

**FACTORS IMPACTING THAI TOURISTS' SELECTION OF
OUTBOUND PACKAGE TOUR**



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OUTBOUND PACKAGE TOUR**

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ABSTRACT

Outbound travelling package tour provides their customers the all-inclusive service ranging from the bookings for transportation and accommodation and a full itinerary. The key value propositions for the package tour that clearly differentiates it from the individual travellers are the convenience, a highly professional and efficient service, and the more cost-effectiveness, leading to a rising popularity to Thai travellers, particularly the ones who travel abroad. However, given the high competition landscape, this study aimed to find the key influencing factors that meaningfully affect Thai tourists' decisions on choosing their outbound package tour.

This study was conducted by using qualitative analysis. The data were collected from 50 samples at Suvarnabhumi airport. The key discovery was that program destination attractiveness and its variety are the most influencing factors for Thais. In addition, travellers' demands become more complicated. Only promotions and recommendation from acquaintance were not as powerful as they were in previous researches. In contrast, social benefit, which found in previous researches, was ranked as 'little important' factor in this study.

KEY WORDS: Thai tourists / outbound travelling / tourist's behavior / package tour

34 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, outbound travelling becomes more popular according to improving technology, transportation, communication and culture. The statistic from National Statistical Office of Thailand and Tourism Authority of Thailand (2015) indicates in Figure 1.1 that Thai population has been increasing every year (Statistical Demography Information, 2015), while the percentage of outbound departure by package tour over Thai population also keeps increasing during the last five years since the recovery of Thai economy.

Increasing percentage of Thai outbound departure by package tour with increasing Thai population

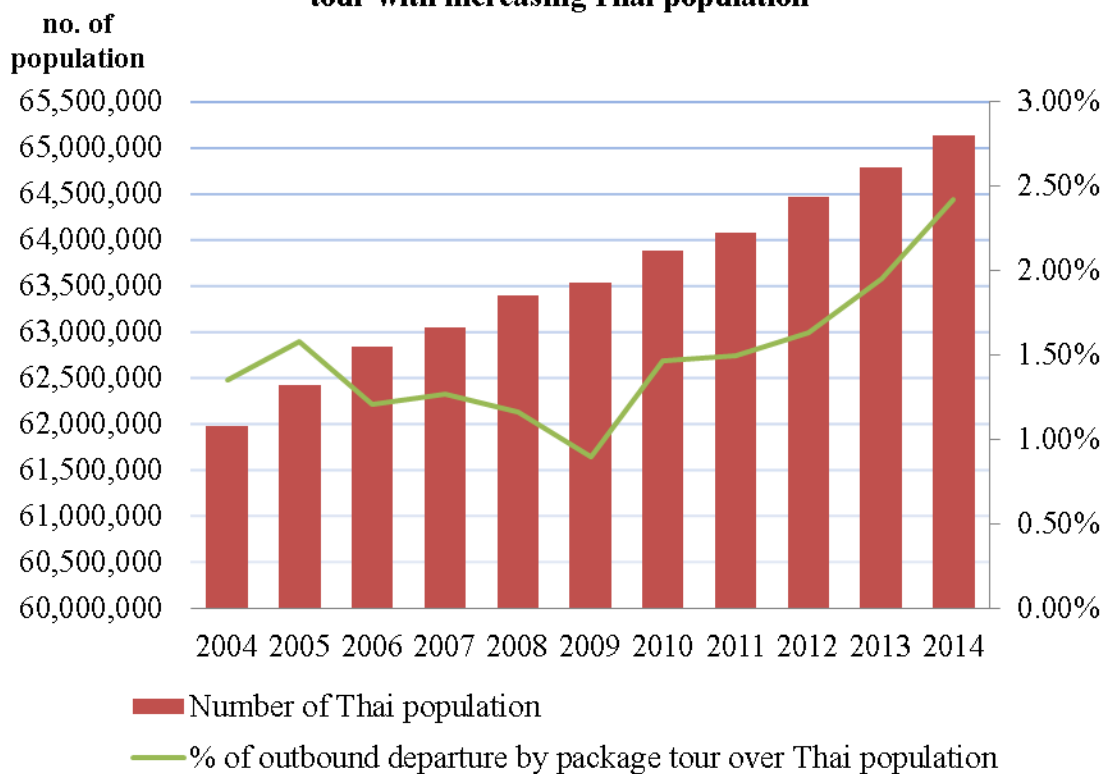


Figure 1.1 Increasing percentage of Thai outbound departure y package tour with increasing Thai population

Figure 1.2 shows not only the growth of outbound departure but also a rebound in contribution of outbound departure by package tour over total outbound departures since 2009 after the contribution had dropped for at least five years before that. This shows sign of opportunity for travel agency in doing business and increasing in exposure to tourists (National Statistical Office of Thailand and Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2015)

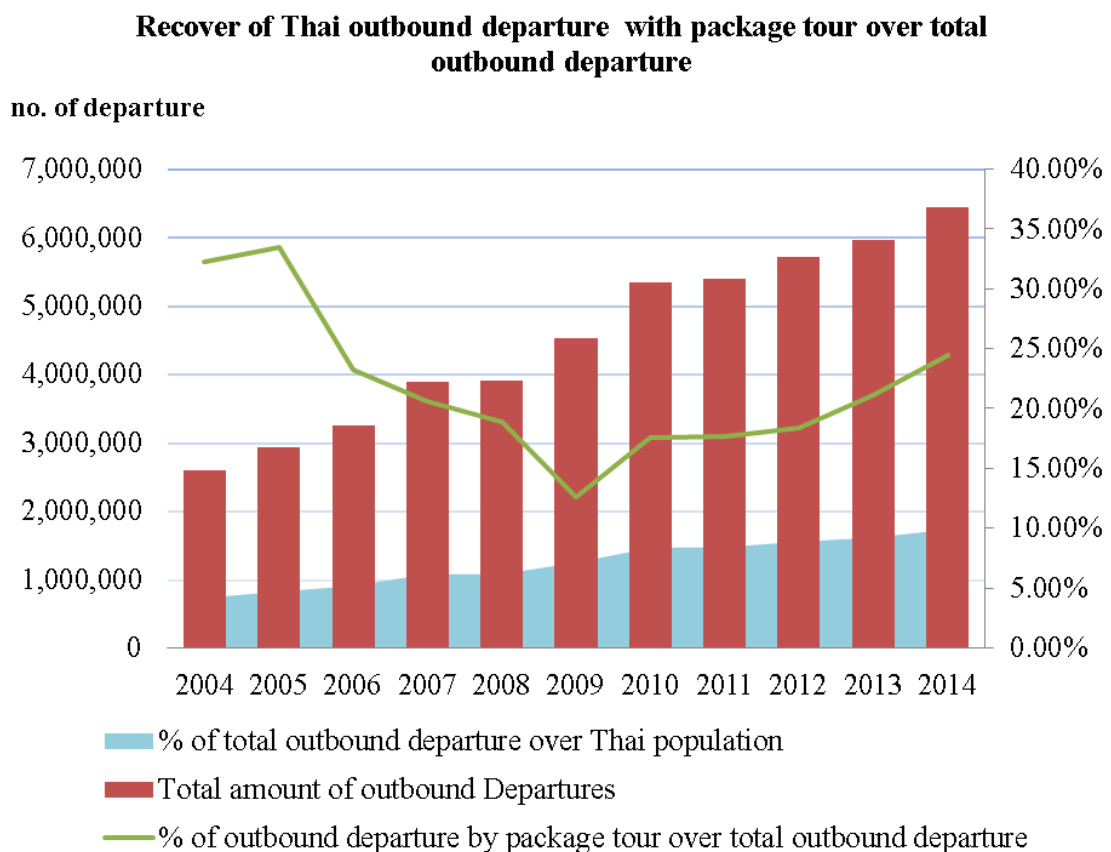


Figure 1.2 Recover of Thai outbound departure with package tour over total outbound departure

Figure 1.3 indicates even more interesting fact that while there is an uptrend in the travelling expenditure spent each year from total outbound travelling compared to the outbound package tour, the gap between the two narrows. This means the package tour travelling becomes increasingly more important and play significant role in outbound tourism (National Statistical Office of Thailand and Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2015).

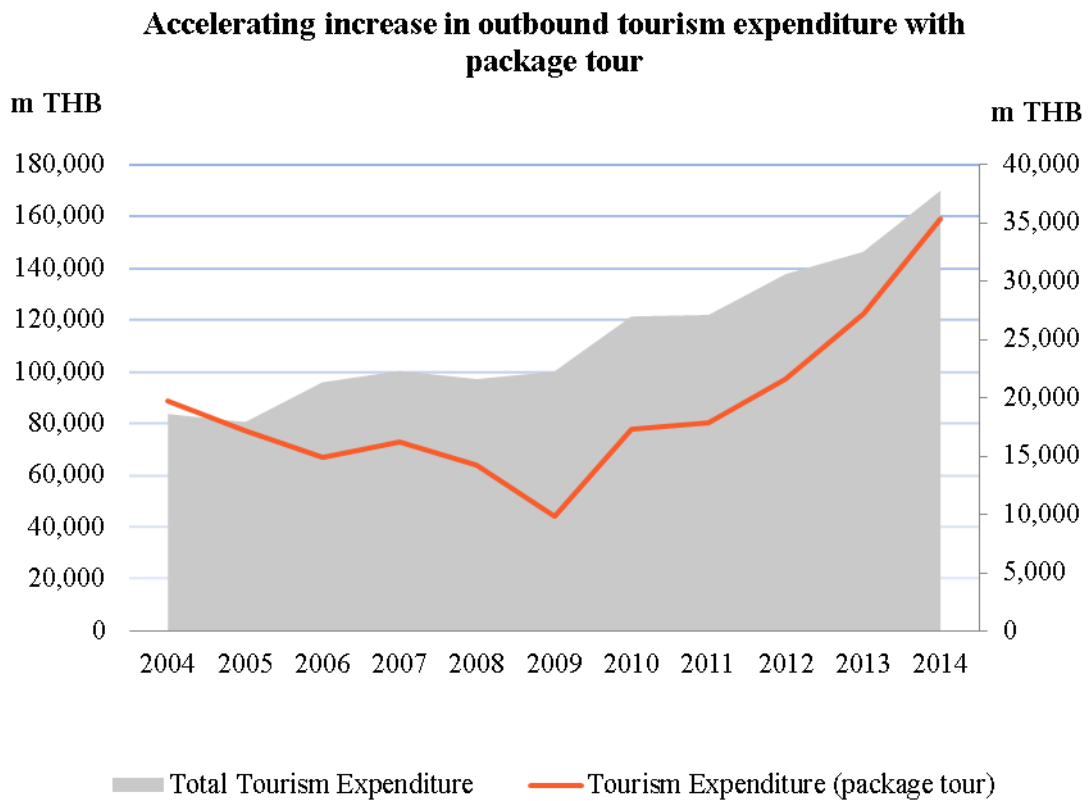


Figure 1.3 Accelerating increase in outbound tourism expenditure with package tour

While the opportunity abounds in the growth of outbound tourism, the competition is also intensifying. New travel companies spring up and offer attractive promotions to travellers, forcing existing players to improve their strategies to survive in this competitive industry.

This study aimed to identify factors influencing outbound package tour selection of Thai tourists. It is critical for travelling agencies to offer the right packages and services to the customers, and hence to remain competitive.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Thailand, nowadays, according to National Statistical Office of Thailand and Tourism Authority of Thailand (2015), the number of Thai people who travel outbound via package tours has been increasing significantly from 934,962 departure times in 2010 to 954,990 departure times in 2011, a mere 2.14% growth. The figure jumps to 1,051,044 departure times at 10.05% growth in 2012, 1,262,535 or 20% growth in 2013, and to 1,574,316 or 24.69% growth in 2013. The outbound package tour market is valued at 35 billion Baht during 2010-2014.

A travel agency is a company providing the arrangement of all travel related services to both retail and group customers including transportations, hotel rooms, tours programmers, and other tourism services such as arranging visa for the tourists on behalf of the tourism industry principals (Goldblatt & Nelson, 2001). The term 'package' is used to define the bundle of such services in this study. Travel agencies may provide travelling service in the country (domestic) or outbound service such as specific journeys to Asia, America, Africa, or Europe. Some travel agencies may focus either inbound or outbound travelling package while some agencies may focus on both.

Travellers have choices to travel either independently or via a package tour. Mancini (1996) stated that the guide package tours were famous among some travellers focusing on those who were aging and lack of some attributes comprising languages and travelling alone.

Schmidt (1979), Quiroga (1990), Enoch (1996), and Mancini (1996) suggested five advantages of tour package including value for money, companionship, convenience, safety feeling, and time and hassle saving. A package tour allows travellers to be able to visit variety of places or attractions within the given time schedule. It is more value added as the tourist will secure their visit and travelling activities in the program they purchase. While tourists may find some difficulties on buying ticket or booking hotel as difference in cultures and languages can be a problem

causing inconvenience. With these advantages, joining a package tour becomes very popular in travel industry.

Value for money

Previous literatures found that the package tour became popular due to its convenience and reasonable price in bundle or value of money is taken into account (Enoch, 1996; Heung & Chu, 2000). The reason that makes the package tour much cheaper is the advantage from taking a mass amount of purchase on accommodations, tickets, and meals at discount rate for group rates (Enoch, 1996). Chang (2007) found that reasonable of price was a major impact on tour package selection for Chinese people. The studies from Thailand also point out that people consider the reasonable price of a package as a key choosing package tour (Pisalsilp, 2009; Wutwanit, 2011; Jatturat, 2003).

In addition, the studies of Meidan (1979) and Kendall (1989) point out that the physical aspect including layout, location and operating hour of travel agency are the fundamental requirements for customers to consider on making a purchase. Price is one factor in determining the choice on package tour because of the price-elasticity of the travellers against travelling as well as the quality and diversification of the package.

Safety / Comfort

Tour package can help increase the familiarity perceived by the purchasers, which in turn leads to both mental and physical comforts and eventually security and safety. With a risk averse personality, Asian people tend to avoid uncertainties which they perceive as a safety as one of the first priority to pick a package tour. Having other people in the same language and culture around during the trip can make them feel secure and ease to know each other (Quiroga, 1990). The implication can be on Thai people as proposed by Jatturat (2003) that safety is the number one criteria of tourist to consider buying a package tour. This reason is supported to be true from the study of Wutwanit (2011).

Convenience

To offer a value added product to clients, a package tour is sold in one price with main purpose to provide convenience. In the past, extra services beyond typical hotel, ticket booking and a guide such as visa handling and travel insurance as mentioned by Persia and Gitelson (1993) can be the key differentiating factors to make one agency standing out from other competitors at a free of charge service. According to Lo and Lam (2004), an all-inclusive package tour can reduce difficulties and unwanted inconvenience which is one benefit that can attract tourists to join the program instead of arranging their own trip.

Social benefits

There are two aspects of social benefit. The first one is the benefit of acquaintance. It seems to be more enjoyable travelling with friends and family (Chang, 2007) which supported by the finding of Celik (2014) that Far Eastern tourists prefers family style of package tour. Another social benefit is making new friends. Some people said that they wanted to join a tour package for social benefits and they enjoyed travelling with a group of people to make new friends (Burke & Resnick, 2000; de Souto, 1985; Lo & Lam, 2004). Jatturat (2003) shows that Thai people are also happy travelling in group to make new friends.

Interesting programs and variety of attractions

Attractive itinerary can be one influencing factor on tour selection but not that significant as recommended by Chang (2007), where the respondents claims that the final decision to select an outbound package tour is impacted by their friends' recommendation, not the interesting programme. While, Jin et al. (2012) argued that a variety of options and flexibility of same tour product could be very important. Kim (2013) indicated that a uniqueness of the itinerary have the highest level influencing tourists' decision on package tour purchase, especially the outbound destinations that could provide them new experiences. In Hong Kong, people also consider the aspect of variety of visits within the limited time since they want to pay one price and can travel to a number of attractions (Enoch, 1996; Heung & Chu, 2000).

Quality of transportation, accommodation and food

Besides the quality of staffs and service, quality of the package tour also refers to transportation, food, and accommodation (Meidan, 1979). Transportation is a key differentiation of tour agencies to attract tourists to make a purchase. It is very important to consider the right transportation methods to serve travellers with reasonable price while also provides the minimum requirements of convenience and functions (Djordjevic, 2013). The study of tourists' selection of package tour from Turkey also indicates that the package tour is more attractive when provide good quality of transportation, accommodation, and food (Celik, 2014).

Quality of tour leader

Ng et al. (2006) found that the most powerful factor impacting travellers to pick a travel agency or package tour was the quality of tour leader in the aspect of knowledge and experiences. It is also mentioned in Kotler (2003) that tourists believe these qualifications will enhance their travelling experience. And, their satisfaction can lead to a repurchase as a consequence. The case study from Taiwan shows the importance of tour leader. People purchase a package tour because they feel confident in tour leader (Chang, 2007). In Thailand, according to Pisalsilp (2009) and Jatturat (2003), the quality of tour leader or tour guide is the factor Thai people consider before picking a package tour as they also want to have new knowledge and experiences from travelling (Wutwanit, 2011).

Service quality

The study from Poland on factors influencing tourists' attitude toward choice of holiday package indicated that the quality of services provided was considered as the most important impact on travelling package selection (Martina, 2012). It also included service from tour guide and all extra assistances (Bowie & Chang, 2005). For Japanese, South Korean, and Chinese, service quality is the most important factors in order to select a package tour (Celik, 2014).

Promotion and advertising

It is important that the brochures and advertisement showing knowledgeable and experienced guide must be sufficient and reachable to allow the travellers to make decisions on tour purchase (Bellur et al., 1988; Buhalis, 1998). In Thailand, promotion and advertising are not the most important factors that led the consumers to make a purchase on package tour although they do have some impact (Wutwanit, 2011; Pisalsilp, 2009; Jatturat, 2003).

Travel agency's reputation and creditability

Martina (2012) said that the reputation and image of travel agency is a part of decision making on tour package selection for the Poles and it is more important among high income people than lower income people. A study of Louisa et al. (2012) found that most of the Chinese people in Hong Kong prefer to check the reputation of an agency to confirm their decision over a tour package as it could help inducing their confidence on the quality of accommodation and transportation.

Travelling time and period

It is also important to tourists to take a tour program which is arranged in the time they are free and no constraint. In other words, it should be in the same period of their holidays. They may also choose the day that their family and friends are also free to travel or no job (Chang, 2007). Some of the travellers need to take care of their children and they consider it as the first priority so they tend to pick the time during their children's school holidays (Hsu et al., 2007).

Personal experience and acquaintances' recommendation with the travel agency

Chang (2007) found that people are more easily persuaded by word-of-mouth suggestion particularly by family members and relatives than by the promotions of tour agencies. Similar finding by Yau (1998) points out that word of mouth communication could be an effective way to recommend a Chinese tourist to select a tour package. In Hong Kong, studies of Kaynak and Kucukemiroglu (1993) and

Heung and Chu (2000) indicate that family, relatives and friends' recommendation could be a significant impact on making a decision.

Travellers can be impacted by the psychological factors rather than economic factors. They may judge from their own experiences more than select from price. Travellers will evaluate their satisfaction on previous experiences and compare to each other (Mathieson, 1983).

Gaps in literature

According to the literature reviews, there are totally 12 different factors that have influence on travellers' decision making on package tour namely, value of money, safety, convenience, social benefits, interesting programs and variety of attractions, quality of transportation, accommodation and food, quality of tour leader, service quality, promotion and advertising, travel agency's reputation and creditability, travelling time and period, and personal experience and acquaintances' recommendation with the travel agency. Those researches were conducted in different countries around the world including Poland (Martina, 2012), Taiwan (Chang, 2007), Hong Kong (Enoch, 1996) and (Heung & Chu, 2000), and Thailand (Pisalsilp, 2009; Wutwanit, 2011; Jatturat, 2003). These studies vary by samples and focuses. In Thailand, there were some studies on factors impacting on package tour selection, however these studies focused on domestic travelling (Jatturat, 2003). The research of Wutwanit (2011) studied about what made Phayao's resident travelled abroad. However, a study of factors that can have influences on Thai travellers' selection of outbound package tour still does not exist. This research, thus, would focus on the topic.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This research used the quantitative method to find out the factors that had impact on package tour selection of the tourists and ranks the influence of them from the most to the least. With this method, it could make the measurement more accurate and reduce some misunderstanding about the factors' meanings or definitions which can be varied from each sample.

In this research, the primary data will be used to conduct an analysis in order to enhance the benefits and results of the study. The information will be gathered from questionnaires that will be distributed to the selected samples who have the right to make the final decision on purchasing outbound package tour to ensure the accuracy.

3.2 Population and sampling

This research used purposive sampling method to collect data. The target population for this study was the Thai tourists who make a purchase of outbound package tour both male and female at any age. The survey was conducted at Suvarnabhumi International airport as it was the start point for Thai tourists before travelling abroad. In the airport, the samples were diversified and coming from different parts of Thailand that will lead to more accuracy for the findings. The questionnaires were distributed solely to the person of the group or family who made a final decision on selecting a package tour. Thus, the fellow travellers were excluded.

3.3 Data Collection

A questionnaire was developed from the findings of the previous studies from different cultures and countries around the world. The questionnaire was in Thai language in order to make a precise understanding to the respondents, and ensure the

reliability, no misunderstanding and mislead to the study and finding. The questionnaire was designed for a various rating scales on Importance from level 1 to level 5, the least to the most to measure the impact of each factor on package tour selection. This study used Likert Scale.

The questionnaire offered anonymity to the respondents to reduce noise and bias from some social factors. This method made people willing to answer to questionnaire and be more honest, thus the result would be even more accurate (Bradburn et al., 1978).

The questionnaire composed of three parts. The first part focused on the respondents' demographic background asking about gender, age, and income per month. The second part was about the experience in travelling of the respondents which were frequency of travelling abroad, experience with travelling agency, travelling destination, etc. The last part was about rating the important of each factors on the decision making of buying package tour for Thai people. Every criterion was provided for the respondents to rate them from 1 (not important) to 5 (most important). There was an opened-end question in this part for the respondents to suggest additional criteria that might have impact on their decision making.

3.4 Data analysis

The data from questionnaire was analysed using frequency distributions. This research counted the score of each attribute given by respondents. It used \bar{x} to measure the importance of each factor on Thai tourists while calculated standard deviation to see the density of the results. The higher the score was, the more important the factor. The calculation was simple and calculated through Microsoft Excel program and finally re-arranged in the table to see to result.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter aimed to present the result of data collection systematically. The data were collected from the targeted respondents at Suvarnabhumi Airport. The results gathered including demographic of respondents will be presented. It also provided research outcome in term of key factors influencing Thai travellers in selecting outbound package tour in the perspective of the travellers themselves.

Respondent's demographic profile

Demographic characteristics of respondents were collected from response in questionnaires of 50 respondents comprising 33 females (66%) and 17 males (34%). Table 4.1 showed the frequency percent of each characteristic of the respondents. 54% of the respondents were ranged in age group 24-35 years old. For the occupation of the respondents, most of them were employees in private companies which were accounted for 80% of the total sample. The majority for monthly income was ranged in 50,001-100,000 Baht which was 40%. Most of the respondents which is 76% had experience in travelling abroad with tour agency while the less was travelling abroad for the first time.

Table 4.1 Profile of respondents of Thai tourists (n=50)

Demographic Background	Quantity (n)	Frequency Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	17	34
Female	33	66
Total	50	100
Age range group		
18-23	2	4
24-35	27	54
36-45	9	18
46-60	9	18
>60	3	6
Total	50	100
Occupation		
private company employees	40	80
government and public administration	5	10
Business owner	5	10
Total	50	100
Income range (THB/Month)		
<15,000	1	2
15,001-30,000	13	26
30,001-50,000	9	18
50,001-100,000	20	40
100,001-300,000	7	14
Total	50	100

Outbound travelling experience with travel agency		
Had experience before	38	76
First time	12	24
Total	50	100

Factors analysis and discussion toward outbound package tour selection of Thai travellers

After the collection of questionnaire from 50 selected respondents at Suvarnabhumi airport on their decision making over outbound package tour selection with 12 factors from related researches. The results were shown in table 4.2. It showed 9 factors that were ranked as 'very important' factors which had impact on outbound package tour selection of Thai tourists including Interesting and variety of attractions with $\bar{x} = 4.06$, Reasonable price with $\bar{x} = 4.04$, Service quality with $\bar{x} = 4.02$, Travelling time and period with $\bar{x} = 4.02$, Quality of transportation, accommodation and food with $\bar{x} = 4.00$, Quality of tour leader with $\bar{x} = 4.00$, Convenience with $\bar{x} = 3.94$, Safety of the destination with $\bar{x} = 3.84$, and Travel agency's reputation and creditability with $\bar{x} = 3.72$. The 'moderately important' factors were Promotion and advertising, and Personal experience and acquaintances' recommendation with the travel agency. The last factor was Social benefit. It was ranked as the 'little important' one. This research used the statistic method and data analysis by ranking the score according to Best (1997). The score rating is showed as follow.

4.50 - 5.00 = Most important

3.50 - 4.49 = Very important

2.50 – 3.49 = Moderately important

1.50 – 2.49 = Little important

1.00 - 1.49 = Not important

Table 4.2 Influencing factors on Thai tourists' selection of outbound package tour

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	n	\bar{x}	S.D	Result
Interesting programs and variety of attractions	0	2	7	27	14	50	4.06	0.76	Very important
Reasonable price	0	2	10	22	16	50	4.04	0.82	Very important
Service quality	0	1	11	24	14	50	4.02	0.76	Very important
Travelling time and period	0	3	8	24	15	50	4.02	0.84	Very important
Quality of transportation, accommodation and food	0	2	12	20	16	50	4.00	0.85	Very important
Quality of tour leader	1	1	12	19	17	50	4.00	0.92	Very important
Convenience	0	2	9	29	10	50	3.94	0.73	Very important
Safety & Comfort	0	4	10	26	10	50	3.84	0.83	Very important
Travel agency's reputation and creditability	0	3	20	15	12	50	3.72	0.90	Very important
Promotion and advertising	1	8	16	18	7	50	3.44	0.98	Moderately important
Personal experience and acquaintances' recommendation with the travel agency	2	5	21	14	8	50	3.42	1.00	Moderately important
Social benefit	10	17	14	8	1	50	2.46	1.04	Little important

Interesting and variety of the attractions provided in travelling program

Most of the respondents had a common agreement that the interesting and variety of the attractions provided in travelling program was the most important criterion for them in order to pick one outbound package tour over others. The result showed that 27 persons out of 50 (54%) considered this factor as high impact on their final decision, while 14 persons gave the highest score on this. The $\bar{x} = 4.06$ was classified in the "very important" rank for Thai tourist which had a little contrast on Chang's (2007) study indicated that attractive itinerary could be one influencing factor

on tour selection but not that significant as friend's recommendation was more important on final decision than attractive program. However, this study was conducted on Taiwanese tourists. There were some studies that strongly supported this finding. For example, Jin et al. (2012) argued that a variety of options and flexibility of tour products could be very important factor. Kim's (2013) study also gave strong support on a uniqueness of the itinerary. It claimed that this factor could have a highest level influencing tourists' decision making on package tour purchasing, especially the outbound places that could provide them new experiences. Studies conducted in Hong Kong (Enoch, 1996; Heung and Chu (2000) indicated that people also considered the aspect of variety visits within the limited time since they wanted to pay in one price and could travel to a number of attractions. However, the reputation and respectable of the travel agency was the most important factor to consider an outbound package tour for Hong Kong and Chinese tourists.

Reasonable price

The reasonable price was considered as the 2nd rank criterion for Thai tourists in order to select an outbound package tour. The current research found that 22 persons of 50 agreed that this factor had high influence on them to make a decision, while 16 persons scored this criterion to the highest influence. When compared to individual travelling, cost could be cheaper due to the economy of scale. This study's result supported the findings of Pisalsilp (2009), Wutwanit (2011), and Jatturat (2003) that Thai tourists also pointed out that reasonable price of the package was a key choosing tour package. Not only for Thai tourists, there was a study of Chinese travellers by Chang (2007) which found that reasonable of price was a major impact on tour package selection for Chinese people. This factor was supported by the study of Meidan (1979) and Kendall (1989) who pointed out that price was one factor in determining the choice on package tour because of the price-elasticity of the travellers against travelling as well as the quality and diversification of the package. Additionally, package tour became popular due to its convenience and reasonable price in bundle or value of money was considered. However, there was a study from Hong Kong of Lo and Lam (2004) on selection criteria when choosing an abroad package tour. The result was

a little different as Hong Kong tourists seemed to feel indifferent to price especially for short distance tour, instead, they concerned more on promise date, and personal safety.

Service quality

The study showed that service quality of travel agency was the third ranked criterion for Thai tourists to make a purchase on outbound package tour including the staff's manner, payment method flexibility as well as the willingness to give any information in a very responsive way. 24 persons out of 50 agreed that this criterion had high impact on their selection, while 14 persons thought that this criterion had the highest influence on them. The finding was very interesting as there was only one female respondent who rated this criterion as a little important factor and 100% of male respondents agreed that this factor was at least moderately important to most important. There was a study from Poland claimed that tourists considered the quality of services provided by the travel agency as the most important criterion on travelling package tour selection (Martina, 2012). The same result was shown in the study of Cevdet et al. (2014) whose finding indicated that the tour arrangement and service quality were considered as the most important criterion for foreign tourists in Istanbul to select a package tour. This factor was also strongly supported by the study from Hong Kong as Wong and Kwong (2004), they discovered eight dimensions in selection of outbound package tour criteria of Hong Kong tourist, the service quality of the travel agency was ranked as the third influence criterion while safety was the most important.

Travelling time and period

This factor measured the influence of convenience of time and period of the package tour including the confirmation of the date of travelling and number of day's tour on Thai tourists' decision making on selecting outbound package tour. This criterion was the 4th rank of all the factors influencing with $\bar{x} = 4.02$. The research found that 24 persons out of 50 person agreed that this factor had high impact for them while 15 persons agreed that this criterion was considered as the most important factor. As

most of the respondents (80%) were private company officers that had limited holidays each year, the right time to travel then became very important. This factor seemed to be more flexible on female rather than male as the result showed that 88.3% of male rated this factor as very and most important, while 72.8% of female giving the same rate of score. This argument was supported by the study of Chang (2007) which indicated that Taiwanese tourists would not take a trip immediately until they had free time and the right time to come. In other word, they preferred the travel period in the same period of their holidays. As a parent, they also needed to choose the period of school's holiday in case their children also be able to join the trip. This reason was also shown in an evidence of Hsu et al. (2007) study that Taiwanese preferred to pick the time during their children's school holidays for abroad vacation (Hsu et al., 2007).

Quality of accommodation, transportations, and food

This factor quantified the importance of quality of transportations, accommodations, and food provided in the package tour on Thai travellers' decision of outbound package tour. The results from questionnaires showed that 20 persons out of 50 agreed that this factor had high impact on their package tour selection, while 16 persons thought that it was the most important factors both for men and women. The data analysis in table 4.2 showed that this factor was ranked as the 5th important factor among 12 factors while it was still considered as the "very important" criterion. As it was said in Meidan's (1979) study that not only the quality of staff that was a key success, the quality might refer to the transportations, food, and accommodations. Although time had passed but the important of transportation quality still exist as shown in Alexsandar (2013) study that transportation quality could be a key of tour agency to attract the tourist to make a purchase on package tour as it was considered as the minimum requirement of package tour. For Thai tourists, although this factor was not the number one criterion but it was still very important and had to come together with the quality of food and accommodations.

Quality of tour leader

This factor measured the impact of quality of tour leader in the aspects of professional, knowledge, and also experience on the routes of travelling program on Thai tourists selection of outbound package tour. It was also measured as one of the very important factor for Thai tourists to purchase an outbound package tour with an equal $\bar{x} = 4.0$ as same as quality of accommodations, transportations, and food. The result was 36 persons out of 50 (72.0%) considered it as a very to most important factor especially in male that 9 out of 17 persons (53.0%) thought this factor had the most influence on their package tour selection.

Nowadays, people were more educated. Travelling needed to provide them not only entertainment and fulfil their need but also needed to provide more information and knowledge for them as well. This finding was supported by the study of Ng et al. (2006) which was conducted in Australia indicated that Australian tourists agreed that the quality of travel consultant in the aspect of knowledge and experiences were the most powerful factor impact travellers to pick a travel agency or package tour. As they believed that these qualifications will enhance their travelling experiences and this satisfaction could lead to a repurchase as a consequence (Kotler, 2003). This factor would become more important for Thai tourist since Thailand is now considered as developing country. Not only in Australia which was developed country, Taiwanese also gave an important on tour leader in order to select and outbound package tour as they gave a reason that it made them feel more confident during the trip (Chang, 2007).

When compared to the finding of Lo and Lam (2004) studied about Hong Kong tourist criteria on selection of outbound package tour. It showed that when Hong Kong tourists were choosing long distance package tours they prioritized the quality of the guide while price appeared to be indifferent for them. That meant Hong Kong tourists were willing to pay more to order to get higher quality of tour guide.

In case of Thailand, there were three studies from Pisalsilp (2009), Jatturat (2003) and Wutwanit (2011) that supported this study's finding. They found that the quality of tour lead or tour guide was one of the factors that Thai tourists considered before picking a package tour as they also wanted to have new knowledge and experience from travelling.

Convenience

This factor measured the impact of convenience in setting up and planning package tour as a factor to select outbound tour package. The study showed that 29 person out of 50 persons considered this factor as one of the high impact factors on their outbound package tour selection while 10 person think it was the most important factor. This factor was rated as a “Very important” factor for Thai tourists with $\bar{x} = 3.94$. Having abroad trip might require a lot of detail for travellers to prepare due to the different in culture, landscape, language, climate, and legal. Some agreed that they were willing to pay a few more to buy convenience. They did not need to make several payment for accommodation and transportation as they could pay once for bundle price to a travel agency.

The result aligned with the finding of Wutwanit (2011) that showed main reason for Prayao tourists to select an outbound package tour was mainly from the convenience in arranging trip. Although this reason might not be the most important factor for Thai tourists which samples came from different part of Thailand and different time period of collecting data but it still had some impact.

Moreover, what was very interesting for this finding was extra service that was necessary such as handling visa and applying for insurance improve convenience and value added to a package tour (Persia & Giteson, 1993) as well as Lo and Lam (2004) claimed that an all-inclusive package tour could reduce difficulties and unwanted hassle that was one benefit that could attract tourist to join the program.

Safety & Comfort

This factor referred to familiarity, which in turn leads to both mental and physical comforts and eventually security and safety. It referred to the safety in various aspects comprising environment, people, language, culture, and clear of contagious disease, etc. The result showed that 26 persons out of 50 rated this factor as a very important factor while 10 persons thought it was one of the most important factors and rated as “Very important” rank criterion for Thai travellers on selecting outbound package tour. This factor seemed to have more impact on female rather than male as

78.78% of female scored this factor 4 and 5 degree of important while male scored this factor as very and most important for 58.82% of total male respondents.

The safety of the destination was supported by the research of Quiroga (1990) which said that tour package could provide sense of security and safety to tourists especially for Asian people who were considered as more risk averse person than westerners and tended to concern about safety as the first priority. The study claimed that the respondents feel secure to travel with the people speaking same language and culture.

For some studies of Asian tourists on criteria of selecting outbound package tour such as Taiwanese from Lai and Graefe (2000) found that tour activities and safety were the most important selection criterion for Taiwanese tourists. This was the same as Lo and Lam's (2004) study which found that Hong Kong travellers revealed guaranteed return on promised date and personal safety to be considered as the most important criteria to both short and long distance package tour selection.

In Thailand, the study of Jatturat (2003) showed that Thai travellers thought that safety was the number one criterion to consider in order to select outbound package tour while the study of Wutwanit (2011) also confirmed that safety was also one of the important factors although not number one. Those studies then showed a little difference from this study as most of them showed that safety was the first priority criterion, while in this study it was ranked only number 8th from 12 with rated as only "important" factor not the most.

Travel agency's reputation and creditability

This factor measured the impact of travel agency's reputation and creditability on Thai travellers in order to select an outbound package tour. There were 15 persons out of 50 scored this factor as a very important factor, while 12 persons thought it was one of the most important criteria. However, this factor had less impact on male tourists. 47% of male respondents rated this factor more than moderately important while 57.6% of female rated this factor as very and most important factor. As table 4.2 showed that the reputations and creditability of travel agency was rated as "Very important" and ranked as the 9th criterion. This result supported the study of Louisa and Henry et al. (2012) that talked about the study in Hong Kong that most of the Chinese people prefer to check the reputation of an agency to confirm their decision making over a tour package selection. They said that it can help supporting their confidence on the quality of accommodation and transportation. Wang, Hsieh and Chen (2002), Wong and Kwong (2004), and Bresler (2011) also claimed that Hong Kong tourists particularly gave prominence on reliability and respectable tour agency than other criteria.

However, there was a study from Poland of Martina (2012) that was in line with this study showed that the reputation and image of travel agency was only a part of decision making on outbound package tours selection.

Promotion and advertising

This factor measured the impact of promotion and advertising launched by travelling agency on outbound package tour selection of Thai travellers. It was measured as a 'moderately important' factor and ranked as the 10th important factor out of 12. This factor had more impact on female as 54.6% of female scored it as more than moderately important factor on choosing package tour, while 58.9% of Thai male thought this factor was only moderately important or lower.

It was supported by Bellur, McNamara and Prokop, (1988) and Buhalis, (1998) that the sufficient and reachable brochures on advertisement could make the travellers to consider purchasing a package tour. However, this factor was not

considered as the most important criterion as same as reported in Wutwanit (2011), Pisalsilp (2009), and Jatturat (2003) findings in Thailand that promotion and advertising were not the key factors that led the consumers to make a purchase on package tour although it did have some impact.

Personal experience and acquaintances' recommendation with the travel agency

This factor measured the impact of personal experiences and acquaintances' recommendation of the travel agency on Thai tourists to select an outbound package tour. In detail, this factor was about the travellers' experience on the travel agency that they selected or the recommendation of the travel agency from the acquaintance on their final decision to make a purchase of outbound package tour. For Thai tourists, the score was 11st ranked out of 12 factors in this study as a "moderately" important factor. This factors gave an equally impact on majority of both male and female tourists which 58.9% of male rated it as moderately important or less, while 54.6% of female thought so. This finding was supported by the study of Yau (1998) who pointed out that word of mouth communication could be an effective way to recommend a Chinese tourist to select a tour package. In Hong Kong, there were some studies of Kaynak and Kucukemiroglu (1993) and Heung and Chu (2000) said that family, relatives and friends recommendation could be a significant impact on making a decision.

However, the finding in this study was a little bit different on Taiwanese tourists that found in Chang's (2007) study that people were more persuaded by word-of-mouth particularly by acquaintances than by promotion of the tour agency.

The finding was also different from it was shown in the study of Mathieson (1983) research that travellers were normally impacted by psychological factor which was their own experience more than the impact of pricing. This argument seemed not true for Thai tourists as they judged the price as the very important, while own experience was only moderately important.

Social benefit

This factor measured the impact of social benefit on outbound package tour selection of Thai people. The result was that the respondent saw little importance on the benefit of getting to know new people or making a new relationship during the trip. It was rated as a “little” important factor which the least important among 12 criteria in this research. There was only 1 person out of 50 scored it as one of the most important factors which was a male respondent. However, 32 persons from the sample thought about this factor as only moderately or less important factor. This agreement was indifferent between male and female’s opinion. Only 23.6% of male scored this factor as high and most important factor while 15.2% of female gave high score for this benefit.

The finding was in line with those of Chang’s (2007) study which indicated that Taiwanese prefers to travel with someone they were familiar than making new relationship.

However, this was different from some findings that people wanted to join a tour package for social benefit and they were more enjoyable to travel in group to make new friends (Burke & Resnick, 2000; de Souto, 1985; Lo & Lam, 2004). In addition, it was different from the study that suggests a companionship as number one criteria to select a package tour to offers more opportunities for developing friendships or romance (Schmidt, 1979; Quiroga, 1990; Enoch, 1996; Mancini, 1996). In case of Thai tourists, the study of Jatturat (2003) also showed that Thai people were happy to travel in group to make new friends.

From overall research findings and discussion, there were 9 factors that were quantified as very important factors for Thai tourists in order to make a selection on outbound package tour. The factor that got the highest score was interesting and variety of attractions provided in the program. The result was strongly supported by the study of Wong and Lau (2001) who said that an interested attractions and popular places to see in the itinerary is the most important factor for tourists when they select a package tour. Promotion, advertising and personal experience and acquaintances’ recommendation with the travel agency are classified as moderately important factors. For Thai people, the factor that had least impact on outbound package tour selection was the benefit of having companion during the trip.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This research studied the influencing factors that impact Thai tourists' decision on outbound package tour selection. The topic was very attractive due to an increasing scale of exposure of outbound travelling of Thai travellers. High competitive industry generates large amount of income to players but also eliminates some travelling companies from the cycle. The winners can enjoy big benefits, just to know the right strategies to win customers' mind.

Changing in the nature of business and culture can have impact on travellers' behaviour. Knowing the right influencing factors can benefit travelling companies not to waste budget on wrong focus. On the other hand, the implementation from knowing what is really important can make them conduct the right strategies as well. This research was updated and implemented on large target which was Thai people not only in Bangkok or specific areas. The respondents were limited only the person who had power to make a final decision on package tour selection. The data was collected from 50 respondents to represent the whole Thai travellers by conducting questionnaire with open-end suggestions.

The results of the study showed that there was no single but a set of nine factors that almost equally influence the decision on purchasing the package tour. The top nine influencing factors, ranking from the highest to lowest, were 1) Interesting and variety of attractions in the program, 2) Reasonable price, 3) Overall service quality, 4) Travelling time and period, 5) Quality of food, transportation and accommodation, 6) Quality of tour leader, 7) Convenience, 8) Safety, and 9) Travel agency reputation and creditability. The result was very interesting since it showed the selective behaviour of the travellers. They were very wise and concerning more about Quality. The study also found that the three factors - Promotion, Personal experiences and acquaintances' recommendation, and Social benefit - had little impact on travellers' final decision.

While the study shared similarities in a set of influencing factors to previous researches, the study differs in term of the importance ranking for each factor. For example, due to differences in variables including time conducting the research and samples' culture and nationality the sample personal experience and acquaintances' recommendation could be the most influencing factors for Chinese travellers in selecting an outbound package tour (refs), but it was ranked almost the lowest factor for Thai tourists.

5.2 Practical implications

The competition in travel industry is very high and seems to increase as time pass especially among travelling agencies who provides full-service package and program tour for travellers. To survive and remain competitive, business owners need to be efficient and provide the right product with a customer-driven mind-set and to differentiate itself from the competition. While there are nine important factors to clients the companies should match their strengths with the factors within the relevant set of factors and attempt to reduce their weakness by improving the quality and efficiency of their service.

From the research findings, the first important factor is interesting and variety of program tour, so business owners should collect the information from tourists about their desired destinations and travelling style. The second factor is reasonable price that means the companies may not have to set a very cheap price, but it is better to show the reasonable price when compared to the quality of other aspects. The third one is service quality, the companies have to make sure that all staffs are well-trained to provide best service in overall to the customers. The improvement can also be done by following customers' recommendation.

The travelling time and period is ranked as the forth important factor. The travel companies should check the holiday and also semester break period to provide the right time program to the tourist. As the quality of transportation, accommodation, and food is the fifth important factor, the companies have to provide at least acceptable quality of these criteria for the customers. They may use the questionnaires to collect information from the customers for feedback of the hotel, food, and transportation to see

the satisfaction and make an improvement. The sixth important factor from the finding is quality of tour leader. The companies have to make sure that the tour leaders are expertise enough with good knowledge about the destinations by let them do the exam every quarter or 6 months to keep them updated. The companies may provide training program to the tour leader in term of service to ensure the quality of tour leaders and fulfil tourists' needs.

Convenience is the seventh important factor on outbound package tour selection. The companies have to make sure that all the processes of travelling including getting information, confirmation, and payment, etc. have to be easy for the tourists to avoid suspension of purchase. Moreover, travel agency should focus more on the safety of the program including travelling method and destination. The companies may avoid those destinations with domestic violence or have a spread of infective disease. The next important factor is travel agency's reputation and creditability. The recommendation for this factor is, the companies should join the competition events. By getting award, the reputation will be improved. The companies may try to beat all criteria to get certificated from government and other travel institution. The logo and grand are also important, they have to be designed well to represent the quality company.

Promotion and advertising is ranked as the moderate important, so it is still a requirement for the travel agency to provide promotion and have advertisement to create brand recognition and awareness to the tourists. As personal experience and acquaintances' recommendation is moderately important, the travel agency need to ensure impressive experiences to all customers as they will be the one who help promoting the company. The discount for the loyalty customers and new customers with reference are interesting campaigns. The last factor is social benefit. It is ranked in little important factor. For recommendation, the company has nothing to do to promote this aspect, however, it is also important to make the tour members feel comfortable with fellow traveller by ice breaking activity during the trip. This can embed positive feeling to the tour members for the next trip.

5.3 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

This study had some limitations that should be addressed. This research was conducted at Suvarnabhumi airport during the holiday period so it might contain more information of the respondents who had limited vacations such as company employees and tended to travel only during the free time. The data were gathered using questionnaire in which the criteria were given. Although there was an open-end question provided for the respondents to give suggestions, most of them did not answer. Hence, the in-depth information could not be obtained. Conducting a research at the airport could be one barrier in gathering information as some of the respondents were in hurry and might not focus enough on giving score on each factor. Another limitation was the number of respondents, the more respondents giving information the more accurate the result could be. As the information was gathering during short holiday period, most of the destinations of the respondents were in Asia which was considered as a short trip and still in not totally different culture.

For future research, the improvement can be done by collecting data from several days and occasion not only during the holiday to see if there are any differences in result and opinion. It may be better to have an interview with individual traveller one on one in order to get in-depth information or ideas. The future research may collect the questionnaire form several types of tourists such as those travelling short and long distance and destinations to see if there is a difference in priority of the criteria. It may be more interesting if the future research can also collect and classify the travelling intension of the respondents such as for shopping, relax, or fulfil personal need as it may be some differences on how they consider each criterion on selection of outbound package tour.

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APPENDICES



Appendix A : Questionnaires Questions

1. What is your gender?
 - Male Female
2. What is your age? (Years)
 - < 18 18 – 23 24 – 35 36 – 45 46 – 60 > 60
3. What is your occupation?
 - Private company employee Government admin. Business owner
4. What is your income per month? (THB)
 - < 15,000 15,001 – 30,000 30,001 – 50,000 50,001 – 100,000
 - 100,001 – 300,000 > 300,000
5. Have you ever travelled abroad before?
 - Never Yes, 1 – 2 times per year Yes, > 2 times per year
9. How much did it cost for this package tour? (THB)
 - < 15,000 15,001 – 30,000 50,001 – 100,000 > 100,000
10. Please rate the factors affecting your decision to choose foreign package tour;
 - 5 = Most important, 4 = Very important, 3 = Moderately important
 - 2 = Little important, 1 = Not important
 - Interesting programs and variety of attractions
 - Reasonable price
 - Service quality
 - Travelling time and period
 - Quality of transportation, accommodation and food
 - Quality of tour leader
 - Convenience
 - Safety & Comfort
 - Travel agency's reputation and creditability
 - Promotion and advertising
 - Personal experience and acquaintances' recommendation with the travel agency
 - Social Benefit