

Understanding the Second Wave of Chinese Outbound Tourists: Perceived Service Quality, Satisfaction and Loyalty towards Bangkok

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Abstract—This research was concentrated on investigating the relationship between Chinese outbound tourist's characteristics, perceived service quality and satisfaction in Bangkok, and an analysis the relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty in the end. In order to collect data, a total of 400 questionnaires were distributed and collected in Suvarnabhumi Airport and CentralWorld department store respectively. The researcher used independent Sample t-test, one-way ANOVA and Pearson's r Correlation to analyze the association between Chinese outbound tourist's characteristics, perceived service quality and satisfaction and destination loyalty.

Keywords—Destination loyalty, second wave of Chinese outbound tourism, service quality, tourist characteristics, tourist satisfaction

I. INTRODUCTION

THE development of Chinese outbound tourism has been explored during the past several years. The increasing number of Chinese outbound tourists is the main force for the world's tourism market. Following decades in which China was a closed society before "open-door" policy launched, when looking back to China's history, the first contemporary "wave of going overseas" was with the purpose of searching a better future. The itinerary of the first wave of Chinese outbound tourist often scheduled in a rush pace, for example, visits eight countries in ten days or just takes some pictures in tourist attraction to prove "I have been there". They also tend to travel in tour groups as they are first-time visitors, they don't like to visit unknown, special place in a destination, just enjoy to the famous highlights and crowded tourism attractions.

However, a second wave of China's outbound tourism has started, with fully independent tourists. These Chinese tourists are younger, richer, and more educated. The majority of fully independent tourists usually have previous experience of traveling abroad. The Internet is the main source for Chinese independent tourists when planning a trip. Furthermore, in order to express their individuality, Chinese independent tourists are

more interested in uncommon attractions instead of the must-see landmarks. It must be stressed that with the purpose of learning or experiencing local cultures, Chinese independent tourists usually stay longer at a destination.

Nowadays, a better understanding of the customer is essential for the success of beating one's business competitors. As for the tourism industry, tourist behavior changes day by day, even with regard to small details, thus it is necessary to stay updated on tourist purposes and behavior. It is worth investigating who the "second wave of Chinese tourists" are. This study is conducted in order to increase the understanding about "second wave of Chinese tourists" and to contribute to the enhancement of the service to them by Thai tourism operators.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Dickman (1989) states that there are many factors influencing the decision of tourists who will take a trip to a destination. On the other hand, tourist characteristics consisting of gender, age, educational level, occupation, and income are also worth analyzing.

Gender: Some researchers have posited that gender differences do not influence the behavior of tourists (Kinnaird and Hall, 1996), while some other scholars have emphasized the motivation in taking a trip is different between men and women (Ford and Gibson, 1991).

The **educational level** also has implications on tourist behavior. It has an optimistic impact on tourist travel (McIntosh and Goeldner, 1995). Education is one factor that can motivate a person to travel with the purpose of increasing their knowledge and experience.

In the tourism industry, the way to satisfy tourists is the key to obtain competitive advantages in tourism management. Improving **service quality** is the most useful method used by service suppliers in order to attain customer satisfaction. Kvist (2006) suggested that good service quality should start from the needs of the customer and end with customer satisfaction. A model of service quality named SERVQUAL was first proposed by Parasuraman (1985). This model of service quality is the most famous and widely used as a reference in measuring customer perception of service quality.

The nature of the relationship between **satisfaction** and **loyalty** is complex. There is a common assumption that satisfaction is likely to increase loyalty (Oliver, 1980; Patterson, Johnson and Spreng, 1997; Bolton, 1998; Page and Eddy, 1999; Jones and Suh, 2000). For the service industry concerned, the

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influence of dissatisfaction on loyalty can reduce service recovery (Webster and Sundaram, 1998). Furthermore, Yoon and Uysal (2005) have stressed that travel destinations can also be regarded as products that can be resold (revisited) and recommended to others (such as friends and relatives). In summary, marketing literature advises that attitudinal loyalty is the result of satisfaction (Lovelock, Patterson and Walker, 2001).

III. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The framework

The independent variables are identified in this study as tourists' demographics such as their gender and educational level. The SERVQUAL model is used to measure tourist perception of service quality at a destination, which consists of reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness. Satisfaction is the result of experience that has at least met or exceeded tourist expectations. Therefore the researcher will examine post-purchase evaluation judgment. Secondly, the researcher will examine tourist assessment of the outcome of their experience about service quality at the destination area.

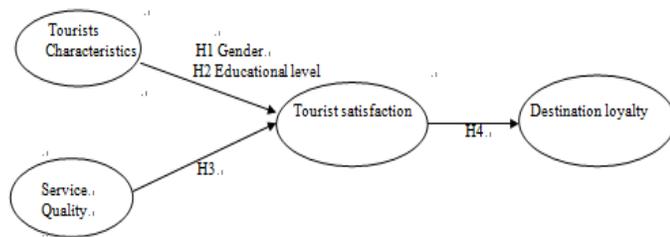


Fig. 1 Developed by the researcher for this study

There are four hypotheses in this study:

Ho1: There is no significant difference among Chinese outbound tourist's satisfaction based on their gender.

Ha1: There is a significant difference among Chinese outbound tourist's satisfaction based on their gender.

Ho2: There is no significant difference among Chinese outbound tourist's satisfaction on the basis of educational level.

Ha2: There is a significant difference among Chinese outbound tourist's satisfaction on the basis of educational level.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between service quality and Chinese outbound tourist's satisfaction.

Ha3: There is a significant relationship between service quality and Chinese outbound tourist's satisfaction.

Ho4: There is no significant relationship between Chinese outbound tourist's satisfaction and destination loyalty.

Ha4: There is a significant relationship between Chinese outbound tourist's satisfaction and destination loyalty.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was composed of 4 parts: Personal Information, Tourist Satisfaction, Service Quality in Bangkok and Loyalty.

A five point Likert scale is used in this study. It is often used to evaluate respondents' attitudes by asking about the extent to which they agree or disagree with a particular question or statement. The mid-point on the Likert scale in this study refers to neither agreement nor disagreement. This option can avoid forcing respondents to choose agreement or disagreement options (i.e. forced choice), which would lead to misleading conclusions, if they really hold neutral options towards the items. Moreover, the balance side point options (e.g. the point 2 and 4 of a 4-point Likert scale) are labeled as 'slightly agree/disagree'; the adverb 'slightly' tends to reduce the number of mid-point selections.

B. Sampling Procedures

For the reliability test, the researcher selected respondents who self-organized private visits to Bangkok age from 20 to 45, traveled around Bangkok and departed from Suvarnabhumi Airport between 6th and 10th September 2014. For the next step, the research went around the Bangkok city area, such as Central World, Siam paragon and Suvarnabhumi Airport from 1st December 2014 to 1st January 2015 for the distribution of the questionnaires.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

In this research, a total of 400 questionnaires were distributed and collected in order to study the fully independent Chinese outbound tourists' perceived service quality, satisfaction and loyalty towards Bangkok. Out of 400 respondents, the majority were females (55.8%), males taking up 44.2%. Most of the respondents were 20-29 years old, this age group occupying 53.5%, 57.3% of the respondents were employed as a company staff, Most respondents' educational level was at the bachelor degree level (74.2%). And the majority of respondents earned 2001-3000 CNY per month, which accounted for 39.2%.

TABLE I
SUMMARY OF DESCRIPTIVE PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Variables	Highest Mean	Lowest Mean
Tourist Agreement	4.72 "Traffic jams in Bangkok are heavy." Which means negative imply.	4.11 "Variety of tourist attractions such as historical places, temples or palaces is great."
Service Quality	4.44 "Hotels are safe and secure." And "Clear and accurate signs and route information are available."	4.21 "There are convenient payment methods (credit card/union-pay/visa/master)"
Destination Loyalty	4.46 "If asked for recommendations, I will suggest Bangkok as a tourist destination."	4.31 "I will visit Bangkok in the future."

According to Table 1, highest mean (4.72) and the lowest mean (4.11) in terms of tourist satisfaction statement are "Traffic jams in Bangkok are heavy" and the "Variety of tourist attractions, such as historical places, temples or palaces is

great.” It is necessary to point out that the respondents strongly shared their concern with heavy traffic jams in Bangkok. For the service quality, the statements “Hotels are safe and secure” and “Clear and accurate signs and route information are available” received the highest mean (4.44) and the lowest mean (4.21), respectively. Finally, regarding destination loyalty, “If asked for recommendations, I will suggest Bangkok as a tourist destination” is the item with the highest mean 4.46, while “I will visit Bangkok in the future” received the lowest mean 4.31.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The results of this research demonstrate that there is no significant difference among Chinese outbound tourists’ satisfaction based on their gender, while educational level plays an important factor on tourist satisfaction. The outcomes of the data analysis in this study also show service quality do have a positive effect on Chinese outbound tourists’ satisfaction. And tourist satisfaction contributes to destination loyalty.

This study only investigated the Chinese outbound tourists who visit Bangkok, thus, further research could study Chinese outbound tourists visiting other cities in Thailand, such as Pattaya, Phuket, and Chiang Mai. Further research could therefore focus on specific tourist destinations in Thailand.

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