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TOURISM FACTORS INFLUENCE THE LOYALTY OF GAY TOURISTS VISITING THAILAND

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Abstract

In the study of factors affecting loyalty foreign gay tourists visiting Thailand, the researchers collected quantitative and qualitative data from in-depth interviews and presented the findings. The objective of this research is to study tourism motivation and destination images that affect loyalty through satisfaction (mediator).

Introduction

In the study of actors affecting loyalty foreign gay tourists visiting Thailand, the researchers collected quantitative and qualitative data from indepth interviews and presented the findings. The objective of this research is to study tourism motivation and destinationimages that affect loyalty through satisfaction (mediator).

In terms of the current situation of domestic tourism among foreign gay tourists, it was expected that in 2019, there would be approximately 39.0 - 39.8 million foreign tourists, increasing by 2.0 - 4.0 percent. The markets that tend to grow include Asian tourists, such as the Malaysian, Korean, Japanese and India. As for Chinese tourists, the growth is likely to accelerate in the second half of the year, but there are some challenges in competition, economic conditions and currency. The number of European and Russian tourists may shrink, especially in the third quarter due to increasing popularity of travelling to Turkey and Europe among Russian tourists4. However, the overall domestic market has the same characteristics as the international market. According to statistical data for the past 5 years, the average length of stay tends to decrease, but there are more travelling links. In addition, income has increased due to increasing travel frequency and increasing daily expenses per person. At the same time, each region focuses on using more contents to add value and attract tourists by creating stories to help enhance the strength of the region. Moreover, each region focuses on once-in-a-lifetime experience and recognition of secondary city identities, as well as raising awareness of ecotourism.

As for the overview of the current tourism situation in many areas, there are a large number of tourists from China travelling to Thailand, followed by tourists from the European zone. The season with a large number of tourists is the beginning of the year, and domestic tourists travel during the mid year (Informant, 2019: Interview). Although the number of tourists is larger than that last year according to statistics, it is considered low, especially for Chinese tourists. (Informant No. 6, 2019: Interview).

As for the situation of tourism outside the country, the Division of Economy, Tourism and Sports (2019) stated that the economic slowdown in many countries may affect tourists' travel decisions, as tourists are sensitive to income and prices. The global economic slowdown has caused many countries to employ the tourism sector to drive the economy and facilitate tourism measures to compete in attracting foreign tourists. The international market promotion will be carried out under 3 main strategies including (1) improving the image of Thai tourism brand to become a Preferred Destination, (2) stimulating spending and expanding the market base for the middle-upper groups, and (3) expanding the market base for the special interest group.

In the American region, there is the normal number of tourists. In 2018, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand, a record of 1 million tourists was made, but the number of Latin American tourists shrank worldwide. Tourism business operators need to come up with strategies to support both Thai and foreign tourists during each tourist season in order to stimulate tourism throughout the year. In certain tourism areas in Thailand, accommodations are so expensive that Thai tourists cannot afford. Therefore, they choose to travel abroad because they feel it is more worthwhile than traveling in Thailand (Informant, 2019: Interview). In addition, the terrifying competitor in tourism is Vietnam (Informant, 2019: Interview).

Today, marketing has focused on the millennial group, which is a group of people born between 1986 and 1995. They are Gen Y and Gen Z people. This group of people are in the working age range, have the purchasing power, and can travel all year. They do not care about working hours because they can work off-site or at home, so this group of people are worth focusing on.

The tourism promotion of tourist destinations may not focus on gay tourists because gay tourists may not be the main group of focus in tourism marketing promotion. However, there are also activities that gay tourists can travel to attend, including activities that gay tourists host at their personal place (summary from Informants No. 5, 6 and 17, 2019: Interview). There is also an integration of the public and private sectors to go on field to present tourist attractions in certain countries, such as Hong Kong, Vietnam, China, Singapore, Malaysia (Informant, 2019: Interview).

As for the domestic tourism trends of foreign gay tourists, Thailand is regarded as an "LGBT-friendly destination". When considering the context of strict Muslim neighbours such as Indonesia or Thailand's tourism rival, Malaysia with a majority Muslim population, religious taboos prevent acceptance of an LGBT community. Therefore, when gay tourists want to travel as a couple or in group, Thailand is always the destination that allows for free expression and tourists will be free from discrimination. In this regard, Thailand has checked all the boxes, as there has been no violent anti group like anywhere else. This has become Thailand's strength when combined with tourism products by the private sector. There is ongoing preparation for this group of customers, and it is included in the guidelines of the government promotion plan (Voice Online, 2019).

Gay tourists belong to Niche Market group which include quality tourists. This group of tourists are wealthy and have no burden on children which makes it easy for them to make travel decisions (Summary from Informants, 2019: Interview).

Results

According to the Exploratory Factor Analysis in the study on motivation and destinationimages that affect loyalty through satisfaction, it showed that based on the data of all respondents, 5 variables and 12 elements were used to group the variables with similar analysis results. This group of variables are called factors or dimensions. The exploratory factor analysis in this research employed the Varimax axis rotation technique (perpendicular axis rotation) in grouping variables by inputting data into the software in which Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)> 0.6 (Tabachnik and Fidel, 2001) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 0.000 (Sig.). Then, the reliability of all factors were checked as follows.

Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

1. In the explanatory factor analysis on tourism motivation, data were input into the software where Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) = 0.744 (KMO> 0.6) (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 0.000 (Sig.), and then the reliability of all factors was checked. There were 6 factors of tourism motivation, and the Cronbach's Alpha values were 0.861, 0.797, 0.775 and 0.735, respectively, all of which were greater than 0.6 (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.6$).

The results of explanatory factor analysis on tourism motivation showed that the variables with the weight (factor loading) were grouped into 5 groups according to the weight. Group 1 consisted of variables RL2, RL3 and RL4. Group 2 consisted of the variables NV2, NV4 and NV5. Factor 3 consisted of EC1, EC2, EC3, EC4, EC5 and EC6. Factor 4 consisted of RL5, SC1 and SC2, and Group 5 consisted of GLS1, GLS2 and GLS3. The factor groups were named based on the original factors as follows: 1) Relaxation, 2) Novelty Seeking, 3) Escape, 4) Socialisation, and 5) Gay Social Life and Sex: Gay culture. 2. In the explanatory factor analysis on destination images, data were input into the software where Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) = 0.838 (KMO> 0.6) (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 0.000 (Sig.), and then the reliability of all factors was checked. The destination image consisted of factors. The Cronbach's Alpha values were 0.792 and 0.714, respectively, all of which were greater than 0.6 (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.6$).

The results of the explanatory factor analysis on destination images showed that the factors with the weight (factor loading) were grouped into 2 groups according to the weight. Group 1 consisted of variables CI12, CI14 and CI15, and Group 2 consisted of variables CI11, AI1, AI2, AI3, AI4, AI5 and AI7. The factor groups were named based on the original factors as follows: 1) Cognitive Image and 2) Affective Image.

3. In the explanatory factor analysis on destination choices, the data were input into the software where Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) = 0.757 (KMO> 0.6) (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 0.000 (Sig.), and then the reliability of all factors was checked. The factors of destination choices had no components, and the Cronbach's Alpha values were 0.853 and 0.745, all of which were greater than 0.6 (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.6$).

The results of the explanatory factor analysis on destination choices showed that the factors with weight (factor loading) were grouped into 2 groups according to the weight. Group 1 consisted of variables DC2, DC3, DC9, DC12, DC17 and DC18, and Group 2 consisted of variables DC6, DC20, DC21 and DC23. The factor groups were named based on the original factors as follows: 1) gay-friendly facilities and 2) gay-friendly activities.

4. In the explanatory factor analysis on satisfaction, the data were input into the software where Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) = 0.870 (KMO> 0.6) (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 0.000 (Sig.), and then the reliability of all factors was checked. The factors of satisfaction had no components, and the Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.847, which was greater than 0.6 (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.6$).

The results of the explanatory factor analysis on satisfaction showed that the factors with weight (factor loading) were grouped into 1 groups according to the weight which consisted of variables SAT1, SAT4 and SAT5.

5. In the explanatory factor analysis on destination loyalty, the data were input into the software where Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) = 0.871 (KMO> 0.6) (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 0.000 (Sig.), and then the reliability of all factors was checked. There were 2 factors of destination loyalty, and the Cronbach's Alpha values were 0.909 and 0.874, respectively, all of which were greater than 0.6 (Cronbach's α > 0.6).

The results of the explanatory factor analysis on destination loyalty showed that the factors with weight (factor loading) were grouped into 2 groups. Group 1 consisted of variables IR1, IR3, IR4, IR5 and IR6, and Group 2 consisted of variables WM1, WM2 and WM3. The factor groups were named based on the original factors as follows: 1) Intention to Re-visit and 2) Word-of-mouth.

Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) (Hair et al, 2018) is responsible for measuring the statistical results and "confirming" whether the variables fit the model perfectly (Model Fit). According to the analysis, the variables were divided into 4 parts: tourism motivation, destination images, destination choices and destination loyalty.

1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis on Tourism Motivation

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) on tourism motivation to confirm the grouping divided variables into 5 groups: 1) Relaxation, 2) Novelty Seeking, 3) Escape, 4) Socialisation, and 5) Gay Social Life and Sex: Gay culture, respectively. The model fit was perfect. However, after inputting the data into the software, the model was not fit. Therefore, it was necessary to improve the model. After considering the MI (Modification Indices), it was found that there were some pairs of variables in the model that yielded relevant results. The researchers, therefore, removed the Escape group and variables EC1, EC2, and EC4 out. Consequently, the fit model was obtained with Chi-square = 56.101, df = 45, p = .124 (> .05), CMIN / DF = 1.247 (<3), GFI = .982 (> .90), CFI = .996 (> .90), RMR = .040 (<.05), RMSEA = .035 (< .08) (Arbuckle, 2011). The 1st Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (1stOrder CFA) is as shown in Figure 1, and the 2ndOrder Confirmatory Factor Analysis (2ndOrder CFA) is as shown in Figure 2.



Chi-square = 1078.490.df = 125, p = .000 ChiSquare/df=8.628, GFI=.761, CFI=.744, RMR=.102, RMSEA=.138

Figure 1: Result of the 1st Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (1stOrder CFA) on Tourism Motivation



Chi-square = 56.101.df = 45, p = .124 ChiSquare/df=1.247, GFI=.982, CFI=.996, RMR=.040, RMSEA=.025

Figure 2: Result of 2nd Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (2nd Order CFA) on Tourism Motivation

2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis on Destination Images

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) on destination images to confirm the grouping divided variables into 2 groups: 1) Cognitive Image and 2) Affective Image, respectively. The model fit was perfect. However, after inputting the data into the software, the model was not fit. Therefore, it was necessary to improve the model. After considering the MI (Modification Indices), it was found that there were some pairs of variables in the model that yielded relevant results, and the model was fit with Chi-square = 28.471, df = 23, p = .198 (> .05), CMIN / DF = 1.238 (<3), GFI = .985 (> .90), CFI = .998 (> .90), RMR = .021 (<.05), RMSEA = .024 (<.08) (Arbuckle, 2011). The 1st order confirmatory factor analysis (1stOrder CFA) is as shown in Figure 3, and the 2nd Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (2ndOrder CFA) is as shown in Figure 4.



Chi-square = 28.471.df = 23, p = .198 ChiSquare/df=1.238, GFI=.985, CFI=.998, RMR=.021, RMSEA=.024 Figure 3:1st Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (1stOrder CFA) on Destination Images



Chi-square = 28.471.df = 23, p = .198 ChiSquare/df=1.238, GFI=.985, CFI=.998, RMR=.021, RMSEA=.024

Figure 4: 2nd Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (2nd Order CFA) on Destination Images

3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis on Destination Choices

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) on destination images to confirm the grouping divided variables into 2 groups: 1) gay-friendly facilities and 2) gay-friendly activities, respectively. The model fit was perfect. However, after inputting the data into the software, the model was not fit. Therefore, it was necessary to improve the model. After considering the MI (Modification Indices), it was found that there were some pairs of variables in the model that yielded relevant results, and the model was fit with Chi-square = 23.986, df = 19, p = .197 (> .05), CMIN / DF = 1.262 (<3), GFI = .988 (> .90), CFI = .997 (> .90), RMR = .014 (<.05), RMSEA = .026 (<.08) (Arbuckle, 2011). The 1st order confirmatory factor analysis (1st Order CFA) is as shown in Figure 5, and the 2nd Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (2nd Order CFA) is as shown in Figure 6.



Chi-square = 29.945.df = 21, p = .093 ChiSquare/df=1.426, GFI=.985, CFI=.994, RMR=.019, RMSEA=.033

Figure 5: 1st Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (1stOrder CFA) on Destination Choices



Chi-square = 23.986.df = 19, p = .197 ChiSquare/df=1.262, GFI=.988, CFI=.997, RMR=.014, RMSEA=.026



4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis on Destination Loyalty

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) on destination images to confirm the grouping divided variables into 2 groups: 1) Intention to Revisit and 2) Word-of-mouth, respectively. The model fit was perfect. However, after inputting the data into the software, the model was not fit. Therefore, it was necessary to improve the model. After considering the MI (Modification Indices), it was found that there were some pairs of variables in the model that yielded relevant results, and the model was fit with Chi-square = 15.480, df = 12, p = .216 (> .05), CMIN / DF = 1.290 (<3), GFI = .991 (> .90), CFI = .998 (> .90), RMR = .009 (<.05), RMSEA = .027 (<.08) (Arbuckle, 2011). The 1st order confirmatory factor analysis (1stOrder CFA) is as shown in Figure 7, and the 2nd Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (2ndOrder CFA) is as shown in Figure 8.



Chi-square = 15.480.df = 12, p = .216 ChiSquare/df=1.290, GFI=.991, CFI=.998, RMR=.009, RMSEA=.027

Figure 7: 1st Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (1stOrder CFA) on Destination Loyalty



Figure 8: 2nd Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (2nd Order CFA) on Destination Loyalty

Structural Model

The structural model serves to identify the "influence" between factors or latent variables that affect other factors from the empirical data collected from samples by comparing data with the model that has already been proven to be fit. Goodness of fit usually contains CMIN- p (Chi-square Probability Level)> 0.05, CMIN / DF (Relative Chi-square) <3, GFI (Goodness of Fit Index)> .90, RMSEA (Root Average Square Error of Approximation) <.08 (Arbuckle, 2011). The structural model analysis results are as follows.

Sample Correlation of the structural model showed that the correlation of each variable pair was not more than 0.8, indicating the appropriate relationship between the variables (Hair et al, 2010).

Standardised Residual Covariance of the structural model showed that the Standardised Residual Covariance of each latent variable pair was between +2 to -2, indicating a good indicator (Hair et al, 2010). Regression Weights and significant values of the structural model showed that all factors and variables influenced each other based on a significant hypothesis (at the level of 0.05, *** P-value <0.001), except Destination Choices that did not affect the destination Loyalty (P -value = 0.478).

Standardised Regression Weights of the structural model showed Standardised Regression Weights) transmitted between factor-factor and variable-factor that occurred in the structural model.



Chi-square = 2479.240.df = 877, p = .000, ChiSquare/df=2.827, GFI=.791, CFI=.858, RMR=.087, RMSEA=.068

Figure 9: Structural Model

Figure 9 is the 2ndOrder Confirmatory Factor Analysis (2ndOrder CFA) on tourism motivation, destination images, destination choices, satisfaction, and destination loyalty. According to literature collection. there are 12 variables to test a hypothesis. After inputting the data into the software, it was found that there were some variables and some factors that were relevant. In addition, the software provided recommendations to remove or correlate those variables according to Modification Indices. Consequently, as for Affective Image, variables CI11, AI2, AI3 and AI7 were removed. As for gay-friendly facilities, variables DC3, DC9 and DC17 were removed. In Group 2, variable DC6 was removed, and as for Intention to Re-visit, variables IR3 and IR4 were removed. In addition, there were residue (res) and error (e) in certain variable pairs that were still relevant. Therefore, the researchers correlate them according to the software's instructions.

The researchers finally obtained goodness of fit with Chi-square = 492.811, df = 446, p = .062 (> .05), CMIN / DF = 1.105 (<3), GFI = .938 (> .90), RMSEA = .016 (<.08) (Arbuckle, 2011).

According to the hypothesis testing results, satisfaction of tourist destinations significantly affected destination loyalty (Supported H7).

The hypothesis testing results and the structural model can easily explain that destination choices did not affect destination loyalty, motivation or destination images. Moreover, destination choices positively affected satisfaction of tourist destinations, and satisfaction of the tourist destination had a positive effect on destination loyalty. However, destination images and motivation negatively affected destination loyalty. The final structural model is summarized in Figure 4.13.



Figure 10: Final Structural Model

According to Figure 10, the final structural model showed that tourism motivation consisted of 5 elements as follows:

(1) Relaxation including RL2 with the highest weight of 0.9, followed by RL3 with the weight of 0.80, and RL4 with the weight of 0.53.

(2) Novelty seeking including NV4 with the highest weight of 0.95, followed by NV5 with the weight of 0.78, and NV2 with the weight 0.52.

(3) Escape including EC5 with the highest weight of 0.85, followed by EC6 with the weight of 0.84, and EC3 with the weight of 0.71.

(4) Socialization including SC2 with the highest weight of 0.86, followed by SC1 with the weight of 0.69, and RL5 with the weight of 0.52.

(5) Gay Social Life and Sex: Gay culture including GLS1 with the highest weight of 1.00, followed by GLS2 with the weight of 0.78, and GLS3 with the weight of 0.69.

Destination images consisted of 2 elements as follows:

(1) Cognitive Image including CI15 with the highest weight of 0.76, followed by the CI12 with the weight of 0.67, and CI14 with the weight of 0.62.

(2) Affective Image including AI5 with the highest weight of 0.95, followed by AI4 with the weight of 0.90, and AI1 with the weight of 0.88.

Destination Choices consisted of 2 elements as follows:

(1) Gay-friendly facilities including DC20 with the highest weight of 0.73, followed by DC23 with the weight of 0.66 and DC21 with the weight of 0.63.

(2) Gay-friendly activities including DC18 with the highest weight of 0.89, followed by DC2 and DC12 with the weight of 0.71.

Satisfaction consisted of SAT1 with the highest weight of 080, followed by SAT5 with the weight of 0.56, and SAT4 with the weight of 0.45.

According to the analysis, it was found that satisfaction (Supported H7) had a significant effect on Destination Loyalty (P-value <0.01 consisting of 2 elements: Intention to Re-visit including IR5 with the highest weight of 0.86, followed by IR6 with the weight of 0.84, and IR1 with the weight of 0.76. In addition, Word-of-mouth consisted of WM1 with the highest weight of 0.92, followed by WM3 with the weight of 0.88, and WM1 with the weight of 0.84.

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