

The satisfaction level of Chinese tourists (group tours) in Thailand

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Abstract

This research has studied the satisfaction level of Chinese groups traveling to Thailand through the analysis of the demographic profile, marketing mix (4Ps), intention to re-visit and tourist satisfaction, and to identify the relationships between these variables.

In recent years, the tourism industry of Thailand has grown very rapidly especially the Chinese group tour market. Due to high competition, many travel agencies have devised pricing strategies by cutting prices to compete which the decrease in the quality of tourism services and damage to Thailand's tourism image. Therefore, it is important that the tourism industry understands the satisfaction level of Chinese group tourists.

The findings from this research have provided useful information to enhance the quality of tourism services, especially Chinese group tourists.

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Introduction

Thailand's tourism directly and indirectly contributed 9 percent of the nation's GDP in 2013. Thailand is a tourism country with various types of attractions, from Buddhist temples, exotic wildlife, to spectacular islands. Along with a fascinating history and a unique culture that includes Floating Markets, Simon shows, delicious Thai food and massage, and friendly Thai people who epitomize Thailand's "land of smiles" reputation.

In recent years, the number of Chinese tourists traveling to Thailand has increased rapidly and Chinese tourists have become one of the largest groups of tourists in Thailand. Therefore it is necessary to research the satisfaction level of Chinese tourists for group travel to Thailand, and to understand whether they have been affected by travel agencies' cost-cutting strategies.

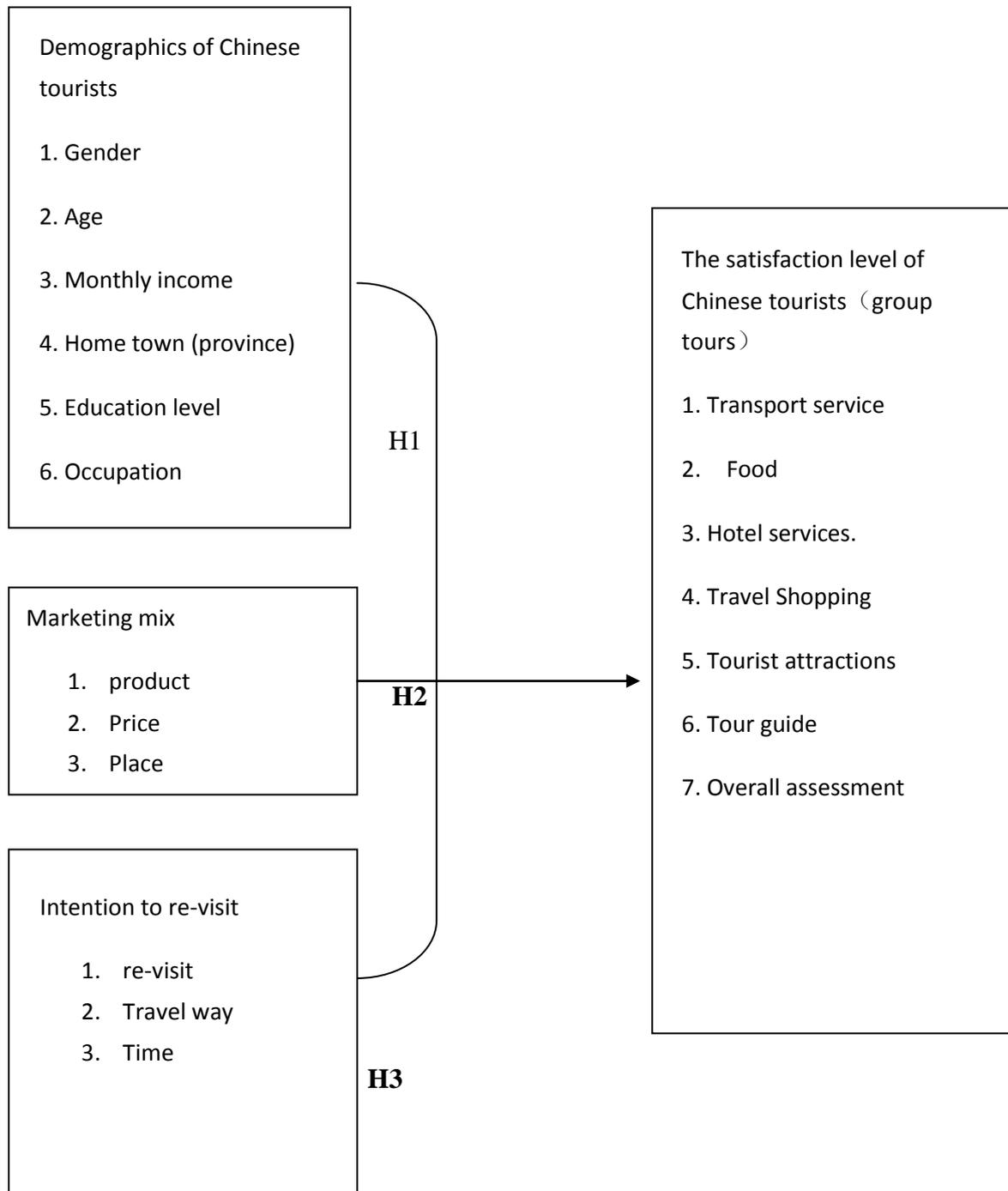
Tourist satisfaction is important to the success of destination marketing because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services, and the decision to return (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). Pizam (1979) was the first to propose tourism satisfaction. This is a comparison of the expectations and actual experience. Expectations are what tourists expect at destinations before their payment. Experience is the tourists feeling at the actual destination. If the result of tourist satisfaction is better than their expectation, it will give a good impression to tourists. On the contrary, if the result of tourist satisfaction is lower than person expectation, it is the customer is not satisfied with the products and services.

Bikesheng (2015) stated that customer satisfaction depends on two aspects, which is what they expected before the purchase and the perceived effect after purchase. Perceived effect of the product / service depends mainly on enterprises. The customer's expectations are mainly in three aspects, previous purchase experience, information from others and the marketing activities of corporate bodies. So that customer expectations are also heavily influenced by companies.

Clearly, it is important for the tourism industry to understand customer satisfaction, especially for Chinese group tours, which is one of the major tourist markets in Thailand.

Therefore, this research aims to investigate the satisfaction level of Chinese tourists (group tours) the satisfaction level of Chinese tourists (group tours) and the possible influencing factors, such as demographic profiles, the marketing mix and the intention to re-visit. The conceptual framework of this study is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study



Based on the above research questions and conceptual framework, the hypotheses of the study are as follows:

H1. The different demographic profiles of Chinese tourists are likely to affect the satisfaction level for group travel in Thailand.

H2. The Thai tour service marketing mix (4P's) influences the customer satisfaction level.

H3. The "intention to re-visit" influences the satisfaction level of Chinese tourists.

Research Methodology

This study addresses the relationships between demography, marketing mix (4Ps), the intention to re-visit and the satisfaction level of Chinese group tours for the following constructs:

1. Demographics: gender, age, marital status, hometown, occupation, education, level and monthly income.
2. Service marketing mix (4Ps) that influences consumer satisfaction: product, price, place, promotion.
3. Intention to re-visit: whether to visit Thailand again, word of mouth, travel method time.
4. Satisfaction level: that is the satisfaction level about transport services, food, hotel services, shopping, tourist attractions, and tour guides on the trip.

The study has collected questionnaires from Chinese group tour customers at King Power Downtown Duty Free Mall, and at the Dome Cabaret Show and Siam Niramit. Questionnaires were collected during November and December 2015. Due to the limitation of time of the study, the researcher will collect a reasonable number of respondents as data for calculating and analyzing. Therefore, the researcher needed to collect at least 150 respondents' data as a sample.

The research adopted a quota sampling method by giving out questionnaires to Chinese tourists traveling in group tours during November and December 2015 in Thailand, while shopping at King Power Downtown Duty Free Mall and at the Dome Cabaret Show. Quota sampling was used for this study because the respondents can be controlled for certain characteristics (Malhotra 2007).

Tour Time	Faculty			
	King Power Downtown Duty Free Mall	Dome Cabaret Show	SIAMNIRAMIT	Total
October	50	50	50	150
November				
Number of students				
Total	150 persons			

In order to ensure the completeness and authenticity of the survey results, the researcher will select only Chinese tourists to answer the questionnaire in Bangkok, while shopping at King Power Downtown Duty Free Mall and at SIAMNIRAMIT and the Dome Cabaret Show

157 questionnaires were actually received. The data were screened for a normal distribution which could be assumed with a Skewness value range of -1 to +1 and a Kurtosis value range of -2 to +2 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). 25 sets of questionnaires were found to violate this assumption, so they were excluded from the analysis. Therefore, 157 respondents remained for the data analysis

Data Analysis

Each construct was analyzed by using descriptive statistical methods such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation to find the descriptive results. The hypothesis tests were conducted by using the chi-square test (χ^2 test) and correlation analysis.

Research Findings

The process of data screening showed that it was a symmetrical distribution of collected data. Next, the process of analysis focuses on the factors influencing the satisfaction level of Chinese group tourists.

Results of Demographic Profile

The majority of respondents were female (60.5%), followed by male (39.5%). The majority of respondents' status were Married (55.4%) and they come from Guangdong Province in China (29.9), followed by Guangxi Province (29.3%). The majority of respondents were 24-36 years old (43.9%) and have an educational level of lower than bachelor degree (47.1%), followed by Bachelor degree (45.2%). The majority of respondents' occupation were office workers (47.1%), followed by owners/ free lancers (24.8%). The majority of respondents had income between 3000-5000 RMB per month (29.9%).

Result of 2 Service Marketing Mix (4P's)

According to the marketing mix (4P's) from the Chinese tour group, this research has found that the majority of respondents' reason of travel to Thailand were folk customs (47.1.2%) followed by inexpensive travel price (40.7%). The majority of respondents were Chinese group tourists traveling in Bangkok (89.8%). The majority of respondents' favorite place was Pattaya (43.3%). The majority of respondents' price of package trip was less than 3000RMB (50.3%) and 3001-5,000RMB (31.2%). the majority of respondents paid for add-tour package (68.8%). The majority of respondents found information at Travel agencies (40.1%). followed by Internet (35.7%) The majority of respondents paid through travel agencies (70.1%) followed by websites (18.5%).

Result of Intention to re-visit

The majority of respondents re- visit (47.8%). The majority of respondents were recommended by friends or family (54.8%). The majority of respondents travel alone (61.5%). The majority of respondents would choose the same agency again (61.5%). the majority of respondents will come to Thailand next time in more than 10 months (66.7%).

Result of Chinese group tour satisfaction level

The satisfaction level of Chinese tourists was investigated. For the satisfaction level of transport services (mean=4.31), the majority of the respondents were satisfied with the level of cleaning and safety at the hotel (mean =4.102). In total, Chinese tourists were strongly satisfied with transport services. For the satisfaction level with food and restaurants the mean was 3.699. The satisfaction level for shopping had a mean of 3.792, and the respondents were satisfied with the level of product quality when shopping (mean =3.917). The satisfaction level of tourism attractions had a mean of 3.804. The respondents were Chinese tourists' satisfaction level for the

atmosphere at scenic locations had a mean of 4.083. The satisfaction level for service quality of tour guides had a mean of 3.911. The satisfaction level for dressing up and Words & actions (mean=4.076). The overall satisfaction had a mean of 0.938.

Result of Hypothesis Tests

H1: The different demographic profiles of Chinese tourists are likely to differ in terms of the satisfaction level for group travel in Thailand.

The study found that there was partial support for the relationship between demographic profiles and the satisfaction level of Chinese group tourists. The majority of respondents' who came from GUANGDONG tended to have neutral overall satisfaction (42.4%). The majority of respondents who came from GUANGXI tended to be satisfied (34.6%). The majority of respondents' occupation who were officers tended strongly to be not satisfied (66.7%). The majority of respondents' occupation who were officers tended to be satisfied (55.0%). The majority of respondents' occupation who were owners / free lancers tended not to be satisfied (66.7%).

H2: The Thai tour service marketing mix (4p's) influenced the customer satisfaction level. The study found that there was partial support for the relationship between service market mix(4ps) and the customer satisfaction level.

H3: The "intention to re-visit" influences the satisfaction level of Chinese tourists. The study found full support for the relationship between the intention to re-visit and the satisfaction level of Chinese tourists.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study identified the factors affecting the satisfaction level of Chinese group tourists, and determined the relationships between different the demographic profiles, the tour service marketing mix(4ps), and the intention to re-visit for Chinese group tourists to Thailand. The study found a significant relationship between the demographic profiles of Chinese tourists (group tours), such as province, monthly income and satisfaction level. The result was in line with the study of Poldongnok (2009) which explored the factors affecting the satisfaction of Chinese group tour travel in Thailand. The study revealed that customers with different gender; age; province; occupation and average monthly income have different satisfaction levels for trips to Thailand. Such consistent results implies that customers with different

demographic profiles (e.g. occupation) tend to have the same satisfaction levels, when Chinese group tours travel in Thailand

The study found a significant relationship between the demographic profiles of Chinese tourists (group tour), such as gender, status, occupation, monthly income and satisfaction level. This supports Poldongnok (2009) which found that customers with different age, province; occupation and average monthly income have different satisfaction levels of Chinese tourists (group tour) in Thailand. Such a consistent result implies that Chinese tourists with different demographic profiles (e.g. monthly income) tend to have different satisfaction levels.

In terms of the service marketing mix (4Ps), the study found a significant relationship between the service marketing mix (4ps) and the customer satisfaction level. such as product, price, place, promotion and satisfaction level, This supports Poldongnok (2009) who found that customers with different factors about product, price, place have different satisfaction levels. The marketing mix influences the satisfaction level of Chinese tourists (group tour) to travel in Thailand; the mix 4Ps (e.g. package price, travel place, information) factors affect the satisfaction level.

In terms of the intention to re-visit, the respondents agreed with the importance of the intention to re-visit which includes re-visiting Thailand, recommending to others; the method of travel and the re-visit time. This supports Kongpanunpol (2010) who studied the factors that affect the satisfaction level of Chinese tourists (group tour) to travel in Thailand. The study revealed that intention to re-visit has a bearing on the satisfaction level of Chinese tourists, such as different intentions to re-visit have different satisfaction levels.

Implications of the Study

1. From the study, the majority of the respondents were satisfied when traveling in Thailand. Thailand is one of the most popular tourist destinations for Chinese tourists, with unique ethnic customs and charming scenery, more and more Chinese tourists visit Thailand.
2. For Chinese tourists, the folk customs, distance near China, the natural landscape, cheaper travel price are the important factors for Chinese tourists to choose travel in Thailand.
3. This research was conducted on the satisfaction levels of Chinese tourists on group travel to Thailand, to understand customer thinking, and the problem of price cuts in

competition with travel agencies and the influence of these factors on Chinese tourists. The efficient business management of Thai tourism means regulating the tourism market, maintaining good market order and promoting the healthy development of the tourism industry. It is also necessary to provide higher quality tourism services to Chinese tourists. In addition, this study could be used for informational purposes for government departments, tourism associations and tourism companies.

Recommendation for Future Study

The future study may replicate this study and increase the sample size to help increase the accuracy and explanatory power of the findings. Future study may replicate this study and extend the sampling frame to other districts, such as Chang-Mai/ Phuket. A larger sample size may help to increase the explanatory power of the findings. Future research could collect more respondent's data (at least 400 respondents.)

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