

Understanding the Visitor Experience: A Focus on Angkor Temples of Cambodia

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ABSTRACT

Due to the global increase in tourism, many destinations are receiving higher than expected visitors with a concomitant deterioration in the quality of visitors' experience. This is particularly true at many World Heritage Sites around the world including Barcelona, Venice, Macchu Picchu and Angkor Wat. The purpose of this study is to assess the needs of visitors to assure a more quality experience at the largest archeological UNESCO site, Angkor Temples of Cambodia.

With this in mind, our collaborative team of Pace University Faculty and Students and the members of the Authority for the Protection of the Site and Management of the Region of Angkor (APSARA) interviewed over 300 visitors in the City of Siem Reap and in the temples of Angkor. The results of the study show that a large majority of the visitors would recommend a visit to the temples of Angkor with their primary motivation be the temples and the culture. Most of the visitors purchase a pass of three days or fewer and are not taking full advantage of the food, art, wellness and other attractions that Siem Reap has to offer. The most popular temples are Angkor Wat and Ta Prom. Most visitors in this study are independent travelers and are not using tour guides. The major limitation with this study was the inability to easily access the largest demographic group of visitors which includes those from ASEAN due to oral and written language barriers. A major contribution of this research is recommendations on how to plan for gathering feedback from the Asian market in future studies of this type. Visitors would be interested in seeing more specific information on the temples, signage, marketing, accessibility, and improved safe infrastructure for visitors who are those physically challenged.

Keywords: Tourism; Visitors; Cambodia; Heritage

BACKGROUND

History Of Cambodian Tourism

Although Cambodia is one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia, its economy has experienced an average growth rate of 8.5% primarily due to tourism even with the challenges presented by the Asian financial crisis and the SARS epidemic [1]. The assets of Cambodian tourism are based on its significant cultural heritage in terms of traditional arts, architecture and natural resources including flora and fauna as well as the natural environment. However, there are several shortcomings in infrastructure, tourism destination development, product development and marketing [2]. Tourism in Cambodia began to increase in the early 1990s. In the year 2000, Cambodia received 450,000 visitors and by 2012, this number increased to 2.5 million [2]. The Cambodia Tourism Development Strategic Plan 2012 to 2020 predicts 7 million international visitors and 8-10 million domestic visitors. One

contributing factor is that Cambodia's Angkor Wat was named TripAdvisor's #1 Landmark in The World in 2017).

The primary tourist markets were Vietnam, South Korea, China, Laos, Thailand and Japan which made up 60% of the visitor population (Figure 1). The remaining most frequent visitors were from United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, Australia and Malaysia.

The remains of the Khmer Empire that flourished in the 11-14th centuries is called Angkor and consists of 400 square kilometer area and over 1000 temples in the Province of Seam Reap. It was inscribed in the list of World Heritage Cultural Heritage Sites with the requirement that it adopt a planning zone and a legal framework for the management and protection of the site that would be called Authority for the Protection of the Site and Management of the Region of Angkor (APSARA). The purpose of the planning zone was to promote sustainable development of cultural and natural

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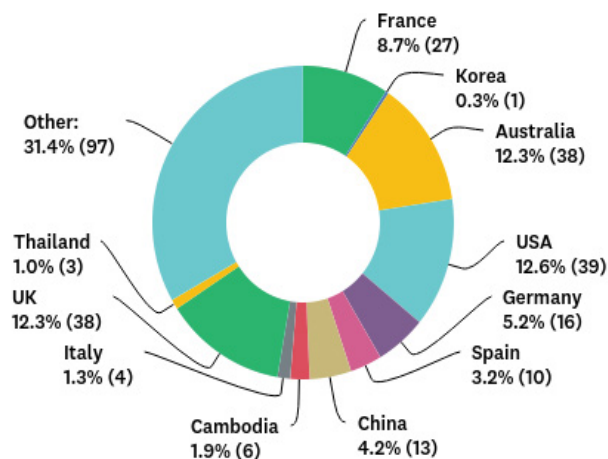


Figure 1: Most frequent international travelers to Cambodia.

resources. Whereas the APSARA would provide a strict balance between the archeological site and tourism development in urban and rural areas [3]. Angkor was at the center of the Khmer Empire that extended over what is now northern Thailand to the Malay Peninsula. In this area of more than 5000 km², there were religious monuments, water reservoirs, settlements, roads, bridges and other public works. It is one of the world's most treasured cultural achievements and considered one of the seven ancient wonders of the world.

The Angkor Zoning and Environmental Management Plan (ZEMP) required by UNESCO established permanent boundaries and meaningful buffer zones. However, the need to integrate cultural heritage and tourism continues to be a problem in many UNESCO sites particularly where tourism has increased to unmanageable numbers that are not sustainable culturally, environmentally and socially. Heritage tourism is one of the fastest growing segments in developed. Both international and domestic markets are major contributors to heritage tourism sites. Although heritage tourism is of great significance, little academic research has been committed to strategies of assuring sustainability of heritage sites [4]. The commercialization of heritage sites tends to degrade the physical sites and eventually the quality of the tourism experience, conservation and restoration even though the commercialization is a source of funding for site maintenance and funding. The designation and promotion as a World Heritage site can lead to significant visitor management issues such as congestion, crowding and site degradation [4]. High visitation may equate with increased revenue to the local communities, but this is not always the case. Day trippers who only arrive for the day and return to their lodging in other locations at the end of the day contribute little to the destination's economy. World Heritage Sites are at risk as they try to maintain the integrity of sites despite the increased volumes of visitors. This study presents the methodology used by one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites to better understand their visitors and assure a quality, sustainable experience

Angkor Archeological Park is known as a living World Heritage Site in that within its 400 sq. kilometers there are active farms, communes and 1000 villages as well as the temples. Control over capacity is problematic in that there are Cambodians living on the site with the national privilege to visit the temples at any time. At the same time, non-resident visitors are required to purchase tickets for 1, 3, or 7-day visits. This arrangement makes controlling capacity of visitors a challenge.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Cultural heritage tourism

Over recent decades, the definition of the term "cultural heritage" has changed. Part of the reason for this is due to the instruments developed by United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Historically, cultural tourism was based on what visitors create and heritage tourism was based on what visitors inherit. In recent years, the definition of heritage tourism has been redefined to include cultural, historic and natural resources. Cultural heritage includes monuments and collections of objects as ancestral traditions and ways of living in the form of oral traditions, social practices, rituals, performing arts, festive events and knowledge, practices and skills related to nature and skills in making the traditional crafts.

United Nations education scientific and cultural organization

The United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was established over a half a century ago for the purpose of contributing to peace and security in the world by promotion collaboration among nations with respect to the rule of law and respect for justice for human rights and freedoms without distinction of race, gender, language or religion. The focus of the collaboration is education, science, culture and communications. Part of UNESCO's mission is the designation of World Heritage Sites which are landmarks or areas to have cultural, historical, scientific of other forms of significance and legally protected by international treaties.

Today there are over 1092 UNESCO World Heritage sites in the world which are categorized as cultural sites (845), natural sites (209), and mixed sites (38). Originally, UNESCO began as a certification program that focused on physical sites but has been expanded beyond destinations to cultural practices and traditions. The National Trust for Historic Preservation considers heritage tourism as one of the fastest growing segments of tourism. Visitor statistics at UNESCO World Heritage sites around the world are showing steady increases.

Management of visitor attractions

Visitor motivation: A study of visitor management necessarily starts with what motivates visitors to travel to a specific attraction [5]. More specifically for this research, the question is what visitors expect and receive from a visit to a sacred site. There are the less obvious benefits of status, nostalgia and education. Visitors also expect a range of services including proper management access to information and visitor facilities [6]. Proper management is interpreted as the achievement of goals and objective of management. On the other hand, ineffective management can result in irrevocable damage or closure of the visitor attraction.

Leask (2009) reviewed literature on visitor management to find that ownership, visitor volume, permanence of the attraction and purpose of the attraction are motivating factors [5]. She surmised that the three elements of a visitor attraction are: the visitor, the site and the market.

Visitor attractions: In order to include day trippers as well as visitors who come from a farther distance and stay overnight, Shackley (2001) used the term visitor attraction instead of tourist attraction in her seminal book entitled *Managing Sacred Site: Service Provision and Visitor Experience* [6].

Visitor attractions have been categorized as 1) components of the natural environment; 2) man-made building structures and

buildings that attract visitors but were designed for purposes other than attracting visitors such as religious worship; 3) man-made structures constructed to attract visitors like theme parks and 4) special events [6]. For the purposes of this research, we will consider the Angkor Archeological Park as a man-made structure attracting visitors but was and is currently used for religious purposes. "Geopietry" is a term applied to visitor attractions perceived as sacred sites which host tourism and religious ceremonies.

Visitor capacity: Management of a visitor attraction is a critical component to the sustainability of an attraction. The number of visitors who visit a site during a given time period must remain below the carrying capacity of that site in order to prevent damage to the site and to maximize the visitors' appreciation of and satisfaction with the site visit.

The World Tourism Organization defines carrying capacity as the maximum number of visitors who can visit a destination at the same time without causing damage to the physical, economic, and socio-cultural environments without decreasing the quality of the visitor experience (UNWTO, 1981). Sacred sites and destinations have visitor flow limits that assure a quality guest experience. The concept of carrying capacity is discussed in the literature and can be measured by calculating the number of visitors that can be sustained in the space without physical or perceptual damage to the experience. This would be physical carrying capacity and psychological carrying capacity [7-9]. The steps that can be taken to control the visitor flow are 1) controlling visitor numbers; 2) expanding resource capacity or 3) a combination of the two [6].

Visitors can have an impact on the attraction via theft, vandalism, graffiti, accidental damage, pollution and crowding. Visitor dress is a way of expressing reverence and there are certain expectations. For instance, taking pictures of worshippers or Buddhist priests is a form of invasion of privacy. The number of visitors is a major threat to the sustainability of heritage sites as the World Heritage Site Designation has led to increased, rapid commercialization. This situation highlights the need to balance the number of visitors and preservation [4].

Site management: Although there is scant research on the topic of site management of tourism destinations, Leask (2010) suggests that the examination of techniques and best practices is the most effective strategy [10]. Benchmarking for quality is a promising tool for visitor site management because it involves the continuous process of evaluating products, services, processes and examples of best practices from destinations having similar challenges with visitor management. Challenges may include location, size, type of destination, visitor management plans, general management and staff skills, pricing, and marketing. Lack of communication and information sharing among organizations and destinations can be problematic. Even though benchmarking is a useful tool for the management of visitor attractions, benchmarks cannot easily be transferred from one site to other due to the wide diversity and unique characteristics of each site.

Leask (2010) noted there is a need for management techniques appropriate and unique to each location. She also stated that many locations are trending to a more market-oriented approach which challenges the potential for more sustainable tourism [10]. Lack of public funding to many of the site has resulted in them becoming more commercial. The commercialization (privatization) of many destinations has created a conflict between resource conservation and authenticity. At the same time, many visitor destinations have

been plagued by poor management skills and high staff turnover as well as growing visitor expectations and a fragile, perishable product [11-13].

The key challenges in visitor attraction management are 1) shaping the management approach based on the competitive environment, 2) measuring effectiveness based on the range of stakeholders, and 3) selecting management tools based on the individual nature of the site. A combination of these factors allows the leadership to improve management of their visitor attraction. To develop a model for effective visitor attraction management Leask reviewed literature using benchmarking quality as a way to establish and achieve standards in the management and marketing of these attractions. She recommends a more business-oriented approach that incorporates benchmarking best practices that consider location, visitor flows, competitive advantage and management. A lack of financial support and reinvestment is evidence of ineffective visitor attraction management and can result decline of the quality of services and resources at visitor attractions.

METHODOLOGY

The APSARA Authority of Cambodia invited the Pace University research team to volunteer to participate in a project to assess the perceptions and experiences of the visitor to the Angkor Archeological Site. Each of the teams drafted a visitor satisfaction survey. The APSARA and the Pace teams jointly evaluated the content and intent of the questions on the survey. After agreement was reached on a 4-page survey, the survey was pilot tested in Angkor Wat on 10 visitors. It was the consensus of the teams that the survey should be reduced to 2 pages. It was further agreed that survey interviews should be conducted at various Angkor temple site and at various times in order to best assess the visitor experience.

The survey period covered July 11-25, 2018 and involved university students and members of the APSARA team. The paper survey was administered and the data were entered into Survey Monkey for analysis and future export to SPSS for analysis (Appendix A).

The survey consisted of 20 questions on the following topics: visitor satisfaction with attributes of the overall trip to Siem Reap and to Angkor Archaeological Park; profile of the visitor responding to the survey; understanding the Code of Conduct while in the temples and visitor preferences, knowledge and spending habits. A limitation in the methodology was the need to have the survey administered in several languages as well as multilingual surveyors. Most of the surveyors were proficient in their own language but most were not necessarily proficient in the language of many of the visitors. For instance, none of the surveyors spoke Mandarin, a predominant language spoken by many of the visitors.

RESULTS

Of the 292 surveyed visitors the Angkor Archeological Site, the three primary visitor groups were from the United States of America (12.6%, n=39), the United Kingdom (12.3%, n=38), and Australia (12.3%, n=38). The largest portion of visitors fell into the category of "other" (31.4%, n=97) which included other countries such as China, South Korea, Vietnam, Germany, Spain, Cambodia, Italy, Japan and Thailand.

Most visitors were motivated to visit Angkor by the temples (83.9%, n=260) and culture (56.1%, n=174). Fewer visitors showed interest and passion for other attractions (17.1%, n=54), food (14.5%, n=45) and local markets (10.0%, n=31) (Figure 2).

Most visitors chose to stay three days in Siem Reap (33.7%, n=98). More than 20% of visitors chose to stay in Siem Reap for four (26.8%, n=78) or five or more days (23.0%, n=67). More than 12% (n=39) of visitors spent two days and less than 4% spent one day in Siem Reap (n=9).

Out of the visitors who planned to spend money on tours, 30% (n=75) planned on spending between \$21-40. Out of the visitors who planned to spend on food and beverages 46.4% (n=115) planned on spending less than \$20. In the planned transportation expenses category, 58.2% (n=167) planned to spend less than \$20 in transportation. Of the visitors who planned to spend on other expenses, 47.4% (n=36) planned to spend less than \$20.

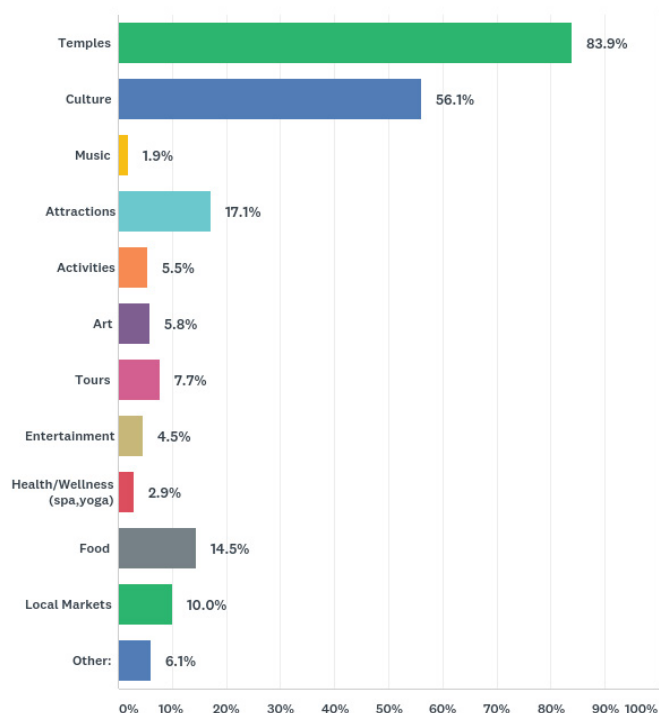


Figure 2: What motivated visitors to travel to Cambodia.

It is common for visitors to choose to travel independently or in an organized group. The profile of visitors in this research were as follows: singles traveling independently (15.3%, n=47); couples traveling independently (18.5%, n=57); and family and friends traveling independently (9.7%, n=30). Those who chose to travel in organized groups were singles (1%, n=2), couples

n=34.5%), and family and friends (6.2%, n=19). There is a tendency for the organized groups to be comprised of visitors who do not speak the local language of Khmer or English.

More than 75% (n=232) of visitors used a remork (tuk tuk) as their transportation during their stay. Twenty-eight percent of the visitors (27.8%, n=86) used a car, taxi or van during their stay. Ten percent of the visitors (10.0%, n=31) and 8.4% (n=26) used buses with 45 seats and minibuses with 24 seats, respectively. Motorcycles and bicycles were the next chosen means of transport, accounting for 5.2% (n=16) and 5.5% (n=17) of responses. Less than 1% (n=2) chose other means of transportation.

More than half of visitors purchased a one-day Angkor pass 53.4% (n=164). Approximately 40% of visitors chose to buy a three-day Angkor pass 40.4% (n=124). Only 1.0% (n=3) did not purchase a pass. More than 83% (n=249) of surveyed visitors were satisfied with the process of purchasing an Angkor pass and only 3.0% (n=41) of visitors were not satisfied with the process (Figure 3).

Generally, visitors were satisfied with their experience in the Angkor site. More than ninety-percent (93.5%, n=288) of visitors were satisfied with temple infrastructures. More than eighty-eight percent (88.4%, n=267) of visitors considered that it was convenient to access temples. However, it is notable that approximately 45.8% (n=105) of visitors were unsatisfied with the signage, because they found it hard to read and understand. Further, 35.9% (n=62) were unsatisfied with accessibility to toilets. In addition, only 44.4% of visitors (n=114) were satisfied with buying souvenirs and more visitors (51.4%, n=132) hold a neutral attitude. Finally, 28.3% (n=82) of visitors were annoyed with the lack of smooth flow of visitors in the temples (Figure 4).

	SATISFIED	N/A	NOT SATISFIED	TOTAL
Temple Infrastructure	93.5% 288	4.2% 13	2.3% 7	308
Accessing the temples	88.4% 267	3.3% 10	8.3% 25	302
Learning about Khmer History/Culture	70.5% 206	16.1% 47	13.4% 39	292
Understanding the signs (or lack thereof)	45.8% 138	19.3% 58	34.9% 105	301
Using toilet Facilities	35.9% 103	42.5% 122	21.6% 62	287
Cleanliness of the park	77.8% 231	10.4% 31	11.8% 35	297
Hospitality of temple staff	83.4% 252	13.6% 41	3.0% 9	302
Hospitality of tour guides	71.3% 201	25.9% 73	2.8% 8	282
Hospitality of drivers	87.9% 248	10.3% 29	1.8% 5	282
Navigating traffic inside park	70.3% 196	12.5% 35	17.2% 48	279
Flow of visitors in temple	60.0% 174	11.7% 34	28.3% 82	290
Accessing food and drink	50.4% 140	43.9% 122	5.8% 16	278
Buying souvenirs	44.4% 114	51.4% 132	4.3% 11	257

Figure 3: How satisfied are you with your experience on the Angkor Site?

many people culture visitors code conduct guide food free tell explanations bathroom
 clean site improve water expensive need price dangerous toilets
 railing better less rubbish temples easy signs groups
 information tour guide history map people audio guide
 ticket railings elderly crowded cheaper tickets signage good human guides less
 culture history audio tours roads access water access Chinese English stairs

Figure 4: Visitor comments on ways the experience could be improved.

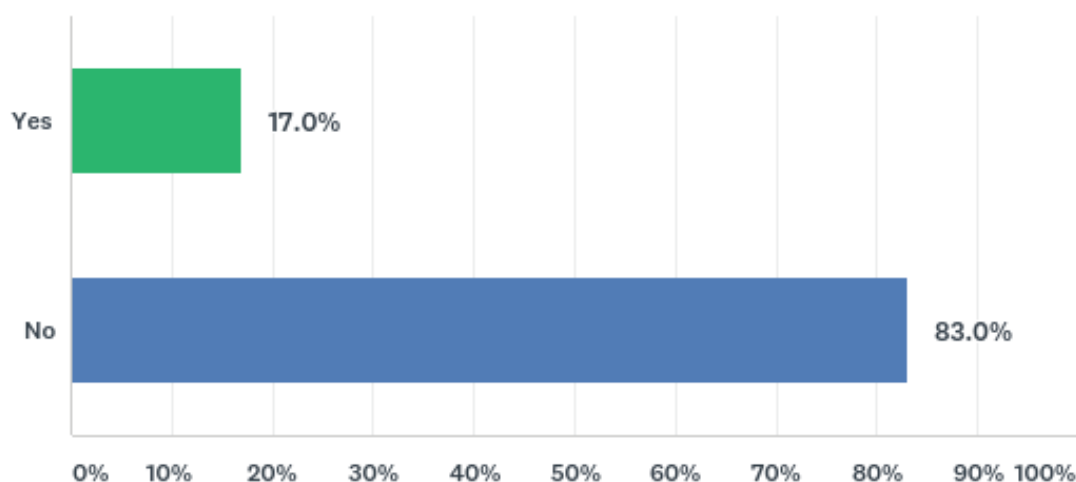


Figure 5: Have you visited the welcome to Angkor website: angkor.com.kh?.

Visitors mentioned “signs and signage” over 40 times and expressed the need for more signs that are easy to understand and explain some of the site’s history. Toilets, restrooms and bathrooms were mentioned approximately 25 times, where visitors expressed the need for additional, clean toilet facilities. Over crowdedness and “too many visitors” were mentioned over 20 times, where visitors expressed their dissatisfaction with the large number of visitors. Statements related to price were mentioned 22 times, where visitors indicated that the price of tickets was too high. Cleanliness was another factor mentioned over 10 times. Many visitors expected toilets to be cleaner and the forests to be free of garbage. The elderly visitors wanted to have railings to hold on to.

Three primary temples which visitors visited were Angkor (97.8%, n=180), Bayon (60.9%, n=81) and Ta Prohm (50.8%, n=61). A majority of 75% (n=30) of survey takers stated that they visited other temples which are not listed on the survey. More than 89% (n=35) of survey takers expressed that they planned to visit other temples.

Sixty-two percent (n=191) of visitors heard of the Angkor Visitor Code of Conduct. Approximately 87.6% (n=162) of these visitors also considered it easy to understand (Figure 5).

Most visitors (83.0%, n=181) had not visited the Welcome to Angkor website.

More than 94%, approximately 229 visitors, had neutral attitudes towards hot air balloon and horseback riding activities. Ninety percent visitors (n=225) had a neutral attitude to elephant riding activities. Visitors who were not satisfied with elephant riding

accounted for 7.2% (n=18).

The largest group of visitors 89.2% (n=207) who were satisfied with the quality of their accommodation stayed at hotels. Few travelers, less than 2% (n=3) were unsatisfied with their hotel accommodation. Travelers who stayed at resorts, hostels and guest house were mostly satisfied (60%, approximately n=27). Those travelers who stayed at other types of accommodations reported to feel neutral 70.0% (n=14).

Visitors who were likely to recommend a trip to Angkor accounted for 92.9% (n=287) of total visitors. 5.5% (n=17) of visitors had a neutral attitude in recommending a trip to Siem Reap/Angkor. Less than 2% (n=5) visitors preferred not to recommend the Angkor trip.

Over half (54.2%, n=167) of visitors were between the ages of 26 and 59. Approximately 36% (n=110) were between the ages of 12-25. Approximately, 9% (n=29) were over the age of 60 and less than 1% (n=2) were younger than 12 years old. More than half of survey takers were female, making up 53.4% (n=157) of survey takers and 46.6% (n=137) of survey takers were male.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Visitor profile

In terms of gender, males and females were fairly equal in numbers. A large majority of visitors were between the ages of 26 and 59, followed by the second largest group, who were visitors between the ages of 12-25. Visitors older than 60 made up a relatively small number of travelers. There is a need to give consideration

to the safety of navigating the temples and the stairways for all visitors, specifically for elderly and physically challenged visitors. For example, the installation of rails and designation of accessible paths through the temples with proper signage might increase satisfaction for these groups.

Although the largest number of visitors responding to the survey were from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and France, this did not necessarily reflect the actual nationality of the visitors on site in order of numbers. The largest number of visitors to the Angkor Archaeological Park and Cambodia as a whole were from ASEAN which is comprised of China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and South Korea. Lack of inclusion of ASEAN survey responses may be due to a variety of reasons. First of all, the surveyors were fluent in only one language, namely English, Khmer or French, which means that they were less likely to approach visitors speaking other languages. It is common for most Asian visitors to travel with a guide who speaks their language. However, these guides often prohibit their group from being slowed down by interviews or surveys. Sometimes the tour guides allow only one visitor to be interviewed to reflect the overall opinions of the group, which is not appropriate. It is recommended that future surveys of visitors be inclusive of interviewers who speak English, Khmer, French, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotian, Thai, and South Korean and the surveys be translated into those languages, respectively. Relationships should be developed with tour companies who will allow their visitors time to be interviewed.

Visitor motivation

Most visitors were motivated to visit Angkor due to the history, temples and culture which is common for sacred sites. The fact that fewer visitors showed interest in other attractions, food and local markets can be partially attributed to a lack of awareness of the uniqueness of these resources and the need for more effective destination marketing while planning their visit to Siem Reap and Angkor. This lack of awareness is also demonstrated in the decision of half of visitors to schedule a trip of three days or fewer as opposed to trips of four or more days.

Visitor knowledge of Angkor/Siem reap

Angkor is the largest UNESCO site and was voted 2018 Trip Advisor Top Destination in the World. However, before visitors come to Cambodia, many do not know that the Angkor Archeological Site consists of a group of temples rather than just the most renowned one, Angkor Wat Temple. Most visitors planned to visit individual temples. Campaigns should be developed to inform visitors that each temple in Siem Reap deserves time to explore its uniqueness. Angkor was the most visited temple followed by Bayon and Ta Prohm, known for Angelina Jolie's appearance in the 2001 *Tomb Raider* movie. While most visitors are most familiar with Angkor Wat, they want to know more about the history and culture behind all of the temples. With this information, the most popular temples may become less crowded and the lesser known temples more visited to impact the flow of visitors.

In 2017 APSARA established a website, "Welcome to Angkor" (<http://angkor.com.kh>) and continues to enhance and optimize it as a source of visitor knowledge. Other options for disseminating more information include pamphlets, flyers and additional signage displaying the history of each temple. Consequently, visitors who wish to do so can enjoy a culture journey and learn about the history. However, to reduce the need to design, print and maintain flyers, self-guided audio tours available for rent or downloadable on

electronic devices are an option. Self-guided audio tours can produce rental revenues for local vendors. However, this represents a local challenge with regard to the guides who derive their income from temple tours. Translated audio tours would be particularly useful for visitors who do not speak English, Khmer or French which are the primary languages of the tour guides.

Furthermore, the current tourism advertisements and promotional campaigns are not comprehensive enough. Visitors do not know that in Siem Reap and throughout Cambodia, they can also enjoy arts, including painting, woodwork, leatherwork, local music and health services, like yoga and spas. Visitors do not set aside enough time and effort to travel in Cambodia but spend more time to travel in Thailand due their robust ad campaign.

There is a need to make full use of social media advertisements to let visitors know more about Siem Reap and what it has to offer. By marketing and promoting the attractions in Siem Reap, visitors can extend their visits based on attractions such as live music, paintings, silk farms, art workshops, markets and health and wellness spas. The local government should also allocate more resources to promotional advertisements to encourage visitors to stay longer in the Siem Reap area. More time spent means higher consumption and further economic stimulus.

Visitors traveling style

A large majority of visitors tour independently as couples, family, friends or by themselves. Again, audio tours are a good option for enriching the independent visitors' experience and knowledge of the history and culture of each temple. In this study, the number of visitors travelling in group tours was significantly lower than those travelling independently. However, we can attribute this to the fact that group tour guides operate on a tight schedule and are less likely to allow their customers time to be interviewed. When it comes to group tours, attractions can cooperate with large tourism companies from different countries and tailor tours to foreign visitors. Tour guides who can master several languages can serve visitors better. Also by providing information in a variety of languages, visitors are able to understand more of the culture and history of Angkor.

Visitors' mode of transportation

The remork (tuk tuk), a two cycle mechanized vehicle, was chosen by most visitors as their mode of transportation followed by car, taxi or van. Visitors traveling in groups tend to choose minibus or bus according to their guides' advice. Any discussion of switching from tuk tuks to more sustainable transportation will most assuredly be politically unpopular. Tuk tuks are the main mode of transportation in Siem Reap and the Angkor Archeological Park and provide the major source of income for thousands of local Cambodians. In practice, it is very convenient to take a tuk-tuk due to the ease of access and use of texting between the tuk-tuk drivers and visitors as tuk tuk drivers tend to have cell phones. If visitors choose to tour individually; they tend to choose tuk tuks or taxis. However, it is advised to make more advertisements to let visitors know they have more transportation options available.

Visitor passes

Visitors can purchase passes to Angkor in one-day (\$37), three-day (\$62) and seven-day (\$72) blocks that must be used on consecutive days. A recent increase in the one-day pass from \$20 to \$37 has left some of the visitors wondering what they are paying for since there was no map of the park or information given at the time of

the purchase of the ticket. Most visitors bought either a one-day or three-day Angkor pass.

Visitor expenses

The largest planned expense was transportation followed by food and beverage, however, visitors only planned on spending less than \$20 per day on each of these. It is recommended that more small shops serving beverages (water) and snacks be established near the temples. If water and beverage can be more accessible, visitors can be more satisfied and increase the amount of revenue for local vendors.

Visitor accommodations

Generally, visitors were satisfied with the quality of their accommodation. Particularly groups who stayed at hotels reported the highest levels of satisfaction compared to those who stayed at other accommodations. Resort, guest house, hostel users were typically more satisfied than not satisfied with their accommodations. Similar trends were observed with travelers who stayed with friends and family. Airbnb users were more satisfied than unsatisfied but almost an equal number reported neutral satisfaction towards the quality of their accommodations.

Visitor activities

Most visitors had a neutral attitude towards the large majority of activities. Visitors expressed the most dissatisfaction towards elephant riding and horseback riding activities because they think it is rude to animals. Horses and elephants in and around Angkor seem unhealthy and tired. Visitors do not want to enjoy a journey at the cost of their suffering and torture. Based on these visitor opinions, it is suggested that these activities be reduced or even cancelled.

Visitor satisfaction

The main five categories where visitors expressed the most satisfaction were the temple infrastructure, access to the temple, cleanliness of the park and hospitality of temple staff and the drivers. Visitors expressed high dissatisfaction with the quality of the souvenirs, availability of water and snacks in the temple markets, lack of signage and the flow of visitors in and around the temples as well as the accessibility and cleanliness of the toilets.

Temple markets

Visitors were not satisfied with the variety of souvenirs offered in the markets and shops located adjacent to the temples. Many of the shops are located in makeshift temporary spaces. Visitors found that many of the souvenirs are the same or similar. Management should take the opportunity to enhance this experience by building an infrastructure and visitor information area adjacent to each temple. Examples of this structure can be found at Banteay Srei Temple, where the Swiss Government assisted in the restoration that included an information center, structures for shops and cafes as well as toilet facilities. Different kinds of artistic and creative souvenirs should be displayed and sold. Also, more small shops should sell beverages and snacks to visitors to meet visitor needs and increase local revenue.

Lack of signage and visitor flow

The large majority of suggestions to improve visitor experience were related to signage. Visitors suggested adding more signs that were clear, understandable and that explained site history. Signs should be improved to be more comprehensible. For instance,

instead of using heavy text in many languages, the signage should be more picture based and therefore easily understandable by more nationalities. As previously mentioned, providing audio tours in various language that are rentable or downloadable is another alternative that could also provide a source of revenue. The architecture of each temple could be considered and a visitor flow pattern with signage could be developed to help with visitor flow issues. APSARA tour guides are currently stationed at each of the temples and are there to enforce visitor flow guidelines.

Accessibility and cleanliness of toilets

Visitors were not satisfied with the accessibility and cleanliness of toilet facilities. These facilities could be a part of each visitor center adjacent to the temples along with the souvenir shops and snack shops.

Visitor code of conduct

The large majority of visitors knew about the existence of the Angkor Visitor Code of Conduct (Appendix B) and also found it easy to understand. Posters of Angkor visitor code of conduct are located at ticket selling areas and posted at the Siem Reap airport to let more visitors know, however, the signage is heavy with text and hard to read. The signage should be redesigned and be more picture based to clearly communicate to visitors of many nationalities.

A small number of visitors visited the Welcome to Angkor website where they could find the Angkor Visitor Code of Conduct along with many other resources to enhance their visit. Access to the website should be optimized for ease of location. Visitors could be informed about this website from flyers, posters and online advertisements. Also, visitors can learn history, culture and background stories about tourist attractions on this website.

Visitor recommendations

Most visitors are likely to recommend a trip to Angkor. Though visitors are unsatisfied with some aspects as discussed in previous section, they still want to share traveling experience and recommend this trip to friends and family.

LIMITATIONS

The primary limitation of this research was the ability to survey a highly diverse international population of visitors. Not only was there an issue of translation of the survey, there was also an issue of having multilingual surveyors. As international travel continues to increase at a rate of 8% per year, research will need to consider how to access an appropriate sampling that involves multilingual data collection.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Angkor Archeological Park is one of the top destinations of the world and will continue to face the challenges of tourism versus cultural heritage. Each UNESCO destination has its unique challenges. The permeability of the Angkor Archaeological Park (UNESCO) site is particularly problematic. Future studies should examine alternatives for limiting tourism to the temples, supporting tourism-based revenue for the local communities and educating the visitor through the use of appropriate signage and information. This research demonstrates the dramatic increase in diversity of the nationalities of international visitors and the need to consider this in survey development and data collection to assure that research truly reflects visitor populations.

Since the completion of this research APSARA has updated and optimized the website. In addition, APSARA has developed a silent video that clearly demonstrates the Visitor Code of Conduct so that it can be understood by any nationality and age of visitors. These are very positive steps in enhancing the visitor experience.

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