Motivation and Behaviour of Thai Outbound Tourists to Europe

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ABSTRACT

This study uses motivation and behavior theory to understand and explore the characteristics of Thai outbound tourists who are traveling to Europe. It was conducted using 400 questionnaires with Thai tourists who were waiting for flights to travel to Europe at Suvarnabhumi International Airport. The behaviors of the outbound tourists are described using the following four classifications: tourists' travel patterns, tourists' behavior before traveling, behavior during the trip and the important considerations affecting traveling behavior. This paper also offers an integrated approach to understanding Thai outbound tourist's motivation and attempts to extend the empirical knowledge on the outbound tourist's push and pull motivations. These motivations are observed with 15 push factors and 20 pull factors.

The results of the study show that Thais travelling to Europe are divided almost equally between male and female in terms of quantity. The largest group of travelers consists of tourists between 30 and 39 years of age and they are most often government officials. The majority of respondents have traveled abroad 1 to 3 times. 70% of the respondents used travel agents to arrange their trips and 81.5% of respondents planned to stay in Europe for 1 to 3 weeks and 84.7% preferred to stay in 3 to 4-star accommodation. In relation to financial factors, outbound tourists are most concerned about airfares and accommodation. They are most concerned with the high cost associated with traveling and potential language problems. The most influential motivating factor in deciding to travel was reported as the desire to discover new places and learn about new cultures and lifestyles.

Keywords: *Thai outbound tourists, Motivation and Behavior theory, Push and Pull, Suvarnabhumi International Airport*

INTRODUCTION

"Tourism has become one of the most important phenomena of modern life and it has proved remarkably resilient in times of economic recession" (Hawkins and Ritchie, 1991). Tourism in Thailand has played a significant role in the Thai economy by generating revenue in excess of 800 billion Baht per year (TAT, 2006). Recently, domestic tourism has been fueled by the rapidly rising income level of middle class Thais. This rise in disposable income has led them to search for tourism destinations aboard. During the last seven years, the number of outbound tourists has doubled, implying a growth rate of 15% per annum (TDRI, Thailand Development Research Institute, 1997). According to the TAT statistics report of 2002-2005 Thai outbound tourists traveling to Europe have a higher average expenditure rate per person than international tourists traveling to Thailand. The report also shows that the number of Thai outbound tourists to Europe is increasing every year. (TAT, 2002-2005).

The study of the motivation and behavior of Thai outbound tourists is beneficial for tourism because the characteristics of Thai outbound tourists traveling to Europe can then be identified. This study presents an integrated approach to understanding Thai tourists' behavior and motivation in term of "push and pull" motives. The objectives of this research were (1) to identify the characteristic of Thai outbound tourists and (2) to investigate the motivation and behavior of Thai outbound tourists.

The paper is organized as follows: The first section represents the theoretical framework of the study and reviews the existing literature. The second section defines the concept of the study and describes the methodology used. The following section presents the results of the research to answer the objectives of the study of the tourist's motivation and behavior. The final section provides conclusions and recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As scholars have noted, people decide to travel for different reasons and motives, perceived as forces that decrease the state of their tension. This stage gives rise to a need that stimulates an attitude or behavior (Fodness, 1994). All human behaviors are motivated even though the choices to satisfy needs can depend on other psychological variables (Crompton, 1979). Motivation has been referred to as psychological and biological needs and wants, including integral forces that stimulate, direct, and integrate a person's behavior and activity (Dann, 1981). Crompton (1979) discovered psychological or social motives in push motivation which described the wish to travel. On the other hand pull motivation factors also affect the opinion regarding the place to visit

and are related to the attributes of the destination (Lundberg, 1990). Sirakaya and Woodside (2004) showed previous empirical research that exposed two prominent forces; which are pull and push motivations. These two motivations describe how an individual's motivation variables pushed them into making travel decisions, and how they are pulled or attracted by destination attributes. In general, the conclusion is that tourist motivation should be perceived as a multidimensional concept in which different understandings about their constructs are determinants in the tourist decision within "push and pull" motivation (McCabe, 2000).

Another method used to study travel experiences is the grounded theory development. This theory is a holistic approach that encompasses the details, complexities and nuances of experiences during travel and also includes detailed descriptions of behavior processes (Geertz, 1973). Purchase Consumption Systems (PCS) is useful for the grounded theory construction of tourism behavior (Woodside and Dubelaar, 2002). John S. & Susan H. (1999) considered how tourists' behavior might evolve in the future in terms of who will be traveling, what tourists will be buying and how they will buy tourism products. The future of tourists' behavior is influenced by a range of seven factors, they are economic, political, industry marketing, the influence of media, experience, technological and social factors (John S. & Susan H., 1999). Consumer behavior refers to the process of acquiring and organizing information in the direction of a purchase decision and using and evaluating products and services (Luiz Mountinho, 2001). In order to take adequate action in the area of tourism marketing one must understand how people perceive things such as destination areas, travel distance, air travel and travel advertising; how they learn to consume and travel, how they make travel decisions, and how personality affects tourist decisions (Luiz Mountinho, 2001).

METHODOLOGY

Sampling Procedures

The target population in this study is Thai outbound tourists who will be traveling to Europe during the study period. A convenience sample was employed to identify respondents. Once respondents agreed to participate in the survey, the purpose of the survey was explained, and a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to them for completion. Data was collected from 400 Thai outbound tourists who were waiting for flights to Europe at the Suvarnabhumi International Airport.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was undertaken in a series of steps. First, descriptive statistics were used to analyze demographic profiles. Second, independent t-tests were used to determine if differences existed among identified motivation factors and genders. Finally a one-way ANOVA was conducted for each demographic to determine whether the demographic factors influenced motivation.

Tourist behavior was identified in four classifications, tourists' travel patterns, tourists' behavior before traveling, behavior during the trip and the important considerations affecting traveling behavior. The analyses of mean values were based on the interval level (0.8), this level can be arranged in sub-levels as follows: 4.21-5.00 is the most important, 3.41-4.20 is very important, 2.61-3.40 is important, 1.81-2.60 is not very important, and 1.00-1.80 is not important.

RESULTS

Demographic Profiles

The results of the demographic profiles are based on 400 Thai outbound tourists. The findings indicated that 50.7% of respondents were female (203) and 49.3% were male (197). The majority of Thai outbound tourists were between 20-49 years of age and half of them were married. The largest demographic group of tourists were government officials (30.2%) and about 26.0% were business owners and business employees. 47.0% of the respondents held bachelor degrees and 26.5% were Ph.Ds. 45.5% of respondents had an income of 40,001-70,000 Baht per month. Most of the Thai outbound tourists claimed to be from Bangkok (45.3%). The top five destinations were France, Switzerland, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Tourists' Behavior

Tourists' travel patterns
The majority of respondents had travelled abroad 1-3 times (37.2%). 62.7% of the respondents were the first time travelers. 25.5% of the respondents traveled with family followed by 24.8% traveling as members of a business association and 21.8% traveled with friends and relatives. More than a half of the respondents (56.5%) traveling to Europe planned their trips in order to coincide with either a leave from work or school's summer vacation.

Tourists' behavior before travel

The purpose of evaluating these results is to examine the tourists' behavior before travel. 38.8% of respondents spent 1-3 months on travel planning, 36.5% spent 1-3 weeks and few of the respondents spent more than 6 months planning. The majority of Thai tourists decided to use a travel agent to arrange the trip (70%), 14% of respondents arranged the trip by themselves, 12% were assisted by associations such as school or sports associations, and 3.5% arranged the trip with the help of friends who live in Europe. Travel agents were the main source of information followed by the internet (18%), friends and family (15.6%), word of mouth (12.9%), travel guide books (10.1%) and previous trip experiences (9.9%).

Tourists' behavior during the trip

81.5% of respondents stayed in Europe for 1-3 weeks. The main purpose of traveling was relaxation and leisure (46.7%), followed by 26.0% traveling to Europe to see European architecture. 63.2% of Thai tourists would like to spend less than 50,000 Baht during the trip in Europe (excluding airfares). The majority of respondents (81.7%) preferred to stay in 3 to 4-star hotels while traveling in Europe. The top five activities that Thai tourists would like to participate in while traveling in Europe were reported to be visiting architectural sites (30.5%), sight seeing (21.8%), attending conferences and visiting museums and historical sites (17.5%) and purchasing antiques, handcrafts and arts (3.3%).

Important Considerations Affecting Traveling Behavior

- **The influence of tourists' expected expenses**
  The top five most important types of expenditure that tourists were concerned about during their travels were: airfares, accommodation, transportation, food and beverages and entertainment activities.

- **Potential obstacles to Thai tourists traveling to Europe**
  The obstacles that Thai tourists were concerned about when traveling in Europe were: the high price of travel, the language barrier, visa requirements, poor knowledge and image of Europe, and the long distance.

Tourists' Motivation

1.1 Push factors

Table 1: Ranking of Push Factors

Attributions of Push Factors	Rank	Mean	Std. Deviation
Discovering a new place	1	4.02	.87
Discovering different cultures & lifestyles	2	3.90	.87
Enriching oneself intellectually	3	3.81	.93
Increasing knowledge	4	3.71	.96
Desire to try something new	5	3.68	1.04
Relaxing physically	6	3.62	.96
Relieving stress	7	3.58	.93
Finding excitement	8	3.55	.93
Escaping from routine	9	3.35	1.04
To have fun	10	3.26	1.12
Have an adventure	11	2.96	1.13
Developing new friendships	12	2.89	2.56
Going to a place my friends have not been	13	2.88	1.40
Finding interesting people	14	2.84	1.10
Talking with my friends about this trip	15	2.51	1.14

Table 1 shows the mean value of the importance and the ranking of push factors that affect tourists' motivations. The top five (of 15) important push factors were to discover a new place, discover different cultures & lifestyles, enriching oneself intellectually, increasing knowledge and the desire to try something new.

1.2 Pull factors

Table 2: Ranking of Pull Factors

Attribution of Pull Factors	Rank	Mean	Std. Deviation
Landscape	1	4.42	.67
Architectural attractions	2	4.39	.72
Cultural attractions	3	4.38	.77
Natural environment	4	4.37	.73
Romantic atmosphere	5	4.18	.90
Relaxing atmosphere	6	3.92	.81
Security	7	3.89	.81
Ethnic diversity	8	3.83	.81

Continued

Table 2 *(Continue)*

Nice weather	9	3.79	.81
Standard of living	10	3.77	.82
Accessibility	11	3.76	.81
Public transportation	12	3.65	.98
Hospitality	13	3.59	.83
Dining	14	3.58	.85
Lodging	15	3.52	.93
Night life activities	16	3.44	1.15
Distance	17	3.36	.94
Shopping facilities	18	3.35	1.07
Social environment	19	3.34	1.03
Sports equipment	20	2.63	1.11

Table 2 presents the top motivational pull factors. The top five (of 20) important pull factors are landscape, architectural attractions, cultural attractions, natural environment, and romantic atmosphere.

Considering Push and Pull Factors

The independent sample t-test analysis describes the differences existing among identified motivational factors and gender. Table 3 shows that only one push factor is significant in this area, the desire to try something new. Most

Table 3: Independent t-test analysis between the top five Push and Pull Factors and Gender

No.	Attributions	Mean		Sig. (2-tailed P-value)
		Male	Female	
	Push Factors			
1	Discovering a new place	4.04	4.00	.603
2	Discover different cultures and lifestyles	3.94	3.85	.323
3	Enriching oneself intellectually	3.77	3.84	.481
4	Increasing knowledge	3.74	3.68	.593
5	Desire to try something new	3.82	3.54	.007*
	Pull Factors			
1	Landscape	4.47	4.43	.148
2	Architectural attractions	4.45	4.34	.147
3	Cultural attractions	4.42	4.33	.268
4	Natural environment	4.42	4.32	.142
5	Romantic atmosphere	4.24	4.12	.168

Note: 1. Independence t-tests were performed to identify the motivation's importance and significant differences between groups.

2. * indicates importance significant difference between groups at p value ≤ 0.05

factors were not significantly different between males and females. There is no significant difference between males and females in the motivation of pull factors.

The results of one-way ANOVA analysis, shown in Table 4, depict the importance of differences between push and pull factors of different demographic groups.

- When evaluating motivations in respect to age of respondents the results of analysis reveal that all of the top five push factors are significant as motivations for travel except the push factor discover new places. Only two pull factors were significant in respect to age and they are architectural attractions and cultural attractions.

- In respect to occupation, every push factor is statistically significant while every pull factor is not statistically significant.

- Discovering different cultures and lifestyles, enriching oneself intellectually, increasing knowledge, and the desire to try something new are all push factors that are statistically significant in relation to income of the respondents. Income was not significantly related to discovering a new place or the pull factors of landscape, architectural attractions, or cultural attractions.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA analysis between the top five Push and Pull Factors, Demographic data and number of times visiting Europe

No.	Motivation factors / Demographic data	Sig. (P-value)				
		Age	Occupation	Income	Education	No. of time
	Push Factors					
1	Discovering a new place	.657	.001*	.300	.034*	.570
2	Discovering different cultures & lifestyles	.004*	.002*	.040*	.039*	.003*
3	Enriching oneself intellectually	.006*	.000*	.012*	.001*	.001*
4	Increasing knowledge	.024*	.000*	.005*	.007*	.000*
5	Desire to try something new	.000*	.001*	.003*	.328	.000*
	Pull Factors					
1	Landscape	.863	.120	.053	.095	.020*
2	Architectural attractions	.014*	.378	.065	.023*	.052
3	Cultural attractions	.009*	.419	.453	.001*	.008*
4	Natural environment	.873	.121	.000*	.330	.819
5	Romantic atmosphere	.237	.562	.003*	.563	.089

Note: 1. One-way ANOVA analysis were performed to identify motivation's importance and significant differences between groups

2. * indicates important significant difference between groups at p value ≤ 0.05

- The significance of education as motivation factor for traveling shows similarities to age and income as a motivation. Education also shows only one non-significant push factor, desire to try something new, and two significant pull factors, architectural attractions and cultural attractions.

- The analysis between the top five push and pull factors and the number of times Europe was visited shows only one push factor was not significant; it was to discover a new place. Only two pull factors were significant; landscape and cultural attractions in Europe.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study contributes to an understanding of the reasons tourists behave the way they do. Tourists' motivations were combined in order to understand why people could be pushed to travel to Europe and what pull motivations European countries exert on Thai tourists to travel there.

The major findings of this study have significant managerial implications for destination marketing. First, the results show that Thai tourists are very aware of and influenced by the desire to experience European landscapes. In order to increase efficiency in marketing European destinations for Thai tourists, marketing teams should focus on the beauty of the landscape. The second analysis reveals that Thai tourists demand experiences related to exploring new things such as a desire to travel to Europe because they want to discover new places, discover different cultures and lifestyles, to enrich themselves intellectually, increase their knowledge and desire to try something new. The results show the relationship between push and pull motivations. This knowledge can be used to create marketing strategies to support both supply and demand in order to enhance the destination's competitiveness.

The one-way ANOVA analysis reveals the difference between push and pulls motives in the different tourist's groups. The analysis shows that many factors that are significantly related such as the push factor of 'desire to try something new' are different between genders. As well as pull motivation factors, the findings can explain the motives in each group; gender, age, occupation, income or education. These results can help in creating travel options for niche groups or improve tourism products for tourists as well. An effective marketing team can use this information to design travel packages for Thai tourists that will best meet their needs and will ultimately provide the highest level of satisfaction possible. By capitalizing on this, tour companies will better serve their clients and thus increase profit while at the same time the clients will have more value in their experiences and have higher levels of satisfaction.

In evaluating the behavior of Thai tourists analyzed by frequency of exhibited behavior, the results are separated into four parts; tourists' travel

patterns, tourists' behavior before traveling, behavior during traveling and the important considerations affecting traveling behavior. The result shows most respondents were first time travelers. Because most of the travelers are not very experienced, travel agencies should focus on providing accurate and helpful information that will help reduce the anxiety experienced by novice travelers. 70% are traveling with travel agents. The results show that tourists spend 1 to 3 months planning the trips. 27.5% of travelers received traveling information from travel agents and from internet sources (18.0%). Results show during the trip 46.7% of Thai tourists traveled to Europe for relaxation and leisure. Popular activities include visiting architectural sites and sight seeing. This study helps fill the gap in knowledge about the demands of tourists which can than lead to improvements or value adding for traveling programs. Finally, concerning traveling behavior, the findings help identify tourists' problems and some factors that influence their decisions to travel to Europe. These results should benefit both suppliers and tourists who would like to travel to European countries and help them to avoid the risk of dissatisfaction in their travels.

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