Saimaa University of Applied Sciences
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Imatra
Degree Programme in Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism
Tourism and Hospitality

Sofia Luukkonen

**Customer satisfaction and service development for tour operator La Moet Phuket**

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Abstract
Sofia Luukkonen
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Instructor: Mr Ilkka Lehtola, Lecturer, Saimaa UAS

The purpose of this thesis was to study La Moet Phuket operations to find out customer satisfaction and to find out how service and tour products could be developed. The idea was to find out how satisfied customers are in tours provided by La Moet Phuket. The main goal of this research was to get development ideas from the customers. The research was made in partnership with La Moet Phuket tour operator.

The work was commissioned for a Swedish owned tour operator La Moet Phuket, which is operating in southern Thailand. This research was carried out at the tours, by giving the opportunity to answer the questionnaire to over 18 years old customers. The questionnaire was created by the researcher and approved by the company manager. Customer satisfaction was one of the subjects in this research. Literature was read about customer satisfaction, customer service, development in tourism products and service, to support this research.

The main areas that were investigated in questionnaire general information and satisfaction levels on price, guide, service, boat facilities, food and drinks, transfer, swim and snorkelling stops and also the willingness to recommend the tour operator to a friend. Questionnaire was given to La Moet Phuket customers in March 2019. The customers had possibility to answer in all the three different tours of La Moet Phuket for 2 weeks. The results of the study show that most of the customers are satisfied in the tours of La Moet Phuket. As a result of the research some development suggestions were given from the respondents participated in this research. La Moet Phuket has good advantages in the sector and should focus on their tour quality, to be the number one in Phuket.

Keywords: Phuket, service development, La Moet Phuket, customer satisfaction, tourism
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Appendices

Appendix 1 Questionnaire
1 Introduction

The objective of the thesis is to find out customers satisfaction in La Moet Phuket tour products. La Moet Phuket is a tour operator located in the south of Thailand and Swedish owner owns it. This thesis aim is to determine current customer satisfaction and develop tour products to meet the customers needs.

The increasing power of customers and rapid grow of competitive environment brings more challenges for companies. Rapid grow has brought to Phuket, a lot of different tour operators at every corner of the resort towns and hotel lobbies. In today’s global economy, company has to consider customers more than ever. Satisfying customers is one of the most important matters for company’s success. Increased competition in the tourism sector brings more pressure for the companies to win and keep customers. Knowing your customers and their needs is one of the success keys in the tourism. (Hudson 2008.)

The future of tourism is evolving with trends, technology and also customers are more demanding than ever. In the future tour products will be more fragmented and dominated by technology. Environmental awareness has brought attention also in travel industry. Tourism organizations need to turn into better adjusted, efficient, effective, more competitive and rewarding.

This thesis is qualitative research and in this thesis the empirical part is explained verbally and also figuratively by using tables. The information in empirical part was collected by customer satisfaction questionnaire. In thesis the main key word, Phuket, service development, La Moet Phuket, customer satisfaction and tourism are explained in the theoretical part by using the relative literature. In thesis there is also used Internet sources.

In the beginning of thesis are introduced destination Phuket and the company La Moet Phuket, so the reader will understand what kind of operator the company is. After the introduction the reader will continue with basic definition of tourism and nature based tourism. After this theoretical part continues with customer satisfaction to support the research. The last theoretical part consists of development of product and service. The empirical part consists of verbally and figuratively presented tables of the customer satisfaction questionnaire results.
In the end are conclusion, tables, references and customer satisfaction questionnaire.

1.1 Phuket as a destination

Phuket is located in the southern part of Thailand in Andaman Sea. It is the biggest island in Thailand. Phuket’s population in 2019 is 540,200 inhabitants. Tourism in Phuket province started in 1970’s with the first beach bungalows at Patong beach. Tourism is important income for the island and it has dominated the island’s economy for the past two decades. Each year, over 3 million visitors arrive to Phuket to enjoy the nature and many other amenities.

Phuket’s economy started with tin mining, but in 1980s restrictions placed upon tin dredging to protect the coastal waters, the industry’s importance has descended. In 20-century rubber has become an important part of economy and large areas of rainforest were cut down to make way for rubber plantations. Other important contributors to the local economy include farming. Some of the main farm products are pineapple, rice, coconuts and cashew nuts. Phuket is also known for pearl farms and marine products. (Phuket 2004.)

Thailand was one of the countries that were hit by the tsunami in 2004. Tsunami had devastating affects in Thailand on Andaman coast, leaving more than 8,000 people, about half of them foreign tourists dead or missing. Damages and losses were closer to $2.2 billion, which had a huge impact on tourism. Tourism is a very important source of income and employment. The industry employs about 300,000 people, many from other Thai provinces. Tourism experts drew up the Phuket Action Plan, which spelled out a comprehensive series of activities in tension to restart the region’s economically vital tourism industry, which had stalled after the tsunami. The main objective was to restore travel confidence in the region, with marketing and communication playing key role. Marketing campaigns began to attract tourists back to Thailand and in 2005 Phuket received already 2.5 million visitors. (Hudson 2008.)

Phuket is popular beach destination. Phuket has fine white sand beaches with turquoise water. Palm trees provide beautiful scenery on the island. Phuket is also know for cultural towns, like Phuket Town which has history from the Por-
tuguese colony. Phuket offers something for any one. Phuket has wide variety of hotels, from the luxury 5 star to the cheapest hostels, with a wide choice of dining and partying options in different parts of the island. Phuket has more than 30 beaches and many tourist resorts. The most popular resorts are Patong Beach, Kata, Karon and Kamala. North of the island is known from hidden gems for travellers searching for a more quite atmosphere. (Phuket 2009.)

1.2 La Moet Phuket

La Moet Phuket was founded by Lotta Hansson, the founder and managing director of La Moet Phuket. Lotta is from Sweden and has lived in the island approximately 20 years. The company started from an idea, which grew into vision. In November 2007 the first tour of La Moet Phuket was running. The company name “La Moet” comes from the world famous Champagne: Moet Chandon, which is also Lotta’s favourite drink. (La Moet Phuket 2019.)

La Moet was founded trough a passion to boats and the freedom of the sea, marine life, nature surroundings, people and most importantly to escape from the crowds. To cruise at a slow peace allows appreciating the environment and the landscape. The satisfaction and peace you feel, that comes from being on the ocean is one of the best ways to spend relaxing day. (La Moet Phuket 2019.)

La Moet is a small company, run by Lotta and her team. The La Moet Phuket team consists of around 10 people. They believe in personal service where the little extras make a big difference. Giving professional service, while still maintaining a personal touch. Spending time with the guests, sharing the years of experience and knowledge they have gained about Phuket and the local people and their traditions, it’s a true blessing for them. (La Moet Phuket 2019.)

La Moet Phuket provides unique tours in the island of Phuket. The uniqueness comes from the relaxed tours and the atmosphere. Many of the competitors provide tours on speedboats in the island of Phuket. Competitive tour operators have usually many languages on the boats and they are often very packed with tourists. La Moet Phuket provides tours that visit less touristic places. (La Moet Phuket 2019.)
1.3 La Moet Phuket tours

La Moet Phuket provides tour packages for customers, which include transportation, marine park fees, insurance, food, snacks, fruits, beverages and free Wi-Fi. The company provides snorkelling equipment for adult and children, toys for little ones and magazines. (La Moet Phuket 2019.)

La Moet Phuket arranges also private charters, which can be created by the customer. La Moet Phuket tailors the charter for the customer. Customer can choose their own route, menu and entertainment if they would like to. (La Moet Phuket 2019.)

All the tours have experienced captain and crew, professional lifeguard, safety equipment on-board and verified medic first aid response with CPR. The Boat is maintained to western standards and is annually at dry dock for full service. La Moet is insured and fully licensed by Tourism Authority Thailand. (La Moet Phuket 2019.)

La Moet Phuket has this season 2018 - 2019, 3 different tours operating, The Cruise, The Island Cruise – Phang Nga bay and Sun & Sunset Cruise. Tours have English and Swedish speaking guide. (La Moet Phuket 2019.)

1.3.1 The Cruise

Phuket has unique landscape and on this tour you will be able to see it. You will be able to see the lush green mountains and private beaches that can only be seen from the sea. Aboard MV Champagne, there is time to socialize as well as relax between snorkelling and swimming. With La Moet Phuket you can leave all your worries behind and appreciate a fun filled day while creating lasting memories. The cruise is perfect for families and friends. There are 3 stops for snorkelling and swimming from the boat. A peaceful day spent on on-board “MV Champagne”, relaxing on the sundeck or lounging in one of the shady areas. On the menu are freshly baked pancakes. The tour is running every Monday and Saturday. Adults are 3500 THB and Children 1750 THB. (La Moet Phuket 2019.)
1.3.2 The Island Cruiser – Phang Nga

Phang Nga has been a national park since 1981. Phang nga is famous for its limestone cliffs which rise over the sea, some of them reaching up to 300 meters. The national park is known for its caves, lagoons, and emerald-green water. Enjoy the day cruising in one of the world’s most beautiful archipelagos. One stop is the island called Koh Hong, where you can explore the island and have a swim. You can also enjoy the scenery from the boat and relax on the sundeck. Lunch will be served on board while cruising among the many islands. Phang Nga bay consists of 42 islands and there will be several swim stops for a refreshing swim. The Island cruiser is a laidback tour, where you can discover unspoiled beaches in a unique landscape. The tour is running every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Adults are 4800 THB and children 2350 THB. (La Moet Phuket 2019.)

1.3.3 Sun & Sunset cruise

This is the cruise for those who enjoy the sun and sea. During the day you can enjoy the sun and have a swim and snorkel. In the evening you can relax and watch the sun drop into the ocean with dinner under the starts. During the cruise sunset, the first stop is dedicated to snorkelling where you will find many colourful fish, have fun swimming and jumping from sundeck. Later in the afternoon you will find time to relax on the sundeck among cosy pillows or in one of our lounging areas where the sun can’t reach you. This is the tour where you get the best of both worlds. Afternoon swimming and snorkelling in the sun and evening relaxing and watching the sunset while enjoying your dinner. The tour is running every Sunday. Adults are 3500 THB and children 1750 THB. (La Moet Phuket 2019.)

1.4 MV Phuket Champagne – boat

MV Phuket Champagne is a 20-meter wooden boat. It is registered for 48 persons, but the tours are filled with maximum 38 persons. It has all the amenities, a large sundeck with seating and lounging area, lots of open space, two wooden bathrooms with fresh water showers and kitchen. (La Moet Phuket 2019.)
La Moet Phuket believes guests should feel welcome on board, be able to enjoy themselves. La Moet Phuket is called as moving living room. It has big lounging areas just for relaxing or reading a book. On the second floor the boat has spacious sundeck with cosy cushions, where customers can enjoy the sun. On “Champagne” boat you have various spaces to choose where to spend your time. (La Moet Phuket 2019.)

2 Tourism

The essential nature of tourism is travelling outside the usual environment or normal place of residence and work for maximum one year. Minimum length of stay is 24 hours for it to be considered tourism. Visitors who do not stay overnight are termed same day visitors or excursionists. In tourism there is considered to be two elements, the journey to the destination and the stay at the destination. Tourism is divided into domestic and international tourists. (Cooper 2012.)

Tourism destination consists of different kind of components that make the destination. Tourism destination includes tourism products such as supportive attractions and services. Destinations are loosely combined networks of organisations that deliver the tourism experience. Attraction pulls the visitor to the destination and it is the initial motivation to visit. Attraction includes natural and man-made attractions and events. Attraction makes the tourist visit the destination while other amenities and facilities are essential for the destination, but they would not exist without the attractions. Amenities include accommodation, food, retailing and other services. Access to the destination and in the destination is essential for the success of destination. Ancillary services include marketing development and coordination services to both consumer and the industry through a destination management organisation. (Cooper 2012.)

2.1 Guided tour

Guiding is probably one of the world’s oldest professions, now a days tour guides can be found at every tourism destination. Tour guides are important part of tourism product and experience. The main role of guide is to ensure that
the tour run smoothly and is safe. Guided tours typically involve direct experience of phenomena. By globalisation guided tours have developed into diverse, multifaceted, adaptable and context-specific products offering benefits beyond safety and convenience. (Weiler & Black 2014.)

2.2 Nature-based tourism

Natural resources are one of the main attractions to travel. The main natural attractions like beaches, weather, water, landscapes and fauna are connected to nature based tourism. The tourism in nature focuses on experiencing these natural features. Interest in natural based tourism has become popular in this growing environmental awareness. Development of technology and economic has made for the tourism remote and preserved areas more easily accessible. Nature tourism is often mixed with ecotourism even it only shares some of the ecotourism requirements. (Buhalis & Costa 2006.)

3 Customer satisfaction

Customer expectations consist of their previous buying experiences and opinions of friends. Customers are satisfied if the company meet customer expectations. It is important to set the right level of expectations. If expectations are set too low, it might satisfy those who buy but fail to attract new customers. If expectations are raised too high, buyers might be disappointed. (Kotler, Bowen, Makens, Baloglu 2017.)

Customer satisfaction depends on how the product or the service matches buyer’s expectations. We are all different and so are our wants and needs, but essentially our basic needs need to be fulfilled. Quality, value, convenience and good service must be delivered, to customer to get full customer satisfaction. (Customer service 2012.)

In today’s global economy, company has to consider customers more than ever. Satisfying customers is one of the most important keys for company’s success. Increased competition in the tourism sector brings more pressure for the com-
panies to win and keep customers. Customer satisfaction and loyalty are the goal for business to success. (Hudson 2008.)

3.1 Measuring customer satisfaction

Service success and customer satisfaction is measured by customer satisfaction research. Research target are for example customers first impression, service time, service knowledge, other customers and facilities. Customer’s satisfaction research should be implemented regularly. Research should be also focused on the lost customers. It is important to investigate in the research, opinions of current customers, lost customers and potential competitors customers. (Lahtinen & Isoviiita 2004, 11.)

3.2 Service quality in customer satisfaction

Delivering high quality service is one of the best ways to differentiate from the competitors. Service quality is measured how well customer expectations are met. The aim is to exceed the customer’s expectations in service quality. Promise to the guest only what you can deliver and deliver more than you promise. Customers expectations are based on their past experiences, word of mouth and advertising. By exceeding customer’s expectations most likely they will use same company again. (Kotler, Bowen, Makens & Baloglu 2017.)

Customers want to feel them self-special. The experience that customers get from the service should be understood and valued. The quality of service is important factor for the company to be successful. Providing high quality of service should be in company’s strategy. (Customer service 2012.)

In the tourism success or failure depends on the service provided. Remarkable service does not always require a great deal of cost, time or resources. Many times it’s the small details and special attention from employees that make the service more special. Every customer is different and treating all the customers individually will create personalized service, that customers would remember most. Customers have different backgrounds and values, which should be taken into consideration when providing service. Delivering service from the heart and having service minded employees are more willing to go for the extra mile.
To provide high quality of service it requires keen observation skills from the employees and support from management. (Customer service 2012.)

### 3.3 Customer loyalty

Customer loyalty is vital condition for successful company. Customer loyalty tells the company how likely customers are to return to the company, and of their willingness to build relationship. Customer’s expectations have high impact on customer loyalty and they must be met or exceeded. Loyal customers bring more value for the company and are also less expensive. Loyal customers spread more positive word of mouth and are willing to recommend company to a friend. Identifying and focusing on loyal customers will be more beneficial for the company. In tourism industry it is harder to have loyal customers. Many tourists like to travel to new destinations and not to the same ones. In tourism the customers are more price sensitive. Customer’s expectation levels are also higher and they might be harder to meet or exceed. (Hudson 2008.)

Building strong and positive relationship with the loyal customers will have a positive impact also on potential customers. When building the relationship, company should take into consideration customer touch points and strongly focus on fulfilling them all. Loyal customers should be treated with more special service and employees should be trained to provide more personalized service. Loyal customers could have for example more extra offering, special prices or rates. Company should keep records on customer purchase history and reach loyal customers individually through media. Loyalty programs are easy way to maintain contact with loyal customers. (Customer service 2012.)

### 3.4 Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth has a strong impact on consumer buying behaviour. Consumers believe more in recommendations that come from friends and other consumers rather than advertisements or salespeople. One study found that 92 % of consumers trust recommendations from friends and family above any form of advertising. (Kotler, Bowen, Makens, Baloglu 2017.)
Customers who have strong views are more likely to tell more people about their experiences than those with milder views. Dissatisfied customers spread more negative word of mouth than the satisfied ones. (Lovelock & Wirtz 2011.) New technology has made recommendations easier and usually dissatisfied customers will tell others through social media networks. Online complaint can become more damaging to business as everyone can usually see it. Issues should be resolved on-location, to avoid any problem from escalating. When dealing with complaints it is important to understand that customers want to be heard. Usually by listening, emphasising and apologising customers feel that the company wants to help. Offer the customer solution or even compensation. Dissatisfied customers can be converted to satisfied customers who will recommend company to the others. (Customer service 2012.)

4 Development of tourism product

4.1 Definition of tourism product

In tourism, product is the product of the tourism sector, which is fundamental for the tourist during their travel. Tourism product is combination of different type. For example: Package tour, guiding, transportation service and shopping. Tourism products are products that can be sold in tourism market. Tourism product aim is to meet customer’s satisfaction. In process of satisfaction the tourism products have their own types and characteristics. (Introduction to tourism products.)

Product consists of several levels, which are important to understand the product concepts. To provide valuable product, it is important to develop and organize these levels of product. Based on Surprenants (1987) theory, product is divided into 4 levels.
Figure 1. Product levels (Surprenant 1987)

Products first level is core product, the basic of the product and it answers the question what the customer is really buying. The focus on the core product is the purpose of the product. The second level is facilitating products and these are services or goods that represent all the qualities of the core product. The third level is supporting products, which are the benefits consumer expects to get. These products should add value to the core product. The aim of this product is also to help differentiate it from the competition. The last level of product is an augmented product. These include accessibility, atmosphere, customer interaction with the service organization, customer participation and customer interaction with other customers. (Kotler, Bowen, Makens & Baloglu 2017.)

4.2 Product development

Product development can be done absolutely from a new product or already existing product can be modified. New companies develop usually new product and also existing companies can develop a new product. Before product development it is important to know what the customers think of your current products and should the company develop totally new product or modify the existing
one. Customer needs and future trends should be taken to consideration when developing a product. (Kotler, Bowen, Makens & Baloglu 2017.)

In this evolving world it is important to focus on the future trends and customer demand side when developing a product. The future trends have a high impact on customers buying behaviour. The customers are more demanding, experienced and sophisticated. By Yeoman (2008) consumers will be more knowledgeable, discerning, seek quality, participating and drawn from an older age group. Customers are more aware of environmental issues and technologically more skilled. Traditional tour products will be gradually replaced by creative and innovative tour products. The new trends will embrace ethical travel and they concerns for the destinations and communities who live there. Tour operators should response to these trends and embrace the idea of corporate social responsibility, particularly with respect to local communities. (Cooper 2012.)

In tourism we have many different customers, with different experiences, desires and motivations. In future the company should be able to customize tour products. Product development needs to be implemented by co-creation with customer along with the supplier. Technology will have high importance in a process of co-creation. (Cooper 2012.)

4.3 Service development

Good service is all about understanding the customer. For good service employees need to work hard to meet or exceed the service expectations. The service essentials for employee comes from simple warm greet, smile, making eye contact and use of the customers name to make the customer make feel more special. These simple actions tell customers that your company values them. Your company must be always one step ahead of a customer to give remarkable service, to exceed expectations and have satisfied customers. (Customer service 2012.)

The service company needs to identify the expectations of target customers regarding service quality. Knowing your customer is essential for delivering quality. Once customer’s expectations are resolved company must develop service deliver system that meets guest expectations. Communication inside the
company is important, to see the goal for satisfied customers. Service quality and performance feedback is important to communicate to employees. Companies should arrange team meetings to give feedback and motivate the employees. (Kotler, Bowen, Makens & Baloglu 2017.)

Cornell Hospitality research (2012) presented a report, that showed guest satisfaction is influenced by service providers. Employee attitude and the manner have very high impact on the service outcome. Training is critical to ensuring quality service and management should commit investment to create a learning organization. Companies and employers should put a lot into training to get more out of it. Often training has high influence on the motivation. (Customer service 2012.)

5 Research method and process

In this chapter qualitative research is firstly explained in theory. It is followed by research methods used. This chapter also explains research process.

The objective of thesis was to research current customer satisfaction level in tours of La Moet Phuket and to provide development ideas from the satisfaction levels. The author of the thesis was working with corporation with the tour operator La Moet Phuket and was also as a guest in all of the tours, so choosing qualitative research method was natural for this research.

5.1 Qualitative research method

Qualitative research method seeks to explore the phenomena. Qualitative research shares characteristics of seeks answers to a question, collects evidence, systematically used a predefined set of methods to answer the question, produces findings that were not determined in advance and are relevant beyond the immediate boundaries of the study. Qualitative research has ability to provide complex textual description of how people experience a given research. It provides information of the human side. Qualitative methods are effective in identifying intangible factors. (Qualitative research methods.)
Qualitative research can generate thoughtful and precise information, but it suits more for small research crowds. That is why it can only be used to describe conclusions. (Surveymonkey 2019.)

Qualitative research methods are more flexible and are mostly open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are useful when researcher wants to have more meaningful and unanticipated answers. Open-ended questions are rich and provide more information. (Qualitative research methods.) Different kind of questionnaire methods can be still analysed by qualitative method.

Questionnaire that was used in this research was built by support of the study theory. Questionnaire includes 9 questions (Appendix 1) and there was one open-ended question. The questionnaire consists of general questions of the customer’s age, gender and nationality. The questionnaire continues with a background question of visiting La Moet Phuket tour before. Questionnaire continues with marketing question, how did the customer find the tour. It was important to see were the customers satisfied on the tour price, as this is a big factor in customer satisfaction. The questions continued with satisfaction level questions by using Likert scale from 1-very dissatisfied to 4-very satisfied and deleting the option neutral as we wanted to receive accurate satisfaction levels. Likert scale was used in the questionnaire, as it is one of the most reliable ways to measure satisfaction and getting granular feedback. Satisfaction questions were asked by using help of product level theory, of the service and products the guest experienced during their tour. The questionnaire continues with word-of-mouth question of recommending the tour to a friend. The questionnaire ends with open-ended question of development ideas.

5.2 Data collection

The main aim of this research is to collect information about customer satisfaction and to find out the possible development areas. The target group of this research was over 18-years-old La Moet Phuket customers.

Customer satisfaction research is implemented by using qualitative research and analyse method. The questionnaire was executed with the manager of La Moet Phuket and it was done by English language. The questionnaire was the
same on all the 3 different tours, only exception was done with The Island Cruiser tour, as this tour does not have snorkelling. The questionnaire was available on La Moet Phuket tours 21.3. – 31.3.2019. The questionnaire was on all the 3 tours, The Cruise, The Island Cruiser and Sun & Sunset Cruise. The staff on the boat mentioned the questionnaire to the customers on the boat before the tour started and before arriving the harbour. The entire customer on the tour had a chance to answer the questionnaire. The idea was to have at least 45 from all the 3 tours, but we managed to get 49 responses.

5.3 Data analysis

The results of the collected data were analysed by comparing the questionnaire results and by using the help of Microsoft Excel. Data will be presented in the research by verbally and also in some results figuratively to support the results. Questionnaire had an open-ended question the results of which were presented in the research by customer’s word. There were totally 9 questions in this research.

5.4 Reliability

Reliability is about consistency of the results. In research this means the questions should receive the same answer from a person every time it is asked. Reliable measure will give same results on 2 or more occasion. However reliability cannot always be proven if the object being measured has changed. (Finn, Walton & Elliott-White 2000.)

The reliability of the research was high. Received responded questionnaires were all together 49. Results of the questionnaire were divided evenly. Questionnaire was treated confidentially. Respondents were over 18 years old customers and age distribution was high. Questionnaire received responses from different nationalities, which brought new aspects in the research. The research might not be entirely reliable because of the respondent's language skills, aspects to questionnaire that was conducted in English language.
6 Customer satisfaction and development ideas

Customer satisfaction questionnaire was available on the La Moet Phuket tour for all the customers over 18 years old. Customer satisfaction questionnaire got 49 responses. The Cruise got 10 responses, The Island Cruise 19 responses and Sun & Sunset Cruise got 20 responses. In the next chapter I will be presenting the results of the questionnaire.

6.1 General information of respondents

In the first 3 questions I asked from the customers their gender, age and nationality. We wanted to know which tour pulls more younger generation and which older. Also we wanted to know the nationalities of the respondents.

Question (1) gender divided equally by all the respondents 50% women and 50% men, on all the 3 different tours. Men and women are both big customer base for La Moet Phuket.

Question (2) age was divided differently in all the 3 tours. We could see which tour is more popular among the young customers and which one among older customers.

![Age distribution The Cruise.](image)

Figure 2. Age distribution The Cruise.
The Cruise was more popular among young customers 18-34 years old. The tour also had over 45-64 years old customers. The Island Cruise was really popular among older customers almost 50% of 45-54 years old. The customers over 65 years old was second biggest customer group and after 55-64 years old customers. Sun & Sunset cruise was really popular among young customers. Most of the customers were 18-24 years old and 25-34 years old. The third group was over 65 years old customers. La Moet Phuket tours are popular among all age groups, young customers and also old customers.

Question (3) Customer's nationality was divided moderately evenly. The biggest customer groups are from Nordic countries. Most of customers were from Sweden as the tour has Swedish speaking tour guide. The second biggest nationality groups were Finland and Danish customers. The tours had also some customers from United Kingdom and some other nationalities. According to the research Nordic customers are the majority of La Moet Phuket tours.

Question (4) “Have you been before on any other La Moet Phuket tour?” most of the respondents had not been before on La Moet Phuket tours. Averagely 20% of the customers had been on La Moet Phuket tour before. From this result we could see that La Moet Phuket had some few returners from some other tour.

Question (5) “How did you find La Moet Phuket tour?” almost 70% of the respondents had found it through tour representative. The second biggest group
was online. The third little amount of responses we got, I have been on La Moet Phuket tour before and friend recommended.

6.2 Price and satisfaction

The (6) question we had in the questionnaire, was regarding satisfaction in the tour price. Price plays high impact with customer satisfaction, because the customers pay for the tour before and have some kind of expectations and if the tour is expensive for the customer their expectations are higher.

Customers were satisfied on The Cruise tour price. All of the 10 responses were satisfied. The Island Cruise is the most expensive tour of the all tours. From 19 responses, only 3 were not satisfied on the tour price. On Sun & Sunset Cruise also 3 of the respondent were not satisfied on the tour price.

6.3 Service and customer satisfaction

We asked from the customers their satisfaction levels of all the tour points that they had during the tour day. Question (7) was created by using Likert scale, as 1- very dissatisfied, 2- dissatisfied, 3- satisfied and 4- very satisfied.

The first question was how satisfied the customer was on service on boat. On all the 3 tours all of the customers were very satisfied on the service. Only The Island Cruise had 1 response satisfied and Sun & Sunset had also 1 response dissatisfied.

Next questions were regarding guides friendliness and knowledge. The guide on the boat is professional and has done the job many years. The main guide speaks English and Swedish language. Most of the respondents were very satisfied on guides friendliness and knowledge. Only one respondent was dissatisfied on guide’s friendliness on Sun & Sunset cruise.

We asked from the guest their satisfaction levels, regarding boat. We had 4 different questions of satisfaction levels of space on boat, comfort on boat, facilities on boat and safety on boat. MV Phuket Champagne boat is unique and one of the unique selling points for La Moet Phuket, as it is like a moving living room. On The Cruise respondents were mostly all very satisfied on MV Phuket
Champagne boat. On The Island Cruise respondents were half very satisfied and half satisfied. Safety on boat was very satisfied by the respondents, so the overall satisfaction level regarding boat is still high. On the Sun & Sunset cruise most of the guest were very satisfied. 5 respondents were satisfied on boat facilities and 1 was dissatisfied.

The tour price includes transfer from the hotel to the harbour and also after the tour the transfer will take the customers back to the hotel. We wanted to know the satisfaction level of the transfer. Most of the respondents were very satisfied on the transfer. Few of the guest's respondent satisfied. The Island Cruise had among few respondents dissatisfied and one very dissatisfied.

We asked from the guest their satisfaction level of food and drinks. Tour serves food, snacks and non-alcoholic drinks. Lunch is served on The Cruise and The Island Cruise. Sun & Sunset Cruise serves dinner. Lunch or dinner is buffet and there are multiple choices and if you have any special diets the boat will take this consideration. Snacks vary from sandwiches, to fresh local fruits and delicious pancakes. Most of the respondents on all the tours were very satisfied on lunch/dinner and snacks. Few respondents were satisfied. On The Island Cruise was one respondent dissatisfied on lunch and snacks. Also on Sun & Sunset one respondent was dissatisfied on snacks. Satisfaction level on drinks varies from very satisfied to satisfy. There were also few respondents dissatisfied on the drinks.

It was important to know the satisfaction level of the customers on the tour route. All the 3 different tours have very different route. The route has been specially planned to be non crowded and to see the beauty of the Southern Thailand. On all of the 3 tours most of the respondents were very satisfied. Few respondents were satisfied and one dissatisfied on the tour route.

The customers have possibility to swim on all of the 3 tours. Every tour has own swim stops and they might vary of the sea level. For safety reasons all of the customers need to swim with a noodle or a lifejacket. On the The Cruise half of the respondents were very satisfied and satisfied. Most of the respondents were very satisfied on The Island Cruise swim stops. Few exceptions were dissatis-
fied and very dissatisfied. On Sun & Sunset cruise most of the respondents were very satisfied.

2 of the tours, The Cruise and Sun & Sunset Cruise have snorkelling stops. The Snorkelling stop varies from the sea level and the sea life is also different in the stops. The snorkelling gear is provided for the guest on the boat. Satisfaction level on The Cruise regarding snorkelling stops was half very satisfied and half satisfied. Most of the guest was very satisfied on the snorkelling gear and few were satisfied. On the Sun & Sunset Cruise respondents were mostly very satisfied on the snorkelling stops and gear.

6.4 Recommendation

Satisfaction level can be measured from the willingness to recommend a product to a friend or a relative. The more customers recommend the more the customers are satisfied. We wanted to know would the respondents recommend La Moet Tours to a friend in question (8). The Cruise customers responded all yes. The Island Cruise received only one no and all other customers would recommend. Sun & Sunset Cruise received only one no and all other would recommend.

6.5 Respondents comments and development ideas

The questionnaire ends with an open-ended question (9), where respondents had a chance to give comments and ideas for development. In all of the tours we received some thoughts and ideas, but not all of the customers fill that part of the question.

Respondents on The cruise tour wrote, “Music, more different drinks and islands” also another customer wrote “Music on way back and wider choice of drinks”. One of the customers wrote “Allow the guest to swim without a float thing when snorkelling. Perhaps add another snorkelling spot”. One customer had idea to develop some activities for kids, “A few games or activities for kids”.

On Sun & Sunset cruise one respondent wrote, “Add more games to use example cards and puzzle”. One of the respondents wrote, “Don’t allow children on board, it would be more romantic”. One respondent would like to develop drink
menu and add a stop, “I would extend the list of drinks and add the music and 1 stop at the beach”. One of the customers wrote, “Maybe a little more cleanliness such as toilet, cutlery, cushions, cups”. One of the respondents would like to have more shade areas on the top deck, “Shade sails on top deck”. One respondent would like to have more information on the webpage, “Easier access to information on the net regarding tours, whereabouts and how often trips will be done. e.g. Sunset only Sunday night”. One of the guest wrote a positive comment, “Keep on smiling”.

On The Island Cruise respondent wrote, “Not to pick so crowded beaches where water was dirty and snorkelling could not be even tried because of poor visibility”. The Island Cruise is not sold as a snorkelling tour, because in Phang Nga the ocean is not turquoise crystal. One of the guests wrote, “3 swim stops less. Less people on tour”. Also another respondent had idea to have fewer customers on the boat, “A very nice trip! The best trip I been on. Can't see how to make this better. Maybe fewer people on the boat (tourist)”. One of the customers wrote, “Love this boat”.

7 Development ideas for La Moet Phuket

Customer satisfaction questionnaire got really positive feedback and high satisfaction ratings. According to the results, La Moet Phuket service and tour products are rated as high-level. The customer service, tour products, price, guiding and boat satisfied majority of the respondents. Majority of the respondents would recommend La Moet Phuket tours to a friend. This means that majority of the respondents expectations were exceeded or met, which leads to satisfied and loyal customers.

Generally the answers of the respondents did not contain major problems or low-level satisfaction. This is a very good result for the company La Moet Phuket, as it means the tour products and services are in a good level. Research revealed some small details about tours and products, which should be taken under consideration and developed to meet the customer’s needs. Current tour service and products should be modified to meet the customer’s needs.
7.1 Information

We asked from the respondent’s development ideas and we received many good ideas. One of customers wished to have more information on the La Moet Phuket webpage. The respondent wished to have more clearly stated information, regarding the tours and the dates.

Clearly stated information on the webpage has a high impact on the customer buying possibility. If the customer can find easily all the information on the webpage they are most likely not to buy the tour. This could be changed easily on the La Moet Phuket webpage. On the webpage, under the tour description tour days could be added or there should be extra heading just for tour days. This information would already have high impact on the tour information on the webpage.

7.2 Cleanliness

One of the negative comments was regarding the cleanliness. The customer was unsatisfied with the cleanliness of cutleries, toilet and cushions on the boat. With cleanliness customer satisfaction and the image can be only raised. To have satisfied customers, cleanliness should be on a high level. Cutleries and toilets should be washed and cleaned during the tours, to maintain the level of cleanliness. Cushions should be washed upon period time. In case of heavy rain they should be protected to avoid damp.

7.3 Drink menu

La Moet Phuket provides currently on the tours compact drink menu. Few customers wished to have more drink varieties on the drink menu. Adding more drinks to the menu should only bring more quality for the tour. This idea could be put in to practise for example on the Sun & Sunset Cruise. The customers could enjoy the sunset and drink specially made for them cocktails.

Drink menu should have some few good options. For example La Moet Phuket could even arrange survey for the customers in social media, where customers could choose from 10 options their 5 favourite one and make the drink menu
based from the results. To make it sustainable reusable plastic cocktail glasses could be used.

7.4 Adults only

One of the customer development ideas was to make Sun & Sunset cruise adults only. This would bring more value and quality to the couples. Tour would be really popular among the couples and be the romantic getaway from the Phuket city hassle. This is a good development idea, which the company should take into consideration, but this would also divide the family customers from Sun & Sunset Cruise.

La Moet Phuket should evaluate the family customers amount on Sun & Sunset Cruise and see is it financially profitable. If the family customers impact in finance is not high, the company could try to implement this idea for the next season. Adults only Sun & Sunset Cruise would be unique tour and different for La Moet Phuket.

7.5 Ethical tour

Few customers on The Island Cruise had development idea to visit less crowded beaches and to have less people on the boats. On The Island Cruise the tour visits beautiful island of Koh Hong, which is really popular among the tourist especially during high season.

The tour could be developed to visit less crowded island, where the tourist could see more of local life and learn something from it. The customers could for example see how locals live and prepare their traditional dishes. Ethical tour would bring positive impact in nature tourism and have social and economical impacts on the local life. This would embrace more ethical travel and keep up with the future trends.

7.6 Boat

One of the unique selling points for the company is the MV Phuket Champagne boat. The boat is very different from the other tour operators, as it is a wooden big boat. The boat gives the customer freedom to enjoy the cruise by moving
freely around. The boat is like a moving living room. The boat welcomes on the board the smallest children to the oldest passengers and pregnant women, which many other boats do not allow. Maintaining the boat's facilities and improving the boat in the future, should only ensure more satisfied customers.

7.7 Service

To ensure high quality of service, the management should motivate and give training to the employees if needed. Company goals and service quality level needs to be communicated to the employees to ensure high quality of service. The big selling point for the company is the language skill of Scandinavian. This brings a lot of guest to the company that do not speak English enough. La Moet Phuket is owned by a Swedish owner, which brings more value for the Nordic customers and the feeling of safety. These are important factors for the paying customers.

7.8 Additional development ideas

Few respondents mentioned development ideas adding music on the board. Talking earlier with the company manager the tours have tried earlier to play some music on the tours. This has also brought negative impact on some of the customer’s tour experience, so the company decided not to play music on the day tours. This could be also asked during the tour if the customers would like to have music on the tour. Sun & Sunset tour plays music during the sunset.

La Moet Phuket provides some toys for the little ones, but to improve service some few new options of games could be added or even create some new activities, that could be done with the children or whole family.

8 Conclusion

The present thesis has investigated customer satisfaction for the company La Moet Phuket. The purpose of this study was to measure the current customer satisfaction level of the customers, as well as develop current products and services by meeting customers needs. The research had been completed by use of qualitative research method.
The theoretical part of this thesis supports and defines the actual research part of the thesis for the reader. The theoretical part gives the base for the topic and research. The main topic of the theoretical part is customer satisfaction, which was implemented in the research part and research questionnaire. The subtopics of customer satisfaction were service quality, customer loyalty and word-of-mouth. Other important topics that were opened in the theoretical part were product and service development. The theoretical part of this thesis is connected to the research part.

The main purpose of this study was to find out customer satisfaction level of La Moet Phuket tours and to receive development ideas for tour and service. The theoretical part demonstrates different development objects for companies to be successful, while in the research part author points out the realistic development ideas, which were found out in the research. The development ideas were received from the customers of La Moet Phuket, which was the aim for the research. Customer’s feedback is important for developing the products and service as they pay and experience it. Developing product and service to meet customer’s needs is strongly connected to customer satisfaction and company’s success. Measuring customer satisfaction constantly gives the company advantage in the competitive tourism industry.

In a conclusion, the objectives and aims of this thesis research were accomplished. The tour operator La Moet Phuket received valuable information and development suggestions from the respondents participating in this research. According to the questionnaire results, current customer satisfaction level is really high and customers are satisfied with overall service. Majority of the customers were satisfied with the tour price. Satisfaction level was also high on La Moet Phuket tour packages. Research received minor development ideas from the customers, which were suggested to La Moet Phuket. Based on the development ideas, some improvements should be implemented in website information, cleanliness, drink menu and tours. The research results are beneficial for La Moet Phuket, therefore to focus on objects the development should be implemented. Customers are becoming more demanding, so it is important to keep improving the service and tour products to keep high standard. The thesis
research shows that tour operator La Moet Phuket is a very competitive tour operator and has kept strong position especially among Nordic customers.
Figures

Figure 1. Product levels (Surprenant 1987)

Figure 2. Age distribution The Cruise.

Figure 3. Age distribution The Island Cruise and Sun & Sunset Cruise.
References


Dear Customer,

My name is Sofia and I am studying in Finland, in Saimaa University of Applied Sciences tourism and hospitality field. I am doing a customer satisfaction research study for my University, with corporation La Moet Phuket. This questionnaire is for my research and it will take few minutes to answer it. Your response will be treated confidentially.

We kindly ask you to answer the following questions.

1. Gender
   - □ Man
   - □ Female

2. Age
   - □ 18-24
   - □ 25-34
   - □ 35-44
   - □ 45-54
   - □ 55-64
   - □ Over 65

3. Nationality
   - □ Finnish
   - □ Danish
   - □ Norwegian
   - □ Swedish
   - □ United Kingdom
   - □ Something else

4. Have you been before on any other La Moet Phuket tour?
   - □ Yes
   - □ No

5. How did you find La Moet Phuket tour?
   - □ Tour representative
   - □ Online
   - □ Social media
   - □ Friend recommended
   - □ I have been on La Moet Phuket tour before
6. Are you satisfied in the tour price?  
- Yes  
- No

7. How satisfied were you on?  
(Please note the numeric range and circle one option)  
1- Very Dissatisfied  2 - Dissatisfied  3 - Satisfied  4 - Very Satisfied  
1  2  3  4  Service on boat  
1  2  3  4  Guides friendliness  
1  2  3  4  Guides knowledge  
1  2  3  4  Space on boat  
1  2  3  4  Comfort on boat  
1  2  3  4  Facilities on boat  
1  2  3  4  Safety on boat  
1  2  3  4  Transfer from hotel and to hotel  
1  2  3  4  Snorkelling gear  
1  2  3  4  Lunch / Dinner  
1  2  3  4  Snacks  
1  2  3  4  Drinks  
1  2  3  4  Tour route  
1  2  3  4  Swim stops  
1  2  3  4  Snorkelling stops

8. Would you recommend La Moet Phuket to a friend?  
- Yes  
- No

9. Comments and ideas for development?  
___________________________________________________________________  
___________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your time!  
Best regards,  
Sofia Luukkonen  
Student