ABSTRACT

This study seeks to gain insights into the overall attractiveness of a destination by applying the multi-attribute Fishbein model. This approach has been carried out twice before in the international context and this dissertation contributes further to the concepts of destination attractiveness especially through the application of multi-attribute models of measurement and analysis with the context of localisation. It also adds to the body of knowledge on the understanding of tourism product preference and perceptual attitudes held by tourists from specific geographical origins to the South-East Asian region, specifically within Thailand.

The study investigated (i) tourists' perceived overall attractiveness of Chiang Mai Province, Thailand, and (ii) the perceived importance of destination attributes to tourists, which contribute to its overall attractiveness.

Surveys employing a closed-ended, self-administered questionnaire were conducted among 614 international inbound tourists who visited the area during 1-30 April 2001. The participants were selected by using a proportionate stratified sampling method and included tourists from France, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States, and Japan. Data were collected at the departure area of the Chiang Mai International Airport, provincial train station, hotels and resorts in the province.

The main findings of the study indicated that of eight destination attributes, tourists rated 'Cultural Features,' as the most *attractive* element of Chiang Mai. This is closely followed by 'Reception,' 'Cost/Price,' 'Natural Factors,' 'Services,' and 'Recreation and Shopping Facilities.' The attributes 'Accessibility' and 'Infrastructure' were rated lowest in attractiveness.

Generally, Japanese and Western tourists gave high ratings to all attractiveness features. Only the travellers from Taiwan rated the attractiveness features as very low.

In terms of the *importance* of attributes, tourists rated 'Cost/Price,' 'Cultural Features,' and 'Infrastructure,' as most important when visiting a region, while 'Accessibility' and 'Reception' was rated as less important.

Considering the influence of tourists' internal and external characteristics on the perception of attribute importance, the research indicated the following outcomes:

- *Travel motivation*: the result indicated that tourists who were categorised in a 'higher motivational level' of Pearce's 'Travel Career Ladder' appear to show greater interest in 'Recreation and Shopping Facilities,' 'Infrastructure,' and 'Cost/Price' than tourists who have a lower motivational level.

- *Travel purpose*: while all respondents were interested in leisure activities, only those who travelled for educational experiences and business purposes placed greater importance on the 'Cultural Features.'

- *Gender:* male tourists gave more importance to the 'Infrastructure' than female counterparts, whereas females rated 'Reception' of greater importance.

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- *Age:* younger people (under 25) and older visitors (35 and more) considered 'Services' important, while visitors in the 25 to 34 age groups rated 'Services' of minor importance.

- *Occupation,* white-collar visitors rated 'Reception' as important, whereas those who were unemployed and visitors who did not have a regular income (ie. students) rated 'Reception' of less importance.

- *Income:* people with higher incomes rated 'Natural Factors' more highly than those in the lower income category.

- *Marital status,* married people gave more importance to 'Natural Factors,' 'Accessibility,' and 'Reception' than those who were single or never married.

- *Family size:* tourists who have children (under 18 years of age) in their household perceived 'Accessibility' as important, whereas those without children gave it a lower rating.

The study concludes with a discussion on the implications of this research for tourism in the Chiang Mai province of Thailand.