

TOURIST MOTIVATION AND SATISFACTION: THE CASE STUDY OF TRANG PROVINCE, THAILAND

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate tourist motivation and satisfaction in Trang province, Thailand. The target population of this study was tourists who traveled to Trang. Onsite survey was conducted with convenience sampling method. This study found that “trying new food” was the most important factor with respect to all the push factors, followed by “being physically active” and “seeing as much as possible” whereas “reliable weather” was the most important factor among all the pull factors, followed by “outstanding scenery” and “visiting natural attractions. Additionally, “a variety of natural attractions” was considered to be the highest with respect to satisfaction, followed by “a peaceful and restful atmosphere” and “security and safety”. Furthermore, “ease of communication in your own language”, “friendliness of people”, “overall value for money”, and a “peaceful and restful atmosphere” were strong indicators that tourists intended to revisit Trang. The results of this study will have significant implications for destination competitiveness and the type of product development and marketing that is undertaken to attract tourists to Trang. Once the destination has identified the primary motivators that boost travel demand, generate high satisfaction and an intention to return from both Thai and international tourists, the destination is in a far stronger position to develop appropriate travel products and to market these products and the images associated with them in a manner that maximizes the destination’s appeal in targeted market.

Keywords: Motivation, Satisfaction, Tourist behavior, Intention to Return, Trang

1. Introduction

Thailand has been promoted as a tourist destination for many decades, the result of this action being that Thailand is notorious and visited by many tourists. One of Thailand’s biggest sources of income is tourism, and perhaps this is one reason why Thailand is so well known around the world ([1]). Tourism contributes approximately 928,199 million baht to the Thai economy ([2]).

In the southern part of Thailand, Trang is a coastal province which has a long, beautiful coastline stretching along the Indian Ocean. Trang has not only natural attractions (e.g. Muk Island - Emerald Cave, Pak Meng Beach, and Le Cave) and cultural attractions (Sino - Portuguese architecture, and Phraya

Ratsadanupradit Mahison Phakdi Museum) but also a variety of festivals (e.g. Cake Festival, Roast Pork Festival, and Underwater Wedding Ceremony). Trang has been promoted as a tourist destination for many years, however, compared with Phuket, Phang-Nga, and Krabi, (located on the same coastline, the Andaman Sea), Trang is the least focused and least successful in terms of revenue generated from the tourism sector. Even though Trang has both natural and cultural attractions, famous festivals and interesting activities, the number of tourists who traveled to Trang in 2006, were in total 726,373: 656,007 Thai and 70,366 foreign tourists, compared to 1,616,545 Thai and 2,882,779 foreign tourists who traveled to Phuket in that same year. Psychology and

knowledge of tourists is crucial in determining the success of any tourist destination. Unfortunately, current tourism literature has mostly concentrated on reports about tourist motivation and satisfaction in other destinations and not in Trang. Therefore, the object of this study is to investigate tourist motivation and satisfaction in the Trang province. For this paper, researcher focused on: (1) to identify tourist motivation and satisfaction with traveling to Trang, (2) to investigate the relationship between pull motivation and satisfaction, and (3) to assess the relationship between satisfaction and intention to return.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Tourist Motivation

Motivation is “the need that drives an individual to act in a certain way to achieve the desired satisfaction” ([3]). A review of literature on tourist motivations indicates that the motivation concept can be classified into two forces which indicate that people travel because they are pushed and pulled to do so by ‘some forces’ or factors ([4]). These forces describe how individuals are pushed by motivation variables into making travel decision and how they are pulled or attracted by destination attributes ([5]). The push motivations are associated to the tourists’ desire whereas pull motivations are related with the attributes of the destination choices. Additionally, push motivations are more connected to internal or emotional aspects while pull motivations are linked to external, situational, or cognitive aspects.

The idea of the push - pull model is the disintegration of tourist’s choice of destination into two forces. The first force is pushes a tourist away, it attempts to model the general desire to go and be somewhere else, without specifying where that may be. The second force is pulls a tourist towards a destination. This aspect comprises tangible characteristics or attributes of a destination that are primarily related to the perceived attractiveness of a

destination. These destination attributes may stimulate and reinforce inherent push motivations ([6]). Prior researches are generally accepted that push and pull motivations have been primarily utilized in studies of tourist behavior ([7], [8]).

To market tourism services and destinations well, marketers must understand the motivating factors that lead to travel decisions and consumption behavior. Motivation is only one of many variables (e.g. perceptions, learning, and cultural condition) that may contribute to explain tourist behavior. It is an important variable because it is the driving force behind all behavior. In other word, effective tourism marketing is impossible without an understanding of consumers’ motivations ([9]).

“Safety and fun”, “escape”, “knowledge and education”, and “achievement” were perceived respectively as important factors in push travel motivation whereas “cleanliness and shopping”, “reliable weather and safety”, “different culture”, and “water activities” were considered as important factors in pull travel motivation ([10]). Additionally, the main motivators of the domestic traveler who visited Sabah in Malaysia were nature, followed by friendliness, sea/island/beach, seafood restaurant, culture, airline accessibility, safety, adventure, accommodation and finally airport facilities ([11]).

2.2 Tourist Satisfaction

Satisfaction is a “tourist’s post-purchase evaluation of the overall service experience (process and outcome)” ([12]). Without doubt, satisfaction has been playing an important role in planning tourism products and services. Tourist satisfaction is important to successful destination marketing because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services, and the decision to return ([13]).

In tourism context, it is useful to understand how motivation actually occurs and how those needs may be satisfied. Travel satisfaction has been generally used as an assessment tool for the evaluation of travel

experiences, products and services offered at the destination ([14], [15], [16]). Besides, satisfaction was described as the tourist's emotional state after experiencing the trip ([17]). Tourists express satisfaction or dissatisfaction after they buy tourism products and services ([18]). If tourists are satisfied with the products or service, then they will have the motivation to buy them again or they will recommend them to their friends. Then, tourists' satisfaction is a strong indicator of their intentions to revisit and recommend the destination to other people. Additionally, it is generally believed that satisfaction leads to repeat purchase and positive word of mouth recommendation. Tourist' positive experiences of services, products, and other resources which provided by tourism destinations could produce repeat visits same as positive word of mouth effects to such as relatives and/or friends ([19]). Recommendations to other are also one of the most often required types of information for people interested in traveling ([10]). The greatest effect on overall satisfaction was hospitality, followed by accommodation, service quality, food quality, and convenience ([20]).

3. Research Methodology

The target population of this study was both Thai and foreign tourists who traveled to Trang province. Yamane formula was applied for this study, the sample size is 400. Convenience sampling was applied. The pilot test with 20 tourists was conducted onsite of destination. The questionnaire was initially developed in two languages: Thai and English version. A questionnaire consists of three sections: tourist demographics, tourist motivation (a five point Likert - type scale from (1) very unimportant to (5) very important was used), tourist satisfaction (ranging from (1) very dissatisfied to (5) very satisfied).

4. Results

The Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic information of respondents was shown in Table 1. There were 194 (48.5%) males and 206 (51.5%) females. In term of age, 59.8% were in the ages of 25-44, 27% were in the ages of over 45, and 13.3% were in the age of below 25. The marital status of the respondents was married (50.5%), followed by single (44.3%), and divorced/widowed (5.3%). Educations of the participants were undergraduate (53.3%), diploma (24%), postgraduate or higher (16.8%), and school certificate (6%). 75% of the respondents were Thai, 12% were European, 8.5% were Asian, and 4.5% were American. In term of occupation, they were employee (48.3%), entrepreneur (16.8%), student (9.8%), and other (e.g. housewife, retired, and unemployed) (25.3%).

Table 1
Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic data	Items	F	%
Gender	Male	194	48.5
	Female	206	51.5
Age	Under 25 years	53	13.3
	25-34 years	138	34.5
	35-44 years	101	25.3
	45-54 years	68	17.0
	55-64 years	26	6.5
	Over 65 years	14	3.5
Marital status	Single	177	44.3
	Married	202	50.5
	Divorced /	21	5.3
	Widowed		
Education	School certificate	24	6.0
	Diploma	96	24.0
	Undergraduate	213	53.3
	Postgraduate or higher	67	16.8
Nationality	Thai	300	75.0
	American	18	4.5
	European	48	12.0
	Asian	34	8.5
Occupation	Student	39	9.8
	Entrepreneur	67	16.8
	Employee	193	48.3
	Other	101	25.3

Means Ranking of Motivation

Variables

1) Push factors

From Table 2, Trang respondents perceived “trying new food” was the most important among all push factors (Mean = 3.96), followed by “being physically active” (Mean = 3.89), “seeing as much as possible” (Mean = 3.73), “feeling safe and secure to travel” (Mean = 3.70), and “experiencing new/different lifestyle” (Mean = 3.64).

Table 2
Mean Ranking of Push Factors

Push factors	Mean	Rank
Trying new food	3.96	1
Being physically active	3.89	2
Seeing as much as possible	3.73	3
Feeling safe and secure to travel	3.70	4
Experiencing new/different lifestyles	3.64	5
Meeting new people	3.48	6
Being free to act how I feel	3.46	7
Being entertained and having fun	3.39	8
Getting a change from a busy job	3.34	9
Being together as a family	3.22	10
Rediscovering myself	3.02	11
Going places friends have not been	2.86	12
Doing nothing at all	2.64	13
Rediscovering past good times	2.60	14

Note: Importance ranking was based on mean scores measured on a Likert-type scale from very unimportant (1) to very important (5).

2) Pull Factors

From Table 3, among the pull factors, “reliable weather” was the most important factor for Trang respondents (Mean = 4.23), followed by “outstanding scenery” (Mean = 4.18), “visiting natural attractions” (Mean = 4.05), “variety of activities to see” (Mean = 3.99), and “inexpensive restaurants” (Mean = 3.82).

Table 3
Mean Ranking of Pull Factors

Pull factors	Mean	Rank
Reliable weather	4.23	1
Outstanding scenery	4.18	2
Visiting natural attractions	4.05	3
Variety of activities to see	3.99	4
Inexpensive restaurants	3.82	5
Interesting and friendly local people	3.79	6
Local cuisine	3.69	7
Cleanliness	3.26	8
Different culture	3.24	9
Shopping	3.18	10
Visiting friends and relatives	2.86	11
Visiting historical places	2.69	12
Nightlife and entertainment	2.15	13

Note: Importance ranking was based on mean scores measured on a Likert-type scale from very unimportant (1) to very important (5).

Table 4
Mean Ranking of Satisfaction Attributes

Satisfaction attributes	Mean	Rank
Variety of natural attractions	4.26	1
Peaceful and restful atmosphere	4.14	2
Security and safety	4.10	3
Friendliness of people	3.96	4
Quality of food and beverage	3.81	5
Variety of food and beverage	3.68	6
Overall value of money	3.68	7
Price of food and beverage	3.63	8
Quality of restaurant	3.58	9
Quality standard of accommodation	3.56	10
Wide selection of restaurant/cuisine	3.52	11
Price of accommodation	3.43	12
Cleanliness	3.32	13
Easy to access tourist destinations	3.31	14
Reasonable price of sightseeing	3.30	15
Wide choice of accommodation	3.30	16
Ease of communication in your language	3.12	17
Variety of historic/cultural sites	2.80	18

Note: Satisfaction ranking was based on mean scores measured on a Likert-type scale from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5).

Mean Ranking of Satisfaction

Attributes

Table 4 illustrated the mean ranking of satisfaction attributes. The most satisfactory attribute was the “variety of natural attractions” (Mean = 4.26). Moreover, Trang respondents were satisfied with “peaceful and restful atmosphere” (Mean = 4.14), “security and safety” (Mean = 4.10), “friendliness of people” (Mean = 3.96), and “quality of food and beverage” (Mean = 3.81). In contrast, “easy to access tourist destinations” (Mean = 3.31), “reasonable price of sightseeing” (Mean = 3.30), a “wide choice of accommodation” (Mean = 3.30), “ease of communication in your language” (Mean = 3.12) and “variety of historic/cultural sites” (Mean = 2.80) were perceived as being the least satisfactory attribute for Trang respondents.

Post-Trip Behavior

As shown in table 5, Trang respondents perceived “overall satisfaction” being most satisfactory (Mean = 3.85). Moreover, Trang respondents perceived that “intention to return” was likely (Mean = 4.05) Lastly, Trang respondents would recommend the destination to others (Mean = 4.17).

Table 5
Post-Trip Behavior

Post-Trip Behavior	Mean	SD
Overall satisfaction	3.85	0.65
Intention to return	4.05	0.85
Recommendation to others	4.17	0.68

Notes: Overall satisfaction ranking was based on mean scores from 1 to 5 (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied), intention to return was based on mean scores from 1 to 5 (1 = unlikely to 5 = very likely), and recommendation to other was based on mean scores from 1 to 5 (1 = strongly not recommend to 5 = strongly recommend).

Results of Regression Analysis between Pull Motivation and Overall Satisfaction

Table 6 gave the results of the analysis to explain overall satisfaction. The “visiting

historical places”, “visiting natural attractions”, “visiting friends and relatives”, “outstanding scenery”, and “shopping” factors were strong indicators of tourists’ overall satisfaction with their traveling Trang. The “outstanding scenery” and “visiting friends and relatives” had the greatest impact on the overall satisfaction, followed by “visiting historical places”, “shopping”, and “visiting natural attractions”. It can be suggested that the overall satisfaction with their trip will be increased when tourists are satisfied with these five factors. But “variety of activities to see”, “reliable weather”, “different culture”, “interesting and friendly local people”, “local cuisine”, “inexpensive restaurants”, “cleanliness”, and “nightlife and entertainment” did not have any impact on their overall satisfaction.

Table 6
Factors Affecting Respondents’ Overall Satisfaction

Independent variables	Beta	t-value	p-value
Visiting historical places	0.152	3.109	0.002*
Visiting natural attractions	0.107	2.341	0.020*
Visiting friends and relatives	0.216	4.631	0.000*
Variety of activities to see	0.063	1.340	0.181
Reliable weather	0.065	1.217	0.224
Outstanding scenery	0.184	3.984	0.000*
Different culture	0.003	0.061	0.951
Interesting and friendly local people	0.021	0.432	0.666
Local cuisine	0.057	1.178	0.239
Inexpensive restaurants	0.046	0.973	0.331
Cleanliness	0.069	1.308	0.192
Shopping	0.132	2.664	0.008*
Nightlife and entertainment	0.101	1.940	0.053

Notes: Dependent variable: overall satisfaction, $R^2 = 0.212$, $F = 22.525$, and * indicates statically significant difference between groups

**Results of Regression Analysis
between Satisfaction and Intention to
Return**

**Table 7
Factors Affecting Respondents'
Intention to Return**

Independent variables	Beta	t-value	p-value
Quality standard of accommodation	0.017	0.358	0.720
Quality of restaurant	-0.049	-1.012	0.312
Quality of food and beverage	0.033	0.729	0.467
Price of accommodation	-0.025	-0.550	0.582
Price of food and beverage	0.017	0.358	0.720
Wide choice of accommodation	-0.062	-1.252	0.211
Wide selection of restaurant/cuisine	-0.084	-1.688	0.092
Variety of food and beverage	-0.021	-0.443	0.658
Variety of natural attractions	0.022	0.441	0.659
Variety of historic/cultural sites	-0.048	-1.023	0.307
Reasonable price of sightseeing	-0.022	-0.492	0.623
Peaceful and restful atmosphere	0.103	2.064	0.040*
Cleanliness	-0.039	-0.769	0.442
Security and safety	0.022	0.432	0.666
Friendliness of people	0.138	2.846	0.005*
Ease of communication in your language	0.329	7.007	0.000*
Easy to access tourist destinations	-0.059	-1.116	0.265
Overall value of money	0.128	2.660	0.008*

Notes: Dependent variable: intention to return, $R^2 = 0.205$, $F = 26.717$, and * indicates statically significant difference between groups

The results in table 7 were shown that “peaceful and restful atmosphere”, “friendliness of people”, “ease of communication in your language”, and “overall value of money” was strong indicators for a

tourist’s intention to return to Trang. The “ease of communication in your language” had the strongest impact on the intention to return, and “friendliness of people”, “overall value of money”, and “peaceful and restful atmosphere” came next. This suggested that the probability to return will be increased significantly when tourists are satisfied with these four attributes.

CONCLUSION

This study found that “trying new food” was the most important factor with respect to all the push factors. This was followed by “being physically active”, “seeing as much as possible”, “feeling safe and secure to travel”, and “experiencing new/different lifestyles”. “Reliable weather” was the most important factor among all the pull factors, followed by “outstanding scenery”, “visiting natural attractions”, “a variety of activities to see”, and “inexpensive restaurants”.

In addition, “a variety of natural attractions” was considered to be the highest with respect to satisfaction, followed by “a peaceful and restful atmosphere”, “security and safety”, “the friendliness of people”, and “the quality of food and beverage”. Additionally, “outstanding scenery”, “visiting friends and relatives”, “visiting historical places”, “shopping”, and “visiting natural attractions” were strong indicators of the overall satisfaction of tourists who travel to Trang. Furthermore, “ease of communication in your own language”, “friendliness of people”, “overall value for money”, and a “peaceful and restful atmosphere” were strong indicators that tourists intended to revisit Trang.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study confirm previous research, especially Yoon and Uysal (2005), Chan and Chang (2003). The motivators that pushed tourists away from their home were “feeling safe and secure to travel”, “meeting new people”, “seeing as much as possible”, and “being physically active” whereas the motivation which attracted tourists

to visit were “reliable weather”, “different culture”, and “visiting natural attractions”. The reason for this may be that the average temperature of Trang is from 20-36 Celsius all year round. The best time to visit Trang is from December to May, it is not the monsoon season, so tourists prefer to visit Trang in this period. Moreover, Trang has a variety of natural attractions which are beautiful and peaceful. On the other hand, not surprisingly, “visiting historical places” and “nightlife and entertainment” were not important factors to pull tourists to visit Trang. Trang is famous for its natural attractions and festivals, not historical/cultural sites. Additionally, there is very little nightlife and entertainment activity in Trang.

Yuksel (2001) found that the greatest effect on overall satisfaction was hospitality, followed by accommodation, service quality, food quality, and convenience. In contrast, this study found that “outstanding scenery”, “visiting friends and relatives”, “visiting historical places”, “shopping”, and “visiting natural attractions” were indicators for tourist’s overall satisfaction when traveling to Trang. This suggests that the overall satisfaction for Trang visitors is increased when tourists are satisfied with these five factors. Besides, “ease of communication in your language”, “friendliness of people”, “overall value of money”, and “peaceful and restful atmosphere” were strong indicators that tourists’ intended to revisit Trang. This suggests that the probability for tourists to return to Trang will be increased when they are satisfied with these four attributes.

RECOMMENDATION

As mentioned previously, the results show that the most important push factor for Trang tourists was trying new food, so the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), local governor, and private sectors are correct to promote the cuisine festival. Additionally, outstanding scenery and visiting natural attractions were important factors to attract tourists to Trang. Subsequently, the Tourism

Authority of Thailand (TAT), local governor, and private sectors should be concerned about natural resource conservation so as to preserve the natural resources for sustainable tourism. This could be one of the most important factors to attract tourists to visit Trang. In addition, the Tourism Board should create an appropriate tourism policy, support private operators, and consider capacity at tourist attractions to preserve the natural environment.

Furthermore, this study found that visiting historical sites was not perceived as a pull motivator to visit Trang. In fact, there are many cultural attractions in Trang such as Sino-Portuguese architecture, Khao Sam Bat Cave, and Phraya Ratsadanupradit Mahison Phakdi Museum. Additionally, visiting historical sites played an important role in a visitor’s overall satisfaction. Historical places might attract more tourists especially international tourists from western cultures, so the local governor and tour operators should not only promote natural attractions and festivals but also historical/cultural sites. This action may well attract more visitors to Trang province.

Moreover, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), local governor, and private sectors should pay serious attention on crucial problems that occur in Trang i.e. cleanliness of tourist attractions, the English skill of the staff, the price of sightseeing and accommodation, variety of accommodation, and tourist destination accessibility. To solve these problems the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), local governor, and private sectors should follow these suggestions:-

- Cleanliness: The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), local governor, and private sectors should encourage local people and tourists to participate in taking care of the environment. Additionally, they should provide more garbage and clean toilet facilities at tourist attractions.

- The English skill of staff: They should improve the English skill of staff. Institutions in Trang should provide better training in English and courses directed at the tourist industry so as to improve the language

skills of the staff who work in the field of tourism. This will make it better to communicate between staff and tourists.

- The price of sightseeing and accommodation: To get a competitive advantage, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), local governor, and private sectors should control and keep the standard of sightseeing and accommodation reasonable prices. Furthermore, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), local governor, and private sectors should emphasize the quality of service and the standard of tourist attractions. This includes value for money for tourists too.

- Tourist destination accessibility: When compared to nearby provinces, there were very few direction signs to tourist attractions in Trang, so the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), local governor, and private sectors should provide more signboards for tourist attractions along the road, both in Thai and English.

In conclusion, understanding the importance of both push and pull factors perceived by tourists can help the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), local governor, and private sectors to meet the desired individual needs of tourists. Lastly, the level of overall satisfaction is significant in terms of their future behavior. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), local governor, and private sectors should attempt to keep tourists satisfied with the natural/cultural attractions, festivals, facilities, and services within the area so as to gain a high level of word of mouth recommendation. Satisfied people do not necessarily return but they can still help the destination by attracting new tourists.

Furthermore, the future research should examine the impact of tourist demographics on motivation and satisfaction, and should find out the expectation of tourists to visit Trang. The result will have significant implications for destination competitiveness and the type of product development and marketing. The study in this area could help Trang to develop appropriate travel products and to market these products and the image associated with them in

a manner that maximize the destination's appeal in targeted market.

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