The Effects of Tourist Profiles and Destination Characteristics on Tourist's Intention to Return to Klong Suan 100-Year Market, Samutprakan Province

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the explanatory ability and relative importance of tourist profiles and destination characteristics underlying tourist's intention to return to Klong Suan 100-Year Market. Through multiple regression analyses of the responses of 400 respondents, the model indicated that two items of tourist profiles and two destination characteristics could statistically significantly explain the variance in the tourist's intention to return. Specifically, the destination characteristics are overall quality and people factor while the tourist profile items are the number of previous visits to the destination and age range. The model was significant at <.001 level and could explain about 56.3 percent of total variance in repeat intention. Regarding the contribution of each item to the total variance explained in tourist's intention to return, overall quality could explain 37.5% more of the variance in tourist's intention to return after that explained by the other three items. The contributions of the others were the number of previous visits (2.4%), age range (0.7%), and people factor (0.6%).

Keywords: tourist profile, destination characteristics, Klong Suan 100-Year Market

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the industries recognized as being of key importance to Thailand's economy. According to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Dr. Suwat Sittilor, Thailand had over 22 international tourists visiting Thailand last year, generating almost a trillion baht of income [1]. This number was also backed up by Mr. Suraphon Svetasreni, the Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand [2]. Domestic tourism reached 112 million visits, generating half a trillion baht. In total, Thailand earned about 1.5 trillion baht from tourism alone in 2012 [1]. However, this amount of money did not equitably benefit all parts of Thailand. Most travel expenses were spent within such major destinations or regions as Bangkok, Phuket and Chiang Mai. There is no doubt that each province or municipal area attempts to take its share of this pool of money. Some have developed new tourist destinations while others have chosen to promote their existing locations. One major type of destination that creates a copycat situation in many areas is the nostalgic Thai market, a market that can fulfill one's wistful desire to return to the market of the old days. These markets can be located on the ground or on a river or canal and many of them date back over one hundred years; hence, the name "100-Year Market." Some popular markets among tourists are Damnoensaduak Floating Market in Rachaburi Province, Bangnampueng Floating Market in Samutprakan Province, and Jatujak Market in Bangkok.

One of the most well-known markets around Greater Bangkok area is Klong Suan 100-Year Market. Klong Suan is located in Tumbon Klong Suan, Samutprakan Province. In the old days, when canals were the main mode of transportation, the Klong Suan area was one of the popular boat stops for people traveling from the eastern part of Thailand to Bangkok, the capital city. Although Klong Suan 100-Year Market has become more popular among tourists nowadays, because of its vicinity to Bangkok, its market share is still small in terms of visitor numbers as compared to other nostalgic markets in the area. Apart from attracting new faces,

the administrators of Klong Suan 100-Year Market have focused their marketing strategy on repeat business, which is very important in today's business environment because it helped reduce marketing costs. This paper set forth to explore the tourist profiles and destination characteristics that had an effect on a tourist's intention to return to Klong Suan 100-Year Market in Samutprakan Province. Their explanatory ability and relative importance were also examined.

2. Literature Review

To attract new tourists to a destination was not an easy task, but to encourage repeat visits was even harder. Repeat business is an unquestionably important source of income that destination owners would like to secure. How to do that was a matter of knowing the factors underlying or influencing the tourist's intention to return. Many researchers had confirmed that tourists were more likely to revisit destinations that they had positive experiences with [3-4] and they would feel more secure in returning to a familiar place [5].

People are motivated to travel because of either internal or external factors; but, most of the time because of both. In other words, travel motivations are formed by tourist profiles or destination characteristics. People might decide by themselves to see new things or meet new people abroad when they had free time and sufficient money or the destinations themselves might play an important role in attracting people to go and visit those places.

The Thailand Ministry of Tourism and Sports has identified key tourist profiles and destination characteristics that play a major role in the decision making process of tourists regarding where to travel [6]. Examples of destination characteristics were price, transportation, accommodation, restaurant, travel services, attractiveness, souvenir shop availability, safety, and other travel-related support facilities. Key tourist profile items were the socio-economic demographic characteristics of each tourist including gender, age, education, occupation, and income.

Brida, Pulina, Riano and Zapata-Aguirre [7] reviewed the literature regarding factors affecting the intention to return to a destination and found various factors empirically proved to have an effect on repeat intention. They included, but were not limited to, age [8], distance between place of residence and the destination [9-11], household income [10], length of stay in the destination [10], number of visits [10,12], perceived quality of service provided [11], perceived value for money [11], prior experience [13], level of satisfaction [13], perceptions of the travel experience [14], individual characteristics [15], and travel-related variables [15].

As shown in Figure 1, the authors had identified ten factors in this study, specifically five tourist profiles and five destination characteristics, and further postulated that there was a positive relationship that could help to explain the variable "tourist's intention to return to Klong Suan 100-Year Market."
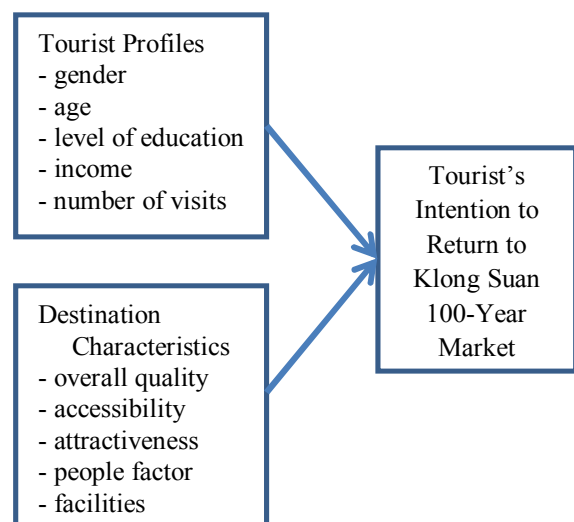

Figure 1. Research Framework

3. Research Questions

Two research questions were addressed in this study:

1. How powerful is each item in explaining a tourist's intention to return to the Klong Suan 100-Year Market?

2. What was the relative importance of each item explaining a tourist's intention to return?

The importance of the research questions lies in the need to generate guidelines for administrators of Klong Suan 100-Year Market on how to prioritize considerations regarding the effects of tourist profiles and destination characteristics on tourist's intention to return, especially when financial resources are limited.

4. Methodology

The unit of analysis in this study is individuals who are Thai tourists who visited Klong Suan 100-Year Market during January-February, 2013. Four-hundred tourists were approached and asked to complete a self-administered survey regarding their perceptions toward Klong Suan 100-Year Market, specifically relating to the areas being studied.

All data analyses were performed on statistical software. A stepwise multiple regression was employed to address the first research question while an enter-method multiple regression was administered to answer the second research question. The independent variables in the current study consisted of ten items of tourist profiles and destination characteristics, five each. The tourist profile items included primarily the socio-economic demographic variables; namely gender, age, income, level of education, and the number of previous visits to the destination. All except gender were measured on at least an ordinal scale. The destination characteristics included overall quality, accessibility to the destination, attractiveness of the destination, people factor, and facilities. All destination characteristics were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree, with the statements asked regarding each factor. The dependent variable was the tourist's intention to return to Klong Suan 100-Year Market measured by a single item scale with 1 representing absolutely no intention to return and 10 representing an absolute intention to return.

5. Results

Four hundred respondents were used in this study. This was sufficient to meet the regression guideline for the minimum ratio of observations to independent variables which is 5:1 [16]. The largest percentage of respondents was females (54.5%) between 16 – 30 years of age (46.0%), holding a bachelor's degree (50.0%).

The stepwise regression model indicated that only four items could statistically significantly explain the variance in the tourist's intention to return. Two were destination characteristics, namely, overall quality and people factor, while the other two tourist profile items were the number of previous visits and age range. The model was significant at a <.001 level.   The equation of this model was Tourist's Intention to Return = -1.058 + 0.887X1 + 0.286X2 + 0.270X3 + 0.225X4, where X1 = Overall Quality, X2 = people factor, X3 = the Number of Previous Visits, and X4 = Age Range. All of the four regression coefficients, plus the constant, were significant at a <.05 level. There was no impact of multicollinearity since each item has a high tolerance value with the lowest tolerance at .825. This was supported by the Durbin-Watson test with a result of 1.945.   The adjusted R^2 of .563 (similar to R^2) indicated no over-fitting of the model and suggested that the result could be generalizable from the perspective of ratio of observations to variables in the equation (100:1 in the final model). At the 95% confidence level, the margin of error for any predicted value of tourist's intention to return was at ±1.497. Given that all coefficients have a plus sign, all four items had positive relationships with a tourist's intention to return. In other words, an increase in value of any of the four items will have a positive impact on tourist's intention to return. To ascertain the contribution of each item to the total variance explained in tourist's intention to return, another four enter-method model was estimated, each with three items comprising the first block and the fourth item making up the second block. These models showed that overall quality could explain 37.5% more of the variance in a tourist's intention to return after that explained by the other three items.

The contributions of the others were the number of previous visits (2.4%), age range (0.7%), and people factor (0.6%).

6. Discussion

Research Questions

1. How powerful is each item in explaining the tourist's intention to return to the Klong Suan 100-Year Market?

Only 4 items could statistically significantly explain the tourist's intention to return to Klong Suan 100-Year Market. They were overall quality, people factor, the number of previous visits to the destination and age of tourist. The first two items were destination characteristics while the other two were part of tourist profiles. The study pointed out that older tourists were more likely to go back and visit the market again in the future compared to their younger counterparts. In addition, if any first-time tourists decided to visit the market for the second time, they tended to go back a third time and sometimes more often. The reasons why the other proposed tourist profile items did not have a statistically significant relationship with the intention to return to the market is likely because of the homogeneous characteristics of the respondents. Specifically, the majority were university graduates with an average monthly income of less than 20,000 baht. Regarding destination characteristics, the results suggest that visitors paid more attention to the overall quality and the hospitality of local people than such physical factors as attractiveness and facilities provided at the market. Accessibility was not an issue either as long as tourist's expectations of overall quality were met or they could feel that local people as well as market vendors treated them fairly and were hospitable and helpful. Collectively, the four items could explain about 56.3% of the variance in a tourist's intention to return to Klong Suan 100-Year Market. Individually, overall quality was the most powerful item, explaining 91.02% of the total variance explained. It was followed by the number of previous visits (5.83%), age range (1.70%), and people factor (1.46%).

Table 1. Contribution of Each Factor to the Total Variance Explained by the Full Model

Factors	R Square Change If Entered Last Into the Model	Variance Increment of the Total Variance Explained
Overall Quality	0.375	91.02
People factor	0.006	1.46
The number of previous visits	0.024	5.83
Age range	0.007	1.70

2. What was the relative importance of each item regarding its explanatory ability of tourist's intention to return?

Regarding the relative importance of the four items that could statistically significantly explain the intention to return, overall quality was the most important item that could explain most of the variance in tourist's intention to return. It was followed by the number of previous visits, age range and people factor. This analysis was based on the comparison of standardized regression coefficients in the original model. The relative importance of these four items corresponded with their explanatory ability discussed above.

Table 2. Regression Coefficients

Factors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-1.058	.533		-1.985	.048
Overall Quality	.887	.048	.674	18.503	.000
People Factor	.286	.120	.086	2.378	.018
Number of Previous Visits	.270	.058	.159	4.637	.000
Age Range	.225	.091	.083	2.473	.014

7. Applications and Suggestions for Future Research

From the results of this study, administrators of Klong Suan 100-Year Market are better able to understand the importance of the aforementioned tourist profiles and destination characteristics that explain a tourist's intention to return to the market. This study illustrates that improving the perception of overall quality, as well as the hospitality of local people, could improve the likelihood of repeat customer visits. Regarding tourist profiles, administrators of the Klong Suan 100-Year Market might consider redesigning the market or adding facilities that could appeal more to senior-aged tourists. The results also suggest the relative explanatory ability of each item; therefore, administrators will know which item(s) they should first focus upon. Future research should attempt to shed some light on how to improve the perception of the market's overall quality. Additionally, how to ensure that local people and market vendors will stay and/or become more hospitable, honest and helpful is another interesting topic area to undertake.

8. Conclusion

There are four items that statistically significantly explain the variance in the intention of visitors to return of Klong Suan 100-Year Market. As limited empirical research has been conducted on the return intention of market visitors in Thailand, this study resulted somehow in new knowledge about the concept of nostalgic market loyalty. The results of this study indicate that overall quality is the most important item explaining variance in return intention. It was followed by the number of previous visits, age range, and people factors, respectively in order of their relative importance. Market administrators can now understand to what extent each factor explains customer loyalty and therefore can make proactive adjustments to maximize the level of return intention of tourists visiting their nostalgic markets.

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