



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**VISITORS' EVALUATION OF FACILITIES AND SERVICES
AT TAMAN PERTANIAN MALAYSIA, SHAH ALAM, SELANGOR**

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T FH 2006 5



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By

NOR FAEZA BINTI BAHARUDDIN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Master of Science**

November 2006



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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November 2006

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Faculty : Forestry

The purpose of this study was to carry out an evaluation of product attributes in Taman Pertanian Malaysia, Shah Alam. This study answered three objectives namely; to examine visitors' expectation and performance evaluation of the parks' attribute, to evaluate visitors' satisfaction of product attributes based on Importance Performance Analysis, and to identify the relationship of the product attributes and overall satisfaction of the visitors. The questionnaires were distributed to visitors selected conveniently at Taman Pertanian Malaysia. A total of 253 questionnaires were completed by the samples involved from which information such as the expectation and performance on selected attributes, demographic characteristics and trip/visiting characteristics were obtained. Overall, this study showed that most of the visitors indicated their dissatisfaction concerning their visit to Taman Pertanian Malaysia. The findings also revealed



that three items fell into satisfied attributes (positive disconfirmation), no items in indifferent attributes (confirmation) and fourteen items fell into dissatisfied attributes (negative disconfirmation). Among the 17 attributes that were grouped under the ‘facilities’, ‘services’ and ‘information’ concepts, 82% of the attributes fell into ‘concentrate here’ quadrant and these attributes has need most priorities in terms of improvement. The rest of the attributes were rated as ‘good work’. Apparently, safety and security of visitors attribute were placed high on the visitors list of importance. The model used to evaluate the product attributes in this study proves to be a valid method of measuring recreational satisfaction. Based on the results obtained from this study, it is surmised that the findings and information be appropriately used as guidelines for the management board of the park to help increase visitors’ satisfaction.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**PENILAIAN PELAWAT TERHADAP KEMUDAHAN DAN SERVIS
DI TAMAN PERTANIAN MALAYSIA, SHAH ALAM, SELANGOR**

Oleh

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Tujuan kajian ini dijalankan adalah untuk menilai atribut-atribut produk yang terdapat di dalam Taman Pertanian Malaysia, Shah Alam. Kajian ini menjawab tiga objektif iaitu; untuk menyelidik kehendak dan keadaan sebenar (*expectation and performances*) pelawat semasa menilai atribut-atribut produk yang terdapat di taman, untuk menilai kepuasan pelawat terhadap atribut-atribut produk berdasarkan kepada *Analisi Important Performance*, dan untuk mengenalpasti hubungan di antara atribut-atribut produk dengan kepuasan keseluruhan. Borang kaji selidik telah diedarkan secara pensemplan mudah kepada pelawat-pelawat di Taman Pertanian Malaysia. Sebanyak 253 borang kaji selidik telah dipulangkan kepada pengkaji di hujung tempoh dimana maklumat-maklumat seperti jangkaan dan keadaan sebenar (*expectation and performances*), atribut-atribut produk pelancongan yang dipilih, ciri-ciri demografik dan ciri-ciri lawatan telah



diperolehi. Secara keseluruhannya, pelawat-pelawat tidak berpuas hati dengan lawatan mereka ke Taman Pertanian Malaysia. Maklumat yang diperolehi menunjukkan bahawa 3 item dikategorikan sebagai atribut berpuas hati (*positive disconfirmation*), tiada item dalam atribut tiada perbezaan (*confirmation*) dan 14 item dikategorikan dalam atribut tidak berpuas hati (*negative disconfirmation*). Diantara 17 atribut-atribut produk yang telah dikategorikan ke dalam tiga konsep iaitu 'kemudahan', 'servis' dan 'maklumat', 82% dari atribut-atribut produk itu tergolong dalam kuadran 'memerlukan perhatian' (*concentrate here*) dan atribut-atribut produk ini merupakan tumpuan utama bagi pembaikan. Atribut-atribut produk yang lain pula tergolong dalam kuadran 'kerja yang baik' (*good work*). Dapat dilihat bahawa keselamatan dan jaminan pelawat diletakkan sebagai atribut yang utama di dalam tahap kepentingan mereka. Model yang digunakan untuk menilai atribut-atribut produk dalam kajian ini mengesahkan bahawa ia adalah langkah yang berkesan untuk memperolehi keputusan yang meyakinkan. Berdasarkan keputusan yang diperolehi dari kajian ini, adalah dirumuskan dan digalakkan kepada pihak pengurusan taman untuk menggunakan maklumat kajian ini sebagai panduan kepada pihak pengurusan untuk meningkatkan kadar kepuasan pelawat.

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I certify that an Examination Committee met on 8th September 2006 to conduct the final examination of Nor Faeza Bt Baharuddin on her degree thesis entitled “Visitors’ Evaluation of Facilities and Services at Taman Pertanian Malaysia, Shah Alam, Selangor” in accordance to with Universiti Putra Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Putra Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Apparently, parks have come a long way in playing a role in human lives since the early days, especially circa late eighteenth and the nineteenth century, yet with the same goal in mind. Arguably, one of the most significant purposes of a park is to provide an open, vast space of greenery that enables its patrons to unwind in the serenity of the park (Adlin, Mohd. Fadzil and Azizi, 2000). The need for parks is imperative in providing the proper recreational spot for residents living in urban areas. Enriching the lives of urban residents is an important component for not only parks provide greenery of trees and flowers amidst the grayness of concrete of the cities, but parks would also be a perfect place for families to come together and socialize with one another. Thus parks not only serve as a place for physical exercises or recreational purposes alone but also offer a perfect and pleasant experience for those who seek peace and tranquility from the hectic daily routines of the city life.

Wan Sabri (2002) pointed out that a major goal of park and recreation agencies is to contribute to an individual's satisfaction. It concerns with delivering satisfying experience in terms of consumers' needs and expectation. Manning (1999) also



states that a primary goal of parks and recreational agencies is to provide quality opportunities from which users derive satisfaction. This goal stems from the belief that users who are highly satisfied on their first visit have a high likelihood of becoming a regular visitor or loyal users. They tend to share and convey their experience that they had to their peers and continue to support the agency that had provided that expected content. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985, 1988) also stated that service agencies in particular tend to focus on customer satisfaction as a way to differentiate themselves from their competitors with the delivery of high quality service.

Nowadays, having the opportunity to get away from all the rapid growth of technologies, strenuous work hours and time constraints is highly valued by most Malaysians. More and more people are trying to get as much leisure time as they can to fit into their busy schedule. This is exactly where recreational areas and parks play a vital role in providing just the right place for this group of people to relax and ease their minds of trouble. Valuing health, family togetherness and environmental education, the public understands the importance of recreation to the individuals, their family members and the society as a whole (DeGraff, Jordan and DeGraff, 1999). This has been as when there has been a notable rise in the awareness level where the citizens and government alike do not emphasize on the academic part of the education system only but also has put stronger emphasis on co-curriculum activities such as outdoor recreation as well (Bernama, 2005). Thus, people are willing to spend their money and time on the activities where

they will receive satisfaction and benefits from the experience and not only the delivery of the product where they exercise their activities. They do not buy the product per se, but purchase the benefits that are derived from the activities.

According to Stancliff (2002) these benefits includes:

1. The fulfillment of the need for social interaction with others
2. Self-explanatory and satisfaction of personal achievement
3. Seclusion that offer temporary escape from daily routines
4. Acquisition of knowledge or satisfies curiosities
5. Happiness

Additionally, the Ministry of Tourism is hoping to meet the government's target, as it is enumerated in the 8th Malaysian Plan, that is to attract 20 million tourist annually to Malaysia by the year 2010 (Ooi and Genesan, 2004). The ministry has urged various tourism agencies involved to expedite their steps taken in enlarging the tourist count (Ooi and Genesan, 2004). Apparently, parks and recreation agencies are involved in mutually beneficial partnership with tourism. These reason have become a significant purpose and opportunity for parks and recreation agencies to seek new ideas to accelerate the development, improvement and their planning strategies to provide high quality tourism product, as they are likely to become major assets contributing to the nation's economic growth in the future where the demand is set to be higher and also of the rise of potential competitors.

1.2 Problem Statement

To deliver a satisfying experience is the main root aimed by recreation and park agencies. Tourists' satisfaction is essentially central to any destination management for it greatly influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services and the decision to return (Kozark & Rimmington, 2000). Crompton (1991) also stated that satisfied visitors are motivated to make repeated visits to the places that met their expectations and may convey the satisfaction by means of introducing them to others. However, it is wise to keep in mind whether or not such practice and steps taken are being effectively implemented. This is one of the reasons why many parks that started out well, are no longer as frequently filled with patrons.

One such case is the Taman Pertanian Malaysia, which accordingly, will be the focus of this current study. The majority of visitors to Shah Alam would have known about the attractiveness and beauty of Taman Pertanian Malaysia. The park was the most popular recreational site in Selangor and was a crowd puller in the early nineties. It is no surprise that the park once received an award of excellence for government agencies in the tourism industry (Hariyati, 2000). However things have changed over the years. It is discouraging to know that the place now lacks visitors. Although the park still maintain its luscious greenery like it was before, visitation to the park has declined by 18% (Nurul Hazreen, 2001) every year over the last ten years as shown in Table and Figure 1.

Table 1: The number of visitors to Taman Pertanian Malaysia from 1993 to 2003

Year	Type of visits		Total
	Day visit	Stay overnight	
1993	398, 693	31,169	429,862
1994	271, 453	35,945	307,398
1995	278, 197	40,842	319,039
1996	251, 238	37,358	288,596
1997	195, 296	26,930	222,226
1998	160, 070	21,582	181,652
1999	150, 865	0	150,865
2000	126, 263	0	126,263
2001	110, 201	0	110,201
2002	NA	NA	108, 585
2003	NA	NA	91, 945
Total	-	-	3,395,310

Source: Taman Pertanian Malaysia, 2004.

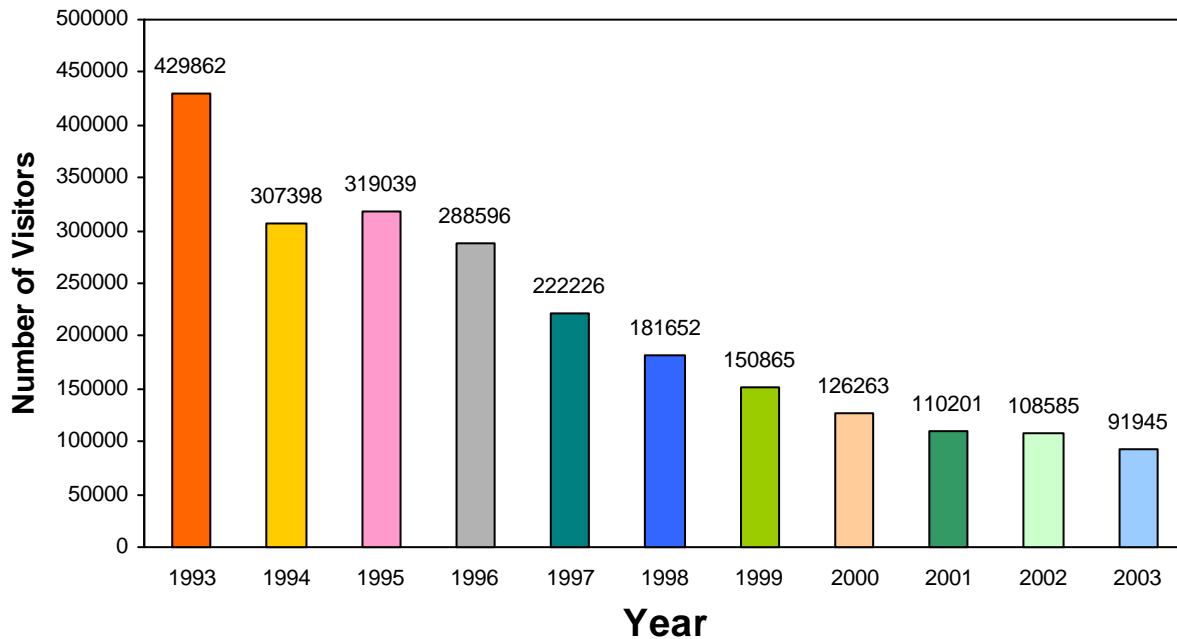


Figure 1: Declining Visitation Pattern from 1993 to 2003.

Realizing this worrying fact, evaluation of satisfaction on the existing parks are considered a necessary action in order to ensure the parks' tourism products meet the visitors' expectation and satisfaction. The result and recommendation of the study could hopefully attract more visitors to utilize the park, so it could once again regain its center of attraction. Basically, Taman Pertanian Malaysia still continues the restoration and conservation of its natural resources and this park reflects the tropical greenery, vibrant colors and cultural patterns that portray the country rich heritage. It also plays an important role in the society through its benefits. It would be a waste to society to allow something so valuable then and still is, to go disregarded and neglected.

1.3 Objectives

General Objective

The general objective of this study is to carry out a satisfaction evaluation of product attributes at Taman Pertanian Malaysia, Shah Alam in order to provide essential information for the management.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine visitors' expectation and performance evaluation of the parks' attribute.
2. To evaluate visitors' satisfaction by using Importance Performance Analysis.
3. To identify the relationship of the product attributes and overall satisfaction of the visitors.

1.4 Significance of Study

The problems faced by Taman Pertanian Malaysia are also faced by quite a few other recreational and park agencies within Malaysia. The outcome of the study is to assist not only Taman Pertanian Malaysia but is also hoped to be offered as a reference and guideline to other existing and new agencies that face the same situation and importantly to improve them towards fulfilling visitors' needs.

The study is an approach to know how well the destination management has been catering to the needs of its visitors these past years. Evaluation of visitors' expectations and performances of product attributes, hopefully will enables the park management to focus on the product attribute and to determine features that are important, which areas need most improvement, to maintain or enhance their strength and improve on their weaknesses as stated by the visitors, so they could take remedial actions served their visitors better.

This study also used actual data (contextual/situational selection data) as opposed to the use of contrived data. These datas were obtained first hand from actual visitors who visited Taman Pertanian Malaysia. Therefore the result of this study may contribute to expanding the knowledge about the park visitors at an actual visiting stage and provide a basis for further research in the area.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

As the same concept of retail store, which sells household items or groceries alike, parks and recreational agencies also offer the same satisfying outcome of a product. In a more formal note, product may be defined as ‘a set of satisfying items contributing to the human life’. (Chisnall, 1997). Differing from purchasable items that are sold in stores, a tourism product is utilized through the service it provides, rising to the expected satisfactory level and more of the physical aspect of the tourism product.

Since expectations and requirements of the public are changing and competitors are increasing, a destination management should be able to improve their products and find alternatives in order to meet current and future demands. DeGraff et al. (1999) added that park, recreational and leisure service professionals have a responsibility to learn as much as possible about the entire constituents and understand what customers want and expect from their organizations. Tourism is very much a ‘people’ business by which it handles directly, customers and people that come to them (Ferguson, 2005). As most American businesses accord the measurement of customer satisfaction as high priority, it is a strategic initiative to



understand customers' needs and then provide the products to maximize customer satisfaction (Vavra, 1997). It is formalized that it is an objective tool for assessing how destination management treats people.

One of the most commonly used theory in studying user satisfaction is the expectancy-disconfirmation theory (Huh, 2002). Expectancy-disconfirmation theory was developed by Oliver (1980) and he used Helson's adaption theory of 'contrast effect'¹. Based on this theory, it suggests that expectations fix a standard of performance, providing a frame of reference for customers' evaluative judgments. Satisfaction was then viewed as a function of the baseline effect of satisfaction, modified by perceived disconfirmations. As described by Oliver (1980), prior to purchase, consumer form expectation of the product or service. Then, purchasing and consumption of the product or service reveals the consumer's beliefs about the perceived performance. The perceived performance either positively disconfirms or negatively disconfirm the expectation. In Oliver's theory, expectations serve as an anchor or baseline for which customers' satisfactions are measured.

¹The 'contrast effect', as developed by Helson's (1964) in his work on adaptation level theory, suggest that people will tend to exaggerate the difference between stimuli or options that are slightly different from their own, current opinions and stands.

