

Abstract

This relationship marketing study investigates the influence of national culture on the development of host-guest relationships between local and international tourists and Thai resort operators on Samui Island, Thailand. It proposes that a quality relationship between tourists and resort operators, which is characterised by high levels of trust and commitment, is the major determinant of customer loyalty. In particular, it concentrates on the major cultural differences between Thai and Australian tourists that impinge upon host-guest relationship development.

To assist in the study, a research model developed by Morgan and Hunt (1994) was modified and used to conceptualise host-guest relationships and to inform the data collection procedure. Based on survey data collected from Australian and Thai tourists that arrived on Samui Island between January and February 2005, it was found that Australian and Thai respondents have different service experiences during their vacation. Moreover, they also weigh the importance of the antecedents of trust and commitment differently. The findings of the study highlight the need for resort operators to interact with tourists in a culturally sensitive manner. The managerial implications of the results of this study for resort operators are presented, and some recommendations for future service management and delivery strategies are suggested.