

**FACTORS THAT INFLUENCING THAI OFFICE WORKING
AGE IN BANGKOK'S PREFERENCE TOWARD FREE
INDEPENDENT TRAVEL TO JAPAN**



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TRAVEL TO JAPAN**

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to explore psychological factors that influencing preferences of free independent travelers who prefer to travel independently and also neglect on group package tour which is old traditional method when travelling for Thai outbound tourists. The scope of research is determined to apply five psychological dimension(s) included: price consciousness, risk taking, sense of freedom, spontaneous explorers and open to new experiences to on their travel preferences. The semi-structure interview is conducted on this research to collect information from interviewing with eighteen respondents who has experienced on free independent travelling in Japan. The result from data collection presented that free independent travelers love to organize their own itinerary by themselves and happy for preparing their trip. They would like to escape from time pressure and routine action. In addition, they emphasized more on low price, discount and promotion during consider to purchase. Besides, free independent travellers were not meet with the definition of spontaneous explorer as they preferred to know something in details if it is an interesting for them. On the other hand, the aspect of risk taking showed that free independent travelers concerned more on safety, stability and would avoid risk during trip.

KEY WORDS: Free independent travel / Mode of travel / Psychological variables that influencing method of travelling

33 Pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Travel can bring great happiness. The travelling is a dream and inspiration of people to explore new things. Travel can make people feel relax and escape from routine activity to explore the real world and discover their true self.

1.1 Research Background

People love to journey to see new things in this world. International travelling allows people to explore others arts and cultures, interact with local people, taste with local food, and local languages however people has different past travel experiences, language skills, concerned about insecurity and unfamiliarity incidents from the new destination thus the outbound tourism industry emerged to diminish these kinds of problems.

In the past, Thai outbound tourists preferred the group package tour (GPT) which is the traditional method of travelling. The travel agencies will provide all-in-one service to consumer while the consumer just purchase a single price with agreement from travel agencies for their vocation trip and the travel agency will provide all booking services for airline's tickets, accommodations, transportations, create itinerary, restaurant and a tour guide service along with the trip.

However, the world is now connected as the technology improved. The people who adopt technology are easy to explore new things though their desktops which encourage the method of travelling as free independent traveler (FIT) among Thai tourism sector. A trend is growing into independent travel and the relative decline in package travel (Chesshyre 2002; Pryor 2001; Scutte 1997). The free independent

traveler (FIT) is able to purchase their flight tickets, hotel, restaurants and transportation reservation via online-booking and they are able to search for travel information to learn about attractions, activities and travel routes in the destination and easy to plan their own program after reviewing from travel's bloggers.

The Internet is an important variable that shifted the trend of free independent travel since people is easy to look through the information source and plan prior to arrival the destination. Besides, the lower cost of roaming is highly competitive in network service providers industry whereas a continuing of a new technology device such as a portable Wi-Fi router for Internet. Users can start browsing the Internet and get online on many devices (phones, laptops and tablets) which is reducing some uncertain incidents and reduce risk during travelling.

Japan is the top of Thai tourist's destination city with a uniqueness culture, beautiful architectures, minimalism style, local food; Sushi and Sake, people with manner of politeness and friendliness, and a modern world of fashionable, hi technology, and supreme transportations. The government of Japan has much offer information and facilities for tourists who support the new trend of travel pattern and travel agencies attempt to develop new product and service and optional packages in Japan to attract free independent traveler.

According to Japan national tourism organization revealed about Thai visited to Japan in year 2015 in the total of 796,731 Thai tourists visited to Japan which increased by 21.20 percent from the year 2014. The main critical point is when Japan has taken the visa exemption arrangements with 67 countries in year 2014; those citizens of those countries are not required to obtain visas to enter Japan which granted a short-term period of stay at the time of landing permission 15 days for Brunei, Indonesia, and Thailand. As a result of visa waiver, stimulate Thai tourists is ease to travel Japan and more competitive in outbound tourism industry, airline businesses, online booking businesses and TV commercials attempt to promote Japan.

1.2 Problem statement

An increasing of tourist is more travelers neglect on group package tour (GPT) which was tend to be quite structured and not flexibility and freedom on vacation (Quiroga 1990). Independent traveler would like to organize their own schedules they want to have experience the real traditional culture whereas a package tours is only walking around in a hurry but some group of tourist prefer to stay with no time pleasure. They are happy to search information and plan for their air ticket, accommodation, attraction and transportation. Quest (1990, p. 137) said "The decline of the package tour may be due to the fact that it has become unfashionable" and more people travel overseas. They become more sophisticated in their demands, more importantly; they have more confident to travel independently." From the change in new travel style among Thai tourists, it is a challenge for tour operators and travel agencies to develop more flexible and customize their product and service to rival on the competitive tourism industry and to study the factors that influencing individuals to engage in travel's choice.

1.3 Objective of Study

The main purpose of this study is to explore and gain insight which dimensions in the term of psychological that influencing toward the increasing trend of free independent travelling (FIT). In the past, Thai people tend to travel with group package tours (All-inclusive package tour) which provide all in one service to consumer and this is the old traditional travelling method in Thai outbound tourism. I would like to conduct the research by applying these five psychological variables to investigate in this study included: price consciousness, risk taking, sense of freedom, spontaneous explorers and open to new experiences to study on their travel preferences.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

World Tour Organized (UNWTO) defined the tourism as the activities of individual person traveling to and staying in places outside their normal environment for not more than one year for leisure, business and other purposes. It is a distinction between tourism and travel. For tourism to happen there must be a displacement: an individual has to travel, using any type of means of transportation. There are three criteria are used simultaneously in order to characterize a trip as belonging to tourism. The displacement must be such that (1) It involves a displacement outside the usual environment: this term is of utmost importance and will be discussed later on. (2) Type of purpose is the travel must occur for any purpose different from being remunerated from within the place visited: the previous limits, where tourism was restricted to recreation and visiting family and friends are now expanded to include a vast array of purposes. (3) Duration: only a maximal duration is mentioned, not a minimal. Tourism displacement can be with or without an overnight stay. We shall discuss the particularity of in transit visits, from a conceptual and statistical point of view.

Guyer Feuler (1905) defined tourism is a collection of activities, services and industries which deliver a travel experience comprising transportation, accommodation, eating and drinking establishments, retail shops, entertainment businesses and other hospitality services provided for individuals away from home.

2.1 Mode of travel

Outbound travel can be classified into two types of travel modes. The group package tour (GPT), also referred to as the group inclusive tour (GIT), and the

free independent traveler (FIT), also referred to as the Independent traveler (IT) (Koder, 2007; Wang et al., 2000). Mak (2004) defined the group package tour (GPT) as an all-inclusive package tour with a specified size and as a group or groups traveling on scheduled transportation.

2.1.1 Free Independent travel (FIT)

The free independent traveler is considered to represent a customized trip. The free independent traveler customizes the trip by gathering pre-trip information from friends, performing on-line searches, communicating with specialty providers, and trying other methods. The FIT is described as person who likes to travel on their own planning. They tend to travel in smaller groups or in couples and avoid mass tourism and the holiday packages offered by travel agencies. In addition, they prefer an individualistic approach to travel and tend to pass on their own experiences, ideas, and knowledge to others. From the work of Morrison, Hsieh, and O'Leary (1993) defined backpackers are one sector of the independent travelers as person who travel on their own itinerary and making their own transportation and accommodation arrangements, and choosing not to purchase Group package tour. Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) define backpackers as independent travelers on an extended independent vacation, staying in budget accommodation, with an emphasis on informal and participatory vacation activities that expose them to the culture of the destination country. Many of these types of tourists are students or young professionals. By the definition, those travelers who have booked only air travel ticket from travel agencies are considered as Independent travelers.

2.1.2 Group Package Tour (GPT)

The group package tour combines elements of a pleasure trip, such as transportation, baggage handling, accommodations, sightseeing schedule and other services into product that is sold to the consumer at a single price. GPT are generally

put together by tour operators and tour wholesalers, who purchase the components from their suppliers, such as airlines, local coach service providers, hotels, restaurants, and related parties. GPT products were originally created for travelers in order to provide them with a convenient way to purchase travel-related services. GPT companies maintain a volume-pricing advantage and in many cases, have access and priority to destinations otherwise difficult and expensive to visit, despite advantages offered through the Internet.

2.2 Psychological variables that influencing FIT

2.2.1 Price consciousness

Price consciousness is exclusively regarded with consumer who emphasize on paying a low price. Price sensitivity is closely related to price consciousness, which is defined as the extent to which price is used as a negative criterion for consumers' decision making (Lichtenstein, Bloch, & Black, 1988; Monroe & Petroschius, 1981; Zeithaml, 1984). That is a type of consumers who rely more on price than on other characteristics of a product tend to view price in its negative role. Price consciousness has been used as a proxy to, and interchangeable with, price sensitivity (Petrick, 2004, 2005).

The present study followed a more precise definition by Petrick (2004) and price sensitivity is on the basis of price consciousness, indicating the effect of a change in price on customers' willingness to pay. While price sensitivity has occasionally been measured on a basis with the weight attached to price in consumers' evaluation of a product's overall attractiveness (Erdem, Swait, & Louviere, 2002), we followed a widely-used multidimensional measurement of price sensitivity with five items (Goldsmith & Newell, 1997; Lichtenstein et al., 1988).

From the past studied of Sproles and Kendall (1986) regarding eight factor model of consumer style. The decision-making style is a mental orientation characterizing to make decision based on personality in psychology. Price-Conscious is consumer who is focused more on price and incentive by cheap price, discount and promotion. The price consciousness consumer is aimed to buy product and service toward value for money.

2.2.2 Risk-taking

Tourists are classified based on the personality traits and a characteristic has been used understanding behavior of travelers. Alvarez and Asugman (2006) identified risk taking attitude to as a new experience, variety seeking, and attitude towards planning factors influencing mode of travel between group package and free independent tours. In addition, Ajzen (1991) suggested that risk-taking is an expression by the positive and negative evaluations of participants while engaged in certain behavior. The components of unpredictable results and attitude toward risks may play as an important role of adventure tourism. Besides, the past studied found that a risk-taking attitude has a strongly relationship among youth travel behavior (Han et al., 2010)

2.2.3 Sense of freedom

From the study of Krippendorf (1987) suggests that travel offers a sense of freedom and self-determination not available in everyday life, escape from routine activities. The independent explorer based on the motivation. It might be that independent travel offers greater opportunities for this very sense of freedom. (Mayo and Jarvis 1981; Anderson (1970) people may be born with a sense of curiosity which is a driver of need to explore the world around them, curiosity for new places and people. In addition, Anderson described the characteristics of an independent traveler

as independent traveler is not looking for anything in particular and is not greatly concerned with what his or her discovers, it is a sense of true explorer.

The definition of free independent traveler is applied to the travelers who have high degree of freedom in their itinerary, flexibility to change and adjust in their schedule every time to visit attractions, restaurant, and activities in the destination.

2.2.4 Spontaneous explorer

The tourists are more spontaneous, with a lower level of vacation planning and a desire to do what comes on the spur of the moment. Spontaneous Explorers is the person who want to get involve with something in details and want to know deep inside, they do not fear with the risk because they can learn from it and with this point, they can see varieties of things such as attractions, food, people. (Mark A. Bonn, Howook “Sean” Chang, Jerome Agrusa, Leslie Furr, Woo Gon Kim and Hae Young Lee, FIU Review Vol.27 No.1).

2.2.5 Open to new experiences

Poon (1993) described a distinction between traditional and new tourist that traditional tourist aims to search for sun, are cautions and follow the people and they travel because the vacation is like a reward to them and treated them from a routine life. Plog (1973, 1991) identifies two personality types among tourists. In the term of psycho, Plog indicated the centric traveler is safety seeking and prefers the familiar, and the opposite non-centric traveler is adventure seeking and prefers the exotic.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is conducted by semi-structure interviews to collect insight information toward the travelling preference from Thai tourists in working group age who had travel experiences in Japan with a free independent travelling method (FIT). According to free independent travel method is currently growing sector of Thai tourism industry as people tend to search for their own travel information from Internet before making decisions, use online booking for book their flight, accommodation, transportation and planned travel program prior arrival to destination. In addition, the nature of independent travelers is a group of travelers who prefer to travel on their own itinerary, flexibility and control the cost of travelling and unhappy with time pleasure.

3.1 Research Method

The qualitative data collection method is conducted this study to insight the psychological variables that influence the participants' preference on the free independent traveling method. The interview questions are designed and related to research topic of "Which factors that influencing toward Thai office working age in Bangkok preferences in free independent travel". The psychological aspects included; price consciousness, risk taking, sense of freedom, spontaneous explorers and open to new experiences.

The data collection was conducted by semi-structure interviewing included opens ended questions which provided the quality of data which is bested interviewer

for data screening accurately. It helps to capture emotion on their participants, feeling and behavior and this qualitative method is compelling the activity keep on the track.

3.2 Sample size

The sample size were eighteen participants; twelve office workers who live in Bangkok Metropolis which had experienced in free independent travelling to Japan and four participants had experiences in both Independent travel and Group package tour. The study is extended to perceive aspects from one participant of sales executive from a travel agency, one participant of tour leader who work for a tour wholesaler company.

The research questions were designed and categorized into two groups of questions. The first group is Thai office workers in Bangkok within the age range between 24 - 39 years old, four participants had both experience with Free Independent travel (FIT) and Group package tour (GPT) and twelve participants who had only experiences with independent travel are interviewed to investigate the travel's choice, share their own experience toward outbound trip, indicate their travel characteristics, benefit and drawback from their trip and better understand the attitude toward group package tour.

The second group is two persons working in outbound tourism industry, one sale executive from Travel agency, one outbound tour guide, and one person who is owner of travel agency. The 13 questions are designed to study the consumer's criteria's and inquiries before buying group package tour. These questions will gain the aspects from a current situation of Thai tourism industry.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The data collection was conducted by using semi-structure interview approach with all interviewees. The respondents were divided into two groups which sixteen respondents were selected on the basis that they have been travel experiences in Japan by free independent travel method and the second group of two respondents who have been working in tourism's industry.

The author designed the interview questions to counterpart each group of interviewers for data collection which is more specific and help to in depth understand their perspective, expectation and criteria towards the preference in free independent travelling (FIT).

4.1 Profile of respondents

The demographics information was included in the interview questions. The respondents were requested to identify their demographic categories and travel characteristics when they visited Japan that included: (1) Age, (2) Gender, (3) Occupation, (4) Education, and (5) Income. In addition, the second part of questions was designed to identify their travel characteristics included: (1) Length of stay, (2) Size of travel party, (3) Frequency of visit to Japan, (4) Method of travelling to Japan, (5) Relation among travel party and (6) Ability to speak Japanese.

The second group was requested to reveal the personal information included: (1) Age, (2) Gender, (3) Education, (4) number of working year in tourism industry.

Table 4.1 Demographic of respondents that had experience to Japan.

Respondent	Age	Gender	Occupation	Education	Income (Baht)
1	25	Male	Private officer	Bachelor degree	25,000
2	39	Female	Private officer	Master degree	48,000
3	27	Female	Private officer	Bachelor degree	25,000
4	30	Male	Private officer	Master degree	45,000
5	24	Female	Private officer	Bachelor degree	30,000
6	28	Female	Private officer	Bachelor degree	33,000
7	23	Male	Private officer	Bachelor degree	42,000
8	24	Female	Private officer	Bachelor degree	25,000
9	27	Female	Private officer	Bachelor degree	30,000
10	26	Female	Private officer	Bachelor degree	35,000
11	25	Female	Private officer	Bachelor degree	30,000
12	25	Female	Private officer	Bachelor degree	35,000
13	38	Male	Private officer	Master degree	48,000
14	24	Female	Private officer	Bachelor degree	30,000
15	25	Female	Private officer	Bachelor degree	35,000
16	25	Female	Private officer	Bachelor degree	34,000

Table 4.1 illustrates the data of majority of the respondents; twelve were female, while four of respondents were male. The age of respondents was between 27 to 39 years old and they were all private officers. Three of respondents were graduated in Master Degree, while thirteen were graduated in Bachelor degree. The average income was 34,375 Baht per month.

Table 4.2 Travel characteristics of 16 respondents

Travel characteristics						
Respondent Number	Length of stay (Days)	Size of travel party	Frequency of visit	Method of travelling to Japan	Who did you travel with?	Japanese speaking
1	15	5	3	FIT	Friends	No
2	9	6	1	FIT	Friends	No
3	10	7	3	FIT	Friends	No
4	7	2	1	FIT	Friends	No
5	10	1	3	FIT	Alone	No
6	7	3	3	FIT	Friends	Yes
7	10	3	3	Both	Friends	No
8	15	4	2	Both	Friends	No
9	6	2	3	FIT	Friends	No
10	5	2	2	FIT	Friends	No
11	7	10	2	FIT	Family	No
12	6	2	2	Both	Family	No
13	7	5	2	Both	Family	No
14	5	2	2	FIT	Friends	No
15	6	3	2	FIT	Family	No
16	7	3	2	FIT	Friends	No

Table 4.2 shows that the travel characteristics of each respondents. Out of sixteen respondents, the minimum length of stay was five days whereas the maximum was fifteen days per trip. The most of respondents travelled with two to three members and the maximum size of party was ten members. For the frequency of visit of respondents to Japan is shown that there were fourteen disclosed that it is not their first time visiting, while two respondents visited for the first time. Four of sixteen respondents declared that they had experiences in both Independent travel and Group package tour. For the relative among travel party, a majority of respondents travelled with their friends were ten respondents, five respondents travelled with family, and one respondent travelled alone. In addition, the one of sixteen respondents can speak Japanese.

Table 4.3 Profile of two respondents working with tourism industry

Respondent	Age	Occupation	Education	Number of year work for travel business for Japan
17	35	Tour leader	Bachelor degree	22 Years
18	31	Sales executive	Bachelor degree	6 Years

Table 4.3 shows the profile of respondent 17, he was 35 years old and he has working for 22 years as tour leader and sales executive at tour wholesaler company. The respondent 18, she was 31 years old and works at the position of sales executive at tour agency company in Thailand.

4.2 Research Findings

In this chapter included an examination of the study and a summary of those findings. There were sixteen respondents engaged in the interviews and provided level of important dimensions influencing their preferences in choosing free independent travelling method when they visited Japan. However, the purpose of this study is to investigate and obtain the data in the term of psychological aspects therefore the variables being considered were categorized by price consciousness, risk-taking, sense of freedom, spontaneous explorer and open to new experience to describe and summarize the key factors affecting decision making to choose free independent travel method. On the other hand, the author determined to examine the opposite point of view from tour operator and travel agency to acknowledge the tourist behavior and current situation in tourism industry.

4.2.1 Price consciousness

From the interviews, almost all respondents revealed that price plays as the important part in their decision making to purchase and reserve for their vocation by sharing their experiences as follows questions;

Which airlines you choose for travelling to Japan (Budget airline / full service airlines)? How about your accommodation?

“I think the free independent travelling is cheaper than the package tour. I do not want to pay for service fees that charged into the price of package tour. When I set the budget of trip, I have to search for the lowest price of airline at that time then I would book in advance to get an early bird discount for accommodation. However, I choose to stay at 3-star hotel to get more convenience because I travel with friends and their little child. I think that I can control the budget very well when travelling aboard I think it is worth of money when comparing with the same price of package tour.”

“When I got confirmation from my friends then I would find the lowest price from low-cost airlines because they release many promotions to attract customer. Besides, I have to check price and compare the benefit from each carrier thoroughly. For the accommodation, I choose 3-star hotel but I have to compare the location and price of hotel which one is the best choice and worth of money before making decision”.

“When I make a decision for booking its depend on the price at that moment. I would choose the cheapest one to save my budget, I usually book it in advance to save the budget and it will be low cost airlines. I usually book for hotel with Airbnb because good price and convenience”.

Moreover, one of respondent mentioned that “I always choose low cost airlines but business class seat since the duration of flight was five hours to Tokyo thus I prefer to comfortable seat for the rest. I believe it is worth of money rather than paying the same range of price but sit in economy seat from full service airlines.”

“It depended on the companions of the trip, if I travel alone, I would choose low cost airline; if I travel with my parents, I would choose full service airlines because I need my parents get more comfortable seat.”

In contrast, four of respondents mentioned that “I would choose full service airlines because they provide standard service in order to get more benefit on baggage allowance and comfortable seat because my friends and I love shopping and they want to carry on large baggage. If they travel with low cost carriers, I have to pay additional fees for loading baggage.”

In summarized on their making decision when they travelling, the result was shown that there were four would choose full service airlines while a majority with sixteen of respondents would choose budget airlines as the figure below:

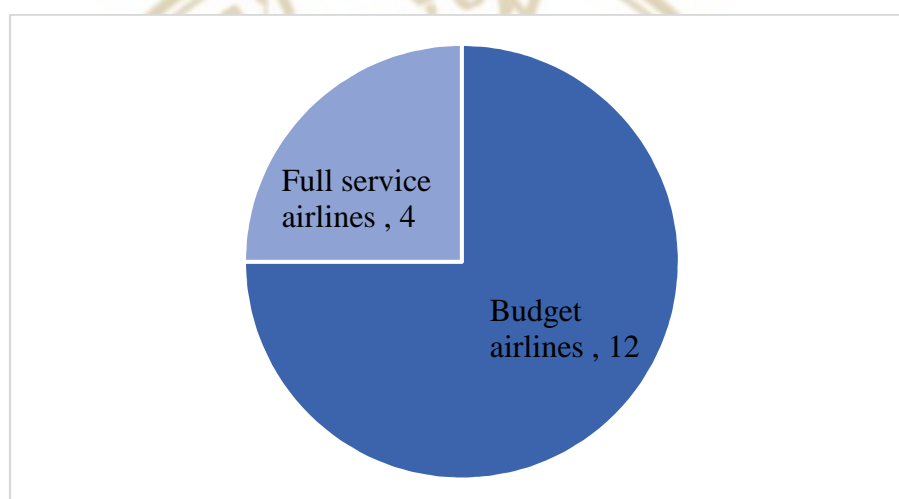


Figure 4.1 Result of choosing airlines when travelling to Japan

Another question was developed to explore on their motivation with low price. Do you usually wait for promotion or discount when booking for airlines, accommodation, and transportation?

“I always search and wait for promotion and discount before booking for my airline every time. I feel like I am the winner of the game and proud of this triumph if I get cheapest price.”

“I am a fan page of many social medias thus I usually receive an update promotion. For my last Japan trip, I got the flight ticket with up to 30% discount and accommodation is not quite easy to wait for promotion, I have to book in advance to

get early bird rate and I also study the route and calculate for my transportation's expense during trip which one is cheaper between single ride or pay a package.”

“I always look for promotion at all even the price of public transportation in Japan, I would buy it at Thai travel fair which is a bit cheaper than the price that you buy when you arrive Japan.”

“Sometimes I purchase the flight ticket first even though I never plan to go that place. I bought it because it is cheap. I have a plan to visit Canada this year but if I see the cheap flight ticket from another destination, I would switch to go that place instead immediately. I think I am a price conscious person.”

“The price is the first criteria when customer make a decision to purchase a package tour. They usually ask for discount and promotion and compare the price between programs.” – Sales executive from travel agency

These above statements are relying with the past study by Petrick (2004), (2005) mentioned that price sensitivity is a type of consumers that rely more on price than on other characteristics of a product tend to view price in its negative role. The price consciousness is exclusively regarded with consumer who emphasize on paying a low price and effecting of a change in price on customers' willingness to pay. The opinion from respondents is synonymous with the past studied from Sproles and Kendall, 1986, stated that price-conscious consumer is focused more on price and incentive by cheap price, discount and promotion. This group of consumer is aimed to buy product and service toward value for money.

4.2.2 Risk taking

From the interviews, not many people are willing to take risk when travelling on their vocation. From Ajzen (1991) suggested that risk-taking is an expression by the positive and negative evaluations of participants while engaged in certain behavior. The components of unpredictable results and attitude toward risks may play as important role of adventure tourism. Most of respondents spent long time

to customize their own program perfectly. They had well prepared on their map and transportations in deep detail before arrival to avoid risk as figure shown below:

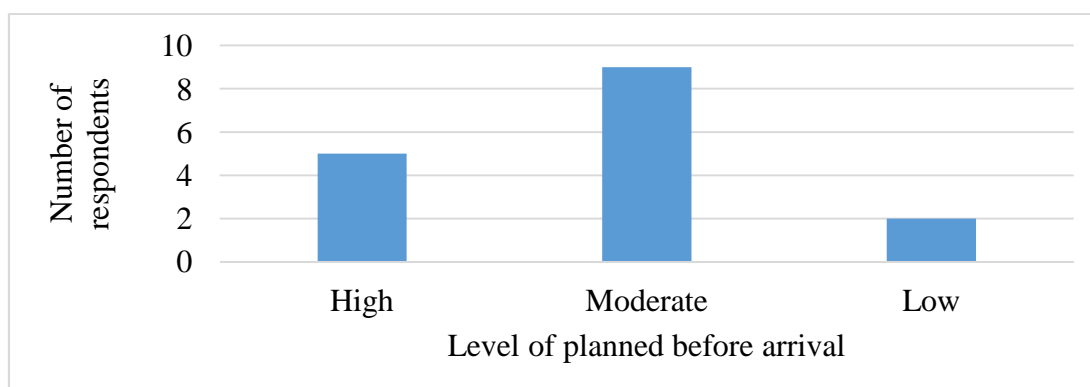


Figure 4.2 Result of level of planned before arrival to Japan

“I plan everything into my itinerary like program tour but flexible, I put all information about attraction place, route information, length of stay, admission fees and outstanding spot of each places for taking picture”

“I make a plan in detailed with map for attraction place because I do not want to get lost and waste the time.”

“I always plan the program roughly but plan for transportation in detail as public transportation in Japan is excellent but expensive. There are many different types of transportation passes that offer any number of ticket combinations. I have spent a lot of time over one month to research and understand the options of before buying the ticket. Besides, I have to check timetables and even platform number because some passes have limitations and if I miss the train, it is a lose time and cost.”

“I always purchase an additional insurance for safety when travelling.”

In contrast, one respondent revealed that “I had only minor plan and my travel party did not visit the place that I would, then I separated from my party and go alone without any maps even though I am worry about my English language. That was much memorized moment from my life.”

With the question that “Do you ever plan after arrival to the destination? Fourteen respondents never plan after arrival to the destination. It is too risk at least they want to know the address of hotel. In the other hand, two of the respondent had this experience as follows;

“I never plan anything before arrival to Osaka then I lost the way to go to my hotel and take long time to arrival but it was not bad for me.”

“I did not book for accommodation for that trip and when I arrived to the airport. Unfortunately, I cannot book for the hotel due to high season then I slept at the airport for one night, this was not a good time for me.”

Most of all respondents cannot speak Japanese but they believed that Japanese is helpful. Therefore, they feel comfortable to ask local people for help and seven respondents mentioned that they had experiences that local people not even provided information but they walk the tourist to that place.

“When I showed the picture of that attraction place, a local people walk with me to that place. The Japanese is very kind person,”

“The group package tour is provided a full service to customer included the insurance during trip, some customer changed their mind and method of travelling after I explained the benefit, more safety from travel with group tour.”- Tour leader

4.2.3 Sense of freedom

From the interviews, all of respondents declared that they would choose the free independent travel method because they do not prefer time pressure, they would to customize their own program and spent a good time with their travel party that they would as follows;

“I preferred to FIT method because I think it is compatible with my travelling's style that I loved to create everything in my plan on my own, choose where to go, where to stay. Everything in my trip is flexible.”

“I do not like time pressure when I travelled. I would like to create my own itinerary to fit my needed and I would to spend a good time with my friends.”

“I usually go with a small party size, I want a freedom to go wherever if this place is not quite interesting for me, I would move to another place.”

“I want to manage everything with myself. I feel enjoy to customize my own program for my travel party and choose the restaurant that I would.”

“I love to travel because it makes me escape from my routine life, I feel relax when I find the new world.”

“I want to customize on my own flight, time table and budget. When I travelled to Japan I want to taste an authentic local food restaurant.”

“I think that I choose the FIT method because I feel happy to journey with a small group of party that I wish. It was quite private and easy to go everywhere whereas I do not have too much freedom when travelling with group tour because I have to spend most of the time with unfamiliar people.”

“I want to stay long time to get my inspiration, try to find some interesting things without limited of time. I love Japanese art and culture and I apply that inspiration into my work and normal life.”

“The FIT provides the total freedom of where to go and what to do. Everything is up to my pleasure.”

“To travel with group tour is travelling to meet the group tour's goal not my goal. Their goal is to take customer to the place that they indicated on the program. I want to choose the place that I really like and I do not like to visit a tourist spot.”

“The member of group has a limited of time around one and a half for each attraction places since the program tour is tide then the member cannot stay for long time in each place.” - Tour leader

These statements supported to the past study of Krippendorf (1987) suggested that travel offers a sense of freedom and self-determination not available in

everyday life, escape from routine activities. All respondents preferred independent travel which offers greater opportunities for this very sense of freedom. (Mayo and Jarvis 1981; Anderson (1970). People may be born with a sense of curiosity which is a driver of need to explore the world around them, curiosity for new places and people. In addition to the study of Anderson described the characteristics of an independent traveler is not looking for anything in particular and is not greatly concerned with what his or her discovers, it is a sense of true explorer.

4.2.4 Spontaneous Explorer

From the interviews, not many of respondent matched with spontaneous explorer who is the person that want to get involve with something in details and want to know deep inside and they can learn from it and with this point, they can see varieties of things such as attractions, food, people. (Mark A. Bonn, Howook “Sean” Chang, Jerome.

“I just want to sightseeing and relax to find new things, taking photo and gathering a good time with friends.”

“I just walk around the attraction places, take a picture, I think it is depend on my interesting, I will spend long time with the things that I love.”

On the other hand, one respondent is very in detail of each attraction. She travelled to Japan alone and prepared just a minor plan for the trip. She embedded herself in that place and spent all the day to touch real art and culture, local people, and local food. The history and information of each place were studied before arrival to the destination.

“I always study the history of each places in deep detailed by reading a book. Somewhere I spent the whole day in order to gather everything before leaving, I like to take picture, talk with local people, and slow down my time into that place. I would like to absorb that time as soon as I can do.”

“If you travel with group tour, they are an expertise to convey history for you and provide in deep detail of everywhere but if you go yourself, you need to study the detail before visiting.” – Tour leader

4.2.5 Open to experience

From the interviews, all of respondents defined the traveling is to open new experience. They gain new experience from the others place as they never see. They want to explore themselves from sight-seeing around, talk with local people and they would like to try local food and choose their own restaurant. They feel excited with local activity like the Onsen, sashimi and included their experience with the modern technology likes Shinkansen, the speedy transportation in Japan. This finding supported by Poon (1993) described that a tourist aims to search for sun, are cautions and follow the people and they travel because the vacation is like a reward to them and treated them from a routine life. This interviews can supported by Plog (1973, 1991) that indicated the centric traveler is safety seeking and prefers the familiar, and the opposite non-centric traveler is adventure seeking and prefers the exotic.

“Travelling is finding new experience that I can create my own journey and enjoy every moment of it. All of things that happen will offer new learn and apply it to their everyday life. Although sometimes that I faced was good things and bad things, but it is new experience in their life.”

“I want to travel to explore things around me in order to get inspiration to do things when I back to my normal life.”

“I want to open my new experiences in the place that I never seen. I think that Japanese is a very unique art and culture and I am happy to visit Japan, taste local food like Sashimi Ramen and local dessert.”

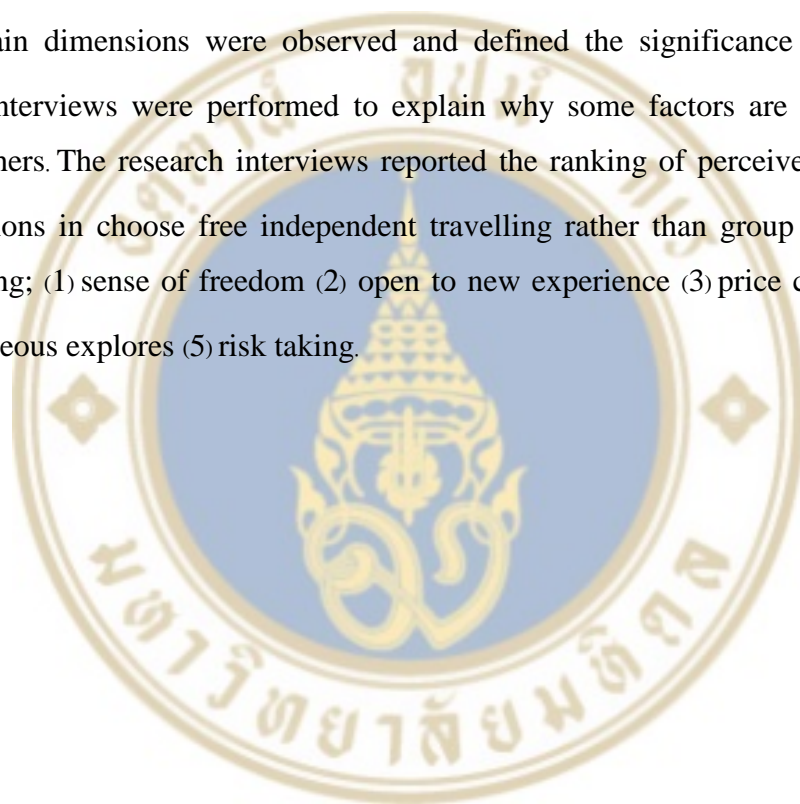
“I want to see new things which is not same in my routine life.”

“I like to travel because its brings me to new things in this world and travel is like to make me out of box.”

“Travelling is my pleasure, I love to see new things, new people and new place that I never seen.”

“Shinkansen is my favorite transportation although it is expensive for single ride. I think that everything is my new experiences since this is the first time I travel aboard.”

This research findings determined that influencing factors preferred by travelers in choosing free independent method of travelling to Japan. From the total of five main dimensions were observed and defined the significance dimensions. The depth interviews were performed to explain why some factors are more significant than others. The research interviews reported the ranking of perceived importance of dimensions in choose free independent travelling rather than group package tour as following; (1) sense of freedom (2) open to new experience (3) price consciousness (4) spontaneous explores (5) risk taking.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion for free independent travelers' interviews

All of respondents preferred to choose free independent method as they believe that Japan is suitable to travel with free independent method because Japan is good tourist destination, safety, good public transportation, beautiful art and culture and food which they cannot find from anywhere since it is uniqueness. Thus, the most important factor that driving their preferences is a sense of freedom. They love to customize their own itinerary even though they prepared well for the trip but it was a flexible plan and easy to change or adjust their program. They feel happy when they manage everything by themselves, they do not like time pleasure or limitation of time when they stayed at their favorite attractions. It was quite private and easy to go everywhere whereas they think that they do not have too much freedom when travelling with group tour.

The second important variable is open to new experiences from the journey. They defined the traveling is to open new experience. Travelling is a precious experience that they enjoy every moment of it. All of things that happen will offer new learn and apply it to their everyday life. Although sometimes they face good things and bad things, but they are all just an experience in their life. Follow by the third dimension of price consciousness. Most of respondents realized that travelling with free independent method is more expensive than group package tour however it is value for money on their budget. They want to buy product and service to meet their requirements.

The fourth dimension is spontaneous explorer. Most of respondents indicated that they would spend longer time for their interesting. They do not want to

know in detail for each attraction that they visited. They prefer to sightseeing and walk around the attraction to relax. Moreover, people has different interesting then it is unanticipated to speculate which person is spontaneous idealist.

In the aspect of risk-taking, not many respondents were influencing with these dimensions since they are free independent travelers but they still need safety and stability during trip. They prefer to travel independently however if they visit the country that they think it is difficult to manage their own trip, they would accept to travel with a group package tour.

5.2 Conclusion for Managers interviews

The tour agency who sell a package tour to wholesalers has facing a problem with declining in sales from package tour as the increasing the trend of Thai tourist travel by free independent travel method however this is not a major effect to the wholesalers of package tour since the main customer are government agencies, public sectors and private company which want to use a package tour to provide more convenient as they travel with a big size of party.

They think that the increasing of the trend caused from the technology change. Now people have improved technology, they have 4G Wi-Fi portable and smart phone that connected Internet which is helpful for people to tourist to travel independent. People do not worry much for lost way because they can use a function of Google map and GPS to guide a direction. However, they know that the limitation of tour is time pleasure since the tour has responsibility to make a plan go on the track and complete according to the program provided. They cannot give too much a sense of freedom and flexibility for tourist to join group tour but the benefit from the group tour is taking care in all service, guide would help to resolve all problems to customer and provide insurance along the trip which is more safety, security, stability and convenient than the free independent travelling.

5.3 Recommendations

The research findings can benefit both public and private sectors. In the term of travel agents and tour operator, it seems that they need to adjust their strategy to attract tourist to purchase their product and service. Although the new trend of free independent travelling is still growing in Thai tourism industry by in the term of sense of freedom and open to new experiences dimensions, the tour operator should create a free package tour which provide a minor program to consumer which already exist but few sector in Thai tourism products. The first purpose to generate this type of package is to attract price consciousness's consumer but I noticed that its correspondent with people who want high degree of freedom. That can bring benefit for both parties. However, this practice has limitation about the economics of scale.

Besides, this examination is revealed that this group of tourist was not risk taking person they concern on risk and uncertain of the trip then the tour agencies need to do marketing communication to convey the advantage from travelling with group package tour to gain more safety, stability and convenience during trip.

5.4 Limitation of study

The limitation of this study is about the interview questions that might not clear for every respondent such as the word "spontaneous explorer" is need to justify the definition of the word when interviewing since the questions emphasized on how they spend time and how they explore for each attraction places however people has difference favorite things, different perspectives and level of perception their preferences. This result the author get insufficient outcome to summarize this factor for this research. Besides, the scope of the research is focused on travelling in japan which most of respondents believed that Japan is simply to visit by free independent travelling method however the author noticed that there are different perspectives and criteria of people when travelling among the countries.

5.5 Future research

This study, which is emphasized on the influencing factors affecting the preferences of choosing free independent travelling method in Japan so further study other countries and compare with this study. Second, this study conducted by applied five variables so the additional psychological factors might be added to the research framework in the future and compare with this study. The author recommended to apply in term of adventurous aspect to describe which kind of motivation they prefer toward travel independently since this study revealed that all of respondents feel like travel is adventure. Another area of research that should be pursued is the investigation the research into others segment who has different on their travel characteristics. Most of participants in this study had similar on their travel characteristics such as length of stay, size of travel party, and previous travel experience. This may be associated with the lack of studies on their preferences influenced by travel characteristics between the free independent travel mode and the group package travel mode. As length of stay and number of people in the travel party are key variable for tourist its effect on their overall expenditure of the trip and the previous travel experiences such as number of countries their visited may be influence on the travel appreciates. Finally, this study hopes the research result are beneficial to tour operators and travel agencies researchers to understand and develop their products and services to meet the consumer's need and guide their organization sustainable in Thai outbound tourism industry.

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APPENDENCIES

APPENDIX A: Interview questions for Free independent travelers

1. Are you people in working age group? (Age between 23 - 55)?
2. What is your job? How about your income/education? Do you live in Bangkok?
3. Do you love traveling? [open to new experience]
4. How many countries do you visit in this year for vocation?
5. How about your last vocation trip, which method of travels do you choose and what are the criteria when you make decision?
6. What is your travel characteristic for your last trip? (Length of stay and size of travel party) and who do you usually travel with (Family, couple, Friends, Colleagues, alone)?
7. How about your Japan trip? Which method of travels (Free Independent travel, Group tour) do you choose and what are the criteria when you make decision?
8. What is your travel characteristic of your last Japan trip? (Length of stay and size of travel party) and who do you travel with (Family, couple, Friends, Colleagues, alone)?
9. Which method of travelling you preferred to travel aboard? [sense of freedom]
10. In your opinion, what are the different between group package tour and FIT to Japan? [sense of freedom]
11. In your opinion, what is benefit you get from travelling by FIT?
12. How about your budget when you travel aboard? Which airlines you choose for travelling to Japan (Budget airline /full service airlines)? How about your accommodation (Youth hotel, Luxury hotel) and what was transportation you used in Japan? [price consciousness]
13. What are the criteria's when you make decision for airlines, accommodation and transportation? [price consciousness]

14. Do you usually wait for promotion or discount when booking for airlines, accommodation, and transportation? [price consciousness]
15. Do you plan for travel before the trip (Majority, Minority): attractions, activities or route information? [risk-taking, sense of freedom]
16. How long do you plan to travel in Japan by FIT method? Are you a planner/leader of the trip? [risk-taking]
17. Have you ever plan for activities after arrival to the destination? [risk-taking]
18. What is your source of information for making plan/schedule for Japan trip?
19. What do you feel if the plan does not go as you planned? Did you fix the problem by yourself? [risk-taking]
20. As we know that English is not the first language in Japan, do you worry about that? [risk-taking], [open to new experience]
21. Which factor is the most important for you to choose your travelling method to Japan? (Cost of trip, Risk from travelling (High/Low); Safety, people, language, new experiences, new knowledge)
22. When you visit the attraction place in Japan, how long do you spend time in that place? Do you want to explore in deep detail? What do you do?) [spontaneous]
23. What are your favorite things to do on your vocation? [Open to new experience]
24. Do you think that Japan is suitable for FIT method or not? Why?
25. What do you think about group package tour? Do you have experience travel with group tour?
26. Do you have a plan for next vocation in outbound? What is your method of travelling? Why?

APPENDIX B: Interview questions for Managers

27. How old are you?
28. How long are you work for travel business for Japan?
29. From your experience, how about current situation of travelling?
30. In your opinion, what do you think about FIT?
31. How do you handle with the trend?
32. What are the factors that you think that it affects this change?
33. Do you think that can affect the trend to Japan? Why?
34. In your opinion, which group (Group tour or FIT) will become bigger toward travel business Japan?
35. In your opinion, what are the most important for both group tour and FIT to choose travel to Japan?
36. What are the benefit and drawback of the group package tour in your opinion?
37. What are the criteria of tour operator to create package tour? How to establish the travel routes to attract customers?
38. What are the most travel characteristics in group package tour in Japan?
[Length of stay and party size]
39. What are the most important things to do in this competitive market?