

Antecedents and Loyalty of Foreign Tourists towards Attractions in Bangkok Metropolitan Area, Thailand

Arunroong Wongkungwan

Abstract—This study aimed to investigate the influence of selected antecedents, which were tourists' satisfaction towards attractions in Bangkok, perceived value of the attractions, feelings of engagement with the attractions, acquaintance with the attractions, push factors, pull factors and motivation to seek novelty, on foreign tourist's loyalty towards tourist attractions in Bangkok. By using multi stage sampling technique, 400 international tourists were sampled. After that, Semi Structural Equation Model was utilized in the analysis stage by LISREL. The Semi Structural Equation Model of the selected antecedents of tourist's loyalty attractions had a correlation with the empirical data through the following statistical descriptions: Chi- square = 3.43, df = 4, P- value = 0.48893; RMSEA = 0.000; CFI = 1.00; CN = 1539.75; RMR = 0.0022; GFI = 1.00 and AGFI = 0.98. The findings indicated that all antecedents were able together to predict the loyalty of the foreign tourists who visited Bangkok at 73 percent.

Keywords—Antecedents, Loyalty, Foreign Tourists, Tourist Attractions, Bangkok.

I. INTRODUCTION

TOURISM in Thailand has been promoted for decades by each Thai government. Tourism supply and demand segments are in focus in order to sustain the tourism business in Thailand and the economy as a whole. There have been several campaigns for boosting spending of both domestic and foreign visitors, aimed to increase the income multiplier to the grass root groups nationwide. Tourism has accordingly become an important for the Thai economy and community development [1]-[4], and therefore the national policy is significant in order to pull more international tourists to the country. Thailand has been expected to be seen on the world tourism map particularly in Europe and North America, which will later yield economic and political benefits [5], [6]. Based on the tourist arrival statistics of the year 2009, it was noticeable that the majority of tourists, 897,421, was from the Asia region. This figure represented almost half the percentage of the whole international tourist arrivals to Thailand, whereas tourists from European countries presented only 28.31 percent [7]. Projecting to be the world's top destinations, the government has put its attempts and efforts in developing the nation's tourist attractions, human resources, image and branding. Yet what has also been attentive in endorsing Thailand tourism is the tourist psychological set.

Arunroong Wongkungwan is with the Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, 10300 Thailand (Phone: 662 1601490; fax: 662 1601491; e-mail: arunroong.wo@ssru.ac.th).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The historical data of tourist arrivals to Thailand points out the fact that Thailand has been very successful in drawing first time visitors to Thailand. However, what was notable was the very low percentage of repeated visitors, which was only 0.46 percent. The statistics explains that Thailand has been successful in marketing new visitors yet failing in sustaining them as a repeated market. An increasing budget each year on publicizing Thailand as a tourist destination cannot be any guarantee for the sustainability of Thailand tourism. First time international tourists who visited Thailand did not have much word of mouths for their Thai travel experience. This has caused a huge cost to be invested in public relation for Thai tourism. Contrarily, word of mouth and informative behavior among tourists is useful in reducing the public relations budget spent for promoting Thailand. Therefore, in order for first time tourists to provide word of mouth, both with quantity and quality, about their travel experience, loyalty must be gained from this group of tourists. Moreover, loyalty of first time visitors will be effectively helpful in reducing the cost spent in drawing new tourists, as the experienced tourists with loyalty will be the ones who do the marketing [8]. Reicheld [9] explained that cost spent in attracting new customers is normally 6 times higher than cost spent in retaining old customers. Besides, retaining old customers has ability to boosting company's profit of up to 5 percent. By this fashion, old customers benefit in producing higher profit owing to the fact that old customers spend more and are less sensitive to pricing. Therefore, customers with loyalty contribute greater impact to a company's sales and profits in the long run [10]. Research study pointed out the importance of tourist's loyalty to tourism sustainable. Physical development of tourist destinations is not the only milestone to tourism success. Studies that address the loyalty of tourists must be more emphasized. Oliver [11] pointed out that tourist's loyalty could contribute to sustainable tourism business development while effecting a continuing reduction of development cost. This is because tourists who have loyalty to tourist destinations will take care of those destinations, meaning that they will travel with responsible mind.

To assure tourism sustainability, it is important to develop infrastructure while maintaining attractiveness and appeal. But the more important thing is to seek ways to build tourist's loyalty. A study of loyalty of customers requires an understanding of behavioural insight. Building loyalty from tourists encourages them to revisit, persuading then to tell others and feeling that they are part of service or destination [12]-[14]. However, based on the documentary research of

Thailand tourism policy, it was found that there had not been any action policy in building loyalty among visitors. Moreover, studies about tourist's loyalty have not had a big impact in terms of application to Thailand's tourism policy.

Based on the literature review, it was found that there were several antecedents of tourist's loyalty to tourist attractions. Tourist's satisfaction was found to affect tourists' likeliness to have loyalty to a particular tourist destination and to share their memorable experience and to tell people to have the same experience. Moreover, if tourists feel they have learned something from and get acquainted with destinations as expected, they will perceive value, which consequently affects their loyalty and intention to revisit [15]. Feelings of engagement with tourist destinations and communities were also explained to be the antecedents of tourist's loyalty [16]. Even though pull factors of tourist destinations are very important in marketing [17], effective management of pull factors must be in association with tourist's internal motivations. Lee and Crompton [18] believed that tourists seeking new things were a drive of travel behaviour. Lee and Crompton explained that once tourists found destinations which could offer new experiences, they would have a loyalty towards those destinations.

This research paper was thus conducted in order to forecast important factors as the antecedents of loyalty of foreign tourists visiting Bangkok, Thailand. The factors in this study included tourists' satisfaction towards tourist attractions, their perceived value, feelings of engagement with the attractions, acquaintance with the attractions, push factors, pull factors and motivation to seek novelty.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to investigate the influence of selected antecedents, which were tourists' satisfaction towards tourist attractions in Bangkok, their perceived value, feeling of engagement with the attractions, acquaintance with the attractions, push factors, pull factors and motivation to seek novelty, on foreign tourist's loyalty in tourist attractions. The hypothesis of this study was that tourists' satisfaction towards Bangkok's tourist attractions, perceived value, feeling of engagement with the attractions, acquaintance with the attractions, push and pull factors and motivation to seek novel were the antecedents of foreign tourist's loyalty in tourists. The conceptual framework was developed based on related theories [18]. The sample of the study was 400 foreign tourists who visited Bangkok, by use of a Multi Stage Sampling technique. After that, Semi Structural Equation Model was utilized in the analysis stage by LISREL. In addition, qualitative data collection was done in order to compare the samples with different backgrounds and to find out whether there was any difference in their loyalty.

IV. FINDINGS

The Semi Structural Equation Model of the selected antecedents of tourist's loyalty in Bangkok's tourist attractions had a correlation with the empirical data through the following

statistical descriptions: Chi- square = 3.43, df = 4, P- value = 0.48893; RMSEA = 0.000; CFI = 1.00; CN = 1539.75; RMR = 0.0022; GFI = 1.00 and AGFI = 0.98. The findings explained that all antecedents were able together to predict the loyalty of the foreign tourists who visited Bangkok at 73 percent. The antecedents that affected the loyalty included tourists' satisfaction, their perceived value, feeling of engagement with the attractions, acquaintance with the attractions and motivation to seek novelty with the correlation coefficients of 0.21, 0.30, 0.12, 0.15 and 0.23 respectively. The antecedents with no effect on tourist's loyalty were the push and pull factors. These findings concurred with the empirical data. In measuring the level of loyalty of foreign tourists, the finding reported high level of loyalty was influenced by level of satisfaction towards the attractions, perceived value, acquaintance with the attractions, push factors, pull factors and motivation to seek novelty, and moderate level of loyalty was influenced by feeling of engagement with the attractions.

V. DISCUSSION

Satisfaction was found to have an influence on loyalty of foreign tourists who visited Bangkok with a correlation coefficient of 0.21. This means that Bangkok has been accepted as recognizable tourist destinations. Bangkok enjoys full facilities and infrastructure for local residents and tourists, such as convenient transportation, a variety of accommodations and a wide range of restaurants offering various kinds of foods with good prices. This gives the image of Thailand the land of foods, where tourists can find food anywhere and anytime. Moreover, there is architectural beauty with a combination of old and new along with the friendliness of Thai people which all together represent the uniqueness of Thailand and help to satisfy international tourist [19]. These images of Bangkok contribute to the image of Thailand which is constructed. Travel experience in Bangkok as described the publicized information made by the government can contribute to tourist's satisfaction [20]. However, satisfaction can change to dissatisfaction at any time as satisfaction is an attitude, but loyalty describes a behavior [21], [22]. Besides, perceived value was found to have an influence on loyalty of foreign tourists who visited Bangkok with a correlation coefficient of 0.30. As Bangkok offers a variety of experiences, foreigners who visited Bangkok were allowed to participate in learning the value of art and culture of Thailand. This finally contributed to an engagement and loyalty of tourists to the attractions [23]. The findings also indicated that the tourists evaluated whether goods and services were value for money. The perceived value received in the first- time visit to Bangkok would assist tourists in assuring that their next time visit would be a greater experience.

Feeling of engagement with the attractions was reported to have an influence on a loyalty of foreign tourists who visited Bangkok with a correlation coefficient of 0.12. Engagement is a characteristic of mind the tourists have with the attractions. The feeling of engagement happens through interaction of a person with other persons through subjects and activities [24]

and this provides a willingness to protect, preserve and develop in a better ways with what a person has the engagement with [25]. This characteristic plays a great role in influencing tourists to revisit Bangkok and to intend to share their travel experiences and good memories to others. Tourists' acquaintance with the attractions was also found to have an influence on loyalty with a correlation coefficient of 0.15. The tourists who traveled in Bangkok were easily acquainted with the area due to the fact that Bangkok provides convenience in traveling by different modes of transports, with availability of signs and service people to facilitate tourists. Being acquainted can be acquired from learning. Experiences from traveling to Bangkok allowed tourists to learn and predict the experience to be received in their future trip to Bangkok. The finding explained that tourists' higher level of knowledge and understanding received from their second time traveling to a particular tourist destination would increase the level of acquaintance with those tourist destinations and this would significantly be able to predict a revisit in the future. Moreover, the tourists' motivation to seek novelty placed an influence on loyalty with a correlation coefficient of 0.23. Seeking for new things is one of the significant motivations of modern people. People like to explore experiences they cannot find in their daily life, which can be challenging, exotic, calm and quiet. Novelty at destinations offers an excitement to tourists who seek new things and one visit is not enough for them. Thus, they will need to come back to explore more. Continual visits allow feeling of engagement, acquaintance and loyalty.

VI. FUTURE STUDIES

Suggestions to be made in accordance with the findings addressed an issue of public relation and advertisement for tourism of Thailand. As Thailand is predominantly a land of Buddhism with friendly people. Content to be produced to promote this uniqueness of Thailand should be focused, for example memorable experiences in terms of Buddhism, religious travel, art and culture- related travel. This will enhance value to be perceived by tourists who visit Bangkok and Thailand. Moreover, the findings revealed that it was likely that tourist had less loyalty at an attitude level than at a behavior level, this suggest that public and private sectors in the tourism industry should initiate policy and action plans to accelerate number of tourists' revisits, such as incentive provisions and discounts to increase their loyalty in Bangkok and Thailand.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Luedech Girdwichai, The President of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand for financial support. The author would like to thank Asst. Prof. Dr. Prateep Wajeetongratana, the Dean of Faculty of Management Science for the full support in this research.

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