

Marketing Mix Factor Strategy to Promote Tourism in Thailand in Supporting Solo Tourists

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to learn about behaviors, expectations, and satisfaction of solo tourists who chose to come to Thailand to suggest an improvement guideline for Thailand to support solo tourists. The population of this study consisted of 400 domestic and international tourists that were solo tourists who chose to come to Thailand. The data was collected using a questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistic analysis by percentages, frequencies, averages and standard deviations, with inference statistic analysis methods of, namely, a t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Pearson correlation coefficient, to test the hypotheses. The result found that tourists mostly spent around [to 5 day(s) each trip, spent around THB 20,001 to THB 30,000 (USD 637 to USD 956), and used online social media platforms to find information about their destinations. The tourists reported to be satisfied with locations and services the most, with safety and safety facilities in respective places. The recent finding also found that tourists were satisfied with locations and services of Thailand the most. The hypothesis test result found that solo tourists with various durations spent and various tendencies of future visits were satisfied with tourism in Thailand differently. It was also found that the expectations of coming to Thailand could be related to satisfaction of solo tourists towards tourism in Thailand with a statistical significance.

Index Terms— marketing mix factor strategy, satisfaction, tourism, improvement, solo travel

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry is considered an industry that generates the majority of income for Thailand each year. Therefore, the government prioritizes tourism policies as stated by the “20 Year National Strategy (2017-2036)” in strategy 2 about Competence Abilities which states an objective to turn Thailand into a developed country with steady and sustainable economic growth and higher competence abilities. Tourism diversities, therefore, could be able to help Thailand to achieve the objective by 1) preserving the status of being world-class tourism destination that attract high-quality tourists in every level, 2) improving tourism environments and tourism business values using identities and Thai culture, and 3) utilizing data and local wisdom to create economic values and diversities to respond with new tourism market tendencies, as also stated in the National Reformation Plan (Revised Edition) and the Special Plan under the National Strategy following the Spread of Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19), 2021-2022.

However, the spread of Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) affected tourism industry of Thailand greatly. The businesses that were affected the most, especially in the first 6 months after the spread of Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19), were found to be recreation, tour guide, food and drink, product and souvenir, hotel and accommodation, and transportation businesses, respectively. But after 7 months of the spread of Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19), businesses that were able to maintain their liquidities and be able to keep their businesses when compared to other businesses were transportation businesses according to tourism-related data studied by the researcher. The result found that the spread of Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) did not only affect tourism businesses but also tourism behaviors of tourists as well. Traveloka, a well-known mobile application for tourism in this region, announced many new trends of tourism after the spread of

Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) that besides the so-called staycation trend like AirBnB, there could be new possible trends of travels that are destined to happen (Tourism of Thailand, 2019). Assoc. Prof. Panlapa Pitisan, a marketing researcher of College of Management, Mahidol University, suggested that solo traveling has become a rising trend all over the world due to its charms of freedom and flexibility that can be customized to one's likings not only for the newer generations of tourists. [1]

MMGY Global, a leading marketing company, also suggested that solo traveling could be seen more and more. A survey conducted by the company with a sample group of 2,300 found that, from January 2017 to December 2019, search terms related to solo traveling were used increasingly through online search engines like Google and such at 40% more than usual. The factors varied from the rise of low-cost airlines that had made international flights easier to access, ease of access to tourism information online, newer generation lifestyles that seek to learn more than ever, to new and unusual experiences that can be sought from traveling.

The popularity of solo traveling turned the researcher to develop a marketing mix factor strategy to promote tourism in Thailand in supporting solo tourists in order to benefit entrepreneurs or related tourism sectors to utilize as a marketing guideline to promote tourism in Thailand in order to support solo tourists to eventually bring about impressions and satisfaction and as a guideline in planning business strategies that can better support solo travel tourism.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To learn about tourism behaviors and satisfaction of solo tourists who chose to come to Thailand.
2. Final Stage To learn about marketing mix factors that affect satisfaction of solo tourists who chose to come to Thailand.
3. To create a marketing mix factor strategy guideline to promote tourism in Thailand in supporting solo tourists.

III. RESEARCH CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The following is an overview summarized using data obtained from studying related concepts, theories and researches and synthesized as the research conceptual framework:

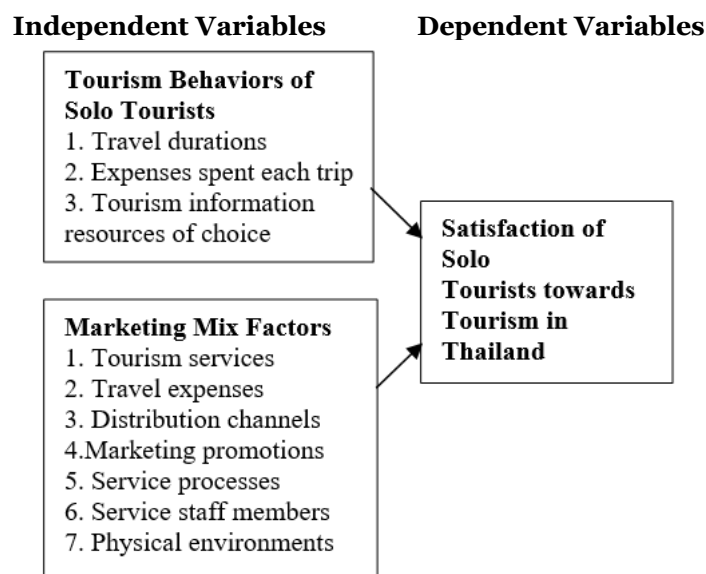


Figure 1 Research Conceptual Framework

The presented framework were turned into the following research hypotheses:

1. Solo tourists with different tourism behaviors are satisfied with tourism in Thailand differently.
2. The marketing mix factors of tourist attractions are related to satisfaction of solo tourists towards tourism in Thailand.

IV. SCOPE OF STUDY

Content Scope

This study aimed to learn tourism behaviors and satisfaction of solo tourists who chose to come to Thailand and also to understand marketing mix factors that affect satisfaction of solo tourists who chose to come to Thailand in order to summarize as a marketing mix factor strategy guideline to promote tourism in Thailand in supporting solo tourists as a quantitative research. The variables applied in this quantitative research were as the following:

1. Independent variables: tourism behaviors of solo tourists and marketing mix factors of tourist attractions

2. Dependent variables: satisfaction of solo tourists towards tourism in Thailand.

Population and Sample Group Scopes

The population and the sample group in this study consisted of domestic and international tourists who chose to come to Thailand. Since the certain number of the tourists was not summarized at the time, the researcher was not able to know the exact number of the population. Therefore, the Sample Size formula suggested by W. G. Cochran (1953, p.85) was applied to calculate a sample size suited for the sample group with a reliability of the data at 95 percent and a deviation of 5 percent. The Sample Size formula of W. G. Cochran. [2] returned a suitable number of the sample group to be equal to 384. The number was, then, rounded up to 400 by the researcher as the size of the sample group in this study.

Area Scope

The data for this study was collected from tourists who chose to visit tourist attractions within the Bangkok areas with an emphasis on solo tourists without companies. The researcher conducted this collection within the attractions in Bangkok in person and through an online data collection with help from 3 tourism pages that had many followers.

V. LITERATURE REVIEWS

A. *Waranyu Kaewkanlaya* [3] developed a guideline for improvements and promotions of cultural tourism of tourists within Rattakosin, Bangkok. The quantitative research result found that different personal characteristics of international tourists, namely, education, monthly income, and residences/homelands affected the overall satisfaction towards tourism in Rattanakosin differently, while genders, age, status and occupations did not affect the overall satisfaction towards tourism by much. The overall satisfaction towards tourism was related in a medium level with tourism behaviors and found that the tendencies of tourism behaviors was related in a medium level with suggesting/recommending tourism in Rattanakosin to others.

B. *Thanakorn Sirisukantha* [4] conducted a study on marketing mix services towards satisfaction of Thai tourists within cultural tourist attractions in Lampang and found that products, marketing promotions, staff members, processes, and physical characteristics affected satisfaction of Thai tourists within cultural tourist attractions in Lampang with a statistical significance level of 0.05, while price and distribution channels did not affect satisfaction of Thai tourists within cultural tourist attractions in Lampang with a statistical significance level of 0.05.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology

This study is a quantitative research that used a questionnaire as a tool to collect data from solo tourists who chose to come to Thailand.

The questionnaire was created from information obtained from texts, documents and related researches based on the research objectives in 4 sections: Section 1 Personal Factors of Tourists, Section 1 Tourism Behaviors of Solo Tourists, Section 3 Marketing Mix Factors of Tourist Attractions, and Section 4 Satisfaction of Solo Tourists towards Tourism in Thailand. 30 sets of the questionnaire were tested for reliability by utilizing them in a pre-test with the population of solo tourists who chose to come to Thailand and found that the reliability scored at 0.897, which indicated that this questionnaire was legitimate to use as a data collection tool.

As for data analysis, the researcher verified the completeness of the questionnaires and coded them according to a statistic research method and processed them with a statistic package computer program using descriptive statistic analysis by percentages, frequencies, averages and standard deviations with inference statistic analysis methods of, namely, a t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Pearson correlation coefficient, to test the hypotheses.

VII. RESULTS

1. 400 domestic and international solo tourists who chose to come to Thailand reported to have 3-5 days for a trip, spend around THB 20,001 to THB 30,000 (USD 637 to USD 956 USD) in each one, use online social media platforms mainly to find information about attractions to visit, and have certain tendencies to revisit.

2. Tourists rated the marketing mix factors of tourist attractions presented in the questionnaire in each section from most to least with the average of 3.98 for services, 3.91 for expenses, and 3.61 for service processes, respectively.

3. Tourists reported to be satisfied with solo tourism in Thailand at a high level with an average score of 4.10. The majority rated readiness of services within attractions in the first place, followed by satisfaction towards activity formats provided at tourist attractions for tourists to participate, with satisfaction towards safety systems for tourists in the last place, but the satisfaction was still high for this factor.

4. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis 1 Solo tourists with different tourism behaviors are satisfied with tourism in Thailand differently. The result found that solo tourists with various durations spent and various tendencies of future visits were satisfied with tourism in Thailand differently.

Hypothesis 2 The marketing mix factors of tourist attractions are related to satisfaction of solo tourists towards tourism in Thailand. The result found that marketing mix factors of distribution channels, service processes, tourism processes and service staff members were relatable to satisfaction of solo tourists towards tourism in Thailand with a statistical significance of 0.01.

VIII. SUMMARY

1. Most tourists utilized online social media platforms to find information on solo tourism in Thailand. Therefore, the most suitable means to provide tourism information for Thailand would be the online social media platforms. The result was in accordance with the one found by Sombat Kanjanakit (2010) who conducted a research on tourism improvements within the Chao Phraya River areas in Bangkok which found that government and private sectors could have been more involved in improving and providing up-to-date and information guidelines in various formats, especially online social media platforms since they are the most accepted and influence decision behaviors of users around the world today.

2. Distribution channels, a marketing mix factor, which, in this study, referred to as channels for information about tourist attractions, accommodation reservations, activity reservations, etc., were relatable to satisfaction of solo tourists towards tourism in Thailand with a statistical significance of 0.01. The result was in accordance with the one found by Wiwatchai Bunyapak [5] who stated that decent and efficient tourist attractions should be ready with their services in every aspect, especially with readiness of information resources, information centers for tourists, including rights reservations in tourism for tourists to be as confident as possible with their travel plans and that readiness of tourist attractions could highly affect travel decisions of tourists to the attractions.

3. The marketing mix factor of service processes relatable to satisfaction of solo tourists towards tourism in Thailand with a statistical significance of 0.01. The result was in accordance with the one found by Supakorn Puradinkun [4] who studied cultural tourism improvement and management in Bangkok areas and found that tourists prioritized tourism services, facilities in tourist attractions, such as sufficient and effective services provided by tourist service centers, etc.

4. Tourism services as a marketing mix factor was relatable to satisfaction of solo tourists towards tourism in Thailand with a statistical significance of 0.01. The result was in accordance with the one found by Preecha Daengroj [6] which stated that one of the most significant factors of tourism is tourist attractions because they attract tourists to visit. Tourist attractions could be unique natural resources, cultural or historical tourist attractions, or tourism that presents local ways of living to learn about local wisdom, historical sites, etc.

5. Service staff members in the marketing mix factors were also relatable to satisfaction of solo tourists towards tourism in Thailand with a statistical significance of 0.01. The result was in accordance with the one found by Pakorn Namwha and Siriwimon Wantong [7] who suggested that one of the most significant factors of tourism is service staff members who play crucial roles in providing services that bring about every satisfaction possible. Managers who prioritize service policies with service receivers in mind tend to be able to deliver satisfaction more easily, which is in accordance with the concept of Sirijanya Prapruetkij [8] who found that sufficient numbers of staff members with expertise in presenting details and information of each tourism destination are considered a valuable tourism potential.

IX. SUMMARY

Suggestions to utilize the research results:

1. Most tourists utilized online social media platforms to find information on solo tourism in Thailand. Therefore, government and private sectors could have been more involved in improving and providing up-to-date and information guidelines in various formats, especially online social media platforms.

2 Safety systems that are more solid and work seamlessly throughout the whole system should be prioritized by having information policies for tourists to learn about the roles and duties of tourist police to gain confidence in safety for tourists who would like to visit.

3 Readiness of services provided by tourist service centers is another important factor that solo tourists prioritize first on top of their minds. Therefore, in order to promote Thailand as one of the best destinations in the world for solo tourists, more tourist service centers that provide sufficient and effective services for tourists with the ability to effectively provide information about each tourist attraction, best practices and other related information of the places, should be significantly considered by related sectors.

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