

ABSTRACT

Customer expectations and perceptions toward the service quality of Sirisin and Trang Watee travel boats are investigated. This research focuses on a comparison of service quality between Sirisin and Trang Watee travel boats as determined by five dimensions – tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Additionally, it also examines customer expectations and perceptions of service quality when segmented by travel characteristic factors.

Based on the SERVQUAL survey instrument, the researcher distributed the questionnaires to two groups of the sampled population - 190 questionnaires were collected from Sirisin's customers and 190 questionnaires were collected from Trang Watee's customers during June, 2002 in Trang province.

According to the results of the hypotheses testing at the significant level of .05, there is a significant difference in customer expectation of service quality between Sirisin and Trang Watee travel boats when determined by reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. However, there is no difference in customer expectation of service quality between the two boats when determined by tangibles. There is also a significant difference in customer perception of service quality between Sirisin boat and Trang Watee boat in terms of five dimensions – tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. For the gaps between customers' expectations and perceptions of each boat, the results show that there is a difference between customer expectations and perceptions of the service quality of Sirisin and Trang Watee travel boats. In addition, this research indicates that there is a difference in customer expectations and perceptions of service quality when segmented by travel characteristics - experience, purpose of visit, and number of group members. Finally, this research indicates that there is a positive relationship between motivation and the customer expectations of service quality, whereas there is no relationship between motivation and the customer perceptions of service quality.