



DISABLED PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION, SINGAPORE

Access to S.E.A. Aquarium Feedback Report 2015

General Feedback from DPA

23 January 2015

Overview

On 23 January 2015, the Disabled People's Association (DPA) went to S.E.A. Aquarium at Resorts World Sentosa to enjoy the aquarium as well as give feedback on how the experience was for visitors with disabilities. DPA partnered with the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group (ANZ) to organise this event, with ANZ kindly volunteering manpower on the day and covering the ticket costs of all participants.

A total of 135 people participated in the event, including DPA members, ANZ staff members, and DPA's institutional members – the Singapore Association for the Deaf (SADeaf) and Down Syndrome Association (DSA). After all groups had finished exploring the aquarium, DPA conducted an informal feedback session on the members' experience.

DPA hopes that our findings will provide the management of S.E.A. Aquarium with a better understanding of the disabled customer experience. We also hope that the management will adopt the recommendations and work towards improving accessibility to their public attraction.

Methodology

DPA staff conducted a feedback session at S.E.A. Aquarium after the visit. There were a total of 135 participants comprising of DPA members with disabilities, ANZ staff members and members from the Singapore Association for the Deaf and Down Syndrome Association - both of which are DPA's institutional members. Participants have various types of disabilities such as visual, intellectual, physical or hearing.

The questions asked at the feedback session were both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Participants were asked a variety of questions ranging from the accessibility of the attraction to customer service satisfaction using a standard questionnaire designed by DPA (see Appendix 1). DPA then amalgamated all responses into a write-up which was sent to the management of S.E.A. Aquarium for perusal.

Findings

SEA Aquarium Experience: Most of the members described the outing as enjoyable and happy experience. The modes of transportation used by members to get to SEA Aquarium were MRT, bus, taxi and specialized vehicles. Our members opined that the SEA Aquarium was not very friendly to people with visual and hearing disabilities. Members experienced difficulty in finding the main entrance. Sign Board pointing the entrance is relatively small and hard to find. Overall experience at SEA Aquarium was rated good.

Customer service: The leader requested a group entry for a group of 150 people so as to avoid crowding. The customer service officer standing at the entry point refused and insisted individual entry - on one by one basis. Only an intervention from a senior helped.

Attractions: The path inside aquarium is too dark and with sudden slopes. This is especially difficult for the wheelchair users and visitors with children. Some members tapped and were about fall. This can be highly dangerous. The visually impaired people may not be able to enjoy the marine world as nothing is designed to help them to enjoy the experience. Some signage are positioned not in a comfortable way .Some are positioned too low. The steep ramps also created difficulty for the members. The visitors to SEA Aquarium crowded in front of most of the attractions and the wheel chair users were not able to view the attractions. The other visitors were not considerate and no staff was deployed help.

Lifts and Toilets: The members experienced difficulty in finding the lifts. No clear indicators were provided to find the lift. No direction of lift for the wheel chair users were seen. This caused inconvenience to the wheelchair users and their caregivers. The people without disabilities were using the toilets allocated for people with disabilities. So they had to wait for a longer time and that caused inconvenience to them. The toilets were clean and dry. The deep ocean aquarium do not have a clear indicator to lifts. No information was given on how to handle an emergency situation. Some visitors with prams used the escalators and it can be very dangerous. Some toilets did not have sufficient lighting.

Recommendations

Entrance: The entrance can be made more accessible by putting footprint marker. This will help the people to follow. An **Information / Visitors support Desk** can be set up to help the visitors. There was no staff to restrict this and no announcement was made to remind. Deploying trained staff (at different locations inside and at the entrance of the aquarium) to direct the visitors and help the needy visitors would be useful. Information about handling emergency situations must be provided in the website and other notable areas of the aquarium.

Lighting: The Aquarium is too dark. We understand that some deep sea creatures may be sensitive to light. Putting dim lights to the ground will help the visitors to walk safely. Visitors with baby strollers, children, people with disabilities and even the public may fall down due to steep slopes. Gentler ramps and more visual aids will be good.

Signage: The positioning of the signage must be comfortable. Visitors may not see a high / low positioned signage. A signage must be clear and legible. An interactive tap -on feature containing required information about different sea creatures would be useful. This will reduce the waiting for each information to come and the user can find the information at move of the fingertips. Most of the visitors tried to block the other visitors while viewing the fishes. The wheel chair users were not able to go to the front to see the attractions. Trained staff can be of help in such situations. Providing models of sea creatures to touch and feel will help the people with visual impairments. Informative commentaries in a clear and slow pace will be useful for them to explore the marine world.

Group Check-in: Allowing group check in will be highly welcomed for such a large group of 150 people including people with special needs. Availing the service of a sign language interpreter will help the people with hearing impairments. Placing well trained staff inside the aquarium to help the visitors will be beneficial.

Lift: The locations of the lift must be indicated clearly with signposts. The lift indicator must be put near the big fish tank - deep ocean aquarium, to allow the wheel chair users to get near the fish tank. A map showing the locations of the lifts and toilets would be helpful.

Acknowledgement

DPA thanks ANZ for their support, and also thanks Sadeaf and DSA for their cooperation on that day. We would also like to thank all participants for taking the time to provide feedback.

Appendix 1

S.E.A. Aquarium Feedback Form

Note: Try to get as much feedback as you can and if answers are not forthcoming then please ask individuals for their responses or suggestions. Try and get a variety of answers or suggestions for each question.

1. Did you find the SEA Aquarium experience enjoyable? (Please count how many said yes and how many people said no)
2. Was the SEA Aquarium accessible to you? (Please count how many said yes and how many people said no)
3. Would you recommend a visit to a person with disabilities? (Please count how many said yes and how many people said no)
4. Were you happy with the customer service at the SEA Aquarium? (Please count how many said yes and how many said no)

Getting to the S.E.A Aquarium:

5. How easy was it to find out where the SEA Aquarium is located?
6. Were you able to get to the SEA Aquarium using public transport?
7. Did you have to arrange special transport to the SEA Aquarium? If so, what mode of transport did you use?
8. Was the entrance signposted in a manner that was accessible to you?
9. Was the entrance easy for you to find?
10. Was the entrance accessible to you?
11. How could the entrance be made more accessible to you?

Attractions:

12. Is the signage of the various aquariums and/or information accessible to you?
13. Did you encounter any issues getting around the path and attractions? If so, please list the issues you faced.
14. If you encountered problems getting around the path and attractions how did you overcome them?

15. Can you suggest any improvements to enhance your experience of the paths and exhibits (bearing in mind your particular disability)?

Amenities

Refreshments:

16. Are the food court/restaurant signage and/or information accessible to you?
17. Did you encounter any issues ordering, getting and consuming your food and drink? If so, please list the issues you faced.
18. If you encountered any issues at the refreshment outlets how was it resolved?
19. If you encountered any issues refreshment outlets how was it resolved?

Toilets

20. Are signage and/or information for the toilets accessible to you?
21. Are the toilets easy to find?
22. Did you encounter any issues trying to access the toilets? If so, please list the issues you faced.
23. If you encountered any issues accessing the toilet facilities how was it resolved?
24. Can you suggest any improvements to the toilet facilities, bearing in mind your disability?
25. Other general feedback? (please ask the group if they have any other general feedback or suggestions to improve the disabled customer experience of the S.E.A. Aquarium)