

ABSTRACT

The Meeting, Incentive, Convention & Exhibition sector is one of the important sectors within the tourism system, Thailand is one of the competitive convention destinations, which can not be overlooked in the Asia Pacific Region. To maintain Thailand's competitiveness, it is necessary to understand customers' wants and needs. This study applied importance-performance analysis technique to identify the important attributes that influence organizers' decision of site selection and how they perceived the selected convention hotel's performance on these identified criteria.

Descriptive research was employed in this study, using the survey method. The population of this study consisted of 32 organizations who have organized meeting/convention/exhibition at the selected convention hotel from 2001-2004, namely Sofitel Central Plaza Bangkok. Due to the small population, the census was considered as an appropriate method. This research used a self-administered questionnaire as the instrument of research.

Importance-performance analysis was widely used in this study to interpret the data. According to the importance-performance analysis introduced by Martilla and James in the 1970s, 28 attributes of this study were placed into two-dimensioned grid, showing that 5 attributes were placed into Quadrant I, labeled "Concentrate Here", while another 9 attributes fell into Quadrant II, labeled "Keep Up the Good Work". Quadrant III, known as "Low Priority" comprised 8 attributes and Quadrant IV consisted of the remaining 6 attributes, indicating "Possible Overkill".

This research found that overall, respondents appeared to be comparatively satisfied with Sofitel Central Plaza Bangkok's performance of their perceived important attributes, since most of the attributes were placed into Quadrant III and

Quadrant II. The results of this study support previous research conducted by Weber, 2000, that service factor were perceived more important than physical factor on different time sequence.

The importance-performance analysis revealed differences in the strengths and weaknesses of the Sofitel Central Plaza Bangkok, suggesting that the management to make a distinction between marketing and operations such as the attributes fell into Quadrant I “Concentrate Here” area should be utilized as a guide for the hotel’s improvement. On the other hand, the attributes under Quadrant II “Keep Up the Good Work” could be promoted as hotel’s competitive strength to attract customers. Meanwhile, by enhancing customers’ perceptions about importance of attribute and promote Quadrant IV “Possible Overkill” to be competitive strength “ Keep Up the Good Work”. Last but not least, attributes placed into the “Low Priority” section should be repositioned in terms of resource allocation.

Future research consideration are suggested such as analyzing the gap existing between importance and performance mean, and the service gap analysis between management perception of customer’s expectation and customer’s expectation.