

# FACTORS INFLUENCING TRAVEL DECISION ON CULTURAL TOURISM OF THAI TOURISTS, TRAVELLING TO SAMUT SONGKHRAM PROVINCE

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## ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to study factors influencing travel decisions on cultural tourism of Thai tourists who travelling to Samut Songkhram province. The sample group used in the research is the tourist population in Samut Songkhram province. The 400 sampling was collected by using a questionnaire (Questionnaire) as a tool in this study. The questionnaires were analyzed by using the Taro Yamane (Taro Yamane) formula and the statistics instrument used to analyze the hypothesis is Chi-Square Test, Independent Sample T- test and One Way-ANOVA by using the software program to process the data.

The research results indicated that most of the sampling was female age between 21-30 years old, with a single status, and a monthly income between 20,001 – 30,000 Baht. Their educational level is Bachelor degree which is accounted for 50.30 percent. Most of the sampling were an employee of the private company, and their purpose of travelling is for relaxing on their holiday. They perceived their news from the internet and decided to purchase a touring package on their travelling because they thought that it is valued for money with the cost between 1,000 – 3,000 Baht. The duration of their travelling is within 1-3 days.

The result of the hypothesis 1; indicated that the occupation, income, has a relationship with the tourism behavior with the statistically significance level of 0.05 and the result of the hypothesis 2; about the tourist attractions, safety, price and place of accommodation affecting the decision to travel in Samut Songkhram province, moreover, has difference effect on the decision making on cultural tourism of Thai tourists travelling to Samut Songkhram province with the statistically significance level of 0.05

**Keywords:** Factors influencing travel decisions, Cultural Tourism, Thai tourists, Samut Songkhram Province

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an industry that plays an important role in the economic development of many countries. Therefore, each country pay attention in strengthening its competitiveness in order to seize the world tourism market share. Especially Asian countries, they have established marketing strategies to attract more and more tourists around the world to travel to their countries. Therefore, they have formulated the national development strategies and integrating tourism as part of economic development. Whereas, if any country has a clear strategic development plan based on a strong economy, good infrastructure, the abundant of natural resources and a potential tourism personnel, then there will be an important factors that will help drive the country to develop tourism growth (Tagenggsak Chaichan, 2013, page 1). [1]

At present, tourism is an industry that plays an important role in the economic development of many countries. Each country pay attention in strengthening its competitiveness in order to seize the market share and to attract more and more tourists from around the world to travel to their own countries. Therefore, the competition in the tourism industry in the world market has focused on culture by using it as a part of the product or service to differentiate itself from competitors. This is consistent with the Creative Economy (Creative Economy) that associated with various cultures and countries. Cultural tourism is considered one of the industries that has brought culture as a selling point to attract the attention of domestic and foreign tourists who are interested in learning the culture, history, architecture and experience the lifestyle of the local people. Especially Asian countries, the importance of cultural tourism can generate revenue for their countries immensely. Therefore, they use culture as part of the country's strategy to attract tourists who want to experience various dimensions of art and culture that are important points for tourism (Krairoek Pinkaew, 2012, p. 32).[2]

Samut Songkhram is one of the central provinces of Thailand. Neighboring provinces are (from the south clockwise) Phetchaburi, Ratchaburi and Samut Sakhon. Local people call Samut Songkhram "Mae Klong". The province is the smallest in area of all Thai provinces.[3]. Samut Songkhram is at the mouth of the Mae Klong River to the Gulf of Thailand. With several canals the water of the river is spread through the province for irrigation. At the coast, there are many lakes for producing sea salt. Samut Songkhram is a leader in Thai salt production, with 4,535 rai worked in 2011 by 111 households to produce salt. [4.] The sandbar, which is called Don Hoi Lot are located at the mouth of the river where it is famous for its endemic shell population. In the Ayutthaya period the area of Samut Songkhram was known as "suan nok" ('outer garden') and was administered by Ratchaburi. During the reign of King Taksin, it was made a province. It was the birthplace of Queen Amarindra of King Rama I. The birthplace of King Rama II in Amphawa District is now a memorial park.

The main attractions of Samut Songkhram province that tourists are a lot interested to travel in, are Amphawa Floating Market. The policy of sustainable tourism development of Thailand, to support the National Strategic Development Plan and the National Tourism No. 2 (2560-2564 BC). [5] Regarding tourism promotion policies for 55 secondary cities, emphasis is placed on promoting community tourism marketing and income distribution to secondary cities. The Tourism Authority of Thailand has created the Amazing Thailand Go Local Project and adjusted the proportion of visitors from major cities to secondary cities, from 70:30 to 65:35, which focuses on determining the target groups which are appropriate to the potential of the target area. Create a local identity and organize activities to stimulate travel in secondary cities. Strengthening the community. Therefore, the country is provided with the importance of domestic tourism management seriously. There are also popular and important tourist destinations such as Rama II National Park, Bang Kung Don Camp, Tha Kha Floating Market, Bang Kapo Temple, Chulamane Temple, Amphawa Floating Market Khlong Khon Mangrove Forest Conservation Center and the Phra Phutthaloetla Naphalai Monument.

Therefore, the researcher realized the importance of the problem and want to study about factors influencing travel decisions on cultural tourism of Thai tourists who travelling to Samut Songkhram province. In order to study as a tourism model that focuses on the promotion of cultural tourism, preserving culture, distributing income to local communities in the future.

## OBJECTIVES

To study factors influencing travel decisions on cultural tourism of Thai tourists who travelling to Samut Songkhram province.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Related research

Karuna Boonmaruean (2014) has studied the factors affecting foreign tourists who travelling in Thailand, and found out that the average income per head of tourists was the most important factor for Chinese tourists. Based on the assumption, the researcher found that the number of tourists will increase by 1,250 people, if the income of tourists increased by 1 USD, the exchange rate has the greatest impact on tourists, especially Korean and Japanese tourists. The number of Korean tourists has increase by 18,485 people, while the number of Japanese tourists has increased by 8,432 people, when the exchange rate increased by 1 won and 1 yen respectively. The travel expenses factor has the most significance to German tourists. When the additional cost of US \$ 1 increased the number of tourists has increased to 7,628 people. In addition, the study of the impact from various events, the researcher found that the Asian economic crisis has a positive impact on the number of tourists with the most advantageous is the exchange rate of Thailand due to the baht depreciation caused an increasing on the number of Japanese tourists in Thailand of 383,663 people, the number of German tourists travelling to Thailand has increased by 275,996 persons and the number of UK tourists travelling to Thailand has increased by 115,579 people. In contrary, the negative effect will happen to most Asian tourists, especially to tourists from Malaysia, Korea, Taiwan and Singapore respectively. The impact of the Persian Gulf War also has a negative impact on the number of Malaysian tourists which has been decreased to 251,086 people.[6]

Yanika Chuentako(2019) has studies tourism activities impressed the community and visitors for nature, culture and traditions of community life and society in different way tourism promotes physical, mental, emotional, social and intellectual development, which is the best way of absorbing experience to achieve natural and cultural learning, local knowledge and the way of life of local people which engage in tourism activities.[7]

Prapaporn Phanomphrai and team (2017) have studied the attitude of foreign tourists towards the hospitality of Chiang Rai people. The objectives are as follows: 1) To study the attitude of foreign tourists towards the hospitality of Chiang Rai people and 2) To study guidelines in order to develop hospitality of Chiang Rai Province in order to meet the needs of foreign tourists by using quantitative research and qualitative method that collects opinions from foreign tourists as questionnaires of 400 sets and by using an in-depth interview with foreign tourists and guide of 60 persons in total. As well as set up the meeting with government agencies, the private sectors and the public to raise their opinions. The research results are as follows: Most foreign tourists are male, aged between 25-34 years, travelling from the United States, with Bachelor's degree, their occupation is a private company employee, single status with an annual income between 10,000-30,000US\$. The purpose of travelling is for leisure. Tourism information derived the most, was from the internet. Foreign tourists have an attitude towards hospitality of Chiang Rai people in terms of friendliness, safety, ease of travel, tour services / guides, information services, infrastructure / utilities, accommodation, facilities in the city, inbound – out bound service and food / restaurant at a good level.

From in-depth interviews with foreign tourists and guides as well as various meeting to brainstorm ideas in order to develop tourist's hospitality service in Chiang Rai towards excellency, the researcher found that the friendliness aspect of service providers, they must have professional ethics, without exploiting fraud, fraud scam. They must have a sense of

treating tourists as their relatives. For the safety aspect, they should add patrols and security personnel in tourist areas, airports, as well as tourist accommodation areas, increase travel convenience, and should prepare roadside maps, travel signs or directions sign in English and other foreign languages. Foreign language communication training for tour services and guides should be provided as well as their knowledge in many tourist attractions that they could be able to explain and suggest tourists to travel properly. For information services aspect, they should promote more on tourism news and providing information service via internet and print media respectively. For the infrastructure and utilities aspect, they should take care of maintenance, improvement of roads, phone booth, public toilets to be ready to use, clean and safe as well. For the accommodation's aspect, staffs, who provide accommodation services should be able to use foreign language to communicate with foreign tourists as well, and not taking advantage by setting the price level to be in line with the service quality. For facilitating the entry-exit of the city aspect, they should focus on fast, convenient and safe service systems. For food and restaurants aspect, they should improve food to be hygienic, arrange the atmosphere and environment to be clean and attractiveness. [8]

## **RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

**HYPOTHESIS 1.** The difference of personal factors such as gender, age, income, occupation and education level of tourists are correlated with tourism behavior.

**HYPOTHESIS 2.** The difference of personal factors such as gender, age, income, occupation and education level of tourists are correlated with travel decisions on cultural tourism of Thai tourists who travelling to Samut Songkhram province differently.

## **RESEARCH SCOPE**

1. Boundary area: Samut Songkhram province.
2. Population: Thai tourists who travelling to Samut Songkhram province
3. Scope Content: To study factors influencing travel decisions on cultural tourism of Thai tourists who travelling to Samut Songkhram province.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS**

### **1. General Information of Respondents:**

The research results indicated that most of the sampling was female age between 21-30 years old, with a single status, and a monthly income between 20,001 – 30,000 Baht. Their educational level is Bachelor degree which is accounted for 50.30 percent. Most of the sampling were an employee of the private company, and their purpose of travelling is for relaxing on holiday

### **2. Thai tourists behavior Information**

The research results indicated that most of the sampling perceived their news from the internet and decided to purchase a touring package on their travelling program because it is valued for money with the cost between 1,000 – 3,000 Baht. The duration of their travelling is within 1-3 days.

**3. Mean and standard deviation Information on factors influencing travel decisions on cultural tourism of Thai tourists who travelling to Samut Songkhram province.**

The research results indicated that the overall level of opinion on factors influencing travel decisions on cultural tourism of Thai tourists who travelling to Samut Songkhram province is at a high level. When considering each aspect, it was found that Tourist attractions

was in a very important level, followed by Safety, price, place of accommodation, transportation, social and political stability respectively.

#### 4. Hypothesis testing

From the hypothesis testing in this research found that:

The result of hypothesis 1, The difference of personal factors such as gender, age, income, occupation and education level of tourists are correlated with tourism behavior. The statistic used in this research was Chi-Square Test. It was found that occupation and income are correlated with tourism behavior with statistical significance at 0.05 level.

The result of hypothesis 2, The difference of personal factors such as gender, age, income, occupation and education level of tourists are correlated with travel decisions on cultural tourism of Thai tourists who travelling to Samut Songkhram province differently. The statistics used are Independent Sample T-test and One Way-ANOVA. It was found that on the tourist attractions aspect, safety, price and place of accommodation, affecting the decisions on cultural tourism of Thai tourists who travelling to Samut Songkhram province differently with statistical significance at 0.05 level.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Recommendation from this research**

The research results on factors influencing travel decisions on cultural tourism of Thai tourists who travelling to Samut Songkhram province indicated that, there should be an increasing communication channels or public relations activities, because at present, most tourists who comes to travel in Thailand get an information by reading or studying a lot online, so there should be more public relations of existing places in Samut Songkhram province. Moreover, publicized many attractions that could promote Samut Songkhram province accordingly.

### **Recommendation for future research**

This research has conducted by using the sampling of the population in Samut Songkhram only, and in order to enable the research results to be used by tourism entrepreneurs, there should be a further comprehensive study conducted in other provinces as to see the difference of the related studies. Therefore, the results of those studies, could be used and be able to apply the research findings to improve the implementation of marketing strategies appropriately in order to meet the needs of consumers respectively.

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