Factors Influencing Tourist Decision to visit the Burmese Temples in Lampang Province

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Abstract
The main aim of this research was to investigate the tourist decision to travel to Burmese temples in Lampang province. The scope of this study was based on Thai and foreign tourists who traveled in Burmese temples in Lampang. The study was considered to be both qualitative and quantitative research. The qualitative interview method was conducted by the Director of Lampang Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports. The quantitative research was initiated by structured questionnaire to collect data from 400 respondents. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the results of this research.

The findings from the descriptive analysis showed that the majority of the respondents were female and married. They are aged between 45-54, holding a master’s degree, working for government organizations, and having an average monthly income of 20,001 – 30,000 Baht. For the situational factors, several task definition factors were taken into account in the study and the destination being suitable for family vacations was the most significant task definition factor influencing tourists’ decision to travel to Burmese temples. Considering the marketing mix factors, product factor had the highest degree of influencing on their trips to Burmese temples. Ultimately, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports’ strategy to improve marketing and public relations on the role of local administration, national and international levels had the most influence in tourists’ decision to visit Burmese temples. Moreover, selling point of Burmese temples in Lampang province are cultural heritage sites. With promotional campaign and introduction of existing domestic attractions, more tourists may possibly travel to Burmese temples in the future.

Keywords: Tourist decision, Lampang, Cultural tourism destination

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Introduction

Tourism industry contributes a great deal to Thai economy. In order to prepare Thailand for the Asean Economic Community in 2015, the government stated in the Eleventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (2012-2016) that the self-sufficient economy philosophy will be used as a knowledge base and guidelines to develop Thai tourism industry. In addition, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports viewed that public participation in sustainable development was of major importance and a key objective to promote sustainable tourism.

The movement towards cultural tourism prompted the researcher to critically look at the potential of the researcher’s hometown, Lampang, as the new destination for the development of sustainable cultural tourism. At the moment, Lampang is best known for the only city in Thailand that still uses horse carriage as a mean of transportation and is the ceramic city. In order to highlight the significance of cultural tourism, the objective of this paper is to raise the awareness of cultural tourism through the promotion of the collection of Burmese temples as the new tourist destination in Lampang.

Historically, Lampang was once a centre of teak industry and trade. At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, a large British-owned timber company brought in Burmese supervisors to train Burmese and Thai loggers in the area. These supervisors, along with Burmese teak merchants who did their trade in Lampang, had built their residence and sponsored the construction of more than a dozen impressive temples in the city as an act of making merit. Their legacy still lives on in several of Lampang’s best-maintained temples. Although these temples are historically important, they are not well known among the mainstream tourists and are in need of planning and management if they are going to be recognized as cultural and historical sites.

Research Question

How do they promote cultural tourism of the Burmese temple in Lampang province?

Objectives of the Research

1. To analyze the characteristics of the tourists who visit Burmese temples and examine their perception and attitudes toward the cultural attractions in Burmese temples
2. To determine the potential of developing cultural tourism in Burmese temples
3. To suggest appropriate strategies for the development of cultural tourism in Burmese temples
The Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the work concentrates on the factors affecting tourists’ decision to visit Burmese temples in Lampang province by analyzing the relationship among tourists’ characteristics, situational factors, marketing mix and Lampang Provincial Office of Tourism and Sport strategy.

In the factors associated with increased tourism demand following standard theory, the demand for any good or service can be expected to be influenced by a myriad of price and non-price factors. That is using the situational factors as “Physical surroundings”, “Social surroundings”, “Temporal perspective”, “Task definition” and “Antecedent states”.

Marketing Mix and Tourist Behavior reflect the nature of their target markets. Kotler (2003) said, once they have obtained their research data on consumer behavior, tourism organizations have manipulated their marketing mix or 4’P’s’, which include:

- Product: tangible aspects, service element, branding
- Price: discounting, value-for-money
- Place: the role of intermediaries, direct sales
- Promotion: advertising, brochures, sales promotions

An Interview with the Director of Lampang Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports said that the main strategy of cultural tourism in Lampang province lies in different cultural sites. The Lampang Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports also focused on travelling during the holidays. The director suggested four strategies for the cultural tourism.

Strategy 1: Restore and develop infrastructure to support tourism
Strategy 2: Raise and maintain the standard for creative tourism management on a sustainable basis
Strategy 3: Improve the capability of personnel and public services in order to attract and be able to efficiently serve the AEC market
Strategy 4: Improve marketing and public relations in the role of local administration, national and international levels

In order to accomplish the objectives of the study, a model was designed. The factors offering decision to visit Burmese temples of the study were selected through the related tourism literature review. In the review of the tourism literature, the factors selected were all important ones affecting the tourist market and tourism product.
### Independent Variables

#### Tourists’ characteristic
- Age
- Gender
- Marital status
- Education
- Occupation
- Average income per year

#### Factors of situational
- Physical surroundings
- Social surroundings
- Temporal perspective
- Task definition
- Antecedent state

### Dependent Variables

#### Decisions to go to Burmese temples in Lampang province
- Revisit Burmese temples
- Worth of money paid for traveling
- Overnight stay in Lampang Province

### Marketing mix
- Price
- Place
- Product
- Promotion

### Ministry of Tourism and Sports strategy
- Restore and develop infrastructure to support tourism
- Raise and maintain the standard for creative tourism management on a sustainable basis
- Improve the capability of personnel and public services in order to attract and be able to efficiently service the AEC market
- Improve marketing and public relations in the role of local administration, national and international levels
Research Methodology

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. In terms of qualitative method, an interview with the director of the Lampang Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports was carried out to gain insight into Lampang’s cultural tourism and marketing strategy. The survey was used to gain quantitative data. The questionnaire was used to examine the potential of developing cultural tourism in Lampang province, in factors of a cultural tourist attraction in nine Burmese temples purposive sampling. The questionnaires were handed to 300 Thai respondents and 100 foreigners travelling in nine Burmese temples in Lampang province from October to November 2013. To ask respondents to fill up the questionnaire, the purpose of the research was explained before hand and secondary data was collected after finishing the verification of the validity of each questionnaire after data collection for each field trip. The data were lastly encoded for analysis.

Result and Discussion

The Relationships between Demographic Characteristics and Tourists’ Decision to travel to Burmese temples

One objective of the research was to analyze characteristics of the tourists who visited cultural sites and examine their perception and attitudes toward the cultural attractions in Lampang together with the demographic factors that influence their demand for travel to Burmese temples was consistent with the possibility of revisiting and staying overnight. The results from descriptive analysis revealed that tourists with different demographic profiles, namely gender, occupation, education background, income level, and marital status were not different in their decisions to visit Burmese temples in terms of revisiting and staying overnight in Lampang province except the age factor that appeared to have a relationship with the decision.

The results revealed that the tourists of different ages have significantly different decision making criteria regarding revisiting and staying overnight in Lampang province while other demographic factors did not present any significant differences in decision making regarding revisiting and staying overnight in Lampang province. The results from this study, therefore, were incongruent with previous studies done by Chandler & Costello (2002) and Chang (2006) who found visitors at all destinations were extremely homogenous with regard to their demographics, lifestyle, and activity level preferences. A portion of these demographic similarities may be a result of the homogenous characteristics that are shared by the destinations themselves. It is possible that the tourists’ reasons could be for the purpose of visiting Burmese temples that were possible to be varied from leisure and recreation to visiting friends and relatives, and business. In contrast, the study of Weaver & Oppermann (2000); Kotler (2003); Alegre & Pou (2005), argued that tourists’ socio-demographic segmentation could readily be associated with specific types of tourist’s behavior including wants, preferences, and usage rates thus, the tourist’s demographic profiles should have a direct influence on their length of stay.
Research findings illustrated that age profiles of tourists affect the perceived image of tourist destinations. With respect to age difference, older tourists tend to travel for reasons that based on cultural exploration and relaxation, whereas younger tourists were more likely to travel to engage in sports. This finding was not surprising given that one would expect older tourists who prefer actions that do not involve physical effort, more than younger tourists. This could be due to the fact that age was closer to the market and could anticipate any product adaptations or developments necessary. Equally, it was evident that the better the relationship between age and tourism in Burmese temples, the greater the possibility of revising and staying overnight in Lamphang province.

The Relationships between Situational Factors and Behavior of Tourists Traveling in Burmese temples

The objective of the research was to study, which ones of the situational factors influence the tourism decision of tourists with regard to traveling to Burmese temples consistent with the possibility of revisiting and staying overnight in Lamphang province. The results found that there was the relationship between situational factors and tourists decision; tourism decision to visit Burmese temples due to revisit and as regards their overnight stay in Lamphang province. Although the situational elements were variable, it was statistically significantly different from the mean.

The results of this study suggested that tourists did not solely make their tourism decisions on single situational factor. According to the findings of this research, task definition factor is the most notable element at agree the level of the situational factors. Specially, the destination being suitable for a social gathering, family vacations, relaxation and an escape from the routine life was the most acceptable sub-element on tourists’ decisions to travel to Burmese temples, followed by antecedent states factors, physical factor and temporal perspective factors respectively.

The findings revealed that tourist’s opinions toward task definition factor of Burmese temple had relationship with their willingness to revisit the temple, the duration of their overnight stay in Lampang province and travel worthiness. The results of this study were contrast from previous research by Marshall (1993) which concluded that task definition was goal of visitors forms to resolve needs deriving from a specific situation. From Belk’s (1975) point of view, task definition was defined as “the causes that occasion the need for consumers to buy or consume a product or service” (p. 159). People travel to different types of destinations due to different purposes. Task definition impacted visitors choosing a destination. Therefore, visitors may seek specific messages or information which depends on the task definition they are experiencing. Likewise, when visitors choose destinations, it depends on their different purposes, for example, they travel for personal reasons or travel for business.
The Relationships between Marketing Mix Factors and Behavior of Tourists Traveling in Burmese temples

The research aimed to find whether marketing mix factors on tourists’ decisions regarding revisiting or staying overnight in Lampang province. The result showed that there was no relationship between marketing mix factors and tourists’ decisions regarding revisiting or staying overnight in Lampang province. Although the marketing mix elements were variable, it was statistically significantly different from the mean (X).

The results of this study suggested that tourists did not solely make their tourism decisions on single marketing mix element. According to the findings of this research, product is the most element at agree level of the marketing mix. Specifically, cultural heritage sites, environment, attractions, and safety were the most acceptable sub-elements. Place, promotion, and price were concentrated on respectively.

The findings revealed that tourist’s opinions toward products of Burmese temple had relationship with their willingness to revisit the temple, length of their stay and travel worthiness. The results came from previous research by Supajittra (2000) which concluded that the cultural differences between Thailand and other countries could attract visitors who were traveling to learn and experience particular features of an area, such as cultural themes including handicrafts, attractions, architecture, history and traditional lifestyles. This could be explained by focusing on the products of Burmese temples such as cultural heritage sites, its attractions and environment, events and festivals, activities, accommodations, and souvenir shops that might attract tourists to visit Burmese temples, especially during events and festivals of Burmese temples which tourists highly appreciate. However, it can influence tourists to revisit and stay overnight in Lampang province. In addition, research found that the product factors were more feasible when dealing with festivals and events that have most influence on the tourists. However, such festivals and events were created once or twice a year only which mean that the tourists could participate in the festivals in Burmese temples once or twice a year only. Therefore, the related parties such as the Tourism Authority of Thailand or provincial authority should create more festivals or activities more frequently and in different angles, which further result would be in the continuing tourism business.

The Relationships between the Ministry of Tourism and Sports Strategy and Behavior of Tourists Traveling in Burmese temples

The objective of the research was to study which one of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports’ strategies influences the tourism decision of tourists with regard to traveling to Burmese temples consistent with the possibility of revisiting and staying overnight in Lampang province. The results found that there was the relationship between strategies of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports and tourists’ tourism decisions to visit Burmese temples due to revisit and as regards their overnight stay in Lampang province. Although the
elements of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports’ strategy were variable, it was statistically
different from the mean.

The results of this survey suggested that tourists did not only make their tourism
decisions on a single component of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports’ strategy. According
to the findings of this research, improving marketing and public relations in the role of local
administration, national and international levels are the most element at agree the level of
the strategy of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports. Particularly, the strategy of supporting
tourism personnel in having a competency assessment in standard of Thai labor in tourism
(ASEAN Tourism Monitoring Committee) was the most acceptable sub-component in
improving the capability of personnel and public services in order to attract tourist and be
able to efficiently serve the AEC market, raise and maintain the standard for creative
tourism management on a sustainable basis, and restore and develop infrastructure to
support tourism were concentrated on respectively.

The findings revealed that tourist’s opinions toward improving marketing and
public relations in the role of local administration, national and international levels of
Burmese temple had relationship with their willingness to revisit the temple, length of their
stay and travel worthiness. The results from this study were contrast from previous
research by Marinko, J. (2010) which concluded that international public relations and
consumer relations are very important because of the orientation of Croatian tourism
toward foreign markets. This requires appearances at fairs, providing information and
making presentations, designing and publishing brochures and other types of tourist
information, creating websites or newsletters and organising study tours for agents.
This could explain that improving marketing and public relations in the role of local
administration, national and international levels is one of the most direct ways to address a
wider public in tourist generating countries. In addition to generally presenting Lampang
tourism, the dissemination of information and presentations create an opportunity for
business meetings, press conferences, workshops, and special-interest organisations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The respondents suggested that in order to promote Burmese temples to be well
known, the information should be distributed through general mass media during festivals
or events via local news on television. In order to attract more tourists to Burmese
temples, there should be the reviews of the province’s tourist attractions, destination
development and promotion. Burmese temples are able to become successful beautiful
tourist destinations of Thailand. Hotels and restaurants are the supporting elements in the
tourism industry that should be continually developed. Moreover, selling point of Burmese
temple are cultural heritage sites, with promotional campaign and introduction of existing
domestic attractions, more tourists possibly travel to Burmese temples in the future.

The existing promotion plan for tourism industry should be revised whether the
plan achieves the tourists’ attractions. Burmese temples should be promoted as unique
locations to gain competitive advantages. In addition, the existing attractions of Burmese temples could be regarded as different perception, especially from diverse perspectives. Therefore, the existing attractions should be continually promoted - which not only limited to promote cultural heritage sites but including natural, historical, traditional and social life to fulfill significant tourism needs and also in different ways such as developing a cultural center.

This would suggest that in order to encourage tourists to stay longer, Burmese temple tourism-related parties need to develop tourism activities that can be combined with cultural activities such as sightseeing for activities during festivals and local events, seeing the way of local social life, different species of plants, garden and wildlife that cater to various personal tourism needs. Consequently, new activities combined with historical and architectural sites could encourage repeat visits. When the tourists satisfy with the trip in Burmese temples, it would link to their perceptions of worth visiting.

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References


