

**Towards an identification of elements contributing to the tourism
experience satisfaction: a global approach**

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Abstract

Usually described as an amalgam of touristic products and services available in one site, the tourism offering is considered in the literature as a combination of consumption experiences that involve both private and public actors. Thus tourism experience is characterized by many interactions with physical and human environment valued by tourists and leading to satisfaction. From a management viewpoint, understanding satisfactory and dissatisfactory elements of experiences is a significant challenge to design and deliver a memorable experience and to support positive post-consumption reactions. Using the critical incident technique, the authors collected 216 incidents in order to reveal salient factors on which tourists forge their evaluation and build up their satisfaction. This research sought to investigate major driving factors of tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction taking into account all elements related to a touristic stay and partially neglected to date in the tourism literature. A typology of elements contributing to the tourism experience satisfaction is proposed. The results claim that a broader, holistic view of tourism experience is needed and advise to focus on elements leading to satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Moreover, besides the traditional categories classification based on service attributes and the type of providers, the results highlight the human being factor as a new important category of elements influencing satisfaction. Implications for tourism destination managers and services managers are then discussed.

Key Words

Tourism experiences, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, destination, tourism services, critical incident technique

Towards an identification of elements contributing to tourism experience satisfaction: a global approach`

In order to better understand tourist satisfaction, researches in tourism follow the stream of service marketing. It is common in service industry to conceptualize global satisfaction as a result of a compensatory process in which service elements/attributes having an impact on satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction are distinguished and evaluated. In that purpose, tourist satisfaction is assessed in previous works through the evaluation of elements related to the destination and its territory (such as landscapes, climate, inhabitants or fauna and flora) or elements related to private service suppliers (such as catering, accommodation or leisure). Few researches mix both types of elements (public and private) in assessing tourist satisfaction, and most of them seem to be restrictive and incomplete.

However understanding satisfactory and pleasant experiences is a significant challenge for tourism managers to design and deliver a memorable experience and to support positive word of mouth or willingness to revisit. From a tourist perspective, tourism experience is seen as holistic and is described as an amalgam of touristic services and facilities located on a shared territory. Tourist attractions and facilities are then viewed as a combination of consumption experiences that involve both private and public actors (Yoon and Uysal, 2005). It is the reason why tourist satisfaction measurement has to be exhaustive and encompass both types of attributes.

Then, to deeper understand how tourists evaluate their overall tourism experience and to develop a reliable and robust measurement of tourist satisfaction, a two-stage methodology is needed. This paper presents the results of the first qualitative phase. Using the critical incident technique we identify key elements of tourism experience contributing to tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction and we propose a classification of these elements according to their nature.

First, this paper presents the conceptual framework in which the research takes place. Then, the research methodology and the results are exposed. Finally, managerial implications and future researches are discussed.

1. Conceptual framework

1.1. The concept of global satisfaction in tourism

Consumer satisfaction remains a major challenge for companies and an essential study subject which fueled marketing reflections these past 30 years. Many definitions have been suggested (Vanhamme, 2002) but most authors agree that satisfaction is a psychological state resulting from an individual evaluation linked to a consuming and/or purchasing experience. The intensity of the emotional response is contextual and varies depending on the type of products and persons (Giese and Cote, 2000). Customer satisfaction is regarded in the literature as a mediator of attitudes (Oliver, 1980) and post-consumption/purchase like for example repurchase or customers recommendations. Dissatisfaction on the contrary has adverse consequences as boycott or claims.

In the traditional disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1980), customer satisfaction derives from the gap between customer expectations and perceived performance of a product or service. Nevertheless, this framework is not fixed. The way customers experience a product and that of a competitor through its marketing communications, their opinions on comparable products and the individual's personal values all act on the level of expectations. When a product does not reach a certain level of performance up to consumers' expectations, there is dissatisfaction. The customer is disappointed and dissatisfied. Satisfaction, on the contrary, arises out of satisfied expectations. Beyond a certain point, surprise and the unexpected can even create enthusiastic reactions. Churchill and Surprenant (1982) also showed that expectations and performance can have a direct influence on satisfaction. This is notably the case of new products on which consumers have no preconceived opinions, regarding results likely to be given.

For tourism services, numerous studies pointed out that this traditional disconfirmation approach suffers from applicability (Fuchs and Weiermair, 2004). First of all, the affective dimension is quite neglected in this paradigm while emotions play an important role in building up satisfaction (Del Bosque and San Martin, 2008). As tourism services are experiential by nature, emotional value (i.e. product's ability to arouse feelings and affective states) and social value (i.e. perceived utility drawn from interactions between people) may have an influence on customer satisfaction (Williams and Soutar, 2009). Then, for destination products, accurate expectations concerning destination characteristics are hardly established because of places' remoteness. Information issued by destination management organizations

and other tourists or relatives would also influence the tourist's opinions before and during his trip. Finally Bourgeon-Renault, *et al.* (2007) showed that satisfaction could be conceptualized as a dynamic and sequential process. Sometimes consumers can no longer consider their prior expectations and forsake them in favor of what they experiment. The social dimension is important in this process as other clients' satisfaction can contribute to the tourist's own satisfaction.

Importance-performance analyses are therefore frequently applied to identify characteristics seen as strengths and weaknesses for a location. In the tourism literature, a performance-only approach appears to be a more suitable method for the measurement of destination satisfaction (Fuchs and Weiermair, 2004, Deng, 2007, Thompson and Schofield, 2007). Therefore, the tourist's satisfaction is often seen as a competitiveness indicator, just as potential tourists' attraction can be (Enright and Newton, 2004). Several studies are based on satisfaction surveys to gather information regarding tourists' opinions and assess the destinations' performance (Alegre and Garau, 2010). In these studies, satisfaction is generally measured post facto, globally or from an evaluation of the place's attributes, even if Coghlan and Pearce (2010) recommend real-time on-site surveys to better incorporate the affective dimension of satisfaction, particularly important in tourism experience.

1.2. Measurement of tourist satisfaction

1.2.1. The theory of contributing elements to customer satisfaction

The concept of satisfaction has usually been scrutinized as a one-dimensional approach. It consists in evaluating individuals' satisfaction regarding the final result and/or elements of the experience along a continuum in which dissatisfaction is the furthest opposite of satisfaction. However further approaches, more qualitative, suggest considering these two constructs independently and identifying the specific attributes causing satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Following in the footsteps of Herzberg, marketing researchers have showed that these concepts are not diametrically opposite (Audrain-Pontevia, 2004). Some factors can influence the level of dissatisfaction without actually generating satisfaction when they are fully achieved. Alternatively, other attributes are sources of satisfaction but do not provoke dissatisfaction when they are not achieved. Finally, some other attributes act on both satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

By replicating the Llosa's Tetraclasse model (1996, 1997) developed in services marketing, Lichtlé, *et al.* (2002) confirm there are four types of elements contributing more or less significantly to satisfaction in the distribution sector. The "key elements" must be efficient because they always strongly contribute to satisfaction, whether they are positively or negatively evaluated - such as the outlet's ambiance, reception and catering rates. The "plus elements" are those which have an impact on the customer's satisfaction when they are positively evaluated but have no impact on dissatisfaction when they are negatively assessed - for example a free digestive at the end of a meal. These first two types of elements deserve special attention and investments as they are key factors of differentiation from competitors. "Basic elements" strongly contribute to dissatisfaction when they are negatively evaluated but have weak impact on satisfaction when they are positively evaluated - such as cleanliness. These basic elements should be carefully managed and monitored as they represent the core of the service. Finally "secondary elements" have very little influence on satisfaction and dissatisfaction however their level of performance may be - for example opening hours. Thus, they need no particular attention.

Thereby the aim of these researches is to discern elements that create satisfaction from those which produce dissatisfaction. The weight of these elements' contribution is considered as fluctuant and depending on the level of perceived performance. This bi-factorial approach is then as relevant to companies as they are to territories. Individuals' overall satisfaction towards a tourism experience can be optimized by improving elements creating satisfaction and avoiding sources of dissatisfaction.

1.2.2. The considered elements in tourism satisfaction assessment

Several researches in tourism implicitly use the framework of analysis defined by Llosa (1996, 1997). Generally aiming at identifying antecedents of tourist satisfaction, these works underline the elements of tourism experience having an impact on satisfaction. However, it is possible to distinguish them according to the type of elements considered as belonging to tourism experience by researchers and taken into account within measurement of the construct (see summary table in appendix 1).

On the one hand, some researchers focus mainly on personal reactions and feelings experienced by people when using tourism services during their stay. They clearly position their work in the service marketing field and then assess tourism experience through personal satisfaction in specific service encounters such as transportation, accommodation or leisure.

Cadotte and Turgeon (1988) were among the first to pay attention to dissatisfiers and satisfiers variables in the hospitality industry. They define dissatisfiers as “variables where low performance or the absence of a desired feature cause negative feelings/dissatisfaction leading to complaining behavior” (p.78). Minimum performance is required for these services attributes. In their study of restaurant and lodging industries, parking availability and accommodation rates are the predominant dissatisfiers. On the contrary, portion sizes and cleanliness of restaurants as well as helpful attitude of staff and spaciousness of lobbies are viewed as satisfiers. For these features, unusual performance induces positive satisfaction, and consumers express compliments. Efforts are really needed in these areas. Finally, they discover some other attributes named “criticals” which can cause dissatisfaction and satisfaction. Bitner, *et al.* (1990) also focus on service encounters satisfaction in the hotel, restaurant and airline industries and isolate specific events and behaviors as sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Special treatment that consumers received for example, were viewed as satisfiers. Inadequate responses to failures in the service delivery were seen as dissatisfiers. In more recent studies, Deng (2007) stresses the importance of the empathy dimension as the most significant attributes category to tourist satisfaction. Improvements are thus suggested concerning attention and help provided to tourists in Taiwanese hot springs tourism. Surveying both tourists and service providers, Zouni and Kouremenos (2008) note also that tourism providers tend to underestimate tourist satisfaction with the destination and with most service offerings especially for accommodation. They warn about the destination marketers' misperceptions of service problems and their ability to propose an integrated solution to customers.

On the other hand, other academics consider tourism experience as primarily tied to the destination and its environment. They evaluate the experience with elements related to the location's setting such as experience of place, weather or inhabitants. From studies showing the availability and performance of transports as a salient attribute of overall destination satisfaction, Thompson and Schofield (2007) for example, investigate the predictive effect of public transport performance on destination satisfaction. Consistent with the tourism literature, they highlight a link between public transport performance and tourists' satisfaction. Alegre and Garau (2010) however, in a study in seaside destinations, claim that overcrowding, over-commercialization and environmental deterioration are the major factors of dissatisfaction. Making places less attractive, these elements have a negative influence on the tourists' intention to return to the destination.

However, consumption experience in tourism is often complex, resulting from the individual's interactions with one or many services (transportation, accommodation, visitor centers, leisure, etc.) and environmental and public elements (destination's amenities, host population). According to Murphy, *et al.* (2000), each element form a « moment of truth » that together, allow an assessment of the quality of stay. Hence, destination marketers have to examine the entire tourism experience and not only the core service suppliers (Zouni and Kouremenos, 2008, Xu, 2010). In fact, from a tourist perspective, the experience is seen as holistic. Consequently, a tourist's satisfaction is often difficult to evaluate because it is altered by a series of events that are not necessarily interconnected. The individual's assessment is based on a combination of products and services with multiple attributes. That explains why few studies have tried to include both the destination product's environmental aspects and service facilities in their analysis of tourist satisfaction. Most research efforts embracing this point of view just take into account fewer environmental aspects and private services or tackle the subject only within the quality of service dimension. Moreover, it consists in general in identifying important attributes contributing to satisfaction for a specific destination.

In this perspective, Akama and Kieti (2003) assess the level of tourist satisfaction in a national park from the quality of service. They identify the main park attributes that influence the overall satisfaction including cheap accommodation and catering facilities, personal attention but also attractive and appealing natural attractions. They discover a majority of satisfiers variables that enhance the visitor satisfaction. Chen, *et al.* (2009) adopt a broader approach to identify the most significant variables of visitor satisfaction. Based only on two service attributes (facilities and service performance of service providers) and twelve destination attributes considered as major resources for the studied place, their survey highlights two major factors that most affect tourist satisfaction, i.e. personnel service and socio-cultural aspects (friendliness of residents, traditional and historical elements discovery). The authors conclude their study by proposing careful planning and management in both public and private sectors in order to improve tourism growth. Truong and King (2009), to our knowledge, are perhaps the only ones having attempted to examine destination satisfaction with a large variety of territorial and private services attributes. 31 variables covering destination attractiveness, safety, amenities, variety, price, quality of tourism products and services were incorporated in the analysis of satisfaction. In the case of Vietnam, a close match between attributes importance and satisfaction was found especially for the variety of beautiful natural scenery, prices and availability of shopping and entertainment facilities.

The idea of this research is then to consider tourism experience globally as a succession of diverse service experiences, which are different by nature (private vs. public management-dependent), and are linked to each other by the consumer/tourist himself during his stay. We propose to define experience from a tourist point of view as the global perception of the chain of services in which the tourist goes through in order to fulfill his expectations. This experience is characterized by many interactions with physical and human environment (elements) valued by tourists and leading to satisfaction. The ultimate goal of the global study is to propose a reliable and exhaustive measure of tourist satisfaction toward their trip integrating elements directly linked to the territory and elements linked to service activities delivered on the territory. We therefore suggest completing current measurement instruments in order to integrate the maximum number of elements taken into consideration by the tourist and to propose a classification of these elements.

2. Method and procedure

The main objective of this research is to identify and classify the types of incidents experienced by individuals during their touristic stay, in order to identify incident factors and also attributes strongly contributing to tourist satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In that respect, we used critical incident technique conducted on 107 individuals who travelled the past two years.

2.1. Critical Incident Technique (CIT)

Frequently used in marketing research and more particularly in service field (Bitner, *et al.*, 1990, Bitner, *et al.*, 1994, Grove and Fisk, 1997), CIT seems to be appropriate for discovering the underlying sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in service encounters (Nyquist, *et al.*, 1985) and are relevant in tourism and hospitality research (Callan, 1998, Pritchard and Havitz, 2006). It relies on a set of procedures to collect, content analyze and classify observations of human behaviors (Flanagan, 1954). Using the CIT, data are collected through structured, open-ended questions gathered in various ways (personal interview, written interviews, focus group etc.). Once collected, information concerning incidents is carefully scrutinized to identify data categories that summarize and describe the incidents.

2.2. Data collection

The CIT is essentially a classification technique employing content analysis of stories or “critical incidents” as data. The incidents were collected by two researchers. 107 individuals

who travelled the past two years were asked to recall their last tourism experience and to report specific events that caused pleasant or unpleasant feelings during their stay, no matter the destination and the reason of their trip. Respondents were not directly asked to identify the underlying causes of satisfaction or dissatisfaction but rather to describe a specific pleasant and unpleasant instance. The researcher has the responsibility of abstraction and inference, not the respondent (Bitner, *et al.*, 1990). It is the reason why not all stories are considered as critical incidents. We retained only incidents which met four criteria (Bitner, *et al.*, 1990): 1- being directly related to a tourism event, from departure to return to the original place (not before, as reservation services and not after as service recovery efforts) and 2- being very satisfying or dissatisfying from a tourist perspective, 3- being a discrete episode and 4- being sufficiently detailed for being interpreted by researchers.

A total of 216 incidents were collected: 110 satisfactory (nisat) and 106 dissatisfactory (ndissat). 43.9% of the 107 respondents were men and 56.1% were women. The average age of the respondents was 37 years old, with a range from 20 to 75 years old. Also, only 11% travelled alone, the 89% remaining respondents had children or adults accompanying them on their stay. CIT were related to 37 destinations including 13 destinations in the Indian Ocean area (50% respondents) and France (14%).

2.3. Classification of incidents

Reliability and validity problems may arise as a result of the ambiguity of word meanings, category labels, and coding rules in a particular study (Bardin, 2005). In order to reduce this bias, both researchers worked together to code incidents and propose a classification of elements contributing to tourist satisfaction. An a-priori classification scheme was build up based on existing literature. Then 216 incidents (ni) were scrutinized simultaneously by both researchers and the related elements were consensually allocated to an existing category or, in the case they did not fit into any category, they were discussed by researchers until they reached an agreement. Note that one incident may refer to several satisfying or dissatisfying elements. This process generated 392 elements or attributes (ne) and led to reorganizing existing classification scheme and creating new categories or sub-categories. The process ended when all attributes were put in only one category and when all elements in a given category were more similar to each other than they were with other categories.

3. Results

The critical incident classification system is composed by 3 major categories of elements that account for all satisfying and dissatisfying incidents:

- Category 1: Elements related to territory (ne1=151; 38.5%)
- Category 2: Elements related to local services firms (ne2=157; 40.1%)
- Category 3: Elements related to human being (ne3=84; 21.4%)

392 elements (ne) were classified into one of these 3 categories and 14 sub-categories. Data are shown in details in appendix 2. Table 1 shows frequencies and proportions of tourist satisfaction attributes in each category. Tables 2, 3 and 4 list sample incidents for each of the 14 sub-categories.

Table 1. Category classification scheme

	Type of elements				Row total		No. Items
	Satisfying		Dissatisfying				
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Category 1. Elements related to territory	99	42,1	52	33,1	151	38,5	24
1.A. Natural factors	64	27,2	16	10,2	80	20,4	6
1.B. Cultural factors	25	10,6	1	0,6	26	6,6	4
1.C. Political and socio-economic factors	2	0,9	23	14,6	25	6,4	6
1.D. Urban policies	8	3,4	12	7,6	20	5,1	8
Category 2. Elements related to local services firms	69	29,4	88	56,1	157	40,1	40
2.A. Transportation services	1	0,4	37	23,6	38	9,7	7
2.B. Accommodation services	27	11,5	13	8,3	40	10,2	9
2.C. Restauration services	22	9,4	12	7,6	34	8,7	7
2.D. Recreation / Entertainment services	13	5,5	12	7,6	25	6,4	8
2.E. Rental services (vehicules, equipment, etc.)	1	0,4	6	1,9	7	1,0	5
2.F. Other services	5	2,1	8	5,1	13	3,3	4
Category 3. Elements related to human being	67	28,5	17	10,8	84	21,4	12
3.A. Host population	29	12,3	2	1,3	31	7,9	3
3.B. Other tourists (unknown)	7	3,0	6	3,8	13	3,3	4
3.C. Personnel social network (friends, family, co-workers etc.)	31	13,2	2	1,3	33	8,4	3
3.D. Personal health	0	0,0	7	4,5	7	1,8	2
Column total	235	100,0	157	100,0	392	100,0	76

3.1. Category 1: Elements related to territory

The first category of incidents gather all the incidents directly related to the territory/destination offering and public services that tourist may experiment during its stay.

This category is divided into 4 sub-categories (Table 2): 1- Natural factors such as site, fauna and flora, landscape, climate, pollution, and jet lag; 2- Cultural factors such as museums, monuments, architecture and traditions and folklore; 3- Political and socio-economic factors such as safety, standard of living, tourist's status, business practices, police and customs behavior and 4- Urban policies such as town planning, destination cleanliness, road infrastructures, road signs, public transport, airport, accessibility and general atmosphere.

This category account for 151 elements, which represent 38.5% of the total: 99 (42.1%) are satisfying and 52 (33.1%) are dissatisfying. The satisfying attributes are mainly related to natural factors (64 / 27.2%) and more particularly to landscapes (12%) and fauna and flora (8%) and to cultural factors (25 /10.6%) such as traditions and folklore (5%) and monuments (4%).The dissatisfying elements are essentially related to political and socio-economic factors (23 / 14.6%) such as customs policies (5.7%) and level of life (3.2%) and to natural factors (16 / 10.2%) such as climate (7.6%).

Table 2. Category 1 sample incidents: elements related to territory

Incidents	
Satisfying	Dissatisfying
1.A. Natural factors	
Starting from a white sand beach and turquoise blue sea, I took a small boat to go on a wild and uninhabited island. The walk was very pleasant with a wonderful weather and a splendid view.	Throughout my stay the weather was very bad, which is sad to visit a such beautiful city.
1.B. Cultural factors	
We stayed in a bush village where we attended a traditional feast with songs and dances. Inhabitants left us dance with them despite our clumsy and without mockery.	I lived in a house in a fishermen village around Pondicherry. One day few young men entered the neighbours' house where a poor family lived and with whom I had very good relations. They were violent with the father. In India caste rules are very complex and are still the main reason to sort somebody out.
1.C. Political and socio-economic factors	
Our stay was a total change of scenery because we felt safe. I remember one night, we walked through the city without any fear of being attacked or bothered.	At my arrival in the Chicago airport I got arrested and questioned by customs as a criminal for more than an hour. Personal questions such as the amount on my bank account and a thorough search of my belongings.
1.D. Urban policies	
The Ait Benhadou tour in Morocco, this Kasbah in the middle of nowhere, the blue sky, the ocher land, the snowy atlas. A magic atmosphere and country.	We were in a very touristic and crowding place, with buildings on the beach. It was horrible and dirty.

3.2. Category 2: Elements related to local services firms

The second category of incidents encompasses satisfaction elements related to services provided by private firms located on the destination territory (Table 3). These elements are related to 1- Transportation services such as flight time, comfort, safety, cancellation,

information, service recovery and price; 2- Accommodation services such as reception, surroundings, location, comfort, cleanliness, extra-services, employee behavior, conformity of expected services, value for money; 3- Restauration services such as reception, atmosphere, location, food, cleanliness, employee behavior, ethic, conformity of expected services, and value for money; 4- Entertainment services such as reception, originality, variety of attractions, safety, employee behavior, ethic, conformity of expected services, and value for money; 5- Rental services such as employee behavior, ethic, conformity of expected services, failure and value for money; 6- Other services such as taxi, guide, TO and shopping.

This category account for 157 elements, which represent 40.1% of the total: 69 (29.4%) are satisfying and 88 (56.1%) are dissatisfying. The satisfying factors are mainly related to accommodation services (27 / 11.5%) and more particularly to surroundings (4.3%) and to restauration services (22 / 9.4%) such as food taste (3.4%). The dissatisfying attributes are essentially related to transportation services (37 / 23.6%) and more particularly cancellation and delay (14 / 8.9%).

3.3.Category 3: Elements related to human being

The third category is composed of elements related to human being presence on the territory that may have an impact on global satisfaction (Table 4). These elements can be divided according to the type of people into 4 sub-categories: 1- Host population such as interactions with inhabitants, hospitality and racism 2- Other tourists such as interactions, behavior, presence and absence, 3- Personal social network such as resident, travelling companions and absence/loneliness and 4- Personal health such as local disease and accident. To our knowledge, except for host population (Pritchard and Havitz, 2006, Chen, *et al.*, 2009), the other elements have rarely been mentioned in previous works in tourism (Alegre and Garau, 2010). Nevertheless this finding is consistent with the service marketing field in which some researchers show the influence of other clients on service delivery process and customer's satisfaction (Martin, 1996, Debenedetti, 2003, Capelli and Sabadie, 2006).

This category account for 84 elements on 392 (21.4%): 67 (28.5%) are satisfying and 17 (10.8%) are dissatisfying. The satisfying attributes are essentially related to personal social network (31 / 13.2%) and more specifically to travelling companions (family, friends, co-workers) and local population (29 / 12.3%) and more particularly to interactions with local inhabitants (8.1%). The dissatisfying elements are mainly related to personal health (4.5%).

Table 3. Category 2 sample incidents: elements related to local services firms

Incidents	
Satisfying	Dissatisfying
<p>2.A. Transportation services During our boat ride to Corsica, we had deck chairs at our disposal which has enabled us to relax in the sun, and watching the sea. A pleasant experience that allowed us to forget our troubles.</p>	<p>Our plane was delayed. After boarding a technical problem occurred. During more than two hours we were stuck in the plane without air conditioning and no explanation.</p>
<p>2.B. Accommodation services I loved when I could finally take a break in my hotel. The accommodation surroundings, both inside and outside, was relaxing. Zen interior design with many places to rest, a reading and television area, a beach just in front of the room.</p>	<p>Our accommodation was not pleasant. I remember one night particularly unpleasant when it was very hot and there was no air conditioning. There were a lot of mosquitoes in addition to the uncomfortable sleeping.</p>
<p>2.C. Restauration services Our last night in a restaurant at the top of the Raiyoke tower in Bangkok was one of the best moments. We have shared a meal with family and have enjoyed a delicious typical Thai cuisine and a breathtaking panorama.</p>	<p>The reception in a restaurant we have tested was pitiful. We felt to bother them. In addition the service was particularly long for a rather simple food and cleanliness of the cutlery as well as premises was inadequate.</p>
<p>2.D. Recreation / entertainment services I loved the catamaran ride. There was a great atmosphere. On the route we stopped on a platform to make parasailing then we took the lunch, a barbecue consisting of grilled fishes.</p>	<p>We missed our boat and consequently our link bus because of a wrong information. We were trapped on an island for more than two hours without knowing when the next boat would arrive or how to reach the city. This would have compromised the program of our stay and all bookings.</p>
<p>2.E. Rental services After a sequence of flight delays, we arrived late in the evening. To my amazement the rental agency was still opened and we were welcomed warmly, given all relevant information despite the late hour.</p>	<p>We rented a scooter but it broke down. We had to wait three hours by the wayside in a sunny weather and the staff was very unpleasant. They ended the rental agreement by phone and we got hung up. They did not refund the 3 rental days that we could not enjoy.</p>
<p>2.F. Other services In Malaysia you can make good shopping at very low prices. One day, in a market place I've found all sorts of things, decoration, clothes and footwear, leather goods. Everyone could find something matching their needs. It does great business.</p>	<p>The travel agency tour was disorganized. Too many steps were planned. This does not allow us to enjoy the beautiful hotels and scenery and it required us to wake up early. After some days we were already very tired.</p>

Table 4. Category 3 sample incidents: elements related to human being

Incidents	
Satisfying	Dissatisfying
<p>3.A. Host population During one excursion I was surprised by the inhabitants' greeting. They came to us with a natural kindness, offering us some fruits. They were proud to tell us their history and share with us their customs.</p>	<p>In Paris, you meet people not very sympathetic or friendly. When I took the subway for the first time, I felt embarrassed. They look stressed; people eyes were empty, sad and somewhat depressing.</p>
<p>3.B. Other tourists I enjoyed being surrounded by people of many nationalities and to share good days with them since we were all on the same wavelength: having a linking for party or recreational activities.</p>	<p>The other hostel guests were unbearable. One night, we were particularly frustrated by the attitude of a couple who was always complaining about cold in the restauration room. They were arriviste and very rude with employees.</p>
<p>3.C. Personal social network What I keep in mind from my trip is the first moment shared with family, skating rink after skiing. Children delight when they discover snow and when we have fun together, the feeling of living a scarce moment.</p>	<p>It was not fun to be alone in this big city especially when visiting and for nightlife. It is not easy to meet people and it takes time to build a friendship, what I failed to do during my stay.</p>
<p>3.D. Personal health</p>	<p>An unfortunate fall has required 24 hours of rest. So my wife and I were unable to participate visits of particular interest organized that day.</p>

4. Discussion and implications

Taken together, our results provide strong support for a global approach of tourism experience as elements related to territories as well as those related to private services contributing to tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction. A touristic stay consists of a set of core benefits delivered through public infrastructures and private services, facilities and amenities. It is so relevant for destination managers to better understand the attributes that cause satisfaction or dissatisfaction beyond those currently identified in the literature in order to redirect efforts towards the real sources of satisfaction. Indeed some factors are more important from the tourist's point of view and strongly contribute to their overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction. So they deserve to be carefully monitored. Destination managers as well as private services managers should devote more efforts on these elements. On the contrary, other factors have few or no effect on satisfaction. As they are not significant for the customer, there is no need to spend money or time to improve their performance. In this way, this research identifies key drivers of tourist satisfaction (Table 5).

According to these results three important findings should be specifically underlined. Firstly, public features are significantly considered as satisfiers through the natural settings. Secondly, transportation services are the most frequent source of dissatisfaction especially with regard to delay and cancellations. Thirdly, elements relating to the human factor and partially ignored in the literature should be considered as it accounts for more than 20% of critical incidents. These findings have several implications for destination managers.

Table 5. Ranking of contributing elements to tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction according to their level of importance

		Elements			
		Satisfying		Dissatisfying	
Level of importance	High > 10%	1.A. Natural factors	27.2%	2.A. Transportation services	23.6%
		3.C. Personal social network	13.2%	1.C. Political and socio-economic factors	14.6%
		3.A. Host population	12.3%	1.A. Natural factors	10.2%
		2.B. Accommodation services	11.5%		
		1.B. Cultural factors	10.6%		
	Low 10% > -- > 2%	2.C. Restauration services	9.4%	2.B. Accommodation services	8.3%
		2.D. Recreation / Entertainment services	5.5%	1.D. Urban policies	7.6%
		1.D. Urban policies	3.4%	2.C. Restauration services	7.6%
		3.B. Other tourists	3.0%	2.D. Recreation / Entertainment services	7.6%
		2.F. Other services	2.1%	2.F. Other services	5.1%
				3.D. Personal health	4.5%
	Nil <2%			3.B. Other tourists	3.8%
		1.C. Political and socio-economic factors	0.9%	2.E. Rental services	1.9%
		2.A. Transportation services	0.4%	3.A. Host population	1.3%
		2.E. Rental services	0.4%	3.C. Personal social network	1.3%
3.D. Personal health		0.0%	2.B. Cultural factors	0.6%	

4.1. Strengthening natural and cultural resources management

Feedback on the natural scenery, fauna and flora, and cultural and natural sites were predominant and play a significant role in tourist satisfaction which is consistent with Pritchard and Havitz's study (Pritchard and Havitz, 2006). Environmental issues must therefore be a central concern of public policy. Specific efforts should be devoted to the protection and maintenance of these elements. They also should be considered as prime determinants of destination attractiveness and be used as promotional claims in destinations' communication campaigns.

4.2. Handling public and private dissatisfiers effectively

In this study, few factors contribute significantly to tourist dissatisfaction. Some are directly influenced by public policy such as customs and immigration formalities. Since it is the first tourist contact with destination, it may appear useful to make it the least unpleasant by diminishing waiting times and by monitoring airport employees' behavior.

Others may be indirectly influenced by destination manager's caution. They should alert private services managers about consequences of service failures on business welfare as well as on the destination's attractiveness. Regarding transportation services, delays and cancellations are remarkably disturbing and deserve to be improved.

Finally, environmental variables such as the weather would also have a bearing on tourist dissatisfaction. Some indoor activities could then be conceived allowing vacationers to have fun in bad weather conditions.

4.3. Understanding the experiential dimension of tourism experience

A touristic stay encompasses emotional aspects. It is often the moment to meet others and to share feelings with relatives. Thus tourist satisfaction depends on parameters that are not necessarily related to the tourism product itself or under the control of public and private actors (such as the presence of other tourists, the tourist's mood, etc.). These elements are not considered in satisfaction surveys. They could however improve the destination manager's diagnosis and response capabilities.

Human variables, missing in the previous studies, have to be integrated in the analysis of the market. The results show the existence of a tourist segment for which interactions with locals or with their relatives are the main satisfiers during their stay. It should be interesting to

consider the tourist as a group and not only as an individual. These elements related to human beings may also be used as criteria for segmentation and taken into account in the tourist facilities conception.

4.4. Implementing a public-private partnership

Local communities' involvement is important insofar as they are part of the territory but also users of place resources. Destination resources enhancement and protection require that governments will attempt to inform and mobilize the local population for sustainable tourism development. Residents' support is also required as relationship with the local population is important for many tourists. Residents' contribution should also prevent tourism activity repulsion.

5. Limitations

This research improves our understanding of elements contributing both to tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, some limitations should be discussed. First, this study uses convenient sampling and the number of respondents is quite restricted. A random sampling should be used to improve the study's reliability.

Our research focus on assessing attributes importance depending on their frequency of occurrence and not according to their real contribution to overall satisfaction. In order to measure the weight of each attribute and to develop a reliable and robust measurement of tourist satisfaction, a quantitative methodology is also needed. This is the next step of our research.

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