

TOURIST PERCEPTIONS REGARDING SERVICE AT RECREATIONAL PARKS: EVIDENCE FROM QUINTANA ROO, MÉXICO

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on tourist parks, which have attracted enormous attention for their business potential, as well as their attractiveness to tourists who visit the state of Quintana Roo, offering as they do a variety of products and services that meet the needs of all market segments. The present research aims to understand and assess the perceptions of tourists visiting Quintana Roo in light of the “model of the flower of service,” and its applicability to recreational parks like Xcaret, Xel-há and Xplor. The study is a descriptive cross, using factor analysis with which to detect complementary, value added services, as well as factors which significantly impact the perception of visitors, so as to advance development of new marketing strategies.

JEL: M3, M31, M39

KEYWORDS: Marketing Services, Flower of Service, Perception, Recreational Park

INTRODUCTION

Mexico has a rich diversity of historic, cultural and natural attractions, ranking tenth in international tourist arrivals and twenty-fourth in earnings from international tourism (WTO, 2012). Quintana Roo is a state in Mexico whose income is derived mainly from tourism. In 2011, the state captured the equivalent of 4,341.07 million U.S dollars, which is 37.2% of all foreign currency entering the country from tourism. That same year, there was an influx of 7,850,161 tourists, representing an increase of 4.4% compared to 2010, with 7,518,458 tourists. The economic benefit from tourism in 2011 was 5,811.07 million U.S. dollars, an increase of 5.2% compared to 2010, which had seen 5,522.85 million U.S. dollars in revenues from tourism (Secretaría de Turismo del Estado de Quintana Roo, 2012).

The increasing incidence of visitors to Quintana Roo suggests that tourism service providers have reliable information which enables them to measure tourists' perception of services offered; continuously improve processes and the competency of staff providing services; assess the level of value added, in tangibles and intangibles, as perceived by the visitor; assess the degree of customer loyalty generated along with the motivation to encourage others to live the experience and finally, to create various marketing strategies to improve indicators of competitiveness of the organizations.

Among the wide range of tourist services in Quintana Roo, one encounter high level hotel infrastructure; a diversity of regional, national and international restaurants; an abundance of travel agencies; transportation of all types, including a world-class airport; and, various recreation centers. The latter are better known as recreational parks, which are characterized as touristic, social and entertainment venues. They represent an ideal choice for tourists who want to experience a full service destination for their visit, and are particularly geared to those who want to enjoy their favorite activities during their vacation. The entertainment offered by these parks can be limited to a single concept, or offer a gamut of attractions;

and, in either cases, with all services included in a single cost of entry to the site, or a la carte from a selection of products and services offered on a single territory.

Among the services offered by recreational parks in Quintana Roo one encounters services that do not constitute the principle service, but are to some extent complementary to it and may promote the perception of value of the principle service resulting in a decision to buy, or contribute ultimately to a higher degree of customer satisfaction with the main service. What is not clear is the degree to which these complementary services are in fact achieving either result, and it is to some degree this that is the subject of this study. This question appears to have been little addressed or considered in relation to recreational parks.

One of more important enterprises operating recreational park in Quintana Roo is Experiences Xcaret which is a 100% Mexican owned group, dedicated to entertainment resorts. This company has over 25 years experience operating in the state of Quintana Roo and the adjacent State of Yucatan México.

The company, Xcaret Experiences, is focused on visitor satisfaction with the support of its employees, products, facilities, hospitality, and quality care service. These recreational parks offer different services, aimed at different market segments. Xcaret Experiences Group has won awards because their business model has made them more competitive. Xcaret Experiences Group has three business units which have become a benchmark in the state of Quintana Roo: Xcaret, Xel-há and Xplor. These three parks receive a quarter (25.41%) of all tourists visiting the State of Quintana Roo (Xcaret Experiencias, 2012).

Xcaret is a majestic park by the sea, with unique activities, where you have fun discovering some of the natural and cultural assets that exist in the Mexican Republic (Xcaret Experiencias, 2012). Xel-há is an ideal place for nature lovers, with a set of inlets, lagoons, cenotes and caves that feed the sea and mix with the fresh waters of the longest underground river in the world, where you can enjoy the best snorkel experience and other land and water activities (Xcaret Experiencias, 2012). Xplor is a unique underground world, with activities that invite you to explore and rediscover your emotions and sense of nature (Xcaret Experiencias, 2012).

The objective of this research is to ascertain and assess the perception of complementary services for tourists visiting Xcaret, Xel-há and Xplor, identifying both strengths and weaknesses so that sensible marketing strategies that will enable these parks to become even more competitive can be generated. The content of this article incorporates literature covering the relevant aspects of the marketing of services, data analysis and methodology, in a descriptive approach to multivariate techniques, principally the application of factor analysis, offering the authors' results and conclusions, as well as their comments on the studies limitations and future research directions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the authors review three major constructs as follows: tourism and marketing services, perception of value, and the flower of services. Each of these constructs was assessed in this research design.

Tourism and Marketing Services

Jimenez (2005) mentions that to talk about tourism is to talk about a complex issue requiring a multi-disciplinary approach. Tourism can have reference to marketing, business, management, psychology, sociology, history, etc. (Gunn, 1994). Integrating these in a study of tourism from the point of view of recreation was challenging to the idea then prevalent that each discipline stands alone (Zipperovich, 2004).

In this study marketing is viewed as the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (AMA, 2012).

Services are economic activities that create value and provide benefits to customers, in specific times and places, as a result of producing a desired change in (or for) the recipient of the service (Lovelock, Reynoso, D'Andrea and Huete, 2004). The characteristics of services are that they are intangible, heterogeneous, and simultaneously produced and consumed (Zeithmal, Bitner and Gremler, 2009).

Services marketing may be referred to as a system of action that seeks the best way to satisfy needs and wants through exchange of a generally intangible satisfier for one of tangible value, in a mutually beneficial manner (Saldaña and Cervantes, 2000). Academic interest in service marketing arose primarily in the early eighties (Berry and Parasuraman, 1993).

This field of research includes the characteristics and quality of service, the interface between customers and service providers, internal marketing, assessment processes for customer service, and the client's role in the production and delivery of service. Among other things the concepts of marketing strategies for services have developed in response to the growth of the service industry sector.

Perception of Value

An important aspect in the marketing of services is perception, the process by which people select, organize and interpret stimuli into a meaningful and coherent whole. Perception is how you see the world (Lam, Hair and McDaniel, 2011). Companies should recognize the importance of the keys, or signals, that create customer value, identifying the important attributes and then designing signals which communicate these attributes.

The development of a map of service requires the identification of key activities involved in the production and provision of services (Shostack, 1992), through which are carried out a series of actions based on specific inputs by which the clients live their experience.

Flower of Service Model

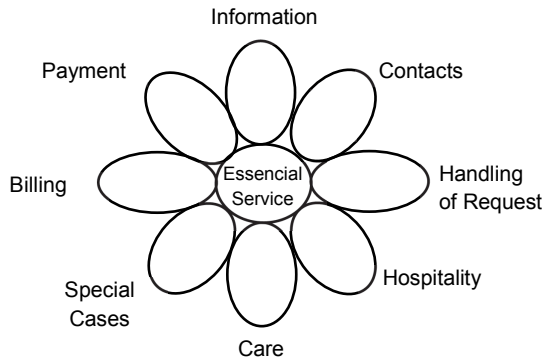
The flower or services model constitutes an excellent way to understand the totality of the service experience. In this case they are divided into two components, those services that facilitate the provision of services, or form essential parts of it; and those that increase the value of services to customers (Lovelock et al., 2004).

The eight groups that form the petals of the flower of services model (Figure 1) represent ways in which to increase the value of services as perceived by the consumer and make customer interactions with the organization easier. Of the eight petals that make up the flower of service, care should be taken with four of them; they are contact, hospitality, care, and special cases, since these elements generate value to customers. The other items, information, handling requests, billing and payment, constitute the service:

The information petal represents the customers need for relevant information such as directions to specific points, hours of operation, prices, directions for use, warnings, conditions of sale, reservation confirmations, etc. The contact petal represents direct communication with the customer such as inquiring about customer requirements, as a way to develop appropriate responses. The consultations envisioned consist mainly of immediate counseling by trained staff with answers to the question, "What would you recommend?"

The handling requests petal concerns customers ready to purchase services, and includes such things as accepting the request, placing orders and making reservations. This process should be polite, fast and accurate. The key is to minimize the time and effort required of both the company and the customer.

Figure 1: Flower of Services Model



In the model “The Flower of Services”, the center of essential service is surrounded by eight groups in the form of petals, each representing a complementary service, which augment and support the offer of the main service. Examples of these include informational services, and billing and paying for services. Others add to the perceived value of the main service such as hospitality, counseling, and attention to special needs.

The hospitality petal should reflect such things as the pleasure expressed in welcoming customers requesting the service, which could impact the level of customer satisfaction. Some other examples of hospitality are transportation, food and beverage, security, etc.

The care petal takes into account that, during a visit, customers often need help with their personal items such as child care, pet care, vehicle parking, luggage management, etc.

The special cases petal is for services that do not fall within the normal service provision, such as supplying infant needs, meeting special dietary requirements, assisting those with disabilities, handling complaints and suggestions, dealing with refunds, and repair of defective goods.

The billing petal represents a common element of service. Billing must be agile, stimulating faster payment; some examples are statements, invoices for individual transactions and announcements of the amount payable.

The payment petal is the exchange of money for service. Some companies accept payment by credit and debit card, using phone or internet. Other alternatives employed include chips, vouchers, coupons and tickets paid in advance.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In developing the research design, it was determined that the type of methodology is conclusive and descriptive, since the data is pure and generates structures. It is also transversal owing to the fact that data was collected only once. The investigation was conducted by questionnaire, consisting of a series of written questions to which subjects responded (Malhotra, 2008).

The size of the sample was applied to an infinite population since there is an annual influx of visitors among the three parks of 1, 994.929 visitors.

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}{e^2} \quad (1)$$

In which:

n = number of sample elements.

p/q = probabilities with which the phenomenon occurs, values taken from 50/50

z = critical value for the confidence level chosen; always operates at a value z^2 is therefore equal to 2

e = margin of error

The sample obtained was 123, resulting in a margin of error of 9%.

For the purpose of this study nominal scales of measurement were used; that is to say, only objects with a strict one to one correspondence were identified and classified (Malhotra, 2008). Another type of measurement used was ordinal interval, which is distinguished by the property of development of a distance scale (artificially), with which you can perform advanced statistical analysis (Hair, Bush and Ortinau, 2004). The rating scale used in the instrument for data collection was 1 to 7, corresponding to a limited number of ordered categories (Mc Daniel and Gates, 2011).

Data collection was carried out with the support of social service students during the month of October 2012: the study sample was limited to those who visited any of the three parks: Xcaret, Xel-há and Xplor. The data collection instrument meets the criteria of validity and reliability. The model of flower service has eight factors that reveal general variables of the three parks which can fluctuate, and whose variation is susceptible to measurement or observation (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2010).

Figure 2 shows the eight groups which conform to the petals of the model, “Flower of Services” from which a group of variables of a reflexive determinate type was adopted by experts for use with recreational parks such as those operated by the Experiences Xcaret Group.

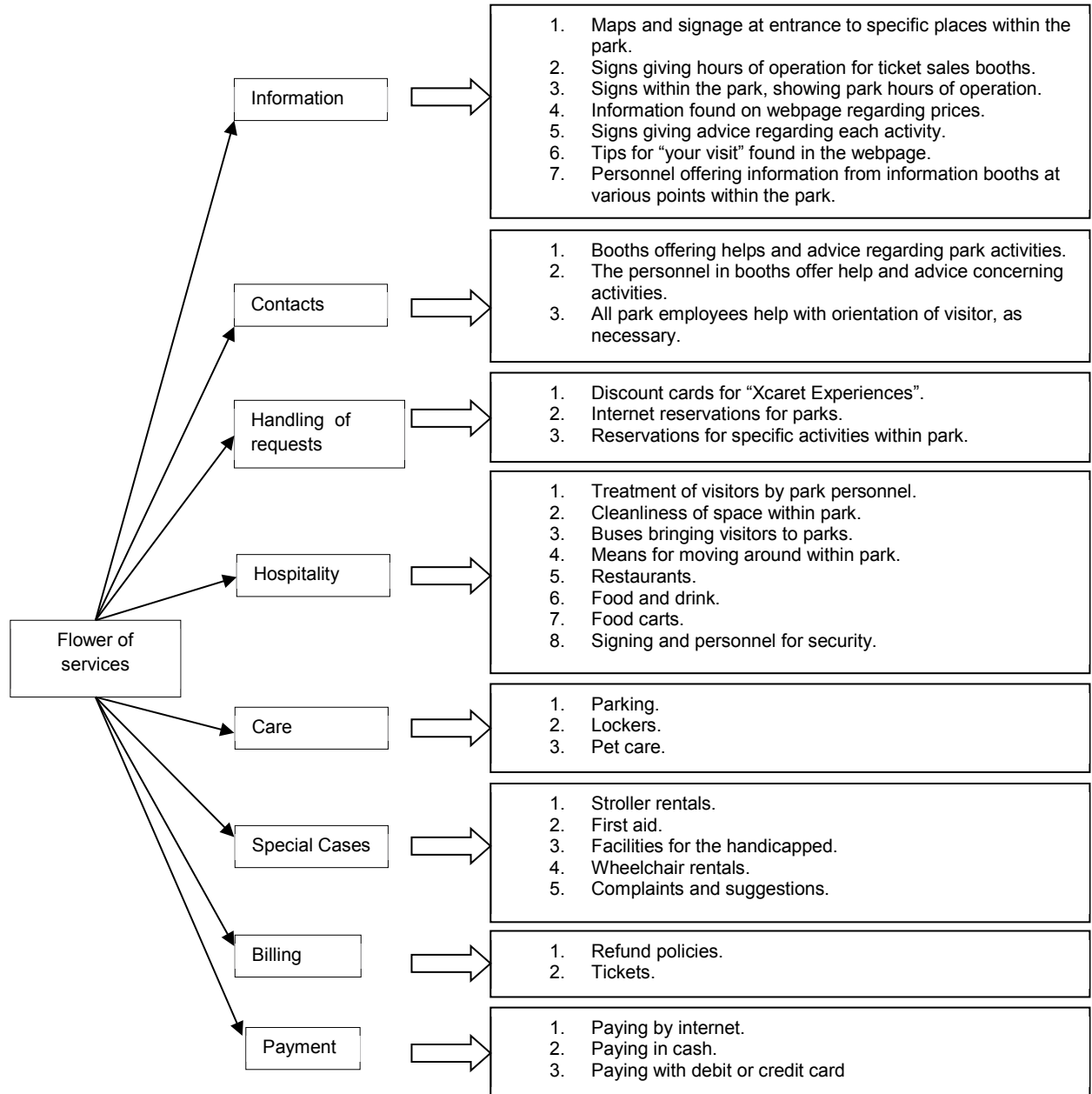
The instrument used has content validity as it complies with the degree to which the measurement represents the concept or the measured variable (Bohrnstedt, 1976). The content domain of the variables is defined based on the literature. Also the theoretical empirical model underlying the construct, the eight petals of the flower model of service, includes three stages (Carmines and Zeller, 1991), these are:

1. The theoretical relation of the concepts is established;
2. Concepts are correlated by means of factor analysis; and,
3. Empirical evidence is interpreted according to the level at which the validity of the construct is clarified.

The confidence level of the data collection instrument is the degree to which it produces consistent and coherent results (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2010). The Cronbach alpha coefficient, a measure of internal consistency was applied, and yielded a result of 0.829.

The data analysis was done using factor analysis, a technique used to simplify the many complex relationships that can exist between a set of observed variables (Pérez, 2006). To perform the analysis the statistical program SPSS (Statistical Package for the social Sciences) was used.

Figure 2: Variables in the model of flower of service, tailored to recreational parks



Source: Adapted from flower model for recreational parks service. It took the eight groups that make up the flower petal; and each petal variables are determined reflective type based recreational parks, discussed by an expert group company adapting to Xcaret Experience.

RESULTS

Characteristics of sample: 100% of respondents had visited at least one park in 2012; 49.6% were male, and 50.4% female; and the mean age was 25.35 years.

For the rest of the investigation, a factorial analysis is applied. This technique focuses on the interdependence of the variables and considers the total variability in the data in order to determine the minimum number of factors that explain the variance. (Malhotra, 2008).

To test the relevance of factorial analysis, mediation by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was performed, comparing the magnitude of the observed correlation coefficients with the magnitude of partial correlation coefficients, yielding 0.766, which indicates the relevance of this analysis.

We applied the method of principal component analysis for factor analysis. The determination of the number of factors is based on the percentage of variance. This method determines the number of factors extracted so that the accumulated percentage of variance attributable to each factor reaches a satisfactory level. In this case, it is recommended that the extracted factors explain at least 60% of the variation. The total variance in the factors discussed in Figure 2 explains 62.57% of the factors, which are then grouped into eight new factors combined, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Total Variance Explained

Components	Initial Eigenvalues			Total Variance Explained			Sum of the Square of the		
	Total	%	%	Total	Extraction		Total	Rotation	
					Variance	Accumulated		Variance	Accumulated
1	8.931	25.518	25.518	8.931	25.518	25.518	4.363	12.467	12.467
2	3.003	8.581	34.099	3.003	8.581	34.099	3.447	9.849	22.316
3	2.211	6.316	40.415	2.211	6.316	40.415	2.974	8.497	30.813
4	2.016	5.761	46.177	2.016	5.761	46.177	2.923	8.351	39.164
5	1.666	4.760	50.937	1.666	4.760	50.937	2.689	7.683	46.847
6	1.506	4.303	55.240	1.506	4.303	55.240	1.991	5.688	52.535
7	1.348	3.852	59.091	1.348	3.852	59.091	1.935	5.529	58.065
8	1.220	3.486	62.577	1.220	3.486	62.577	1.579	4.512	62.577

This table shows the principal component analysis obtained through the statistical program SPSS, in which the percentage of variance shows that 62.57% of the accumulated variance explains the eight components, the minimum number of extracted factors; that is to say, the new number of eight petals that conform to the complementary services adopted by the recreational parks.

Initially there were 35 variables forming a part of the 8 petals of the model of flower of service. The data obtained in the rotated component matrix produce a result of 26 variables grouped into 8 new factors as shown in Table 2.

This factorial matrix is important because it contains the coefficients expressing the standard variables, in terms of the factors. These coefficients represent the correlation between the factors and the variables. A coefficient with a large absolute value indicates a close relationship between that factor and the variable.

With components rotated, interpretation of the matrix was facilitated, the variables that have larger value in the same factor were identified; and by this means, the variables in the eight new factors that conform to the petals of service adopted by the recreational parks were reclassified.

According to the above analysis, the variables are reclassified as follows: Once the eight figures in Figure 3 are analyzed, an analysis of internal consistency was performed to evaluate the confidence level of a cumulative scale in which diverse responses are summed to create a total score (Malhotra, 2008).

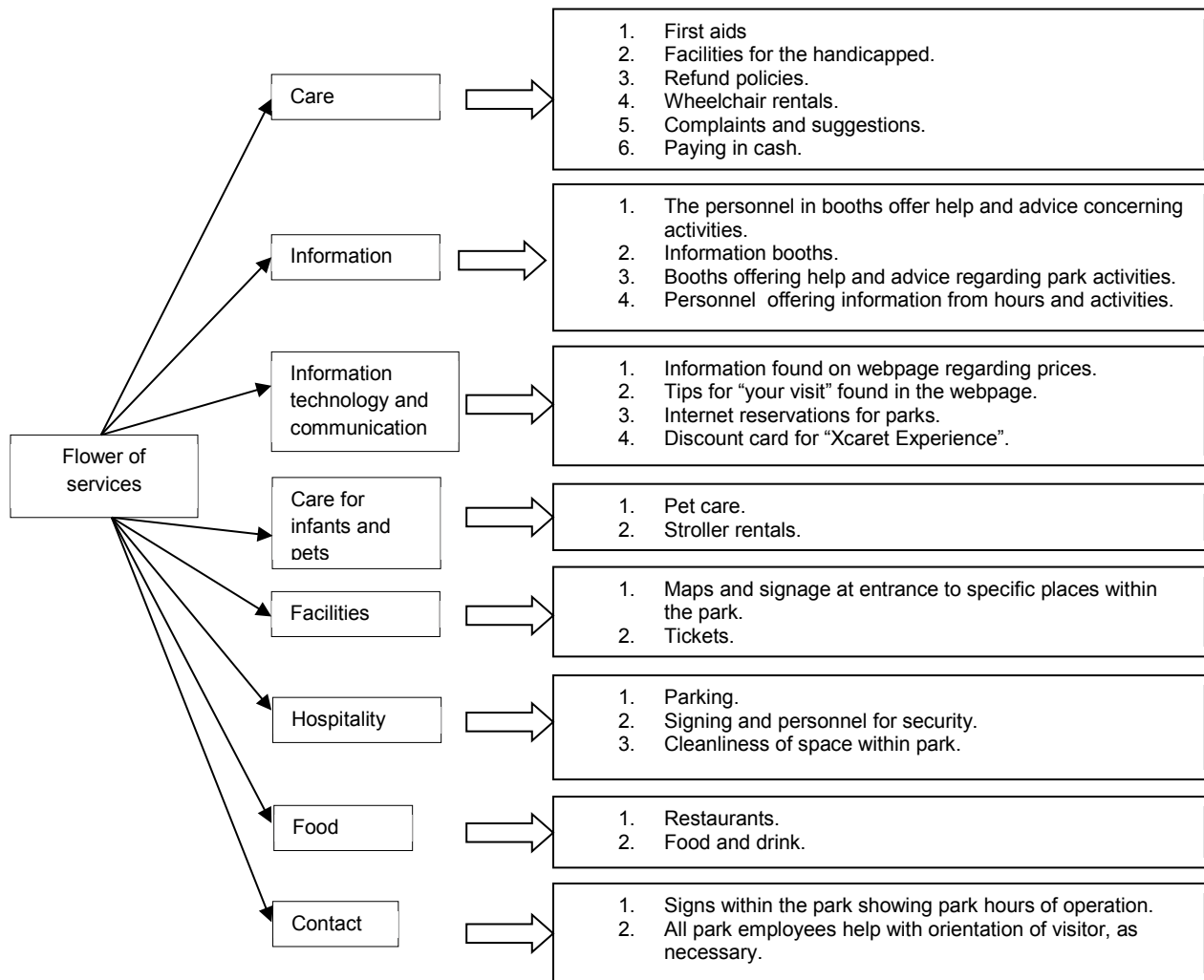
Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated to verify the confidence level; that is, the average of all the possible separate coefficients that result in different forms to separate the response elements of the scale, when the value is greater than 0.5, and the internal confidence is satisfactory, with the following result:

Table 2: Rotated Component Matrix, Factor Analysis Results

Rotated Component Matrix								
	Components							
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8
First Aids.	0.802	-0.012	0.055	0.225	0.018	0.056	0.119	0.214
Facilities for the handicapped.	0.777	0.023	0.171	0.211	-0.095	-0.033	0.038	0.107
Refund policies.	0.715	0.236	0.261	0.115	0.017	0.072	0.11	-0.174
Wheelchair rentals.	0.715	0.08	0.205	0.265	0.046	-0.163	0.152	0.057
Complaints and suggestions.	0.611	0.387	0.142	0.124	-0.053	0.036	0.007	0.144
Paying in cash.	0.553	-0.127	-0.008	-0.048	0.324	0.236	0.018	-0.069
Buses bringing visitors to parks.	0.376	0.214	0.071	0.337	0.138	0.294	-0.159	-0.349
The personnel in booths offer help and advice concerning activities.	0.072	0.742	0.023	0.332	-0.001	-0.030	0.159	-0.060
Information booths	0.188	0.724	0.248	0.045	0.004	0.130	0.139	0.192
Booths offering help and advice regarding park activities	0.191	0.712	0.200	0.143	-0.130	0.185	0.035	0.080
Personnel offering information from hours and activities	-0.094	0.614	0.007	-0.092	0.257	0.277	0.232	-0.027
Signs giving hours of operation for ticket sales booths	-0.089	0.479	0.039	-0.084	0.434	0.101	-0.137	0.419
Information found on webpage regarding prices	0.149	0.097	0.833	-0.056	0.032	-0.005	0.060	-0.076
Tips for your visit found in the webpage	0.102	0.164	0.742	0.148	0.057	0.141	0.277	0.046
Internet reservations for park	0.221	0.110	0.591	0.475	0.156	0.081	-0.099	0.094
Discount Cards for "Xcaret Experiences"	0.189	0.194	0.501	0.464	0.084	0.142	-0.097	0.103
Reservations for specific activities within park	0.271	0.177	0.497	0.480	0.335	0.025	0.003	0.066
Paying by internet	0.392	0.091	0.470	0.264	0.200	0.270	0.189	0.296
Care Pets	0.284	0.005	0.134	0.763	-0.014	-0.010	0.006	-0.066
Stroller rentals	0.387	0.126	0.123	0.588	0.175	-0.061	0.142	0.120
Food carts	0.120	0.275	0.047	0.494	0.047	0.276	0.135	0.044
Treatment of visitors by park personnel	0.357	0.147	0.014	-0.357	0.280	0.028	-0.045	0.097
Maps an signage at entrances to specific places within the park	0.129	0.245	-0.034	0.017	0.689	-0.015	0.159	-0.082
Tickets	0.126	-0.042	0.151	0.333	0.598	0.104	0.085	0.138
Lockers	-0.149	-0.229	0.114	0.064	0.581	0.159	0.096	-0.039
Means for moving around within park	0.050	0.430	0.219	-0.009	0.476	-0.098	0.354	-0.206
Signs giving advice regarding each activity	0.107	0.461	0.349	-0.085	0.461	-0.093	-0.011	0.171
Paying with debit or credit card	0.301	0.038	0.299	0.231	0.321	0.277	-0.193	0.198
Parking	-0.277	-0.042	0.146	0.104	0.203	0.717	-0.091	0.142
Signing and personnel for security	0.241	0.296	0.020	0.211	0.048	0.687	0.000	-0.006
Cleanliness of space within park	0.144	0.255	0.114	-0.310	-0.109	0.586	0.149	-0.207
Restaurants	0.042	0.128	0.124	-0.004	0.225	-0.040	0.856	0.067
Food and drinks	0.230	0.203	0.052	0.122	0.038	0.057	0.765	0.066
Signs within the park showing park hour of operation	0.300	0.077	0.061	-0.107	0.270	-0.057	0.033	0.627
All park employees help with orientation of visitor as necessary	0.058	0.126	0.047	0.212	-0.295	0.053	0.109	0.604

This table shows the results of factor analysis, with a rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. SPSS. The coefficients represent the correlation between the factor (F1, F2...F8). The Varimax Procedure is a method of rotation that reduces to the minimum the number of large value in a factor to improve the ease of interpretation of the data.

Figure 3: Reclassification of Variables



Source: Authors. Reclassification of the variables in accordance with the results of the matrix, of the rotated components. The variables shown are those for which a large value was obtained, which indicate that the eight factors conforming to the petals of service are closely related.

Special case: in this block we found that for the visitor important aspects of complementary services related to first aid, which is associated with the recreational activities offered in parks. Also, as part of the culture of fairness, variables highlight facilities for the disabled and wheelchair rental. This block closely relates to variables such as reimbursement policies, and payment for services, which are both associated with the efficiency of operational procedures.

Table 3: Analysis of Cronbach's Alpha

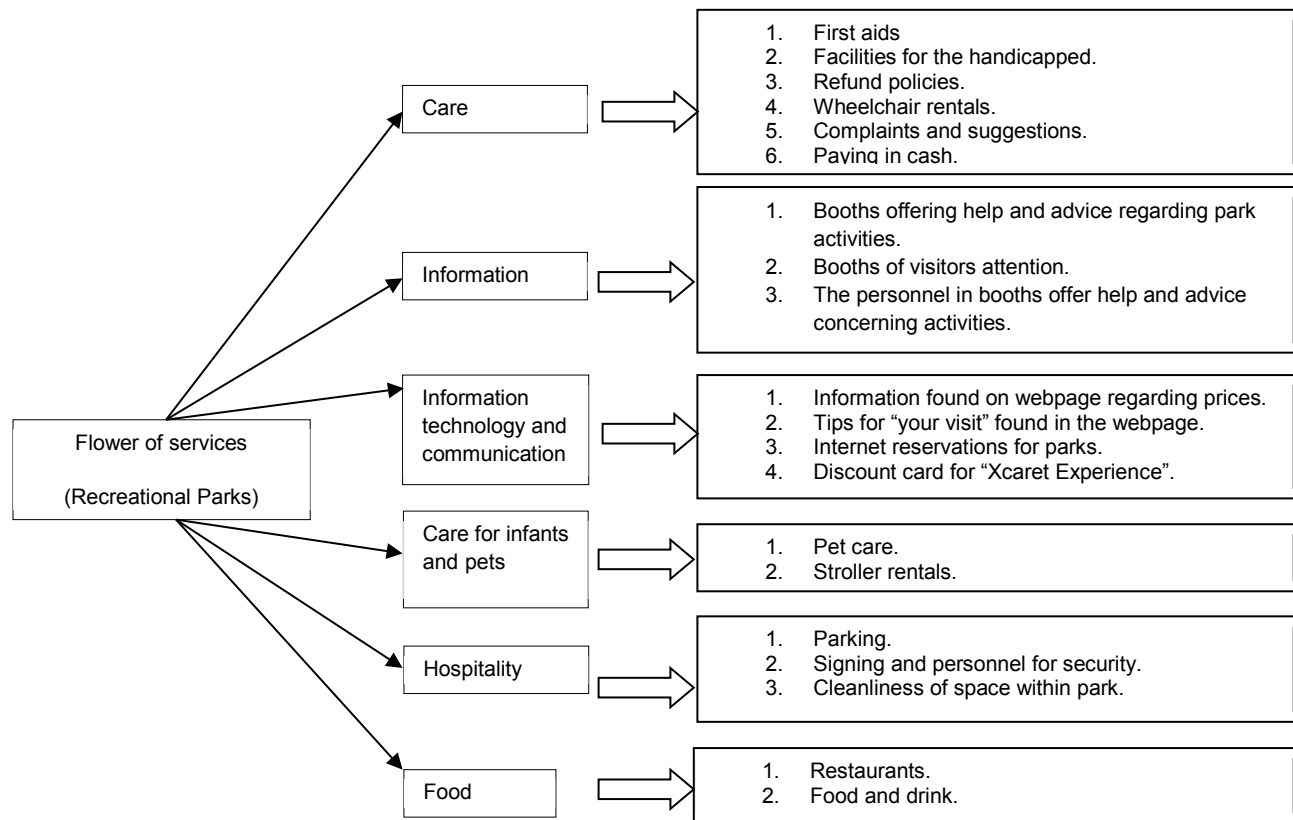
Factor	Alpha de Cronbach
Special cases	0.852
Information	0.780
Tic's	0.781
Attention to infants and pets	0.741
Facilities	0.495
Hospitality	0.565
Food	0.806
Contact	0.295

Table showing the reliability analysis of each of the factors. These coefficients fall within a range from a value of 0 to 1: Those with a confidence level of less than 0.5 are excluded from consideration in this study.

According to this analysis, the factors with highest reliability are: First, information: this factor is related to aspects of communication that the visitors receive during their stay in the park. Second, information Technology and Communication: use of the internet via the website, for pricing, use tips and reservations of different services, are important to tourist, as shown in this block. Third, care for Infants and Pets: this block shows the visitor's interest in the care of children, or pets. Fourth, as per Hospitality: an important factor as it relates to perceptions of cleanliness and safety. Finally, Food: the importance to visitors to have variety of restaurant services for consumption of food and beverages appears in this block.

Applying the results of Cronbach's Alpha to the eight new factors of the flower of services model for recreational parks, and eliminating those with a coefficient of less than 0.5, leaves the flower of services model with just six petals which represent valued adding services, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Final Classification of variables for Recreational Park



Source: Authors. The services represented by the six petals which remain of the original eight, after factor analysis, are Care, Information, Information technology, and communication, Care for infants and pets, Hospitality and Food

CONCLUSIONS

Focusing again on the objective of the present investigation, we wish to study and evaluate tourists' perceptions of the complementary services at Xcaret, Xel-ha, and Xplor recreational parks; to identify strong points and weaknesses, and generate marketing strategies that can boost the competitiveness of each of them within that sector. Analyses of the results confirm that the supplemental services forming the petals of the flower of services model vary depending on the type of the enterprise. In the case of the recreational parks studied, Xcaret, Xel-ha y Xplor, the analysis of the variables in the study of the supplemental services, after applying Cronach's alpha, leads us to regroup the variables into six groups,

rather than the original eight, the most important of which in terms of affecting tourists' perceptions of value are the following: Care (0.852), Food (0.806), Information technology and communication (0.781), and Information (0.780).

It is possible to infer that the positive impact on tourists' perceptions of value represented by the factors mentioned above is that the tourist can count on those elements to safeguard the enjoyment of his entertainment experience. It's also important that they be able to count on an adequate infrastructure for older visitors and the disabled, so that they can move about and enjoy the activities offered, along with the value they place on being able to register their complaints and suggestions regarding the services received. The parks studied are located in the Riviera Maya of Quintana Roo, widely separated from access to food and drink outside the recreational park, and it is indispensable that they provide quality services of this type, on which great weight will be placed by tourists in terms of their perception of value.

In reality, the majority of organizations count on information and communications that allow them to permeate different segments of the market with access to information about the services offered by the parks in an effort to have the visit seen as a total experience for the visitor. Likewise, it is fundamental that all employees of these parks have the capacity to offer those services which are shown to have a favorable impact on tourist perceptions; and, for this reason, develop a marketing strategy that incorporates capacity building in areas of service to clients. In sum, essential factors for the tourists ought to be in harmony with the main service offered by the parks, so that the interaction of the factors naturally generates the perception of added value.

The components with little impact on tourists' perceptions were infant care and pet care (0.741), and hospitality (0.565). Among the reasons for this small impact of offerings of infant care and pet care are that tourists often provide for these things themselves, traveling with items necessary to it, although some do not: nevertheless, the parks offer the option of renting baby carriages and provide areas for pet care, if required by the visitors. As for the component of hospitality, the tourist perceives this as part of the main service so it doesn't aggregate to increase the perceived value of the main service. Also, there are services provided that the visitor may not use at all, such as a parking lot, when he has arrived by bus, for example, and these also do not produce a higher, aggregate perceived value.

In the case of those services other than care, food, information technology and communication, and information it is recommended to develop marketing strategies that help maintain and continually improve the visitors' experience to further promote the utilization of the services offered. Even though the offer of child and pet care, and attention to the needs of those with disabilities, appear to little enhance the perception of value for visitors generally, it is important to continue to offer these services as the frequency of visits by those who might need those services rises, while continuing to analyze the variables related directly to human capital, especially those incident to capacity building and competency building, to maintain and enhance quality of service and increase competitiveness. In general it is basic to establish constant evaluation that measures the differing perceptions, to identify the most significant gaps where improvement may be needed, as well as to give an impetus to innovation in supplemental services with the object of improving the experience.

The methodology adopted allows us to perform a deep analysis and reorganize the variables that form a part of the theory of the flower of services model so as to provide a more certain explication of the reality under study. On the other hand, the theme has received little attention in academic circles, this investigation possibly being the first to focus on recreational parks. The theoretical bases of the study support and validate the study, apart from the results which are, to a degree, unexpected. The investigation develops the fact that supplemental services such as care, food, information technology and

communication, and information are important, and generate value for the visitor in that the visitor perceives these as integral to the principle product.

LIMITATIONS AND RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Among the limitations of the study is that the vast majority of the surveyed visitors were from the area, and are therefore thought to have somewhat different perceptions to tourists from elsewhere. This exploratory study was directed generally to the three most profitable parks of the Xcaret Experiences group; however, it is believed that further research should be conducted in a form individual to each of the parks.

One area of future development and research relates to the paucity of theory pertaining to recreational tourism adequate to complete the flower of services model. Further investigations are needed to differentiate and elaborate those factors integral to the eight components of the flower of services model insofar as they contribute to the perception of value.

This study generates a desire for continued research on the perception of visitors to the parks. The next research could focus on visitors who come for the first time to the parks, and continue contributing to the generation of recreational studies to help establish the model of the flower of service as applied to recreational services.

APPENDIX

The data in the present study was obtained using a questionnaire regarding tourists' perceptions of service at recreational parks in Quintana Roo. What follows is a depiction of the questionnaire.

1. Visit this year to: Xcaret () Xel – ha () Xplor ()
2. Sex: female () male ()
3. Age: _____
4. Interviewee: Local person () Tourist ()

Qualify the following according to the importance you believe, with 7 being very important and 1 not important.

Aspects To Evaluate	Not Important			Very Important			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Maps and signage at entrance to specific places within the park.							
6. Signs giving hours of operation for ticket sales booths.							
7. Signs within the park, showing park hours of operation.							
8. Information found on webpage regarding prices.							
9. Signs giving advice regarding each activity.							
10. Tips for “your visit” found in the webpage.							
11. Personnel offering information from information booths at various points within the park.							
12. Booths information.							
13. Booths offering helps and advice regarding park activities.							
14. The personnel in booths offer help and advice concerning activities.							
15. All park employees help with orientation of visitor, as necessary.							
16. Discount cards for “Xcaret Experiences”.							
17. Internet reservations for parks.							
18. Reservations for specific activities within park.							
19. Treatment of visitors by park personnel.							
20. Cleanliness of space within park.							
21. Buses bringing visitors to parks.							
22. Means for moving around within park.							
23. Restaurants.							
24. Food and drink.							
25. Food carts.							
26. Signing and personnel for security.							

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27. Parking.
 28. Lockers.
 29. Pet care.
 30. Stroller rentals.
 31. First aid.
 32. Facilities for the handicapped.
 33. Wheelchair rentals.
 34. Complaints and suggestions.
 35. Refund policies.
 36. Tickets.
 37. Paying by internet.
 38. Paying in cash.
 39. Paying with debit or credit card
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