Applying Importance-Performance Analysis to Japanese Senior Travelers to Hawaii

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Abstract: Seniors are a growing segment among Japanese outbound travelers. Given that Hawaii is one of the most visited destinations by Japanese travelers, it is expected that the proportion of seniors will grow in the near future in accordance with trends of aging society in Japan. The study employs an Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) to determine critical attributes of the destination. Senior travelers were mostly satisfied with the attributes tested for Hawaii as a travel destination, specifically, factors related to natural resources and a comfortable trip were viewed as major strengths of Hawaii. Interestingly, the features related to physical activities such as golfing, water sports, and outdoor activities were not viewed as important travel destination attributes for Hawaii for both seniors and the younger sample. Moreover, Hawaii still has an opportunity for improvement in local transportation and accommodations. The results provide some useful insights for developing effective marketing strategies to attract Japanese senior travelers to Hawaii, as well as the usefulness of using the importance-performance analysis methodology.

INTRODUCTION

Japanese senior travelers to Hawaii are an important growing market for Hawaii’s tourism. The purpose of this study is to examine the tourism image (importance of various pull factors) that Japanese senior travelers have of Hawaii by the use of Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA). This exploratory study was conducted to examine: (1) the attributes that attract Japanese senior travelers to Hawaii; (2) Japanese senior travelers’ satisfaction with Hawaii’s performance in delivering identified attributes; and (3) any differences in their perception of Hawaii among Japanese senior travelers compared to other age groups.

JAPANESE SENIOR MARKET

Japan has experienced rapid growth in the number of outbound travelers in the last two decades. The figure reached 17.8 million in 2000, which is the highest number in history, up 8.9 percent from the previous year. This increase is strongly supported by the rapid growth of the senior-travelers market segment. In 2000, the number of outbound travelers over age 50 was 5.8 million, which is nearly one-third of the Japanese overseas travel market. This market segment shows a 12.6-percent rise, while those who are in their 20s shows only a 2.7-percent rise.

Hawaii was the second most visited destination of Japanese travelers, after South Korea (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MLIT), 2001). In 2000, Hawaii attracted 1.8 million Japanese visitors, or 22% of the market share of all visitors to Hawaii (Hawaii State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism [DBEDT], 2001). Although tourism by Japanese visitors has been sluggish since 1998, the Japanese market is still Hawaii’s second largest market segment, following U.S. mainland. Japanese tourists ages 20-29 comprise the largest group in 2000, it is predicted that the proportion of seniors will grow.

METHODS

This study adopted importance-performance analysis (IPA) to assess the Japanese senior travelers’ perceptions of factors of Hawaii as a travel destination. Japanese senior travelers were defined as ‘Japanese visitors over the age of fifty, who visited Hawaii for pleasure travel in accordance with Hawaii Tourism Authority’s definition of the senior market (Fishman, 2000). Using an intercept methodology procedure, a quasi-representative sample of Japanese travelers was requested to complete the questionnaire at the departure floor of Honolulu International Airport.

Japanese speaking researchers collected data on July 25 and 28, 2001. Respondents were selected from Japanese travelers that were 20 years or older, and had visited Hawaii for pleasure travel. A total of 211 questionnaires were collected, and senior travelers ages 50 or older completed 73 questionnaires (37%). The detailed age breakdown was: 14% under 29, 22% between 30 and 39; 18% between 40 and 49; 13% between 50 and 59; and 22% age 60 or over. The questionnaire was translated into Japanese, back translated into English for accuracy and then back translated to Japanese.

INSTRUMENTATION

Seniors (>50)

INSTRUMENTATION

Seniors (>50)

Figure 1. Importance-Performance grid: Seniors (>50, N=72)

Figure 2. Importance-Performance grid: Non-Seniors (<49, N=138)

FINDINGS

Travel Behavior

- Non-Senior Travelers
  - (Age <49)
- Senior Travelers
  - (Age 50+)

The results indicated that Japanese senior travelers were mostly satisfied with Hawaii as a travel destination. The features related to natural resources and a comfortable stay were high in priority for seniors in determining their trip to Hawaii, while the features related to physical activities did not have significant influences on their travel decisions. The results also showed that Japanese senior and non-senior travelers had mostly similar perceptions toward Hawaii as a travel destination.