

An examination of level of satisfaction: A case study of international tourists at Phuket, Thailand

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Keywords

Satisfaction, International Tourists, Quality, Food & Beverage

Abstract

An increase in international tourists means an increase in foreign exchange income as well as a reduction in unemployment. The purposes of this research paper were to examine the level of satisfaction of international tourists traveling in Phuket, Thailand in various factors and to investigate their level of satisfaction in comparison with other tourist destinations. An English questionnaire was developed to elicit data information from international tourists who had travelled in many tourist destinations of Thailand. Mean, standard deviation, and t-test was utilized in the data analyzed as well as to differentiate between each group of the international tourists. The findings revealed that the overall level of satisfaction was rated at the highest and Thai food & beverage, natural beauty and mountain, and spa were ranked as the highest three factors of satisfaction. In addition, Chiang-mai, as a major tourist destination of Thailand, was ranked as high level of satisfaction in comparison with Phuket. Overall, male and female international tourists did not indicate any much differences in their preference and level of satisfaction.

1. Introduction

Thailand offers many important tourist destinations such as Bangkok, Chiang-Mai, Phuket, Pattaya, Hua-Hin, and etc. These tourist destinations are well-known to international tourists all over the world. International tourists often consider tourist destinations in Thailand as good as any major tourist destinations of the world and other ASEAN nations along with other tourist destinations such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam. Despite the fact that after international tourists visited tourist destinations in Thailand, they often showed their good attitudes and high level of satisfaction towards the major destinations in almost every tourism factors [1]. In fact, the more international tourists visited Thailand, the higher of level of expectation that they would come back or revisit in the near future due to their high level of satisfaction. Therefore, it is imperative that tourism destinations, tourism activities and tourist destinations must be continuously improved to gain its reputation and to prepare for their revisits in the future. For instance, a strategic plan in improving the standard of service should be considered, even though the quality of service often received good level of satisfaction. There is a serious need to support the better control service quality in order to be able to have a competitive advantage in tourism. Some training can be done constantly, for example service quality standard directly performed in order to enhance tourists' satisfaction. Moreover, it is important that public facilities around tourist destinations for international tourists must be improved such as clean toilets, sufficient provision of foods and drinks, together with the punctuality of public transport service and service of entertainments in order to manage popular tourist destinations in Thailand. Standard and excellent services can guarantee tourists' satisfaction and revisit.

For many decades, the tourism business is one of the most important industry that making business of every ASEAN country in that it generates stable tourists' revenues, distribution of income, and creates many service jobs. The level of competitive in the past showed that many tourist destinations in Thailand had an edge over other ASEAN countries in terms of low cost, friendly people, high quality of service, unique and amazing culture, and stunning natural beauties. However, nowadays other ASEAN countries focus on important national policy to promote and support tourism industry to both earn more foreign money and create more employment. Therefore,

in order for Thai tourism industry to be competitive, it is a must that Thailand aims to increase international tourists' level of satisfaction to both attract and search for new international tourists as well as motivate the previous international tourists to choose to revisit Thailand more often. Certainly, it is therefore imperative to comprehend what satisfy international tourists to select Phuket as their first choice of tourist destination again and again. Shoemaker and Lewis (1999) explained in their papers that international loyal tourists lead to higher income for tourist destinations, and providing free positive word of mouth advertising which contribute to increase jobs as well as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) [2] [3]. In fact, extensive literatures and many studies pointed out that high level satisfaction is the major way to increase loyalty. In other words, satisfaction is a vital condition for loyalty. Therefore, the focus of this study is to find out the level of satisfaction for each reason that inbound tourists choose to visit Phuket, Thailand. Therefore, the focus of this study is about level of satisfaction in each factor of international tourists in order to search for the best way to develop the proper strategic marketing plan to increase tourists' satisfaction in Phuket in the long run.

2. Research Methodology

Phuket was chosen as a main tourist destination to collect information and as the main area for the quantitative research study. Likert five-scale questions were developed with English questionnaire to measure the importance of the satisfaction factors to international tourists' decision to visit or revisit a particular tourist destination. The target population was international tourists who visit and revisit Phuket. The sample size for this research study included 400 respondents with a total time of collection duration of two months. The quota sampling method was utilized with random sampling method at the Phuket. An English questionnaire was tested before it could be used as the tool for collecting data. The independent variables of this study included gender, age, level of education, occupation, and income. Independent variables included satisfaction factors. Descriptive statistics utilized in this research included percentage, mean, and standard deviation and t-test. Taro Yamane's sampling technique was utilized to obtain a sample group that included 400 international tourists. [6]. In addition, the total of 30 pilot samples was tested for the validity and reliability to achieve a Cronbach alpha for the level of 0.70.

3. Findings

From the research finding, it revealed that in term of demographic information, in order to reduce the gender effect, the data collection of male and female international tourists were collected in almost the same proportion, or 50:50 respectively. The majority of the international tourists, or about 67 %, had the age between 30-40 years old. About 56 percent of the respondents were single, 38 percent were married, and the remaining of 6 percent were either divorced or widowed. For the level of education, it found that about 77 percent of these international tourists had a college degree or high school diploma. In addition, the majority of international tourists or about 81 percent would be considered to be middle class since their average income was between 40,000-600,000 US dollars annually. The majority of international tourists were from Australia, EU countries, Asia, ASEAN, and North American. TABLE I shows the level of satisfaction in each factors.

TABLE 1
LEVEL OF SATISFACTION FOR EACH REASONS TO VISIT THAILAND

Factors	Mean	S.D.	Rank
1. Nature-Beach-Mountain	4.59	0.940	2
2. Thai Food & Beverage	4.77	0.893	1
3. Malls & Shopping Places	4.30	0.787	4
4. Tradition Markets	4.11	0.692	7
5. Museums, Art, History	3.87	0.794	8

6. Spa, Massage, Beauty	4.45	0.690	3
7. Festivals, Activities	4.12	0.886	6
8. Night Entertainment	3.56	0.542	9
9. Conference/Expo	3.01	0.788	10
10. Souvenir, Handcraft	4.21	0.997	5
Overall	4.10	0.801	

The findings from TABLE 1 revealed the level ranking of satisfaction level by highest mean to lowest mean as follows: Thai food and beverage, nature-beach-mountain, spa-massage-beauty, malls-shopping places, souvenir and handcraft, festivals and activities, tradition markets, museum-art-history, night entertainment, and conference-expo In addition, the overall means is 4.10 with 0.801 SD. In fact, most of international tourists visit Phuket mainly to for the enjoyment of the natural beach and mountain beauty as well as enjoy the famous and variety of Thai food. Therefore, these two vital factors are rated as the highest level of satisfaction.

TABLE II
LEVEL OF SATISFACTION FOR EACH TOURIST DESTINATION

Factors	Mean	S.D.	Rank
1. Bangkok	4.56	0.928	1
2. Chiang-Mai	4.47	0.890	2
3. Phuket	4.46	0.547	3
4. Pattaya	4.22	0.782	4
5. Hua-Hin	4.01	0.777	5

From table 2, Bangkok as a tourist destination has rated as the highest level of satisfaction. While Ching-Mai was rated as the second highest, Phuket also was also rated with the third highest tourist destination.

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