

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions and Recommendations

This is the final chapter of the research project. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize research findings, provide research recommendations, research limitations and future research opportunities.

#### 5.1 Conclusions

The objectives of this study were to investigate the travel motivations of Korean travelers by adopting the push and pull motivations theory as a conceptual framework, and to examine travel behaviors and tourist satisfaction of Korean travelers. Using factor analysis, this study identified three push and two pull factor dimensions. The three push factors were labeled as: (1) 'fun & relaxation', (2) 'novel experience', and (3) 'socialization', while the two pull factors included: (1) 'attraction variety & costs' and (2) 'safety & cleanliness'. Among them, 'fun & relaxation' and 'attraction variety & costs' were viewed as the most important push and pull factors, respectively. The study also examined the relationships between push and pull factor dimensions. The results indicated that there were significant correlations between the push and pull factor dimensions. This indicated that the push and the pull factors are fundamentally related to each other; they are not totally independent factors. In terms of examining the perception differences of push and pull factors across demographic subgroups, the results indicated some differences among Korean travelers. For example, there was a significant difference between male and female respondents in the motives to travel abroad (push factor) and the perceptions toward destination attractions of Thailand (pull factor). The male respondents tended to be motivated by 'novel experience' and 'socialization' when traveling abroad than female respondents. Furthermore, the respondents who had different educational levels also differed in the perceptions of push and pull factors. The study found that the respondents who had education level with bachelor degree or higher were more likely to be attracted by 'attraction variety & costs' when visiting Thailand than those who had lower education level.

With regard to travel behaviors, the current study has revealed travel behaviors and trip characteristics of Korean travelers. The study shows interesting results about the Korean travel market. For example, many Korean travelers traveled abroad several times a year. Most of them traveled to Thailand with tour companies and package tours while only some traveled independently. Most of them were first-time visitors to Thailand, however, many were repeat visitors. They mainly stayed approximately 6-8 days in Thailand. They came to Thailand with

their friends, relatives, and couples. In addition to Bangkok, their preferred destinations included the eastern part (e.g. Pattaya), the southern part (e.g. Phuket), and the northern part (e.g. Chiang Mai). Major leisure activities were, for instance, sightseeing, visiting seashores/beaches, visiting cultural/historical sites and shopping. Many of them preferred first class hotels (Baht 1,001-3,000 a night), spent approximately at Baht 301-700 for food and beverage and at Baht 1,001-2,000 for shopping. Source of travel information motivating to Thailand may include Internet, media, friends/relatives, and travel agents. Thai culture, Thai food, beaches, and tourism attractions were viewed as the major destination attributions they would recommend to others when getting back home. Most of the respondents would come back to Thailand again due to the attractiveness of Thai culture, a variety of tourism attractions, and low costs of goods and services. Furthermore, the findings also indicated the differences of travel behaviors and trip characteristics among Korean travelers. For example, male and female respondents may have differences in the frequencies of overseas travel, number of visits to Thailand, destination choices, and accommodation. For education level, the respondents with different education levels may have differences in the frequencies of overseas travel and travel expenses, and those with different incomes may have differences in the frequencies of overseas travel, travel expenses (e.g. food, shopping), and type of accommodation.

Furthermore, the study also revealed the level of satisfaction of Korean travelers with Thailand's destination attributes. The findings indicated that the many of them were satisfied with the taste of Thai food, a variety of tourism attractions & activities, and prices of goods & services. However, the least satisfied attributes included cleanliness of tourism attractions, tourist safety, and public transportation. With regard to research hypotheses, the study revealed that the travel motives (push factors) of Korean travelers were related to destination attractions of Thailand (pull factors). It was also disclosed that Korean travelers with different demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, age, education and income) may have differences in the perceptions of push and pull factors, travel behaviors and trip characteristics. However, differences in the travel satisfaction with Thailand's destination attributes were not found among Korean travelers.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

This parts aims to present the recommendations based on the research results including travel motivations, travel behaviors and tourist satisfaction.

### **5.2.1 Travel Motivations (push and pull factors)**

To successfully attract international visitors, Nozawa (1992) suggested that a host community needs to learn about the market, and develop products that are specific for the target market by paying attention to trends and changing preferences. This paper examined travel motivations of Korean travelers. The study identified ‘fun & relaxation’ as the most important motive stimulating them to travel abroad, at the same time, ‘attraction variety & costs’ was viewed as the major destination attribute drawing them to Thailand. Hanqin and Lam (1999) argued that knowing the importance of push and pull factors perceived by travelers can help destination marketers develop the marketing programs to meet the desired needs of target market. Based on the results, tourism marketers should realize the importance of push factor ‘fun & relaxation’ and the motives incorporated in the factor (e.g. the need to see something new, exciting as well as chance to relax from stressful environment), which are perceived as driving forces for Koreans to travel abroad. At the same time, they should realize that tourist’s perception towards a destination is a measure of that destination’s ability to pull or attract tourists (Zimmer et al., 1995). Pull factors are those that emerge as a result of the ‘attractiveness’ of a destination and are thought to help identify actual destination choice (Bello & Etzel, 1985 cited in Hanqin & Lam, 1999). Thus, the identified pull factor ‘attraction variety & costs’ is perceived as an indication of the ‘destination attractiveness’, drawing Korean travelers to visit Thailand to satisfy their needs of ‘fun & relaxation’. According to You et al. (2000), tourism marketers need to tie the motivational drives with the activities that the destination can offer and then package them to better satisfy the target’s needs. This suggestion may be suitable for the case of Korean travelers to Thailand who are motivated by ‘fun & relaxation’ and/or ‘novel experience’ and attracted by ‘attraction variety & costs’. To better satisfy customers’ needs, tourism marketers should develop the products focusing on a variety of Thailand’s attractions including Thai culture, historical sites, natural attractions (e.g. beaches/islands), and a variety of leisure activities and entertainment by designing different tour programs (tour choices) that provide travelers with these experiences while traveling in Thailand. For example, the major tour programs may focus on popular cities like Bangkok and Ayutthaya, and then offer tour choices depending tourists’ interests such as cultural tourism (historical/cultural towns), nature-based tourism (national parks), beach tourism (Pattaya, Samui or Phuket), health tourism (spa, hot spring) or even shopping/city entertainment. More importantly, destination marketers should design effective marketing communications (marketing messages) to stimulate the needs of fun, relaxation, and/or novel experience (push factors) to be linked/related with what Thailand can offer or pull factors (i.e. a variety of tourism attractions and competitive costs). They may create

a tourism theme for marketing purposes (e.g. marketing communications/product development) such as “Enjoy Your Holiday and Discover the Exotic Land – Thailand Where You Experience Endless Happiness” or “Visit Thailand: Discover and Experience the Treasures of South East Asia”. These themes could help stimulate their travel motives (fun, relaxation or novel seeking) and at the same time attract or persuade them to discover those things in Thailand. It could be also useful for designing the package tours responding to the given themes. In relation to travel costs (pull factor), destination marketers should convey the messages promoting Thailand as the best value destination for overseas holiday among Korean travelers (e.g. competitive travel costs compared to other destinations). For example, “Enjoy Your Holiday with a Variety of Thailand’s Attractions, the Place Where You can Afford”. This strategy could be an alternative (option) to the above themes by focusing on a variety of tourism attractions and competitive costs to Thailand. It is hoped that these suggestions would be useful for Thai tourism operators to develop effective marketing strategies (e.g. tour programs, advertising and product promotion) for the Korean travel market.

### **5.2.2 Travel Behaviors and Trip Characteristics**

The study has revealed interesting results regarding the Korean travel market. Some observations have been made and this would be useful for tourism marketers to develop appropriate marketing strategies for Korean travelers to Thailand. For example, many Korean people travel abroad quite often each year. This should provide marketing opportunities for destination marketers to develop appropriate marketing programs to attract Koreans to visit Thailand by using the results of push and pull factors as the marketing theme or guideline. It is also interesting to note that there are many Korean travelers who were repeat visitors. This suggests that Thailand is one of the popular destinations for Korean travelers. Destination marketers may design different marketing strategies and tourism products for repeat visitors (e.g. health tourism, nature-based/beach tourism or night life/entertainment). In addition to offering main products like cultural tourism, natural-based tourism (e.g. mountains and beaches) could be another attractive program for the targets. Despite Bangkok is the major destination, many Korean travelers prefer to travel to different parts of Thailand. In particular, the east such as Pattaya and the south such as Phuket seem to be a preferred place for many Korean travelers. This suggests that Pattaya and Phuket may be added or included in the tour program, especially longer-stay program. Based on the results of travel expenses (e.g. accommodation costs, food & beverage, shopping), these findings should provide useful information for designing appropriate travel costs for the Korean market. The programs could include both middle class and higher

class tour programs for the targets. One interesting observation is the source of travel motivation motivating Korean travelers to Thailand which is primarily based on the Internet. This suggests that the Internet should be used as the major channel to promote tourism in Thailand. Travel business targeting at Korean travelers may provide Korean language on their websites. They should also develop interesting and attractive tourism products through the Internet and should use it as the main media to reach the targets.

In addition, the study also revealed some differences of travel behaviors and trip characteristics among Korean travelers (e.g. gender, education and income). As mentioned earlier about these results, they should help tourism marketers realize these differences among Korean travelers. Heung et al. (2001) suggested that in order to create effective marketing strategies for products and services in the tourism market, a better understanding of customers is necessary. Since the study indicated differences of travel behaviors and trip characteristics among demographic subgroups of Korean travelers, tourism marketers need to understand these differences in order to effectively satisfy the diversified needs of each subgroup. It could be useful for tourism marketers to note that Korean travelers with different demographic subgroups (as previously noted) may have differences in preferred destinations, accommodation type, and travel costs. This finding could help tourism marketers design appropriate tour programs (e.g. different products) catered for Korean travelers as well as to meet their needs and expectations.

### **5.2.3 Tourist Satisfaction**

According to the results, it seems that the respondents were more likely to be satisfied with taste of Thai food, variety of tourism attractions and costs of goods and services rather than other destination attributes. However, when considering the overall satisfaction, the average score is not so high. Many items scored below 3.0; suggesting fair performance. All of the destination attributes examined here are important to the holiday experience and satisfaction of international tourists in Thailand. As noted, tourist satisfaction is important to successful destination marketing because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of goods and services, repeat visits, and word-of-mouth publicity. In order for Thailand to stay competitive in global tourism, it suggests that government agencies involving in tourism development and industry practitioners need to develop and improve the quality, standard or services of these destination attributes. In particular, some issues such as cleanliness of tourism attractions, tourist safety, and public transportation (convenience and service) seem to be least satisfied and need serious attention from concerned parties. Some of these destination attributes could be established or developed industry standard such as accommodation, restaurants, quality

and cleanliness of food, cleanliness of tourism attractions. Industry standard can be the mechanisms to ensure the integrity of the products and services provided to the tourists as well as to meet the minimum requirement of the industry (Patterson, 2002). It is hoped that the findings of tourist satisfaction reflecting from Korean travelers could be useful for national tourism organizations and destination planners in improving those destination attributes to enhance the competitiveness of Thailand's tourism industry and enhance the level of tourist satisfaction.

### **5.3 Theoretical/Literature Contributions**

In addition to the practical contributions, the results of present study have added to the theoretical/literature contribution in the area of travel motivations of Korean travel market. Travel motivation is one of the important areas of tourism research to better understand tourist behaviors (Dann 1977; Crompton 1979; Sirakaya et al. 2003). Knowledge of tourist motivations is important to predict future travel patterns (Crompton 1979; Cha et al. 1995). Despite there are a number of empirical studies examined on the push and pull motivations of international tourists, little attention has been paid to investigate travel motivations of Asian travelers like Korean travelers. The current study is one of the few studies that employed the push and pull motivations theory to examine travel motivation of Korean outbound travelers. With little literature (research work) regarding Korean travelers, the study contributes to the tourism literature by providing new empirical findings about travel motivations and travel behaviors of Korean travelers, particularly in Thailand's tourism context. Since the knowledge of Korean travelers in Thailand is still limited, this study has added and identified major motives that influence them to travel abroad (push factors) which included 1) 'fun & relaxation', 2) 'novel experience', and 3) 'socialization'. More importantly, the current study has revealed that the major reason or motive to travel abroad of Korean travelers is similar to other tourist groups in which they are primarily motivated by the needs of experiencing something new, exciting or different from their usual environment. Regarding the results of the pull factors, this study has revealed that the most important destination attractions that draw Korean travelers to Thailand is primarily based on a variety of tourism attractions and competitive costs in Thailand. This finding could help extend the exiting knowledge of Korean travelers to Thailand, and may be helpful for future studies regarding Korean travelers in relation to Thailand's tourism context.

The push and pull motivations theory is argued to be one of the well-respected and useful motivational theories examining tourist related behavior. It was employed in this study to investigate the travel motivations of Korean travelers to Thailand. As this study found significant

relationships between push and pull factors, this suggests that Korean travelers are internally motivated to travel abroad. At the same time, they are also pulled or attracted by the destination attractions to go to certain destinations. Moreover, the findings have revealed different internal forces (push factors) that motivate the target to take a holiday, and have identified the external forces (pull factors) that draw them to destinations like Thailand. Based on these findings, it can be argued and substantiated that the push and pull motivations theory is a useful theory in which one can understand why people travel or take a holiday, and why they decide to visit a particular destination. This suggests future research may employ it to better understand travel motivations of their target markets.

Due to the importance of the Korean travel market to Thailand's tourism industry, the current study has disclosed interesting results of their travel related behaviors in various aspects, for example, travel motivations, travel behaviors and travel satisfaction with Thailand's destination attributes. All of the mentioned results would add to the existing tourism literature in the area of international tourists' behaviors to Thailand, particularly providing a better understanding of travel characteristics of this important market. It is hoped that this study would be useful for future research investigating Korean travelers or other international tourist markets to Thailand.

#### **5.4 Limitations and Future Research Opportunities**

Although the researcher attempted to ensure the results of the study to be both reliable and valid, there were some limitations associated with this study that should be addressed. At the same time, the direction for future research opportunities is also suggested.

Firstly, this study used a convenience sampling method (non-probability), thus the results may not confidently generalize to the whole population (Korean travelers). In addition, the study examined only one single market - the Korean travel market, it would be more useful to conduct a comparative study of international travelers to Thailand to provide more meaningful information for Thailand's tourism industry. Moreover, many researchers have recognized that the push and pull motivations theory is a useful approach in examining tourist behavior and their travel motivations. Therefore, it is recommended that the theory should be employed to investigate in different sample groups or destinations to provide useful results for developing effective tourism strategies in attracting the desired target market.

Secondly, since this study was conducted in a specific setting - Thailand, it would be more useful to examine travel motivations of Korean travelers in other destinations to compare the results of this study with those of studies conducted in other countries. As the number of

Korean outbound travelers is becoming greater due to growth of Korean economy, destination marketers need to learn and understand more about their motivations to travel abroad in order to develop more appropriate tourism strategies to approach them.

Thirdly, this study collected data on site where the respondents were already in Thailand. The results may not truly reflect their actual motivations to visit Thailand because some factors such as trip experience, perceptions, and attitudes may influence the assessments while they were on the site locations. It would be more interesting for future research to assess tourist motivations prior to their actual journey.

Fourthly, this study collected data in only some tourist cities in the central and eastern regions due to the limitation of researcher team, budget and time constraint. Future research may be undertaken to cover most major tourist cities of the country (e.g. north, central, east and south)

Finally, since this is a quantitative study, the research that is based on qualitative methods examining international visitors in Thailand is still limited. Thus, qualitative research methods such as interviews, observations or focus groups should be accompanied to get a more refined and a better understanding of international tourists' travel motivations and their travel-related behaviors.



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