tour sizes were 122, 88, 59, 79 and 52 and with their satisfaction scores of 78.87, 78.67, 82.49, 82.65 and 85.84 respectively. The hypothesis tested by the F-test showed the

probability value of 0.000, indicating that the difference in group tour size significantly affected the difference in the satisfaction toward the recreational area, which harmonized with the study of Limchun (2005). This was mainly due to the fact the tourists who had the similar preference preferred to formulate the group tour in order to practice the various amusing recreational activities together. Moreover, the data analysis by each couple of the category of group tour sizes showed that the satisfaction of tourists with the group tour size of 1-5 and 6-10 was significantly different from those who belonged to the group tour size of 11-15, 16-20 and over than 20, this was mainly due to the fact that the group tour with a larger in size was taken care cared by the recreational staffs better than the smaller ones, leading to different satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

General Information of Tourists

The most tourists visited Mae Fa Luang Garden were female with their average age of 31.37 years. Most of them graduated bachelor's degree and higher (71%), single (56.3%), private company employee (25.3%) and with average salary of 13,351 baht. Most of their domiciles were in Central and Eastern Region (37.8%), and this was the first trip of the most (59.8%). Most of them had a good comprehension about tourism (72.5%).

Satisfaction Level toward Mae Fa Luang Garden

The satisfaction of the most tourists towards the this recreational area was at a high level. The satisfaction levels by aspects were as followed: (1) the satisfaction toward the place was at a very high level (2) the satisfactions towards the nature interpretation was at a high level (3) the satisfaction toward the provided facility was at a high level and (4) the satisfaction toward the personnel was also at a high level.

Hypothesis test

Factors affecting satisfaction of tourists towards Mae Fa Luang Garden were age, occupation, domicile and group tour size.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Results of the study provided guidelines for recommendations as follows.

1. The study on socio-economic conditions of tourists indicated that the most tourists were private company employees, their domiciles were in the Central and East, thus the public relations program should be implemented more in the other regions especially in the South because in the former time the tourists from this region was the minority. Moreover the marital status of the most tourists were single. In order to increase the visitors the family extension program, the cheap entrance fee for the family group tour should be, therefore, carried out.

2. The satisfaction level of tourists toward this recreational area by aspect could be used as a basic information for the important recommendation as follows:

2.1 Place:

1) The area of Mae Fa Luang Garden is rather small, hence it could not be carried a large number of tourists.

2) The various constructions in this recreational area were not durability, thus the new durable constructions are needed.

2.2 Nature interpretation: The available prohibited signs were not clear and insufficient, hence the number of prohibited signs written in both Thai and English should be improved.

2.3 Facility:

1) Quantity of litter-bin was insufficient, hence the number of litter-bin should be increased and entirely scattered in the recreational area.

2) The entrance fee was expensive. Hence, the entrance fee should be discounted for the low income people and children.

3) The parking area was rather limited. Hence, the additional parking area should be constructed. Moreover, service cars should be provided for the tourists.

2.4 Personnel:

1) The security guards were insufficient. Hence, the number of security guards should be increased and entirely scattered in the risky points especially at the entrance gate.

2) The staffs for consultation were insufficient and lacked of foreign

language skill causing difficulty in communication with the foreign tourists.

3) The staffs to facilitate tourists were insufficient, so that the number of personnel in this section should be increased.

3. Factors significantly affecting satisfaction of tourists toward this recreational area were age, occupation, domicile and group tour size. In order to formulate the proper management plan as well as the public relation program, the mentioned factors should be examined.

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