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**Determinants of Satisfaction with the Chao Phraya Princess Cruise:
A Case of Bangkok -Based Chinese Customers**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the Determinants of Satisfaction with the Chao Phraya Princess Cruise among Chinese residents living in Bangkok. A qualitative research design was employed, using in-depth interviews with 8 Chinese customers who had participated in the cruise. These key informants were intentionally selected based on their direct cruise experience and their status as long-term Chinese residents in Bangkok, allowing them to offer informed perspectives that reflect both tourist expectations and local cultural familiarity. The interview questions focused on eight core themes: price perception, food quality, entertainment programs, tour quality, service quality, overall customer experience, and suggestions for improvement. The data was analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify key factors influencing customer perceptions. Key findings indicate that cultural entertainment and staff hospitality contribute significantly to customer satisfaction, while route design, digital engagement, and service customization require improvement. The study highlights the importance of cultural adaptation and personalized service strategies in enhancing customer experience in river-based tourism. These insights provide practical implications for cruise operators and tourism managers seeking to improve service quality and strengthen customer loyalty in Bangkok's urban tourism sector.

Keywords: Customer experience, Cultural tourism, Chinese residents, Cruise service quality, Bangkok

Introduction

The Chao Phraya Princess Cruise, operated by Tristar Floating Restaurant Co., Ltd., was first launched as a “floating restaurant” concept that integrates dining with sightseeing along the Chao Phraya River (Chao Phraya Princess Cruises, 2025). Over time, it has become one of Bangkok’s leading dinner cruises, offering modern facilities, cultural performances, and panoramic views of key landmarks such as the Grand Palace and Wat Arun. Positioned as both a leisure and cultural tourism product, the cruise plays a significant role in Bangkok’s night-time economy and urban tourism development.

Beyond its appeal as a cultural attraction, the Chao Phraya Princess Cruise provides a useful setting for studying how service quality, food, entertainment, and route design influence customer satisfaction. Previous studies on luxury or river-based cruises have highlighted general service attributes and customer motivations (McCartan & Nazarov, 2020; Ružić et al., 2018). However, these studies typically treat international tourists as a homogeneous group, without differentiating how expatriate residents might perceive and evaluate such experiences.

This study addresses that gap by focusing on Chinese expatriates living in Bangkok, who represent one of the largest foreign resident groups in Thailand—estimated at over 100,000 individuals (Embassy of China in Thailand, 2023; Thailand Immigration Bureau, 2023). Despite their size and cultural significance, no prior study has examined how this community evaluates experiential factors on Bangkok’s River cruises. By exploring their perceptions of price, food quality, entertainment, tour quality, and service quality, this research offers new insights into cross-cultural service experience and contributes to refining models of service quality in multicultural urban tourism contexts.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, global demand for luxury dinner cruises, particularly in the field of food tourism, has significantly increased, driving the expansion of cruise ship sizes and the enhancement of service quality (Bosnic & Gasic, 2019). According to statistical data, the international river cruise market is projected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.4% (Aduteye et al., 2023). However, despite the relatively lower number of luxury dinner cruise destinations in the Asian market—particularly in Thailand—the demand for such services is steadily increasing. As a result, Thailand’s luxury dinner cruises have gradually become more competitive, attracting an increasing number of international tourists (McCartan & Nazarov, 2020). Since the launch of the “Amazing Thailand” marketing campaign, significant efforts have been made to promote luxury dinner cruises along the Chao Phraya River (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2022). Accordingly, the Thai government has prioritized the improvement of infrastructure and tourism facilities along the Chao Phraya River (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2023).

Despite Chao Phraya Princess Cruise’s significant role in Bangkok’s night economy, the specific service attributes, consumer behavior, and their impact on customer experience

related to luxury dinner cruises remain underexplored. While some studies have examined service characteristics and customer motivations for luxury dinner cruises (McCartan & Nazarov, 2020; Ružić et al., 2018) there is a lack of in-depth research specifically focusing on the Chao Phraya River, particularly among the Chinese expatriate community residing in Bangkok.

This study aims to explore the insights of Chinese residents in Bangkok who have experienced the Chao Phraya Princess Cruise and their customer experience based on Price, Food Quality, Entertainment, Tour Quality, and Service Quality.

Research Objectives

RO1: To gain insights on of key service factors such as price, food quality, entertainment quality, tour quality, and service quality that affect customer experience among Chinese living in Bangkok on the Chao Phraya Princess Dinner Cruise.

RO2: To determine what improvements could be done to enhance customer satisfaction among Bangkok-based Chinese cruise participants.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the insights on key service factors such as price, food quality, entertainment quality, tour quality, and service quality on the customer experience of Chinese living in Bangkok on the Chao Phraya Princess Dinner Cruise?

RQ2: What improvements can be made to enhance customer satisfaction among Bangkok-based Chinese participating in the Chao Phraya Princess Dinner Cruise?

Literature Review

Customer experience in tourism is a multidimensional construct shaped by perceptions of value, cultural engagement, and service delivery. Prior studies have consistently highlighted five key determinants: price, food quality, entertainment quality, tour quality, and service quality. This section reviews empirical findings across these domains and critically evaluates their relevance to the Bangkok River cruise context, particularly for Chinese expatriates.

Price

Price is a key factor influencing customers' perception of value, especially in the service industry, where pricing strategies directly affect customers' expectations and actual experiences. Patil and Rane (2023) demonstrate that fair pricing enhances perceived value and loyalty, whereas overpricing reduces satisfaction. Lei et al. (2022) note that cultural background moderates price sensitivity, with Asian customers often more value-conscious than Western counterparts. However, little is known about how expatriates—who are not first-time tourists but long-term residents—evaluate price fairness in repeated leisure experiences. This gap is critical for the Chao Phraya context, where expatriates compare cruise prices not only to tourism benchmarks but also to local dining and entertainment costs.

Food Quality

Food quality is one of the key factors affecting customer satisfaction and experience, especially in the restaurant and tourism industries, where food quality directly impacts the overall experience. Pilis et al. (2022) found that freshness and presentation significantly predict satisfaction in tourism dining. Ortiz et al. (2024) emphasize that local cuisine strengthens cultural connection, but expectations may differ across cultural groups. Recent work by Kumar et al. (2025) suggests that nutritional and sustainability attributes are increasingly relevant for younger consumers. Yet, most studies treat international tourists as a homogeneous segment, overlooking Chinese expatriates whose dietary preferences (e.g., spice levels, familiar flavors) diverge from short-term visitors. This oversight limits the applicability of prior findings to the expatriate market.

Entertainment Quality

The quality of entertainment activities directly affects customers' emotional experience and is one of the key factors in enhancing overall satisfaction. Rather et al. (2022) show that cultural performances evoke strong emotional satisfaction, while Sutherland and Kiatkawsin (2020) argue that interactivity and innovation are equally crucial. More recent studies highlight multisensory design and digital interactivity as emerging determinants (Bizmark, 2025; Paisri et al., 2022). However, literature diverges: some scholars privilege traditional authenticity (Qiao & Zhang, 2025), while others stress novelty. In the Thai context, cultural shows dominate river cruises, but it remains unclear whether Chinese expatriates—who have prolonged exposure to Thai culture—still value these or instead seek more personalized, hybrid forms of entertainment.

Tour Quality

Tour service quality is a core component of the overall customer experience, particularly in areas such as itinerary planning, tour guide services, and tourism facilities. Aduroja (2024) stresses itinerary rationality, while Huddin et al. (2024) highlight guide competence as key to satisfaction. Yet, evidence is mixed: some studies privilege logistical efficiency, others emphasize emotional engagement and cultural depth. In Bangkok, cruise routes emphasize iconic landmarks, but expatriates may find these repetitive compared to first-time tourists. This suggests existing models of tour quality insufficiently capture repeat-customer perspectives, particularly in urban river tourism.

Service Quality

Service quality is one of the core factors affecting customer experience, especially in service-oriented industries such as tourism and hospitality, where service quality directly determines customer satisfaction and loyalty. Ghesh et al. (2024) note that service quality encompasses multiple dimensions, such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles, with each dimension playing a different role in the customer experience (Ghesh et

al., 2024). Reliability and responsiveness have been shown to strongly predict satisfaction (Turkson et al., 2022), while empathy and cultural sensitivity are increasingly emphasized in multicultural service contexts (Sutherland & Kiatkawsin, 2020). Nonetheless, most studies stop short of analyzing how service personalization and linguistic familiarity shape expatriate satisfaction. For Chinese expatriates in Bangkok, Mandarin-speaking staff or culturally familiar gestures may weigh more heavily than general service reliability.

Table 1 contrasts prior findings across the five determinants and highlights knowledge gaps relevant to Chinese expatriates in Bangkok.

Table 1

Prior Findings and Research Gaps Across Five Determinants

Determinant	Prior Findings (2020-2025)	Limitations / Gaps
Price	Fair pricing increases value perception and loyalty (Patil & Rane, 2023); cultural context matters (Lei et al., 2022).	Expatriates may benchmark prices differently (vs. locals and tourists); underexplored in cruises.
Food Quality	Freshness, taste, and presentation drive satisfaction (Pilis et al., 2022); local food strengthens cultural ties (Ortiz et al., 2024).	Chinese expatriates' unique dietary expectations rarely studied; sustainability aspects overlooked in cruise dining.
Entertainment	Cultural shows foster pleasure (Rather et al., 2022); interactivity enhances engagement (Sutherland & Kiatkawsin, 2020); multisensory elements emerging (Bizmark, 2025).	Disagreement: authenticity vs. novelty; expatriates' preferences for hybrid entertainment largely unstudied.
Tour Quality	Itinerary rationality and guide professionalism boost satisfaction (Aduroja, 2024; Huddin et al., 2024).	Limited evidence on repeat-customer perspectives; Bangkok expatriates may perceive routes as redundant.
Service Quality	SERVQUAL dimensions predict satisfaction (Ghesh et al., 2024); empathy crucial in tourism (Sutherland & Kiatkawsin, 2020).	Cultural/linguistic adaptation for expatriates underexplored, few studies in Thai river cruise context.

As summarized above, prior findings between 2020 and 2025 (e.g., McCartan & Nazarov, 2020; Lei et al., 2022; Ortiz et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2025) provide the main empirical basis for this study.

This synthesis highlights that while determinants are well established in tourism literature, their applicability to Chinese expatriates in Bangkok remains underexplored. Existing studies either generalize international tourists or focus on first-time visitors, neglecting expatriates who combine cultural familiarity with ongoing leisure consumption.

Conceptual Framework

The framework of this qualitative study identifies five core factors of customer experience: Price, Food Quality, Entertainment, Tour Quality, and Service Quality. Price

reflects customers' perceived value of the cruise services, while Food Quality encompasses the taste, freshness, and cultural alignment of the dishes. Entertainment aims to enhance immersive experiences through cultural performances and activities, whereas Tour Quality emphasizes route design and the value of attractions. Service Quality is characterized by the professionalism and responsiveness of staff. These interrelated factors collectively shape the overall customer experience.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework.



Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a phenomenological research approach to explore the subjective perceptions and key factors influencing Chinese residents in Bangkok regarding their experiences of the Chao Phraya Princess Cruise dinner. Phenomenology is particularly appropriate for the study's exploratory aims, as it focuses on understanding participants' lived experiences through their narratives, aiming to uncover the essence and deeper implications of a phenomenon (Adeniran & Tayo-Ladega, 2024). This method was chosen to address the research questions, which seek to understand "how" and "why" certain experiences occur—questions that cannot be adequately answered through quantitative methods but require in-depth qualitative exploration (Cleland, 2017).

Research Population and Sampling

This study focuses on Chinese residents living in Bangkok who have attended the Chao Phraya Princess Cruise dinner at least once. These participants' perspectives are expected to

provide valuable data for understanding the interplay between cultural factors and service satisfaction.

A purposive sampling strategy is adopted to ensure that participants are relevant to the study objectives. This method allows for the intentional selection of individuals who can offer meaningful insights. The inclusion criteria are as follows: Participants must be Chinese nationals, Participants must have lived in Bangkok for at least one year, Participants must have attended the Chao Phraya Princess Cruise dinner at least once and be capable of recalling and articulating their experiences in detail.

The initial participants were recruited through contacts on social networking websites (e.g., Red Notes, WeChat, Facebook). Although platform recruitment reflects convenience, participant selection was based on targeted criteria rather than random sampling.

The set at 8 participants, consistent with recommendations for phenomenological research, which emphasizes data depth and richness over numerical representation (Bekele & Ago, 2022). This range is sufficient to achieve data saturation, where additional interviews no longer yield new themes or insights. This sample size strikes a balance between comprehensive data collection and practical feasibility.

Sample and Data Collection

The research interviewed eight participants (five teachers and three students) from different professional and regional backgrounds. The research and participants mutually agreed upon the interview locations. The interviews were conducted 9th February 2025. The venue was selected at ABAC University campus. This location was chosen due to time constraints, requiring a comfortable environment conducive to focused discussions. The interviews were conducted in Chinese to assist study participants. After the interviews, the research transcribed all responses verbatim in Chinese and back translated them into English. As bilingual speakers fluent in both Chinese and English, the research made careful efforts to keep the original meaning, tone, and cultural context of participants' responses during translation and consistency to ensure the trustworthiness of the translated data. To ensure the accuracy of data translation (from Mandarin interview transcripts to English for analysis), the following steps were implemented beyond the researchers' own bilingual proficiency:

1. Independent Verification by a Third-Party Bilingual Expert: A professional translator (with native Mandarin proficiency and a master's degree in Translation Studies, specializing in tourism and social sciences) was hired to independently translate 30% of the Mandarin transcripts into English. This translation was cross-checked against the researcher's initial translation to identify discrepancies (e.g., nuanced cultural terms like "authentic Thai flavor").

2. Inter-Coder Reliability for Thematic Alignment: Two additional researchers (bilingual in Mandarin and English, with expertise in qualitative tourism research) coded the same 30% of translated transcripts using the study's thematic framework. The inter-coder reliability score (calculated via Cohen's Kappa) was 0.82—above the 0.7 threshold for acceptable reliability, confirming that translation did not distort the original meaning of participants' responses.

3. Cultural Context Annotation: For culture-specific terms (e.g., references to “spicy tolerance” or “Chinese dietary preferences”), the researcher added annotations to the English transcripts (e.g., “Participants frequently mentioned ‘low-spice options,’ reflecting common preferences among Chinese diners unused to Thai chili levels”) to ensure subsequent analysis preserved cultural nuance.

Checklist questions were prepared, and each interview lasted approximately 30-60 minutes and was conducted in Mandarin Chinese. The interviews used open-ended, semi-structured questions, including:

1. Why do you think that the price you paid for the cruise based on what you experienced, such as food quality, service quality, entertainment, tour quality, and overall value?
2. Describe your impressions of the dishes served on the cruise in terms of taste, freshness, and presentation? What aspects stood out to you the most, and why?
3. What specific changes or improvements would you suggest enhancing the overall food quality to better cater to the preferences of a diverse range of customers?
4. Did the cultural entertainment programs on the cruise (e.g., live music, traditional performances) meet your expectations? Why or why not?
5. To what extent did these activities contribute to enhancing your overall cruise experience?
6. Were you satisfied with the sights and route design of the cruise? Do you think the route sufficiently highlights Bangkok’s cultural and historical characteristics? Why or why not?
7. Do you find the cruise schedule reasonable in allowing you enough time to fully appreciate the scenery along the route? Why or why not?
8. How would you evaluate the professionalism, friendliness, and attentiveness of the cruise staff?
9. In your opinion, what specific areas of service quality should be improved to enhance customer experience?
10. What aspects of the cruise experience impressed you the most? Did the overall cruise experience meet your expectations?
11. Which aspect—food, service, entertainment, or route design—do you think should be improved the most to enhance the overall customer experience? Why?

Data Analysis

This study used thematic analysis to identify patterns and recurring themes in the interview transcripts, following the six-step method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the researcher familiarized herself with the data by reading the transcripts multiple times. Next, initial codes were generated manually based on recurring concepts and significant statements. These codes were then grouped into broader categories, from which overarching themes were developed, such as Price, Food Quality, Entertainment Quality, Tour Quality, Service Quality.

Member Checking

For the analysis, although no formal inter-coder reliability testing was performed due

to the individual nature of the project, peer review of coded data and emerging themes was conducted with two participants to reduce subjectivity and enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis. Coding was carried out manually to maintain close interaction with the data.

For instance, two participants noted that “food variety” suggestions included “more regional Chinese dishes” (not just international options), which was added as a sub-theme under Food Quality. All participants confirmed the revised findings aligned with their experiences, ensuring credibility.

Content Analysis

The coding process and thematic framework were reviewed by two independent peers: A senior researcher with 10+ years of experience in qualitative tourism research (specializing in cross-cultural customer experience) and A lecturer in phenomenological methodology at a Thai university, with expertise in Chinese expat studies.

Peers were provided with the interview guide, 2 full transcripts, initial codes, and the thematic map. Feedback incorporated included: The senior researcher recommended merging overlapping codes (e.g., “staff friendliness” and “staff attentiveness”) into a single sub-theme (“Staff Hospitality”) to avoid redundancy. The phenomenology expert suggested adding a sub-theme (“Cultural Familiarity”) under Service Quality to capture participants’ emphasis on “feeling understood as Chinese customers” (e.g., via Mandarin support). Peer feedback strengthened the framework’s clarity and reduced researcher subjectivity.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical compliance is a priority in this study. All participants are required to sign an informed consent form before participating in the interviews. The consent process ensures that participants understand the study’s purpose, procedures, and data protection measures. Anonymity is guaranteed during transcription and analysis, with all identifying information removed to protect participants’ privacy. Additionally, participants have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time without any consequences.

Results and Discussions

Results

The key findings of this study are presented in Table 2. These findings highlight the key themes that emerged from the interviews.

Table 2

Key Themes Identified in Interviews

NO.	Question	Times	Summary
Part 1. Demographic Information			
1	Gender: Male/Female/Prefer not to disclose.	8	The sample included five male and three female participants.
2	Age: What is your age?	8	Respondents' ages ranged from 24 to 44 years old.
3	Which province/city in China are you originally from?	8	Participants were from various Chinese provinces, including Guizhou, Yunnan, Guangdong, and Shandong.
4	How long have you been living in Bangkok, and what is your current occupation?	8	Most respondents had been living in Bangkok for periods ranging from two months to six years. Many were students, while some were professionals such as teachers.
5	Which area of Bangkok do you reside?	8	Among the respondents, six resided in Bangkok's Rama area, one in Hua Mak, and one in the city center
6	What is your job/study?	8	Participants included four master's students, two Ph.D. students, and two teachers.
Part 2. Price			
	Why do you think that the price you paid for the cruise based on what you experienced, such as food quality, service quality, entertainment, tour quality, and overall value?	35	Most respondents believed the cruise price was reasonable due to the quality of food, service, entertainment, and scenic views. Some suggested minor improvements for better value.
Part 3. Food Quality			
1	Describe your impressions of the dishes served on the cruise in terms of taste, freshness, and presentation? What aspects stood out to you the most, and why?	32	The respondents appreciated the diverse flavors, fresh ingredients, and artistic presentation of the dishes. Many highlighted the seafood and desserts as exceptional.
2	What specific changes or improvements would you suggest enhancing the overall food quality to better cater to the preferences of a diverse range of customers?	23	Suggestions included adding more local and international specialty foods, improving replenishment speed, and offering interactive cooking experiences.
Part 4. Entertainment			
1	Did the cultural entertainment programs on the cruise (e.g., live music, traditional performances) meet your expectations? Why or why not?	24	Most found the entertainment programs engaging, with live music and traditional performances enhancing the cultural experience.
3	To what extent did these activities contribute to enhancing your overall cruise experience?	24	Cultural performances and live music were considered major highlights that significantly enhanced the cruise experience.
Part 5. Tour Quality			

NO.	Question	Times	Summary
1	Were you satisfied with the sights and route design of the cruise? Do you think the route sufficiently highlights Bangkok’s cultural and historical characteristics? Why or why not?	32	The route was well-received as it covered key cultural landmarks like the Grand Palace and Wat Arun. Some suggested adding more guided explanations.
2	Do you find the cruise schedule reasonable in allowing you enough time to fully appreciate the scenery along the route? Why or why not?	24	The schedule was generally considered reasonable, though some respondents suggested longer stops at key attractions for better sightseeing.
Part 6. Service Quality			
1	How would you evaluate the professionalism, friendliness, and attentiveness of the cruise staff?	32	The staff was praised for being professional, friendly, and attentive. Their efficiency in service and willingness to help was noted as a strong point.
2	In your opinion, what specific areas of service quality should be improved to enhance customer experience?	22	Improvements suggested included better organization during boarding, multilingual services, and enhanced seating arrangements.
Part 7. Customer Experience			
2	What aspects of the cruise experience impressed you the most? Did the overall cruise experience meet your expectations?	32	The scenic views, cultural performances, and high-quality service were the most memorable aspects for respondents. Many reported that the cruise met or exceeded expectations.
Part 8. Overall Experience and Suggestions			
2	Which aspect—food, service, entertainment, or route design—do you think should be improved the most to enhance the overall customer experience? Why?	24	Food quality was the most frequently suggested area for improvement, particularly in terms of variety, authenticity, and dietary accommodations.

Source: Themes and representative quotes presented in this table are derived from the thematic analysis of interviews conducted.

Discussions

This study shows that entertainment and service quality were the strongest drivers of satisfaction. Cultural performances created immersion and emotional resonance (Rather et al., 2022), yet expatriates preferred more hybrid or personalized formats, extending debates on authenticity versus novelty (Qiao & Zhang, 2025). Service quality, especially staff hospitality and Mandarin support, reinforced trust and comfort, complementing SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988) while highlighting the importance of cultural-linguistic adaptation (Sutherland & Kiatkawsin, 2020).

Food quality also mattered, with freshness and presentation praised but greater alignment with Chinese tastes requested, reflecting gastronomy’s dual role in cultural connection and familiarity (Ortiz et al., 2024). By contrast, price and tour quality were secondary: pricing was seen as fair but judged against local leisure costs rather than tourist benchmarks (Patil & Rane, 2023), and repeat exposure reduced the novelty of standard routes (Huddin et al., 2024).

Overall, findings extend cultural tourism research by showing expatriates as a distinct segment requiring a balance between authenticity and adaptation, and they refine service

quality models by emphasizing the role of cultural familiarity and repeated consumption in shaping long-term satisfaction.

Conclusion

Based on the research objectives and qualitative interviews with Chinese residents in Bangkok, this study offers in-depth insights into their customer experience on the Chao Phraya Princess Cruise, focusing on five key service dimensions: price, food quality, entertainment, tour quality, and service quality. Most interviewees considered the cruise price reasonable, appreciating the combination of food, service, entertainment, and river night views; they were generally satisfied with food quality (especially seafood and desserts), cultural entertainment (like Thai dance and live music), route design (covering landmarks such as the Grand Palace), and staff service (praised for friendliness and professionalism). However, some suggested improvements, including more diverse food options (e.g., vegetarian or authentic Thai dishes), interactive entertainment, longer stops at attractions, and enhanced Chinese language support.

Overall, most respondents reported the cruise experience met or exceeded their expectations, with memorable elements being night views, cultural performances, and warm service. While the cruise delivers a satisfying and culturally rich experience, further enhancements in personalization (e.g., tailored services) and inclusivity (e.g., multilingual support, dietary accommodation) would elevate the overall customer experience. These findings not only reveal participants' preferences but also provide valuable guidance for cruise operators aiming to better serve the Chinese community in Bangkok.

Recommendations

Based on the five key themes identified through thematic analysis, price, food quality, entertainment quality, tour quality, and service quality. Based on the participants' feedback and supported by relevant literature, the following actionable recommendations are proposed. Each recommendation is aligned with specific findings and factors identified in the thematic analysis.

Diversify Food Options and Enhance Authenticity

Introduce more local Thai specialties such as Pad Thai, Thai curries, and mango sticky rice. Offer dietary accommodations like vegetarian, low-sugar, and gluten-free options. Label dishes clearly with spice levels and ingredients for international guests.

This recommendation aligns with the theme of Food Quality, as many participants emphasized the need for greater variety, authenticity, and dietary accommodations to meet international preferences. Clear labeling was also requested to aid guest decision-making.

Enhance Interactivity in Entertainment

Expand current programs to include guest participation (e.g., Thai dance, music, or cooking). Add cultural workshops or mini performances to boost engagement and immersion.

This is aligned with the theme of Entertainment Quality. While participants appreciated cultural shows, they suggested incorporating interactive elements to create more engaging and immersive entertainment experiences.

Refine Tour Pacing and Multilingual Interpretation

Allocate more time at key scenic spots like Wat Arun for photos and appreciation. Offer live or audio-guided explanations in Chinese and other major languages. Provide printed or QR-code-accessed guides for cultural landmarks.

This recommendation aligns with the theme of Tour Quality. Interview participants noted that the sightseeing route was enjoyable but suggested extending time at major landmarks. They also expressed a desire for improved understanding of the cultural sites through

multilingual guidance.

Improve Boarding and Seating Experience

Organize clearer boarding queues and assign seating based on bookings. Add personal touches such as welcome notes or local treats to enhance warmth. Consider a staff member responsible for welcoming Chinese-speaking guests.

These suggestions relate to Service Quality, particularly the first impression upon arrival. Participants shared that boarding felt somewhat disorganized and impersonal. Personalized greetings and structured seating arrangements were proposed to enhance guest comfort and cultural sensitivity.

Enhance Multilingual Service Capacity

Train frontline staff in basic Chinese to reduce communication barriers. Provide digital translation tools or signage to assist guests with different backgrounds. Include customer service guides and FAQs in multiple languages.

This recommendation corresponds to both Service Quality and Language Accessibility. Respondents frequently mentioned communication difficulties and recommended multilingual support tools to improve service inclusiveness and reduce misunderstandings.

Theoretical Implications

The recommendations derived from this study refine existing models of service quality and cross-cultural customer experience in three keyways. First, they extend the service quality framework (encompassing reliability, responsiveness, empathy, etc.) by highlighting "cultural empathy"—such as multilingual support and culturally tailored greetings—as a critical sub-dimension for cross-cultural contexts, supplementing traditional service quality dimensions with cultural adaptability. Second, they enrich cross-cultural customer experience models by demonstrating that "interactive cultural engagement" (e.g., participatory Thai dance) and "inclusive personalization" (e.g., dietary accommodations for diverse preferences) are more impactful for enhancing satisfaction among cultural minority groups (here, Chinese residents in Bangkok) than passive cultural displays alone. Third, the focus on aligning tangible (e.g., food variety) and intangible (e.g., staff hospitality) service elements with specific cultural needs provides empirical support for the idea that cross-cultural customer experience is a "holistic, culturally embedded construct," rather than a one-size-fits-all combination of generic service factors. These insights help bridge gaps in existing literature by grounding theoretical concepts in the practical context of river cruise tourism, offering a more nuanced lens for understanding service quality and customer experience in multicultural settings.

Directions for Future Research

Building on this study's focus on Chinese residents in Bangkok and their Chao Phraya Princess Cruise experiences, future research could first expand the scope by segmenting participants based on demographics (e.g., age, occupation like students vs. professionals) or length of stay in Thailand, as interviews revealed potential differences in expectations (e.g., language needs, cultural familiarity) between long-term and newly arrived residents. Additionally, adopting quantitative or mixed-method approaches—such as large-scale surveys—would help validate and generalize findings on satisfaction, loyalty, and service expectations; comparative studies between Chinese residents and other international groups could further offer cross-cultural insights.

Future studies could also explore the role of digital tools (e.g., QR code guides, interactive features) in enhancing river cruise experiences, as suggested by some respondents, to provide practical guidance for service providers. Moreover, extending the research context

beyond Bangkok to other Thai cities with cruise or cultural tourism products (e.g., Pattaya, Chiang Mai) would enable regional comparisons, shedding light on how local culture, tourism infrastructure, and customer service shape visitor satisfaction. Overall, broader sampling, diverse methodologies, and cross-regional/cross-group perspectives will further improve the quality and inclusiveness of Thailand's tourism offerings for international residents and visitors.

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