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Potential Development Strategies on Marine and Beach Tourism



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Sankrusme, Sinee: Potential Development Strategies on Marine and Beach Tourism, Hamburg, Anchor Academic Publishing 2017

PDF-eBook-ISBN: 978-3-96067-653-9

Druck/Herstellung: Anchor Academic Publishing, Hamburg, 2017

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek:

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographical Information of the German National Library:

The German National Library lists this publication in the German National Bibliography. Detailed bibliographic data can be found at: <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

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Hermannstal 119k, 22119 Hamburg
<http://www.diplomica-verlag.de>, Hamburg 2017
Printed in Germany

PREFACE

As early as 1950's, coastal areas were being chosen as one holiday destination for many. Beach and marine tourism have raised its popularity and become a desirable experience for any tourists around the world. Until today, many tourists still seek for experience and pleasure with the sea water, sand, and the sun. One of the undeniable facts about coastal areas the beauty it beholds and the refreshing and awesome feeling its natural resources provide. Research and study from previous years show that tourism related to coastal areas continues to grow. Coastal tourism is important in the economic area, although there were no enough research and study to support the direct contribution of coastal tourism to the totality of the economy nor to the tourism division.

Thailand, having an exquisite, unique and rich seas and coastal areas, made it to be one of the world's known tourist destinations. One could be able to enjoy its marine and beach tourism. It has an exceptional combination of pleasure and enjoyment in both land and in the sea. This includes rich terrestrial and marine biodiversity, varied cultural and unique historical heritage, clean water and beaches, attractive environment, delectable cuisine, and suitable structure. Other activities to enjoy are ports and marinas viewing, snorkeling, fishing, diving activities, and other water sports. A tourist could also have the pleasure of staying in a hotel and resorts which they could consider as their second home. One of the known and famous tourist destinations in Thailand is Phuket. Travellers would definitely agree that whenever seas and sand is being considered to visit in Thailand, Phuket is one of the top answers. Phuket offers innumerable attractions and exciting entertainment, whether be on land or in the sea. The major beaches in Phuket, namely, Patong Beach, Kata Beach, Karon Beach, Nai Han Beach, Mai Khao Beach, Nai Yang Beach, opens numerous water entertainments such as diving, snorkeling, surfing, sailing, and swimming. Phuket also offers land and forest adventures that most of the tourists would like to experience. Apart from these activities, it can't be denied that the long history has shaped Phuket to be attractive considering its diverse ethnic groups, culture, Sino-Portuguese architectural influence, and its distinctive fine cuisine. Added to this, visitors from different parts of the world, with diverse culture and tradition, does not feel unwelcome because of Thai's well impressed hospitality. In Phuket, there will not be any dull moment for travellers because there is always an activity available on and off the island, whether it's raining or shining.

Phuket, as the main site of this study, is considered to be one of the world class marine and beach destination, both for local and foreign tourists. Phuket is Thailand's largest island and considered most famous among visitors who long for relaxation and adventure. Phuket offers the best marine and sea pleasures such as blue sparkling waters, fine sandy beach, diving. In line with Adventures and unique experience, there are rocky coastlines, large lime stone cliffs facing the ocean, forest adventures, island hills with tropical plant life, and other nature adventures. And there are still numerous attractions available for foreign visitors. Aside from the major beaches mentioned earlier, there are also several beaches in Phuket that travellers can consider to visit. These are Rawai Beach, Laem Phrom Thep, Khao Rung, Kamala Beach, Nai Ton Beach, Surin Beach, Emerald Beach, and Freedom Beach.

This study will further support the previous study and research regarding marine and beach tourism as the most utilized selling point of tourism in Thailand. This study will use trip evaluation in order to measure the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of travellers. It can be observed that every year, Thailand is able to support large numbers of tourists both foreign and Thai. This has greatly helped in boosting the income of Thailand in the area of tourism. Thailand has diverse attractions that made tourist to consider it to be among their top destinations. It includes beautiful islands, exquisite beach, challenging diving sites, entertainment and unique historical places. The richness, uniqueness, and attractiveness of the Thai sea and shores made Thailand as one of the tourist attraction and destination for marine and beach activities.

The main purpose of this study is to come up with an analysis and an influence relationship between satisfaction and identified measurement variables. These variables are product, attributes, management, tourist expenditures, and demographic of marine and beach tourism. Particularly, getting an evaluation from respondents in Phuket on how they are satisfied with what Phuket has to offer. These respondents will give their evaluation based on product, attributes, management, satisfaction, tourist expenditures. Structural equation model (SEM) was applied to test the causal relationships between satisfaction and product, attributes, management, tourist expenditures and demographic. One hundred (100) tourists who had visited the marine and beach destinations in Phuket were given a survey containing Likert scale questions. The method of research used is mixed method where both qualitative and quantitative approach was used. The emphasis of this study will be on the development and improvement of Thailand' eco-tourism, marine, and beach tourism. The following

variables were considered during the study: (1) Products, (2) Attributes, (3) Management, (4) Satisfaction, (5) Tourist expenditures, and (6) Tourist demographic. Moreover, this study will also discover strategies in order to implement the development and improvement needed. These strategies will also help to boost up the number of tourists coming to Thailand. Since the competition in the tourism field is stiff and aggressive, this study will make sure that the appropriate strategies will be embraced in order to attract tourist to choose Thailand as their number one destination. Not only to choose Thailand as their destination, but particularly to travel by sea or by the marine route. Research experts, Swanson & Horridge (2004) and Song *et al.* (2011), developed a multiphase model of travel. This model indicates that several properties of the overall tourism system produce customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The multiphase model was eventually modified by Sankrusme (2017). This study covers the proposal that travellers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction is directly or indirectly influenced by the following: product, attributes, management, tourist expenditures and demographic.

As an overall evaluation, the results show that the foremost age group of respondents gaining 55% were within the range of 36-55 years old. Most of the respondents are 59% male, while in the level of education 39% had university education. As for the annual income, tourists with the largest group with 33% has an annual income range of \$50,000 to us \$69,999. The occupation of respondents with the highest percentage of 45% was employee/authority. The length of intent to stay was 6 to 10 days with 42%, the amount of money spent during the trip was within US\$1,000-1,999 gaining 47%. The general view of the tourists considering the product, attributes, management, satisfaction, and tourist expenditures was evaluated as satisfied.

Consequently, Model Modification was also performed by the researcher by taking into account the suggested modifying parameters using the Model Modification Indices (MI). At the same time, the parameters were also continuously modified until Goodness of Fit Index was coherent with the empirical data. This process was performed in order to acquire the relative error. There were 6 Goodness of Fit indices that were found to be consistent with the empirical data and have passed the acceptance criteria. These 6 indices include $\chi^2 / df = 0.91$, CFI = 1.00, GFI = 0.95, AGFI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.000, and SRMR = 0.048. It can be seen that the linear equation model was suitable and consistent with the empirical data.

Considering the prediction coefficient (R^2) of Tourist Satisfaction (SAT), it was acquired to be at 0.85 or it can be defined as, the level in which the variance of Tourist

Satisfaction can be explained by using the variables in the model was at 85%. While the other variables considered like, Product (PRO) had a prediction coefficient (R^2) of 0.82 or it can be defined as, the level in which the variance of Product can be explained by using the variables in the model was at 82%. Attributes (ATT) had a prediction coefficient (R^2) of 0.69 or it can be defined as, the level in which the variance of Attributes can be explained by using the variables in the model was at 69%. Management (MAN) had a prediction coefficient (R^2) of 0.69 or it can be defined as, the level in which the variance of Management can be explained by using the variables in the model was at 69%.

While looking into the direct and indirect influences that affect the initially mentioned variables, the following details were concluded:

(1) The direct effect of Tourist Satisfaction (SAT) on Product (PRO) was at 0.91 and a statistical significance at 0.01. Therefore, Tourist Satisfaction (SAT) had direct influence on Product (PRO).

(2) The direct effect of Tourist Satisfaction (SAT) on Attributes (ATT) was at 0.83 and a statistical significance at 0.01. Therefore, Tourist Satisfaction (SAT) had positively direct influence on Attributes (ATT).

(3) The direct effect of Tourist Satisfaction (SAT) on Management (MAN) was at 0.83 and a statistical significance at 0.01. Therefore, Tourist Satisfaction (SAT) had positively direct influence on Management (MAN).

(4) The direct effect of Tourist Expenditure (EXP) on Tourist Satisfaction (SAT) was at 0.92 and a statistical significance at 0.01. Therefore, Tourist Expenditure (EXP) had positively direct influence on Tourist Satisfaction (SAT).

(5) The direct effect of Tourist Demographic (DEM) on Tourist Satisfaction (SAT) was at 0.07 and no statistical significance. Therefore, Tourist Demographic (DEM) had not influence on Tourist Satisfaction (SAT).

(6) The indirect effect of Tourist Expenditure (EXP) on Product (PRO) was at 0.84, on Attributes (ATT) was at 0.77, on Management (MAN) was at 0.77 and a statistical significance at 0.01. Therefore, Tourist Expenditure (EXP) had positively indirect influence on Product (PRO), Attributes (ATT), and Management (MAN) through Tourist Satisfaction (SAT).

(7) The indirect effect of Demographic (DEM) on Product (PRO) was at 0.07, on Attributes (ATT) was at 0.06, on Management (MAN) was at 0.06 and no statistical

significance. Therefore, Demographic (DEM) had positively indirect influence on Product (PRO), Attributes (ATT), and Management (MAN) through Tourist Satisfaction (SAT).

From the details mentioned, it can be observed that tourist satisfaction has a positive influence on product, attributes, management, and tourist expenditures. One variable, tourist demographics, was found to be of no influence on satisfaction. The results of the hypothesis testing can be seen below:

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Tourist expenditures have a positive influence on satisfaction | Supported |
| 2. Tourist demographic have a positive influence on satisfaction | Not Supported |
| 3. Tourist satisfaction have a positive influence on product | Supported |
| 4. Tourist satisfaction have a positive influence on attributes | Supported |
| 5. Tourist satisfaction have a positive influence on management | Supported |

The outcome of this study will be used in planning and development of the marine and beach tourism. Also, the outcome will be used in constructing a competitive strategy in order for the plans to be realized. This will not only benefit the tourist themselves, but to help the destinations marketers to better understand the elements and components that can contribute to make the tourist satisfaction to be at an acceptable level. The marketers can also improve on how to provide the suitable products, attributes, and management that will directly cater to the needs and wants of a traveller. With this, it is then proposed that destination suppliers and managers need to consider the inferences of these variables, which may lead to increase the overall satisfaction of tourists. Moreover, the conclusions from SEM can also serve as a guide for a successful sea and marine tourism. Given the facts and details of this study, destination managers should concentrate on acquiring a high satisfaction level in order to establish an affirmative post-purchase visitor behavior and to heighten the strategy of competitiveness. The propositions provided in the satisfaction model can be used in the policy-making process basing on the reasons of interest, principles or consideration.

The results of this study can provide propositions that can help marketers and managers of marine and beach tourism. These propositions are as follows: (1) Manager and marketers can be able to directly offer tourist satisfaction in line with product, attributes, tourists' expenditures, and management. (2) Improvement on the attributes of the destination services can be done and implemented by tourism suppliers. (3) Managers and marketers can

formulate better strategies and planning on how to improve and develop better marine and beach tourism. (4) In line with marketing strategies, marketers and managers can competently use these results with strategy provide better positioning and promotional strategy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude, first of all, to the Tourism Authority of Thailand which provided me with information on tourist statistics and related data. My horizon was widened and my understanding was deepened while working with them. Thank you also to the private and government sectors who had provided me with secondary data from textbook, journal, articles, etc. Their guidance and practical advice have helped me to accomplish the great task in this study. I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to Associate Professor Dr. Montree Piriyakul for his patience and valuable guidance, inspiration and encouragement, and for the constructive comments he gave to this study. Finally, I would like to thank those tourists who participated in completing the questionnaire. To all who have contributed in making this study and research possible, thank you very much. I could not make it at this point without your profound help and support.

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INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS JOURNAL

1. An Analysis of Business Leaders in Thailand. *The Business Review: Cambridge*, Vol. 8, No 1, Summer 2007, pp. 114-120.
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