

An Importance Satisfaction Analysis of Hosting Events in Hangzhou, China: A Pilot Study

Sharifah Zannierah Syed Marzuki

Corresponding Author

szannierah@uitm.edu.my

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA,
Puncak Alam Campus, 42300, Selangor, Malaysia

Mohamad Zreik

Independent Researcher, Lebanon

Siti Zahrah Buyong

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA,
Puncak Alam Campus, 42300, Selangor, Malaysia

Sanjar Goyipnazarov

Tashkent State University of Economics, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Sanjar Mirzaliev

Tashkent State University of Economics, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Irmatova Aziza Bakhramovna

Tashkent State University of Economics, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

This paper measures the attributes experienced by the participants that took part in The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) meeting that was held in Hangzhou, China with respect to importance and satisfaction ratings. As this is a pilot study, twenty-nine respondents were asked to rate the satisfaction and performance of the tangible and intangible attributes based on several selection factors using the Likert scale instrument. For the importance attribute ratings, the four-point scale was used (very important, important, somewhat important and not important) and five-point scale was selected for satisfaction (very bad, mediocre, good, very good and excellent). An Importance Satisfaction Analysis (ISA) grid was constructed based on the mean of each factor and the overall mean of the perceived importance and satisfaction. As a matter of fact, there is no study that exists in getting the responses on ISA in the city of Hangzhou before and with that, again, no comparisons can be drawn. The IPA grids showed that six factors fell in quadrant one (keep up the good work) and two factors in quadrant two (possible overkill). Another six factors were in quadrant three (low priority) and three factors were situated in quadrant four (concentrate here). The finding is significant to show that continuous improvement to achieve the reliability of service delivery should be initiated and started immediately.

Related authorities should focus on the key attributes presented on the ISA grid to ensure Hangzhou can fulfill the visitors' hope and expectations for a return visit.

Keywords: Importance, Satisfaction, Quadrants, Event, Hangzhou, China.

INTRODUCTION

Hangzhou is a famous tourist city in China for its historical artefacts and beautiful scenery. The development of science and e-commerce has made Hangzhou to be one of the fast-becoming world's largest e-commerce centres [1]. Within this context, the city is home to China's well-recognized e-commerce service provider, the Alibaba Group with more than 300 million customers and an estimated market value of US\$231 billion. The existence of this commercial giant does contribute to social, infrastructure and economic development. A report by Hangzhou Statistical Bulletin on National Economic and Social Development (2020) in [2] stated that this city received a total of 184.03 million tourists in 2018. In essence, Hangzhou is a major tourist city in Zhejiang province and also the central city of the Yangtze River. This city has the environmental and socio-economic factors to attract tourists from around the globe and also to host important events. Looking at destination and attraction, both work in parallel but the problem or issue that relates to tourism is on return visit and satisfaction. The factors that contribute to return patronage are significant to be explored. Here, this study will provide the factors that tourists will find important and useful for a visit in Hangzhou.

It is interesting to note that there are some distinct factors that contribute to the environmental and socio-economic to influence the development of a tourism industry that include intense competition, high demand from service providers, technology development, demographic transformation and ever-changing demand for tourism-related services [3]. Here, the notion of quality is being reiterated in terms of factors and opportunities. Firstly, to improve the specification and provision of the service quality 'product', then to understand the needs of the visitors and finally, to encourage and maintain brand loyalty [4]. Another conception of brand loyalty is about image identity. The idea of this image identity is to design advertising appeals to potential tourist markets of a particular tourist spot. Tourists, visitors and customers can be used interchangeably in hospitality settings and they have their own tastes and preferences. Therefore, a destination must be able to provide these groups of people with good quality services and experience that relates to their needs and matches the image that is being represented.

Within this context, [5] have explained in detail on the destination competitiveness as far as importance satisfaction is concerned. They reasoned that it is imperative that competitiveness will determine return patronage as tourists will compare the attractions that include facilities and service standards of different destinations. It is important for the destination marketers to have distinct criteria or some uniqueness to attract the attention of potential tourists. Here in Hangzhou, the influence of tourism image on destination choice is strong for tourists to be to make decisions. This destination uses nature and culture as its positive tourism image to create the awareness and attract the attention for a visit. This paper focuses on the reaction and experiences of the participants that took part in UNESCO meeting that was held in Hangzhou. An importance and satisfaction method were conducted and findings were plotted on a grid that is divided into four quadrants. It is to identify whether this city is able to provide visitors with an experience that links to their expectations.

HANGZHOU AS THE DESTINATION OF CHOICE IN HOLDING EVENTS

Hangzhou is a popular city in China and has hosted many important and meaningful events. It has its own natural scenery and cultural heritage that holds a history of more than 2200 years ago thus making it known for so many years as “The Oriental City of Leisure” [6]. This city has its own attractions and uniqueness with its freshwater lake, mountains, parks and friendly locals. The West Lake has scenic views that include Chinese architecture buildings, traditional Chinese boats and unique kinds of bridges (Figure 1-4). With a blend of Chinese heritage and culture, Hangzhou is a good place to hold events and attract not only domestic but international visitors.



Figure 1: Fresh water lake (own photo)
-Colour should be used-



Figure 2: Traditional Chinese boat (own photo)
-Colour should be used-

Here, one of the most prestigious sports events is the Asian Games which will be held in Hangzhou. However, The Hangzhou Asian Games could not be hosted this year, in 2022 due to COVID 19. The event is expected to begin from September 23 to October 8, 2023 [7]. Looking at this prospect, Hangzhou as the capital of Zhejiang province has the potential to increase the number of tourists with respect to organizing important events. The prominent natural landmark is the West Lake and accompanying scenic attractions like Xixi Wetland Park, Song Dynasty Town and other national parks. Not only that, Hangzhou has modern facilities and infrastructures like the Science and Technology Parks and Hi-Tech Development Centres.



Figure 3: Chinese architecture buildings (own photo)
-Colour should be used-



Figure 4: Scenic views of the lake and its vicinity (own photo)
-Colour should be used-

Tangible and intangible factors do contribute to the importance and satisfaction analysis of this research. Tangible factors can be gathered from the architectural forms of buildings, facilities provided and things to see, touch and visit in the city. Within this context, intangible factors include food eating experience and dining environment. It is common for the Chinese people to eat with chopsticks and drink Chinese tea during any events but it is something new for international visitors. Adding to this, the interaction with the local people, understanding their behaviour and to feel safe in Hangzhou is another aspect to be considered. The transportation services, cleanliness, value for money during purchasing items and overall city experience act as determinants in holding events.

IMPORTANCE SATISFACTION ANALYSIS IN HOLDING EVENTS

According to [3], Importance Performance Analysis (IPA) takes into account the expectations of consumers of the importance of attributes and the level of satisfaction with the service delivered and the performance provided. This approach is presented in a two-dimensional grid with the horizontal axis specifying the performance of a particular service or service provider whereas the vertical axis indicates the importance of specified attributes to consumers. Within this context, IPA is common in hospitality and tourism research [8]. This approach has gained attention from researchers in service quality, tourism, leisure and recreation, education and healthcare marketing to name a few.

Taking IPA in the studies mentioned above is interesting where observation of the ratings and indications situated in the grid can be gathered. As discussed earlier, Hangzhou has initiated and become the host of many important events thus satisfaction ratings can be gathered based on selected attributes. Here, IPA can be suited into Importance Satisfaction Analysis (ISA) to determine the satisfaction level of the consumers. The grid of ISA is divided into four blocks and consumers' performance/satisfaction and importance values are then plotted based on means scores of importance and performance/satisfaction attribute ratings. What makes each quadrant unique is the different marketing strategies to be considered and applied [9]. The four quadrants are listed as:

- Quadrant 1: Keep up the good work
- Quadrant 2: Possible overkill
- Quadrant 3: Low priority
- Quadrant 4: Concentrate here

Service providers should "keep up the good work" if some attributes are rated high in importance and also high in satisfaction. Differently, attributes that have low importance rating and low satisfaction rating needs proper strategies. In relation to this, attributes that are high in importance and low in satisfaction should be paid more attention and immediate action must be taken into account. Investing resources is a good start to ensure improvement in the performance of that particular attributes. Finally, attributes that are rated low in importance and high in satisfaction should be maintained and additional resources can be added up from time to time.

It is obviously challenging in holding events and the expectations of the visitors to that particular location with respect to importance and satisfaction attributes, thus significantly of importance. Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang province and located some 175 kilometres southwest of China's financial centre Shanghai, is a strategic city to welcome a lot of visitors.

With that, the responsible authorities should take proactive measures to take this city to a different level by referring to ISA approach. Furthermore, taking this approach of ISA to accurately assess the customers' experiences and expectations for the success of tourism and business activities.

METHODOLOGY

A set of questions have been distributed to the participants of the 8th UNESCO-APEID Meeting on Entrepreneurship Education for the 4th Industrial Revolution that was held on October 9th-11th in Hangzhou, China. Participants of this meeting had the chance to visit Zhejiang University, technology park and other attractive places like the lake, famous buildings, community business areas and met with the local people and also to try their tea and food. The questions were disseminated through Google form and a total of 29 responses were collected. As this paper is based on pilot study, the number of respondents is acceptable. [9] has emphasized that small samples tend to limit statistical power for finding significant differences or relationships between variables. However, this study is on importance and satisfaction analysis that uses mean and presents the attributes in a grid, therefore the findings are very interesting to be explored in detail. Given the small sample size, the findings is limited to the participants of the UNESCO meeting only and it does not look into relationships between variables.

It is important to note that there has been no prior research that examined ISA in the city of Hangzhou and this study is the first to investigate the expectations as well as the experiences of the participants of the UNESCO meeting that can be a source of reference to the authorities to make further development in this unique heritage city. The focus of this research is to determine the elements that are important and to what level the products and services being offered to the respondents met their satisfaction. Data collected were on demographic profiles and importance attributes using four-point scale (very important, important, somewhat important and not important). In addition, five-point scale was selected for satisfaction attributes (very bad, mediocre, good, very good and excellent). The importance and satisfaction attributes were mainly adopted from [3] and adapted from the observation and experience of the authors in Hangzhou.

All means and standard deviations were tabulated for all of the 17 elements on each rating for importance and satisfaction attributes. An overall score was generated from a grand mean for each importance and satisfaction attribute rating. The grand mean will then be plotted in the two-dimensional grid and located in the four quadrants (Figure 5). As discussed earlier, the four quadrants (keep up the good work, possible overkill, low priority and concentrate here) have their own meaning for strategists to take action.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographic Profiles of The Sample (n=29)

Gender	Percentage
Male	55.2%
Female	41.4%
Prefer Not To Say	3.4%
Employment Sector	Percentage
Banking, accountancy or finance	6.9%
Business, consultancy or management	6.9%
Education	65.5%
Government official	3.4%
Healthcare	3.4%
Marketing, advertising or PR	3.4%
Student	6.9%
Others	3.4%
Number of Visits to Hangzhou	Percentage
Once	23.8%
Twice	6.9%
Three times	10.3%
Four times	13.8%
Five times	3.4%
Ten times	41.3%

Demographic profiles of the participants of the UNESCO meeting are shown in Table 1. Most of them are male respondents (55.2%) and the remaining are females (41.4%) and prefer not to say (3.4%). A majority of the participants are employed in the education sector (65.5%), banking, accountancy or finance (6.9%), business, consultancy or management (6.9%) and also student (6.9%). The rests are government officials, from healthcare sector, marketing, advertising or Public Relations (PR) sector and others that share the same percentage that is 3.4%. When asked on the number of visits to Hangzhou, 41.3% of the participants have visited the city more than 10 times and most of them had their first experience in the city (23.8%) and most of them have been to Hangzhou twice to five times.

Within this context, Cronbach alpha assessment was performed to check the internal consistency. The alpha reliability for the ratings is 0.90 and above the accepted level of 0.60 [10] and the result of this can be considered high and consistent. It is important to obtain the Cronbach Alpha before calculating the grand means for the importance and satisfaction items (Table 2). The grand mean for importance ratings is 3.20 with standard deviation of 0.78 and 3.89 for grand mean of satisfaction and standard deviation of 3.79.

Table 2: Mean Importance and Satisfaction of Hosting Events in Hangzhou China

Attributes	Mean of Importance	Standard Deviation	Mean of Satisfaction	Standard Deviation
Accommodation	3.45	0.74	4.28	0.70
Services at the place of stay	3.41	0.73	4.03	0.78
Food services	3.31	0.85	3.72	1.07
Outside food	2.86	0.99	3.59	0.95
Hospitality of the local people	3.38	0.62	3.38	0.62
Communication of the local people	3.28	0.75	3.76	0.79
Variety of things to see and do	3.24	0.69	3.83	0.76
Signages	3.24	0.79	3.62	0.82
Shopping facilities	2.48	1.06	3.72	0.84
Cleanliness	3.31	0.76	4.03	0.73
Personal safety	3.79	0.41	4.21	0.73
Variety of cultural events	2.90	0.98	4.07	0.92
Variety of attractions	3.10	0.82	4.10	0.67
Variety of shopping places	2.38	1.01	3.79	0.77
Transportation services	3.59	0.57	4.00	0.80
Value for money	3.24	0.79	3.76	0.74
Overall city experience	3.38	0.68	4.17	0.76
Grand means	3.20	0.78	3.89	0.79

All mean scores for the items in importance and satisfaction ratings were obtained and a line was drawn vertically for performance and horizontally for satisfaction. Figure 5 presents the Importance Satisfaction Analysis Grid with the cut-off axes on the grid that is 3.89 for satisfaction and 3.25 for importance. Each attribute is placed in the quadrant that is in accordance with the findings. It is worth noting that attributes will fall into the four quadrants based on the given data in Table 2. [7 p.8] have explained in detail in their studies as below:

Attributes in the top left quadrant are rated very important but satisfaction level is rated below average (concentrate here). Next, attributes in the top right quadrant are rated very important and it is the same as the level of satisfaction which is above average (keep up the good work). In another aspect, attributes that fell in the bottom left quadrant are considered less important and it is similar to the satisfaction level that is below average (low priority). The final quadrant is the bottom right which holds attributes that are rated above average on satisfaction but reversely rated below average on importance (possible overkill).

Figure 5 displays the findings of the study where participants have rated personal safety, transportation services, cleanliness, services at the place of stay, accommodation and overall city experience in the upper right-hand quadrant. It shows that, responsible industry players and authorities must *keep up the good work* in maintaining the attributes and do not fall into other quadrants in the future. Good services at the place of stay have been reiterated in the previous IPA researches [10-12]. Participants felt that food services, communication of the local people and their hospitality as above average for importance but below average for satisfaction (upper left-hand quadrant). This might due to language barrier in terms of interaction with the local people. Food services should also be uplifted to offer more varieties that combine Western cuisine and local delicacies. Government agencies, entrepreneurs and related market players must *concentrate* more in this quadrant.

Six attributes fell in the lower left-hand quadrant that includes a variety of things to see and do, value for money, signages, outside food, shopping facilities and a variety of shopping places. These attributes were regarded as below average for both importance and satisfaction. It indicates that the participants have *low priority* in outside food and shopping. A variety of attractions and a variety of cultural events were considered to be average for satisfaction but below average for importance (lower right-hand quadrant). The attributes here need to be given new ideas and perspectives to attract visitors. Participants were satisfied with the ways of attractions and events in Hangzhou but they felt that the attributes were not as important as the attributes in quadrant one (keep up the good work) and quadrant four (concentrate here).

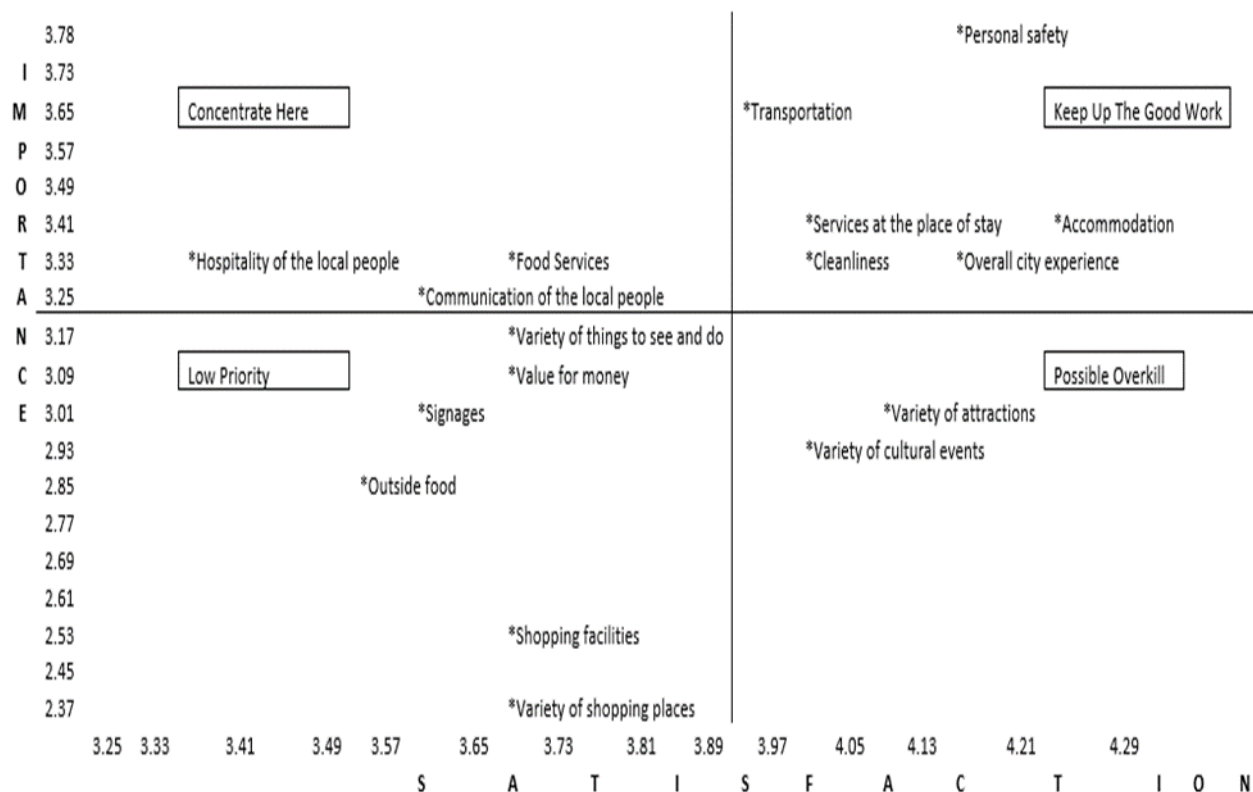


Figure 5: Importance Satisfaction Analysis Grid

CONCLUSION

It can be gathered from the study that accommodation, transportation services, personal safety, services at the place of stay, cleanliness and overall city experience are indeed the most preferable attributes. These attributes are more important than varieties of attractions and cultural events and also shopping activities. This study has come out with interesting findings while taking into consideration the limitations of the sample size. However, this study is significant as the participants had ample time to experience the local culture and the beautiful scenery and well-managed environment. Hangzhou is a famous city and will become one of the preferred top spots in China with the attributes given in ISA analysis grid. [2] have emphasized that studies in developing choice of travel destinations is very limited and not well researched. With this, researchers are encouraged to conduct ISA studies with relation to a specified destination as people are excited to travel to the places that they are used to go or even to the

first timers. It is the right time for policymakers to explore and create different and unique offerings to have added advantages.

The results also showed that some factors need more focus like the communication barriers and food services. Hangzhou has experienced hosting a lot of events whether local or international, and concentration to the challenges of language are of importance. It is suggested that tourism kiosks and English-speaking tourism assistance personnel be located at strategic places to assist and guide visitors as they have high expectations. Adding to this, focusing on their preferences and continuing to improve the attributes of low priority and low in importance are good ways to encourage repeat patronage of the visitors [3]. Visitors who have visited Hangzhou would know whether their expectations were met or not through their experience. However, potential first-timers will have different kinds of expectations based on the information they gathered.

[14] have listed some criteria for a place image to be effective that include:

- Be valid and not based in fantasy
- Be realistic and therefore believable
- Be simple
- Have appeal
- Differentiate a city from other destinations while emphasizing the unique characteristics of the place

It is agreeable on the criteria listed above as this study has found out that Hangzhou has the potential to exceed the expectations of the visitors while maintaining or keeping up the good work displayed in quadrant one and developing more initiatives and innovative approaches in other quadrants. The ISA analysis in this study has contributed to the field of importance and satisfactions attributes on expected and experience, choice behaviours, destination and return visit which are limited in literature. Looking at the sparse studies on IPA and ISA, future research should focus on these areas with a larger sample size and adaptations of different attributes that will benefit selected destination.

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