

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

This chapter reviews the literature in four main areas along with summary:

1. The theory of satisfaction
2. Roles of expectations
3. Significance of a preparatory program
4. Related studies
5. Summary

#### **2.1 THE THEORY OF SATISFACTION**

Zifko-Baliga (1998) stated that customer satisfaction is how well the predictive expectations of the consumers towards products or services are complied with and satisfied.

According to Tocquer and Cudence (1998), “satisfaction is the basic motivation of human beings based on basic needs. It is closely relevant to quality of the service received, the extent of incentive and the absence of undesirable things.” (p. 18)

Meanwhile, Anton (1996) and Band (1991) similarly defined satisfaction as the state in which people’s needs, wants, and expectations through the transaction cycle are met or exceeded, resulting in repurchase and continuing loyalty.

To conclude, customer satisfaction can be defined as the state of the consumers being pleased or happy as a consequence of their desired matters or expectation fulfillment, resulting in their repeated utilization of the services, or loyalty.

For AFS, not only are the participants the normal customers but they are also regarded as representatives for their countries. They have to comply with AFS rules and regulations. One of AFS’ ultimate goals is to enable the participants to appreciate that other cultures are equally as complex and rich as their own and to begin the process of learning how to recognize these differences and adapt their behavior to

them. During or after the program, the participants should be able to treat other people as they themselves prefer to be treated.

Many AFS students apply for the programs with romanticized views of other cultures. They are possibly dissatisfied in some way with their own cultural background and may look to the host culture for a better way of life. Though they may recognize that all cultures have different aspects, their focus tends to be on all preferable facets in the host culture.

As a result, AFS service is designed to support the participants to be able to think critically about and understand more fully not just their host culture, but their own culture as well. In this way, they may develop a more complex understanding of both cultures, enabling them to accept that cultural differences exist and to operate effectively within different cultural contexts while still remaining true to their own deeper sense of what is right and wrong.

## **2.2 ROLES OF EXPECTATIONS**

Expectations are prospects, especially of success or gain. According to Targonski (2007), there are gaps between people's expectations and fulfillments. Once the expectation gaps are bridged, satisfaction is recognized. In line with theories of satisfaction, expectations play an important role in people's level of satisfaction, the more the expectations are fulfilled, the higher level of satisfaction is attained. However, the higher people's expectations are structured, the fewer chances their expectations can be fulfilled, resulting in a decline in satisfaction.

Eberhard (1991) specified that prior expectations had influences on the level of people's satisfaction with a product or service performance quality. Likewise, Westbrook (1993) stated in his study that expectations had a direct relationship with services, which predictably affected the consumers' satisfaction.

At AFS, apart from the attempt to meet the participants' expectations, the services are provided in line with the organization's goals. Good communication to create realistic expectations is significantly important for the operation team to bridge

the gap between the participants' preferences and the organization's underlying mission.

### **2.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF A PREPARATORY PROGRAM**

Methiesen and Lager (2007) suggested a model of international student exchanges including preparatory sessions. In their article, providing orientation at micro, mezzo and macro levels together with a clarification of expectations can reduce the possible problems and constraints that usually occur during the students' sojourns like culture shock and personal adjustment.

Dragonas (1993) emphasized the importance of pre-departure orientation for an exchange program in developing an awareness of cultural differences and in facilitating adaptation to a new environment.

Grove (1982) explained that cross-cultural orientation programs are generally intended to help sojourners make practical preparations for living in countries with different cultures. Preparation sessions should include how sojourners communicate with people in the host country, avoid social errors, refrain from judging the host culture against their own cultural norms, and cope with culture shock. More important concern should be whether these programs improve sojourners' abilities to learn independently about other cultures.

Brislin, Cushner, Cherrie and Yong (1986) mentioned in his book that all people can be assisted in successfully overcoming difficulties if they are aware of the range of the challenges they will face. Moreover, various researchers and practitioners have recognized and valued the importance of preparatory programs for sojourners in another country in that they have designed programs to better prepare people for a successful sojourn in another country. Brislin et al. also recommended that one of the key points to increase the probability of people's successful adjustments to another culture is a well-planned preparation program.

Targonski (2007) stated in "If you want to study in the United States: Getting Ready to Go, Booklet 4" that the preparation stage is very important to the sojourners, as it will help their sojourns in new surroundings easier and more successful.

Similarly, as participants in an exchange program through the course of homestay, exchange students are to be repeatedly confronted with unfamiliar situations and new information. Therefore, preparatory sessions become one of the inevitable operational components and yardsticks of the current exchange programs. According to AFS International's Center for the Study of Intercultural Learning (AFS/CSIL), research and orientation have gone hand in hand at AFS. The AFS/CSIL is responsible for the development of a number of orientation programs and handbooks including the six volumes of the AFS Orientation Handbook, which led to the Orientation Handbook for Youth Exchange Programs, published by the Intercultural Press, 1989. To a large extent, the research efforts at AFS/CSIL have been undertaken for the purpose of improving AFS orientation and program quality. AFS/CSIL has also worked with outside researchers to develop and evaluate AFS orientation programs.

#### **2.4 THAI TRADITIONAL CHILDREARING**

Mortlock (1986) wrote about the way Thai people are brought up to be subtle and considerate in their criticisms. Arguing or disagreeing with seniors is considered an unpleasant manner. To the Thais, evaluation is also a form of criticism as it allows people to express their opinions either positively or negatively towards particular persons or things. Mortlock also added that Thai people are expected to show respect to their elders. The task of decision making almost always belongs to elders or seniors. Thais are accustomed to accept things as they are without offending feelings. As a result, researchers should be aware of the situation where respondents to questionnaires may under emphasize an intense degree of disapproval or pessimistic viewpoints, or chose not to reveal their dissatisfaction at all. Other techniques must be incorporated to obtain the information required.

AFS Thailand's evaluation process includes regular program evaluation forms distributed at the post orientation session for all returnees of each cycle, reports from hosting partners, and other records during the program such as communication with the participants' natural parents, occasional correspondence with participants, and informal conversations with the returnees at the event.

## **2.5 RELATED STUDIES**

Hansel (1986) reported in “The AFS Impact Study: Final Report” that sojourns in different hosting countries had dissimilar impacts on AFS sojourners. Diverse expectations were complied depending on the regions the students were placed. In Hansel’s before-and-after designed study, the subjects were approximately 800 American students. The findings showed that AFS students who spent their sojourns in non-English speaking regions of the world had significantly high post-test scores in almost every characteristic studied, especially their Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability. Moreover, all the subjects studied were reported as being positive to the entire exchange program.

Saranya Tanvanaratskul (2001) discussed the effectiveness of AFS Thailand’s orientation program in her study that the existing orientation sessions were at the satisfactory level. Nonetheless, there should be an improvement in the quality of the information provided including host family and host community information. Moreover, training of basic social etiquette, public speaking and tips in managing study plans should be incorporated. Furthermore, the number of AFS returnees attending the occasion should be increased to provide the new AFS participants more primary-source information. Nevertheless, subjective information should be minimized or eliminated as such information would result in false impressions to the new participants.

## **2.6 SUMMARY**

Customers’ satisfaction, which can be defined as the fulfillment of the clients’ expectations resulting in their loyalty to certain products or services, is a crucial factor to the success of business of all kinds. Regardless of the service with certain conditions AFS Thailand offered to its clients, maximizing customers’ satisfaction is primarily the heart of the operation.

As expectations markedly correlate with customers’ satisfaction, it is considered one of the fundamental tasks of the service providers to accommodate the

clients' preferences or expectations as frequently as possible in order to establish their satisfaction and loyalty retention.

Furthermore, in an intercultural exchange program, good preparation is one of the key components for sojourners to get a good start with their sojourn in another country. It is considerably vital for the international exchange program providers to incorporate a preparatory program in their services in an attempt to minimize the difficulty of participants' transition to a new environment leading to the high participants' satisfaction with the program.

Evaluation of customers' satisfaction, therefore, must be done with great care in order to determine the effectiveness of the business operation, which will directly result in the achievement of the organization.