

## FOREIGN TOURISTS' DEMAND ON THAI CULTURAL TOURISM SUPPLY CHAIN

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### **Abstract**

A tourism supply chain is defined as a chain of organizations whose supply tourism products or services involve various different participants both in public and private sectors. (Song, 2012) Understanding the demand of tourists is a competitive advantage so that information can be used in the tourism supply chain to improve performance and tourists' experience. One of the most interesting tourism sectors is "cultural tourism". Cultural Tourism is a tourism using culture and tradition of each country as a product to differentiate from other types of tourism which adds value to tourist destinations. Moreover, cultural tourism is expected to grow at 10 to 15 % per year (Endersson, 1999). The main purpose of this study is to identify foreign tourists' demand towards cultural tourism in Bangkok, to explore factors which have affected tourists' decision making, and to extract the correlation between demographics, foreign tourists' behavior and influential factors. The findings suggest that market strategies, including product and service development, should be differentiated based on tourists' demand.

**KEYWORDS:** Tourism Supply Chain, Cultural Tourism, Foreign Tourists' Demand, Bangkok

### **บทคัดย่อ**

ซัพพลายเชนการท่องเที่ยว คือ การทำงานร่วมกันระหว่างองค์กรต่างๆ ในการส่งมอบสินค้า และบริการที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการท่องเที่ยว ซึ่งรวมถึงภาครัฐและภาคเอกชน (Song, 2012) การเข้าใจความต้องการของนักท่องเที่ยวเป็นการสร้างความได้เปรียบในการแข่งขัน ข้อมูลด้านความต้องการของนักท่องเที่ยวจะมีความสำคัญในซัพพลายเชนการท่องเที่ยวที่จะส่งผลต่อการเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพในซัพพลายเชนรวมถึงการสร้างประสบการณ์ที่ดีให้กับนักท่องเที่ยวด้วย การท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรมในประเทศไทย เป็นการท่องเที่ยวที่ได้รับความสนใจจากนักท่องเที่ยวชาวต่างชาติเป็นจำนวนมาก การท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรม คือ การท่องเที่ยวที่ใช้วัฒนธรรมและประเพณีของประเทศนั้น ๆ ให้เป็นสินค้าที่สร้างความแตกต่างและสร้างคุณค่าให้กับนักท่องเที่ยว การท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรมคาดว่าจะมีการขยายตัวประมาณร้อยละ 10 – 15 ต่อปี (Endersson, 1999) งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อระบุความต้องการของนักท่องเที่ยวที่มีต่อการท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรมในกรุงเทพฯ และเพื่อวิเคราะห์ปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อการตัดสินใจในการท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรม โดยดูความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างข้อมูลเชิงประชากรศาสตร์ พฤติกรรมนักท่อง

เพื่อข่าวชาวต่างชาติ และปัจจัยที่มีผลผลกระทบ ผลการวิจัยพบว่ากลยุทธ์ทางการตลาด ได้แก่ การพัฒนาสินค้า และบริการควรจะสร้างความแตกต่างตามความต้องการของนักท่องเที่ยว

**คำสำคัญ :** ชั้พพลายเซ็นการท่องเที่ยว การท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรม ความต้องการของนักท่องเที่ยวชาวต่างชาติ กรุงเทพมหานคร

## Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the most important industries in the world. In 2012, over 983 million international tourists arrived worldwide and it was estimated to be valued USD 1.03 trillion (UNWTO, 2013). Thailand is one of the most favorite tourist destinations in Asia. There are many tourist attractions such as beaches, mountains, historical places, shopping centers and etc. In 2012, the number of international tourists arriving to Thailand rose up to 22.30 million compared to that of 2011 which was a 15.98% increase, surpassing an initial target of 20.8 million. This generates revenue up to THB 965,000 million which increased from 2011 around 24% (TAT, 2013). Especially in Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand, it is a center of many aspects such as government administration, business center, social and tourism. In 2012, approximately 14.6 million foreign tourists visited Bangkok which dramatically grew by 18.74 % from 2011 at 12.25 million (Department of Tourism, 2013). Besides the number of foreign tourists that broke the record, Bangkok was also awarded the world best city award from Travel & Leisure, the world famous travel magazine from the US in 2012. This is the fourth time Bangkok has received this prestigious award since 2008, 2010 and 2011 respectively (Travel & Leisure, 2012). Bangkok also received the first tourism city in Asia continually since 2005-2008 & 2010-2011 (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, 2012). Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development concluded that more than 50% of tourist activities in Europe were driven by cultural heritage. (OECD, 2009) Moreover, culture tourism is supposed to grow rapidly in the tourism sector. In the survey of “historical and cultural travelers,” it indicated that 30% of domestic tourists were influenced to travel by art, cultural heritage, events and activities. (Ivanovic, 2008). It also indicated that cultural tourism was the fast growing tourism component and 17-35% of travel decisions of the travelers in the world were motivated by culture. Tourism supply chain management is a strategic key success factor for tourism industry. Tourism industry is one of the fastest growing industries driving the world economy that generates the revenue to the tourist destination countries including Thailand. Thailand has a potential to be a tourist attraction in many aspects such as nature, art, activities, events, festivals and also culture. Culture is the future trend of tourism that will create the uniqueness and differentiate tourism product. This research aims to identify foreign tourists’ demand towards cultural tourism in Bangkok, to explore factors which have affected tourists’ decision making, and to extract the correlation between demographics, foreign tourists’ behavior and influential factors. The findings suggest that market strategies, including product and service development, should be differentiated based on tourists’ demand.

## Literature Review

### 1. Tourism Product

Tourism industry generates huge revenue to tourist destinations, so to be a part of it; each country tries to gain a market share in many ways possible. However, these tourist destinations will be recognized by travelers, depending on the important factor known as tourist product. Bakic 2005 (as cited in Stankovic & Dukic, 2009) reveals that tourist product in tourism supply chain should be comprised of destination attraction, destination accessibility and accommodation. However, due to high competition in tourism industry, economic growth, people's prosperity, thus to attract tourists and to meet their higher demand, the basic tourist product may not be enough. Then optional choices should be offered more. The requirements of successful tourist destinations, apart from accessibility and attractions, include activities, amenities and ancillary (Nulty, 2011). Similarly, Cooper et al. (1993) identified destination attributes or components into the "4 A's" (Attractions, Access, Amenities, and Ancillary services). Furthermore, Buhalis (2000) developed tourist destination attributes or components to be the "6 A's", (Attractions, Accessibility, Amenities, Available packages, Activities, and Ancillary services). Middleton and Clarke (as cited in Salamoura & Angelis 2009) gave the scope of tourist product as a pattern of tangible and intangible package accepted by customers at each level of price. These patterns of package include "content" of the tourism product such as destination attractions and environment, "infrastructure" of the tourism product that includes destination facilities and services and "accessibility" of the tourism product such as infrastructure, equipment, operational factors and government regulations. "Price" of the tourism product is "the sum of what it costs for travel, accommodation and participation in a selected range of facilities and services.

### 2. Cultural Tourism

There are various definitions given to cultural tourism, which share a similarity; for example, Richard (1996) gives the definition of cultural tourism into 2 aspects; first, a narrow definition that refers to the travel motivated by culture such as field trips, art performance, cultural tours, festivals, events, folklores, heritage sites, artistic and cultural manifestations, sites, monuments etc. and second, the wide definition that refers to the travel to experience a variety of human cultures and to gain the new information and knowledge to meet the needs of an individual. Similarly, Richard (2004) explains that the cultural tourism is a pattern of travel that has a purpose to discover monuments, places as well as the travel to others places and experience all related to culture of those places such as people's lifestyles, food, landscape, environment, architecture, towns and villages etc. just as much as its historical sites and cultural performances. McKercher & Du Cros (as cited in Hennessey, 2008) reveal that it is complicated to defend the definition of cultural tourism as it depends on an individual's point of view. It means different things to different people. In tourists' points of view, cultural tourism means travel and experience of culture different from their normal residence and daily life. Also, the professional and

academic people define that cultural tourism is unique and different from others as it uses the uniqueness of cultural heritage to differentiate the destination, and it serves as a major role of tourism model. (Hall and MacArthur 1998; Leask a 1999; Richards, 1996; Shackley 1998).

### **3. Tourism Supply Chain**

Song (2012) identifies six characteristics of tourism which are first, coordination-intensive meaning there are many supply chain members who provide products or services to tourists. They can be bundled to be a final tourism product. Second, tourism product is perishable. There is no inventory stored to serve tourists. Third, tourism products cannot be made prior to the purchase. Therefore, the tourism supply chain is information intensive. Fourth, tourism product is complex. Most of the time, it cannot be sold separately. Fifth, managing demand for tourism is challenging. There is always uncertainty in tourists' demand. Lastly, it is dynamic due to the competitive environment. One of the tourism supply chain issues is demand management.

A study of consumer behavior is the study of why consumers decide to purchase or consumer goods and services. There are many steps related to the decision-making process of consumers which is divided into five stages. It starts from looking for products and services they need, comparing and selecting products and services that provide the most benefit, and then considering the budget they can purchase goods and services, compared with the price under the existing constraints of each individual then making the decision that meets their demand. Not only for goods and services sectors that do need to learn about customer behavior, tourism industry is also not an exemption. There is an attempt to model decision-making processes in tourism and leisure; however, there are various processes and many factors and related parties involved. A different factor results in a different travel behavior as mentioned by Gilbert (1991) (as cited in Pizam & Mansfeld 1999). The study concluded that tourists would travel with different motivation on different occasion; therefore, to study and understand customer behavior is necessary to know the complicated interaction between each factors element. To understand tourists' demand, this study is based on Mayo & Jarvis (1981) which indicated that customer behavior would be influenced by culture, society such as reference group, personal need and psychological need such as motivation, perception, belief and attitude.

### **4. Methodology**

The survey of this study was conducted from August to December 2012. The sample consisted of 400 foreign tourists traveling in Bangkok, focusing on those who travelled to cultural related destinations for example; Royal Palace, Temple of the Emerald Buddha, Wat Phra Chetuphon , Phra Men Ground, Rattanakosin Island Chao Praya River, Sathorn Pier and etc. Data collection for this research was carried out using questionnaires as closed-end questions with two way questions, multiple choice questions, checklists and a likert scale. To ensure that the questions are valid, a pilot test of 30 samples of questionnaires had been distributed and collected to find out if questions were reliable by using statistics;

Cronbach's Alpha in which the result has to be more than 0.6. The analysis of the reliability from Cronbach's Alpha test is 0.879 so, it proves that the questionnaire can be efficiently used for further collection. The questionnaire survey is divided into three parts.

**Part A:** the profile of the foreign tourists using closed-ended questions covered personal data such as gender, age, level of education, occupation, monthly income, marital status and country of residence.

**Part B:** the study of foreign tourists' demand towards Bangkok cultural tourism using closed-ended questions with multiple choice questions, two-way questions and checklists covered the study of foreign tourists' demand towards Bangkok's cultural tourism including data such as their main purpose of the trip, influencers of travel decision, methods to organize and arrange the trip, number of visit to Thailand, average cost per person per trip while traveling in Thailand (excluding air ticket), type of accommodation, favorite activities during the cultural tour in Bangkok, reasons to take a cultural tour in Bangkok, average time spent per trip, local transportation, perception about the cultural tour in Bangkok, chance of revisit, chance to recommend others to take a cultural tour in Bangkok.

Part C: Likert Scale questions focused on the factors influencing the decision of foreign tourists towards cultural tourism in Bangkok including factors such as tourist attractions, transportation, amenities, activities, personal expectations of travelers, advertising and promotion, traveling experience in the past and word of mouth from friends/relatives.

The results based on the answers given in the questionnaires were then analyzed using SPSS.

### Analysis

**Table 1** Profile of Foreign Tourists Shows the Sample Groups of Foreign Tourists to Thailand

| Description     | Amount | %       |
|-----------------|--------|---------|
| <b>Gender</b>   |        |         |
| Men             | 197    | 49.25%  |
| Women           | 203    | 50.75 % |
| <b>Age</b>      |        |         |
| 21-30 Years old | 203    | 50.75%  |
| 31-40 years old | 126    | 31.50%  |

**Table 1** Profile of Foreign Tourists Shows the Sample Groups of Foreign Tourists to Thailand

| Description                   | Amount | %       |
|-------------------------------|--------|---------|
| <b>Education Backgrounds</b>  |        |         |
| Men                           | 197    | 49.25%  |
| Women                         | 203    | 50.75 % |
| <b>Occupations</b>            |        |         |
| 21-30 Years old               | 203    | 50.75%  |
| 31-40 years old               | 126    | 31.50%  |
| <b>Monthly Incomes</b>        |        |         |
| Single                        | 280    | 70.00%  |
| Married                       | 105    | 26.25%  |
| <b>Countries of Residence</b> |        |         |
| Asia                          | 200    | 50.00%  |
| Europe                        | 127    | 31.75%  |

As shown in Table 1, the profile of the foreign tourists, the study reveals that the countries of tourists' residence are in Asia and Europe and that the majority of the tourists is between 21-30 years old. Their education background is bachelor's degrees with monthly incomes of less than 2,000 USD. The majority of sampling group is single. According to the study result, this can be used to design a market strategy especially segmentation by using Asia and Europe as the main target group of cultural tourism. To be more specific, the supply should focus on serving single tourists aged between 21-30 years old. The tourism products should fit the demand of those tourists who hold bachelor's degrees and earn approximately less than 2,000 USD a month.

**Table 2** The Study of Foreign Tourists' Demand Towards Bangkok Cultural Tourism Shows Influential Reasons of Sampling Groups for Making a Decision to Travel to Bangkok

| Description                           | Amount | %      |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| <b>Purpose to Travel</b>              |        |        |
| Vacation and holiday                  | 257    | 64.25% |
| Visiting friends and relatives        | 60     | 15.00% |
| <b>The Most Influencer</b>            |        |        |
| Friends                               | 169    | 45.52% |
| On their own                          | 83     | 20.75% |
| <b>Trip Characteristic</b>            |        |        |
| Travel alone                          | 298    | 74.50% |
| Group                                 | 102    | 25.50% |
| <b>Trip Arrangement</b>               |        |        |
| Self-organized                        | 341    | 85.25% |
| Tour Agent                            | 59     | 14.75% |
| <b>Number of Visit</b>                |        |        |
| First visit                           | 139    | 34.75% |
| Second or third visit                 | 111    | 27.75% |
| <b>Cost while Traveling</b>           |        |        |
| 501-1,000 USD                         | 134    | 33.50% |
| 1,001-2,000 USD                       | 89     | 22.25% |
| <b>Accommodation while Traveling</b>  |        |        |
| Three star hotel or below             | 124    | 31.00% |
| 4-5 star hotel                        | 115    | 28.75% |
| <b>Average Time Spending per Trip</b> |        |        |
| 1-2 weeks                             | 127    | 31.75% |
| Less or equal to 1 Week               | 110    | 27.50% |

**Table 2** The Study of Foreign Tourists' Demand Towards Bangkok Cultural Tourism Shows Influential Reasons of Sampling Groups for Making a Decision to Travel to Bangkok

| Description  | Amount | %       |
|--|--------|---------|
| <b>Chance of Revisit</b>                                   |        |         |
| Will visit again   | 361    | 90.25%  |
| Not quite sure   | 26     | 09.00%  |
| <b>Chance of Recommend Others</b>                          |        |         |
| Will recommend others                                      | 357    | 89.25%  |
| Not quite sure   | 24     | 06.00%  |
| <b>Favorite Activities</b>                                 |        |         |
| Walk around to see local lifestyles                        | 248    | 18.02%  |
| Visiting temple or religious attractions                   | 244    | 17.73%  |
| Visiting local markets                                     | 223    | 16.21%  |
| <b>Reasons Choosing Cultural Tour in Bangkok</b>           |        |         |
| Variety of cultures and lifestyles                         | 194    | 23.29%  |
| Variety of traveling activities                            | 166    | 19.93 % |
| Interest in tourist attractions                            | 163    | 19.57%  |
| <b>Prefer of Transportation while Traveling in Bangkok</b> |        |         |
| Sky Train /Subway  | 313    | 53.32%  |
| Boat   | 80     | 13.63%  |

According to Table 2, the foreign tourists' demand towards Bangkok cultural tourism shows the main reason for travel is for their own vacation and holiday. The influencers to travel are their friends. They prefer to travel alone on a self-organized trip. There are both first time and repeated tourists. They spend around 501-1,000 USD during their visits. The accommodation selection is below 3 stars. The average time spending is approximately 1-2 weeks. The information channels to gather information from the cultural tourism supply chain are the internet and friends or relatives. The chance of revisit and recommendation to others to make a trip is high. According to the study, tourism supply

side can develop strategies to respond to the tourists' demand. Especially, friends and relatives are key influencers so words of mouth are necessary to promote cultural tourism in Bangkok. On the other hand, we can see the significance of tourists' demand that prefers to organize the trip by themselves by gathering information from the internet. Therefore, the key channel to communicate with the target market is the internet. Because of its convenience, 24/7 availability and easy access from wherever in the world, we should promote cultural tourism through the internet such as websites, blogs or social media. This will help promote cultural tourism in Bangkok more efficiently. This is supported by the study of Garin (2010) which indicates that nowadays the internet is very important to a travel industry especially for trip planning, booking and purchasing tourism products such as transportation arrangement and travel destinations. Moreover, the study also indicates that more foreign tourists tend to use the internet for purchasing purposes than local tourists.

**Table 3:** The Factors Influencing the Decision of Foreign Tourists Towards Cultural Tourism in Bangkok Designed by Tourist Products and Customer Behavior, Outcome

| Description   | Amount | % |
|---|--------|---|
| <b>Tourist Attractions:</b>                                       |        |   |
| Kindness of local people  | 4.11   | 1 |
| The difference of culture and lifestyle                           | 4.07   | 2 |
| Variety of tourist attractions                                    | 3.67   | 3 |
| <b>Transportation:</b>  |        |   |
| Easy access by public transportation                              | 3.85   | 1 |
| Free parking lot  | 2.86   | 2 |
| <b>Amenities:</b>   |        |   |
| The availability of public shuttle transports                     | 3.51   | 1 |
| The introduction in brochures/leaflets of the tourist attractions | 3.50   | 2 |
| The availability of free welcome drinks                           | 2.94   | 3 |
| <b>Activity:</b>  |        |   |
| Walking around to see local lifestyles                            | 4.20   | 1 |
| Visiting local markets  | 4.02   | 2 |
| Visiting temples or religious attractions                         | 4.01   | 3 |

**Table 3:** The Factors Influencing the Decision of Foreign Tourists Towards Cultural Tourism in Bangkok Designed by Tourist Products and Customer Behavior, Outcome

| Description                                  | Amount | % |
|--|--------|---|
| <b>Personal Expectations of Travelers:</b>   |        |   |
| Relaxation                                   | 4.11   | 1 |
| Escape from a regularly routine              | 3.95   | 2 |
| Self reward                                  | 3.45   | 3 |
| <b>Advertising and Promotion</b>             |        |   |
| Internet                                     | 4.15   | 1 |
| Words of mouth from friends/relatives        | 4.01   | 2 |
| Magazines & Journals                         | 3.38   | 3 |
| <b>Traveling Experience in the Past</b>      |        |   |
| Past experience                              | 4.05   | 1 |
| <b>Word of Mouth from Friends/Relatives:</b> |        |   |
| Words of mouth from friends/relatives        | 4.07   | 1 |

The study of factors influencing the decision of foreign tourists towards cultural tourism in Bangkok in Table 3 shows that the tourists' impressions namely kindness of local people, difference of culture and lifestyles and variety of tourist attractions have a high impact on the decision making of foreign tourists. In addition, their favorite activities during the trip are walking around to see local lifestyles, visiting local markets and visiting temples or religious attractions. We realized from this study that our cultural uniqueness is a key success factor that can appeal to foreign tourists. Hence, the tourism supply chain should pay more attention to culturally-related tourism, both tangible such as sites, architecture, monuments, food, clothes, and etc. as well as intangible such as traditions, lifestyles, kindness of people, festivals and etc. On the other hand, Thai people, who play a major role in this part, should value the precious culture and recognize the importance of our culture. Last but not least, local people should be proud of their valuable culture heritage and be good representatives to welcome travelers from over the world.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to determine the foreign tourists' demand towards cultural tourism supply chain in Bangkok as well as to understand foreign tourists' factors that have an impact on decision making of cultural tourism. The outcome of this study can be utilized by related parties who

involve in developing and improving cultural tourism to be a selected destination for foreign tourists. Foreign tourists spend around 501-1,000 USD during their visits and stay at 3-stars hotels. They stay in Thailand for about 1-2 weeks. The information channels to gather information from the cultural tourism supply chain are the internet and friends or relatives. They have high chance of revisit and recommendation cultural tourism to others. According to the study, tourism supply side can develop strategies to respond to the tourists' demand. Especially, friends and relatives are key influencers so words of mouth are necessary to promote cultural tourism in Bangkok. On the other hand, we can see the significance of tourists' demand that prefers to organize the trip by themselves by gathering information from the internet. Therefore, the key channel to communicate with the target market is the internet. Because of its convenience, 24/7 availability and easy access from wherever in the world, we should promote cultural tourism through the internet such as websites, blogs or social media. Bangkok has a strong potential for cultural tourism. It has rich and long standing culture that travelers can experience through a variety of cultural tourism destination such as temples, religious architecture, art, music, cultural shows, folk festivals and other cultural resources. However, to develop and promote cultural tourism, each supply chain member needs the collaboration from all related members in the tourism supply chain, including government agencies, private sectors, and Thai citizens to have the common goals to drive Bangkok to become a hub of cultural tourism destination in Asia.

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