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Factors influencing Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong province

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Abstract

This study used a survey research for the purpose of studying factors influencing Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong Province. Data was collected from the questionnaires distributed to 400 respondents for data analysis processed by a computer program. The statistics for analysis were number, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and stepwise multiple regression model. The research findings revealed that among those 400 Thai tourists, most of them were females between 21-30 years of age with a education lower than a bachelor's degree. Their occupations were mainly in the government/state enterprise sector with an average income per month of less than or equivalent to Baht 10,000. They tended to search for tourism information from websites and the purpose of their trips was mainly for a holiday. In view of their decision-making on travelling to Ranong, overall, their opinions were at a high level and in considering the aspect basis and in sequence order, firstly – the Tourist Attraction Aspect showed the highest level, secondly - the Souvenir & Gift Aspect, Transportation to destination Aspect and finally, Security Aspect, were all at high levels, respectively, 3) the factors influencing Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong consisted of gender, age, education level, occupation and average income per month, and 4) the model of Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong = 4.143 + (.342 * age) + (.199 * education level) + (.146 * average income per month) + (.123 * gender) which reflects in 20.3 per cent operating results of the hotels and resorts business in Ranong with the standard error of estimate equivalent to ± .451.

Keywords: Decision-,making, Thai tourists, Ranong, tourist motivation, travel behavior.

Introduction

At the present time and indeed for the foreseeable future, the tourism industry is the main sector which plays a vital role towards the economic development of many countries in. The tendency tourism growth has impacted hotel and service businesses within a highly competitive area. The management of many hotels and resorts have thus placed greater importance on applying updated innovations for their marketing strategies in responding to customer requirements to acquire the highest satisfaction beyond their competitors abilities. For Thailand, the economy relies mainly on service businesses representing approximately 60% of GDP. According to the business classification, the significant service businesses are hotels, resorts and condominiums and as per the 2nd quarter of 2018 GDP report, the expansion of hotels and restaurants reached a 9.4% growth rate (Department of Business Development, 2018).

Tourism is a major economic contributor to Thailand since its revenue not only directly contributes to the GDP but its revenue structure from past to present has also tended to be changed more positively. The tourism revenue that used to be concentrated only in Bangkok has now been expanding to other local regions and contributing to the development and convenience of local communities and tourists through investment and infrastructure development as well as facilities i.e. road, electricity, telephone, etc. while the government sector has also paid good attention to these aspects and is well supported. Thailand has plenty of scenic and attractive tourist attractions scattered throughout the country that can be classified into various types of tourist attractions based on their particular characteristic area and natural resources, such as health tourism, agricultural attraction, eco-tourism, and cultural/historical attractions.

Ranong Province is one of the southern provinces, located on the west coast along the Andaman sea with road linkages to other nearby provinces and diversified tourism potential. Ranong has both natural and man-made tourism resources, historical and cultural attractions as well as famous mineral water resources. Furthermore, Ranong's provincial strategy has been determined to develop the province to become the city of health tourism with direction of development, inter alia, such as launching tourism promotion activities, continually publicizing tourism information via various media, promoting qualified souvenir and gift production, etc. Ranong's tourism development and promotion, therefore, is the essential element which can contribute to greater revenue accruing to local communities which will further help drive both the Ranong and Thailand economy.

Objective

The study sought to investigate the factors influencing Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong.

Research Methodology

This study used a survey research method and the population used for this research comprised 37,752 Thai tourists. The Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1970) was applied for the calculation to acquire the sampling group of 400 respondents with statistical significance level of 0.05.
The research variables as per the conceptual framework are separated as follows:

> **Independent variables** in this study were demographic attributes; gender, age, education level, occupation and average income per month.
> **Dependent variables** were decision-making of Thai tourists on travelling to Ranong under the element of 7 aspects; Tourist Attraction Aspect, Restaurant & Food Aspect,

Accommodation Aspect, Souvenir & Gift Aspect, Security Aspect, Transportation to Destination Aspect and Travel Budget (expenses) Aspect.

The research instrument used for this research was the questionnaire on factors influencing Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong separated into 4 parts:

Part 1- Demographic attributes; gender, age, education level, occupation and average income per month, in a check-list form, totally 5 items;

Part 2- Tourism media exposure of tourists; tourism information channel and travel purpose, in a check-list form, totally 2 items;

Part 3- Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong under the element of 7 aspects; tourist attraction aspect, restaurant & food aspect, accommodation aspect, souvenir & gift aspect, security aspect, transportation to destination aspect and travel budget (expenses) aspect, respectively in a 5- level Likert scale; highest, high, moderate, less and least, totalling 25 items;

The research tools and quality testing for content validity was conducted by 3 experts and reliability by the try-out group of 30 respondents, similar to the sampling group from which the reliability value was equivalent to .9785.

The data was obtained from the questionnaires distributed to the sampling group of 400 Thai tourists.

All questionnaires collected from the respondents were tested on their completeness and analyzed by using a computer program to calculate the statistic value as per the following steps:

Showing a distribution of the sampling group based on demographic attributes and data of tourism media exposure of tourists by focusing on frequency and percentage and decision-making of Thai tourists on travelling to Ranong analyzed by mean and standard deviation.

Testing the correlation among all variables under the condition of criteria defined in the preliminary agreement of the linear regression analysis with Pearson product moment correlation coefficient to find out the correlation among 5 quantitative variables; gender, age, education level, occupation and average income per month including Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong.

Testing the appropriateness of factor model influencing Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong with the variance inflation factor (VIF) at not more than 5 values, tolerance at not lower than 0.2 values and the Eigen value at not over than 10.0 so as to enhance independence and multicollinearity among all factors.

Analyzing the factor model influencing Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong with the stepwise multiple regression analysis by using the variables for forecasting the captioned model on individual basis. creating the factor model influencing Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong by using the equation of $Y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + \ldots$

a	=	constant of forecasting equation
b_1, b_2, b_3	=	predictor regression of coefficient
x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5	=	Predictor

Results

Of the 400 Thai tourists, most of them were females aged between 21-30 years of age with education at levels lower than bachelor's degree, and their occupations were in government/state enterprise sectors and the earned an average income per month of Baht 10,000 and searched for tourism information from websites for the prime purpose of a holiday. Regarding Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong, overall, the opinion represented high level. However, considering items on an aspect basis, in sequence order from the highest to the least, the highest one was the tourist attraction aspect whereas souvenirs and gifts, transportation to a destination and security aspects were at high levels respectively. Considering all factors, gender, age, education level, occupation and average income per month influencing Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong, it was found that the correlation value was not over .80 causing no multicollinearity among all variables in this research and as a result, all dependent variables could be then applied to a multiple regression analysis.

The analysis of results regarding Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong were based on the element of 7 aspects, namely tourist attraction, restaurant and food, accommodation, souvenirs and gift, security, transportation to a destination and travel budget (expenses) as shown in table 1 – 10 below.

Table 1. Average and standard deviation of Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong: tourist attraction aspect

Thai tourists decision-making on travelling to Ranong: tourist attraction aspect	opinion level		
	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	interpretation
1. Having many beautiful coastal natural attractions i.e. Koh Chang, Ranong Islands (Koh Phayam), the scenic with clean white sand beach.	4.24	.548	Highest
2. Having significant historical sites; Rattanarangsan Palace (Replica), the accommodation for three Kings of Thailand during their Ranong tours, Ban Khai of Ranong Governor or Ranong Governor's residence.	4.26	.623	Highest
3. Having attractions for health; Raksa Warin Hot Springs, the natural mineral water, Pornrung Hot Springs and Chao Ruen Spa, the places serving the alternative and Thai medical treatment.	4.56	.554	Highest
4. Having historical attractions i.e. Wat Suwan Khiri (Wat Na Muang), the over-100- years old temple, Wat Ban Ngao where Luang Phor Deebuk was enshrined, Budha Suwan Khiri Jedi (Replica of Shwedagon Pagoda).	4.04	.740	High
5. Having scenic waterfall such as Punyaban Waterfall, Bok- Krai Waterfall, Ngao Waterfall, Khao Pra Narai Waterfall, etc.	4.14	.703	High
6. Having popular and well-known attractions; Phu Khao Ya, Kra Isthmus, etc.	4.33	.590	Highest
Overall	4.26	.546	Highest

As per Table 1, the analysis results showed that in view of tourist attraction aspect, overall, the tourist opinion score was at the highest level (= 4.26, S.D. = .546). Considering each item, firstly, the highest ones (= 4.56, S.D. = .554) consisted of having attractions for health; Raksa Warin Hot Springs, the natural mineral water, Pornrung Hot Springs and Chao Ruen Spa, the places serving the alternative and Thai medical treatments (= 4.56, S.D. = .554) and having popular and well-known attractions; Phu Khao Ya, Kra Isthmus, etc. (= 4.33, S.D. = .590), respectively whereas lastly, the high scores consist of having historical attractions (= 4.26, S.D. = .623) i.e. Wat Suwan Khirir (Wat Na Muang), the over-100- years old temple, Wat Ban Ngao where Luang

Phor Deebuk was enshrined, Budha Suwan Khiri Jedi (Replica of Shwedagon Pagoda) (= 4.04, S.D.= .740), respectively.

Table 2. Average and standard deviation of Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong: restaurant & food aspect

Thai tourists decision-making on travelling to Ranong: restaurant & food aspect	opinion level		
	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	interpretation
1. There are well-known restaurants	3.84	.578	High
2. Restaurants are clean and safe for tourists.	3.87	.612	High
3. The number of restaurants is adequate for tourists.	3.87	.609	High
4. The number of convenient store supply is adequate for tourists' demand.	3.91	.583	High
Overall	3.87	.521	High

As shown in Table 2, the results on Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong, in view of restaurant and food aspect, it was found that, overall, it was at a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.87, S.D. = .521) and considering each item, in sequence order, all are at a high level; firstly, the adequate number of convenience stores for tourists ($\bar{x}$ = 3.91, S.D. = .583), secondly, the adequate number of restaurants ($\bar{x}$ = 3.87, S.D. = .609), cleanliness and security of restaurants ($\bar{x}$ = 3.87, S.D. = .612), and lastly, the well-known restaurants ($\bar{x}$ = 3.84, S.D.= .578), respectively.

Table 3. Average and standard deviation of Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong: accommodation aspect

Thai tourists decision-making on travelling to Ranong: accommodation aspect	opinion Level		
	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	interpretation
1. The number of hotels, resorts and accommodation is adequate for tourists.	4.03	.775	High
2 There are standard and modern hotels, resorts and accommodation.	3.91	.730	High
3. Prices of hotels, resorts and accommodation are fit with a variety of alternative rates depending on tourists' spending power.	3.95	.711	High
Overall	3.96	.659	High

According to Table 3, the results show that in view of accommodation aspect , overall, this was at a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.96, S.D. = .659) and considering each item, in sequence order, all items were found to be at a high level; firstly, the adequate numbers of hotels, resorts and accommodation for tourists ($\bar{x}$ = 4.03, S.D. = .775), secondly, prices charged by hotels, resorts and accommodation with a variety of alternative rates depending on tourists' spending power ($\bar{x}$ = 3.95, S.D. = .711), and lastly, there are standard and modern hotels, resorts and accommodation ($\bar{x}$ = 3.91, S.D. = .730), respectively.

Table 4. Average and standard deviation of Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong: souvenir & gift aspect

Thai tourists decision-making on travelling to Ranong: souvenir & gift aspect	opinion Level		
	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	interpretation
1. Unique of Souvenir i.e. cashew nut or Kayoo, Steamed Tub Lee, roasted coffee, etc.	4.29	.575	Highest
2. Variety of souvenirs and reasonable price	3.95	.668	High

Thai tourists decision-making on travelling to Ranong: souvenir & gift aspect	opinion Level		
	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	interpretation
3. Souvenirs reflecting local culture i.e. pearl & products made from shell, stingray products, etc.	3.82	.733	High
Overall	4.02	.541	High

According to Table 4, the results, in view of the souvenir and gift aspect, overall, the opinion score was at a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.02, S.D. = .541). Considering each item, in sequence order, firstly, the highest one was the uniqueness of items such as cashew nut, steamed Tub Lee and roasted coffee ($\bar{x}$ = 4.29, S.D. = .575) whereas secondly, variety of souvenirs and reasonable price ($\bar{x}$ = 3.95, S.D. = .668) and souvenirs reflecting local culture i.e. pearls and products made from shell, stingray products ($\bar{x}$ = 3.82, S.D. = .733) are at high level, respectively.

Table 5. Average and standard deviation of Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong: security aspect

Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong: security aspect	opinion Level		
	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	interpretation
1. Security officers are on duty at each tourists attractions.	3.65	.692	High
2. Warning signs for tourists are provided for their awareness.	3.80	.886	High
3.First-aid service units are ready for any sickness and accident maybe arisen.	3.45	.897	High
Overall	3.63	.723	High

According to Table 5, the results showed that in view of security aspect, overall, the opinion score is at high level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.63, S.D. = .723). Considering each item, in sequence order, all items are at high level; firstly – provision of warning signs for tourists' awareness ($\bar{x}$ = 3.80, S.D. = .886), secondly – provision of security officers on duty at each tourists attractions ($\bar{x}$ = 3.65, S.D. = .692), and lastly – provision of first-aid service units ready for any sickness and accident maybe arisen ($\bar{x}$ = 3.45, S.D. = .897), respectively.

Table 6. Average and standard deviation of Thai tourists decision-making on travelling to Ranong: transportation to destination aspect

Thai tourists decision-making on travelling to Ranong: transportation to destination aspect	opinion level		
	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	interpretation
1 . Convenience of travelling to destination by personal, public vehicle and airplane	4.03	.693	High
2. Convenient access to tourist attractions	4.00	.793	High
3. Convenient and adequate parking lot at each attraction	3.96	.963	High
Overall	4.00	.657	High

With respect to the transportation to destination aspect, as shown in Table 6, overall, the tourists opinions score was at a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.00, S.D. = .657). Considering each item, in sequence order, all items were at a high level, firstly - Convenience of travelling to a destination by personal, public vehicle and airplane ($\bar{x}$ = 4.03, S.D. = .693), secondly - Convenient access to tourist attractions ($\bar{x}$ = 4.00, S.D. = .793), and lastly - Convenient and adequate parking lots at each attraction ($\bar{x}$ = 3.96, S.D. = .963), respectively.

Table 7. Average and standard deviation of Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong: travelling budget (expenses) aspect

Thai tourists decision-making on travelling to Ranong: travelling budget (expenses) aspect	opinion level		
	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	interpretation
1. Ranong Travelling expenses are cheaper than other nearby provinces.	4.06	.711	High
2. Ranong travelling expenses are worthwhile to spend.	3.96	.776	High
3. Food & accommodation prices are reasonable.	3.97	.734	High
Overall	4.00	.684	High

The Table 7 shows that in view of travelling budget (expenses) aspect, overall, the opinion is at high level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.00, S.D. = .684). Considering each item, in sequence order, all items were at a high level, firstly - Ranong Travelling expenses are cheaper than other nearby provinces ($\bar{x}$ = 4.06, S.D. = .711), secondly - Food and accommodation prices are reasonable ($\bar{x}$ = 3.97, S.D. = .734), and lastly - Ranong travelling expenses are worthwhile to spend ($\bar{x}$ = 3.96, S.D. = .776), respectively.

Table 8. Average and standard deviation of Thai tourists decision-making on travelling to Ranong: overall and on aspect basis

Thai tourists decision-making on travelling to Ranong: overall and on aspect basis	opinion level		
	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	interpretation
1. Tourist Attraction	4.26	.546	Highest
2. Restaurant & Food	3.87	.521	High
3. Accommodation	3.96	.659	High
4. Souvenir & Gift	4.02	.541	High
5. Security	3.63	.723	High
6. Transportation to Destination	4.00	.657	High
7. Travelling Budget (Expenses)	4.00	.684	High
Overall	3.96	.502	High

As shown on Table 8, the results show that Thai Tourists Decision-Making on travelling to Ranong, in view of overall and on aspect basis, both are at high level. Considering each aspect, firstly – Tourist attraction is the highest one whereas Souvenir & Gift ($\bar{x}$ = 4.02, S.D. = .541), Transportation to destination ($\bar{x}$ = 4.00, S.D. = .657), and Security ($\bar{x}$ = 3.63, S.D. = .723) are all at high level, respectively. The model of decision-making of Thai tourists on travelling to Ranong = 4.143 + (.342 * age) + (.199 * education level) + (.146 * average income per month) + (.123 * gender) which reflects in 20.3 per cent operating result of hotel & resort business in Ranong whereas the standard error of estimate is equivalent to ± .451 as details shown in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Model analysis on factors influencing Thai tourists decision-making on travelling to Ranong

Thai tourists decision-making	1st model	2nd model	3rd model	4th model
Constant	4.535	4.384	4.387	4.143
Age	.204	.301	.345	.342
Education Level		.304	.217	.199
Average Income Per Month			.111	.146
Gender				.123
R^2	.115	.171	.192	.203
S.E.	.473	.459	.453	.451
F	51.618**	40.895**	31.292**	25.147**
p-value of F	.000	.000	.000	.000

** at statistical significance level of .01

Conclusions and discussion

The study of Thai tourist decision-making on travelling to Ranong matches with the research on "Factors influencing decision-making towards Thailand tourism" of Chalermkiat Feongkeaw (2013), Pornthip Boontheingtham (2012), Mattanee Khamsamran (2014), and Koson Vacharothon (1999). Furthermore, as per the study of Viet (2019) on "Factors Impact on Tourist Destination Loyalty: A Case Study in Ho Chi Minh City" of which the objective is to define and measure the significant factors related to tourists destination loyalty in Ho Chi Minh City and the study of Chi Minh (Vietnam) which reveal that the destination loyalty shall be impacted by service quality, image of destination and tourist satisfaction. Also, as shown in the study of de Witt (2015) on "Yacht & Community Tourism" focusing on the potential relation of growing ecotourism in South Africa National Park in which tourists play a vital role as stakeholders (Nicolaides, 2015) with capability to participate as a part of its achievement in environmental management. In essence the relationship with non-market stakeholders in the tourism sector can be enhanced to the benefit of all. This is also in line with the study of Ojo, et al. (2014) on "Travel and Tourism Business Confidence Index in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges", in which the following main issues were analyzed; 1) travel and tourism regulatory framework, 2) travel and tourism business environment, and infrastructure, and 3) travel and tourism, human, cultural, and natural resources.

As per the research findings, it was found that, overall, the opinion score of Thai tourists decision-making on travelling to Ranong is at high level and when considering it on aspect basis, tourist attraction is the first aspect of the highest score whereas, in sequence order, the aspects of souvenir & gift, transportation to destination and security are all at high level, respectively. This is in line with the market theory of innovation of Schmooker (1996), Myers and Marquis (1969) as referred in the study of Noppadol Luengphirom (2012) stating that the achievement of innovative creation depends on marketing information rather than product design and this theory also believes that without marketing strategy playing role as a leader, regardless of how good the innovation is, the achievement cannot be reached. This also matches with the concept that the travel motivation is a stimulus to encourage tourists to respond to their self-demand by having a trip.

Normally, whether tourists decide to have a trip depends on the following elements; 1) Physical Motivation which is a motivation related to physical relaxation i.e. sports, beach recreation, entertainment recreation and other motivations related to keeping themselves healthy, 2) Culture Motivation which is a desire to know other people i.e. story of music, art, performing arts and religion, etc., 3) Interpersonal Motivation which is a desire to know new friends, and 4) Status and Prestige Motivation which is a self-development need and recognition i.e. business trip, meeting and education, etc. In addition, this is also in line with the study of Atthapol Jantarasakha (2005) as referred to in Thakerngsak Chaicharn's study (2013) which mentioned that tourism promotion is changing the behavior of persons who are going to be tourists or buyers who tend to purchase through what they uncover in a communication process. For all hotels, greater market penetration is vital as the depth of sales of a product or service in a particular market enhances the bottom-line and invariably affects sustainability (Nicolaides, 2018). The tourist is a person having purchasing power who is interested in travelling regardless of having travel experience or not and the promotion tools can be accessed through any media channel. The promotion tools alluded to, are advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations.

Also, as per the study of Thanathorn Thonghorm (n.d.) as referred to in a study by Sureerat Techathaweewan (2009), it proposes a guideline of tourism promotion to encourage tourists feeling of worthiness by launching a value-added policy rather than sale promotion of tourism

products. The value-adding or upgrading of tourism products can be implemented as follows: (1) developing tourism product quality and standards for the basic advantage of tourists, (2) developing tourism product quality and standards for other advantages i.e. health and mental aspects apart from the basic one, (3) developing tourism product quality and standards responding to psychological needs, (4) developing tourism product quality and standards encouraging tourist engagement and the notion of second-home tourism, and (5) developing tourism product quality and standards representing the idea of 'Thainess'.

The model of Thai tourist decision-making = 4.143 + (.342 * age) + (.199 * education level) + (.146 * average income per month) + (.123 * gender) which can be explained by the achievement of 20.3 per cent operating results of hotel and resort business in Ranong with the standard error of estimate of ± .451. This is in line with the study of Sureerat Techathaweewan (2009) stating that travel behavior is the clear purposeful behavior responding to some tourism requirement of each individual. The purposeful behavior also has motivation as an energizer of demand encouraging people to spend more on trips and it also influences people to have different behavior in view of consuming both goods and travel services. Moreover, it is also the social behavior in which the service providers are interested and which they study and intend to meet tourist requirements for their highest satisfaction so that they are ready and have an intention to revisit a destination. This study is in line with the concept of tourist motivation that is a cause stimulating tourists to pay attention to their travel needs or in designing their own travelling style or it is a determiner of different travel behavior models which are categorized into 2 types: 1) Intrinsic Motivation (or Self-Motivation) i.e. mental and physical motivation, attitude, feeling, and 2) Extrinsic Motivation i.e. travel service, travel amenities, travel attraction, travel security, etc. Also, in line with the corporate image theory of Gregory and Wiechmann (Chumphol Pho-Ngarm, 2004) describing that perception towards target group demand and then using it for corporate image building of an organization requires the management of an organization to be key personnel who determine what corporate image is and what image an organization prefers to build.

The perception on an organization' s ongoing activities is a clear understanding towards work, role and responsibility, working with initiative and innovation to regularly respond to the target group with consistency, regular image building and public relations in real activities and in the clarification on any rumours to the target group. Furthermore, according to the ERG theory of Alderfer (1988), which in ways is similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory but contrary to Maslow's idea in terms of human needs which is changeable i.e. satisfaction – progression processes may cause frustration of efforts due to the increasing responsibility and may force an individual to return to pay attention to the social needs or comfort needs instead, or, in other words, it is a so-called frustration-regression process.

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