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The Factors Affecting Thai Tourists' Decision on Visiting Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market, Phasi Charoen, Bangkok

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Abstract

The research was to study factors affecting Thai tourists' decision on visiting Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market, Phasi Charoen, Bangkok in 2018-2019. The tool for data collection was a survey questionnaire distributed to 384 Thai tourists on their visit to Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market. The researchers analyzed the obtained data by percentage, average and standard deviation. It was found that most Thai tourists were female, aged between 20-29 years old, single, the monthly income less than or equal to 15,000 bath, and still studying at university. Their responses revealed four factors affecting their decision on visiting Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market, Phasi Charoen, Bangkok: (1) Attraction, (2) Accessibility (3) Amenities, and (4) Activities.

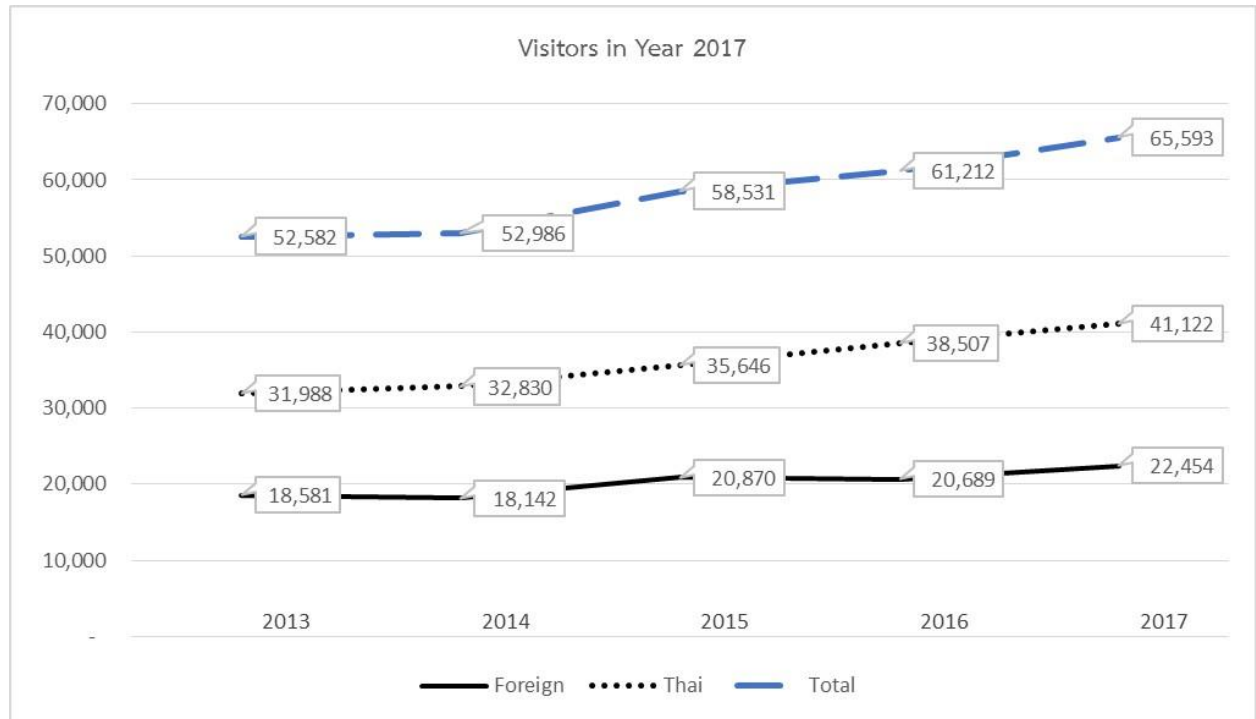
Keyword: *Factors affecting decision, Thai tourists, Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market*

1. Introduction

Tourism plays an important role in the economic and social development of Thailand for competitiveness in generating high income to the country. In particular, countries in Asia and ASEAN have formulated marketing strategies to attract more tourists around the world to visit their countries. Tourism has therefore become a mission that is integrated into other dimensions of the country's economic development (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1994; Samerjai, 2007; Pike (2008). As known, Thailand has prioritized tourism for trade and services to create employment and income distribution as shown in 2013-2017 (Figure 1), and aspired to make Thailand a tourism capital of Asia and a quality tourism destination (Kaewsin, 2007; Rodcham, 2013).

Figure 1 shows growing interest in visiting Bangkok among Thais and foreigners in 2013-2017.

Figure 1: Number of Visitors to Bangkok in Year 2017



Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand (2017), TOT Website

Tourism as a hospitality industry can create various kinds of jobs dealing products and services. Tourists tend to focus more on specialized tourism than traditional tourism in the past, particularly ecotourism, adventure tourism, agricultural tourism, and cultural tourism (Tourism Western Australia, 2008). At present, the Thai government has supported community-based tourism known as Thainess or Thai way of life, or reality tourism which emphasizes local life experience including beliefs that have been passed down through generations to become invaluable heritage that marks the community's uniqueness. Community-based tourism creates a memorable experience for tourists and people in the community to participate in the authentic activities. As known in practices of tourism, the service quality is of prime importance in determining customers' decision (Phakdeeplitot, 2020). The circulation of resources, income, skills and knowledge is meant for villagers to have a stake in local tourism and manage their own resources in providing quality service for incoming tourists. By bringing in various local resources that are natural, history, traditions, way of life and production methods, the community can use them as a cost factor in tourism operations, while developing human capital to its full potential in the community. Those involved in local tourism can use local wisdom in tourism business operations, decision-making, planning, implementation, conclusion of

learned lessons, and resource sustainability to benefit the next generation (Collier & Harraway, 1997; Cooper & Boniface. 1998). According to the government's policies, Thai lifestyle tourism has become increasingly popular among Thai tourists. This is a good response from Thai tourists in their enthusiasm to travel more inside the country.

Since the government has supported local areas of Thailand as new or “unseen” tourist attractions. One obvious example was the floating market at Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market, Phasi Charoen District, Bangkok reported by *Post Today* in 2016.

Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market is a local floating market along Bangkok Yai Canal. It is an old community built in Ayutthaya Period and located in Phasi Charoen District, Bangkok. The floating market is part of the small communities with old wooden buildings, 2-storey houses along the banks of Khlong Bang Luang, souvenir shops, restaurants, barber shops, and community exhibit places displaying various kinds of antiques. In addition, around the floating market there is Wat Kamphaeng (Bang Chak), an old temple which has been with the community for a long time. There is an artist house owned by "The Rak Suay Family" of goldsmiths which is now renovated for an art meeting place for artists as well as art lovers. A central court built around the twelve wooden recessed pagoda (chedi)--presumably one of the four chedis--marks the boundary of Wat Kamphaeng. A small puppet theater is for tourists to watch for free at daytime from 9 am to 6 pm. In the olden days, Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market was prosperous, and there were many gold shops and shops selling food, grocery and household products along the canal. Nowadays, villagers have renovated houses, and some neighborhoods have turned their living quarters into shops for tourists, men's barbershops, hair salons, zinc welding shops, and grocery stores. Local people are well aware of the decline in attraction of the community and would like to revive tourists' interest via public relations to attract both Thai and foreign tourists.

Therefore, the research team would like to study factors that affect Thai tourists' decision on visiting Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market. It is important to understand the needs of tourists so that tourist business operators can respond to potential customers' needs. The researchers visited the site to analyze tourist attractions in 4A's: Attraction, Accessibility, Amenities, and Activities. The researchers also looked at relevant agencies in the area--both government and private business--especially people in the community and nearby areas in order to provide homestay services. The research team conducted the study in 2018-2019 and expected that the obtained findings could shed more light on what to be done to upscale this tourist site to attract visitors and respond to their needs well for sustainability of community-based tourism of Khlong Bang Luang.

2. Research Objective

The research was to study factors affecting Thai tourists' decision on visiting Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market, Phasi Charoen District, Bangkok. It was expected that of the identified factors can be used to guide local tourism business development and operations of Khlong Bang Luang.

3. Scope of Research

The researchers specified the scope of the study as follows:

(1) The scope of the study covered the community and the floating market at Khlong Bang Luang, Phasi Charoen District, Bangkok, Thailand.

(2). The content covered factors affecting Thai tourists' decision on visiting Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market, Phasi Charoen District, Bangkok in four A's as Attraction, Accessibility, Amenities, and Activities.

(3). The participating subjects were Thai tourists visiting the floating market at Khlong Bang Luang, Bangkok.

(4). Time for data collection was from August 2018 to May 2019.

4. Research Method

The researcher used a questionnaire on decision factors identified by Thai tourists for their visit to Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market, Phasi Charoen District, Bangkok. The obtained data were analyzed by percentage, mean and standard deviation.

The sample used in this research was 384 Thai tourists visiting Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market, Phasi Charoen District, Bangkok. The selection was based on the formula of Roscoe (Roscoe, 1969). The data collection tool was a questionnaire which analyzed the data using statistics consisting of percentage, mean, standard deviation.

5. Data Collection Tools and Procedure

The questionnaire consisted of three parts.

Part 1: Demographic variables include gender, age, occupation, status and monthly income of the participating subjects.

Part 2: Questionnaire items deal with factors of tourist attractions in four A's:

(1) Attraction, (2) Accessibility (3) Amenities, and (4) Activities.

Part 3: Other Suggestions and additional comments from the participating subjects.

6. Results of the Study

The results of the study were as follows:

(1) General information of the participating tourists

From the study, 384 respondents were

Female (64.84%) and male (34.16%),

Aged 20-29 years (41.93%),

Students (35.68%),

Single status (57.55%), and

Average monthly income less or equal to 15,000 baht

(2) The results of the study on the decision factors of Thai tourists in visiting Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market, Phasi Charoen District, Bangkok were:

Attraction factor in tourist attractions. The average was at the highest level ($\bar{x}=4.23$, S.D.=0.76). Attraction was unique and at the highest level ($\bar{x}=4.28$, S.D.=0.71). The locals were friendly and willing to serve ($\bar{x}=4.26$, S.D.=0.68); the site was in harmony with nature and culture ($\bar{x}=4.25$, S.D. = 0.77); the traditional way of life of the local people ($\bar{x}=4.20$, S.D. = 0.82); and cleanliness of the site ($\bar{x}=4.18$, S.D. = 0.81).

Accessibility factor in tourist attractions. Overall, accessibility was at a high level ($\bar{x}=3.74$, S.D. = 0.98). The items under accessibility were at a high level. The condition of the transportation route was standard and safe ($\bar{x}=3.77$, S.D. = 0.95); there were various types of transportation available--buses, passenger boats, and sky trains ($\bar{x}=3.77$, S.D. = 0.90); the site was easily accessible and fast ($\bar{x}=3.75$, S.D. = 0.89); there was a navigation guide to various attractions on the site ($\bar{x}=3.72$, S.D. = 1.07); and the community had publicity of tourist attraction information ($\bar{x}=3.68$, S.D. = 1.07), respectively.

Amenities factor in tourist attractions. Overall, amenities or facilities were at a high level ($\bar{x}=3.46$, S.D. = 1.04). Three items under amenities were at a high level: there were sufficient facilities for tourists, such as toilets, trash bins, resting points ($\bar{x}=3.62$, S.D. = 0.94); food and beverage outlets were sufficient and of good quality ($\bar{x}=3.57$, S.D. = 1.00); and the community provided enough staff to give information and take care of public relations ($\bar{x}=3.49$, S.D. = 1.01). Two items were at a moderate level: the number of clear signs of facilities, such as restrooms and parking areas signs ($\bar{x}=3.33$, S.D. = 1.09) and enough parking space ($\bar{x}=3.28$, S.D. = 1.14).

Activities factor in tourist attractions. Overall, activities were at a high level ($\bar{x}=4.08$, S.D. = 0.95). The items under activities were: variety of activities, such as mask coloring and puppet shows ($\bar{x}=4.16$, S.D. = 0.87); activities suitable for tourists for all genders and ages ($\bar{x}=4.14$, S.D. = 0.86); appropriate duration of activities, such as mask coloring and puppet shows ($\bar{x}=4.07$, S.D. = 0.91); activities for knowledge and skill enhancement ($\bar{x}=4.02$, S.D. = 0.98); and activities promoting environmental conservation ($\bar{x}=4.01$, S.D. = 1.09).

Most of the respondents agreed that the four factors affecting tourists' decision on visiting Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market were at a high level ($\bar{x}=3.88$, S.D. = 0.99). The order of these factors was: (1) Attraction ($\bar{x}=4.23$, S.D. = 0.76), (2) Activities ($\bar{x}=4.08$, S.D. = 0.95), (3) Accessibility ($\bar{x}=3.74$, S.D. = 0.98), and (4) Amenities ($\bar{x}=3.46$, S.D. = 1.04).

7. Discussion of Results

From the results reported in Section 6, the researchers put them under discussion as follows:

(1) Attraction

The respondents considered *attraction* as most affecting Thai tourists' decision on visiting Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market, Phasi Charoen District, Bangkok ($\bar{x}=4.23$, S.D. = 0.76).

They liked harmony in nature and culture, friendliness of the community, the traditional way of life of the local people, and cleanliness/ neatness of the tourist areas. This is in line with the research finding of Nuttayasakul (2016), which identifies attraction as the main factor that appeals to tourists. Convenience in traveling or easy access to the tourist site is also important (Suwannin, W. et al. 2014; Dabphet, 2017; Wittayakomollert, 2017).

(2) Activities

Activities were identified by the respondents as a high decision-making factor ($\bar{x} = 4.08$, S.D. = 0.95). Puppet shows and mask painting were suitable for tourists of all ages for fun and enhancement of local knowledge and skills. This finding corresponds with the point made by Dickman (1996) that a variety of activities can entertain tourists well during their stay and touring. In order to increase tourists' interest in traveling in leisure, various activities should be diverse and meet their needs as well. The findings of other researchers also point to the importance of activities, particularly marine activities to attract tourists. (Prachayaprut, 1999; Buakwan, 2013; Choochart, 2000).

(3) Accessibility

The respondents considered accessibility vitally important in affecting Thai tourists' decision on visiting Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market, Phasi Charoen District, Bangkok ($\bar{x} = 3.74$, S.D. = 0.98). Ease in traveling to tourist attractions by public buses, passenger boats, trains need to ensure transportation routes of standard and safety. Maps and navigation facilitation are needed to tell tourists the location of various spots on the site, including publicity for tourist information. Thammabutr (2006) also emphasized accessibility to tourist attractions as part of infrastructure, such as transport systems, airports, as well as industrial transport services by air, land and water. This will allow tourists to travel to their destinations conveniently. Access to cultural resources for sustainable tourism requires that communities have multiple access routes, followed by good road conditions for travelers to get to the community. Regular bus services and well-marked directions to tourist attractions are definitely an advantage in facilitating tourists' visit to the site (Choochart, 2000; Likitsaran, 2016; Losiripat, 2017).

(4) Amenities

The respondents put amenities at a high level in affecting tourists' decision on visiting Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market, Phasi Charoen District, Bangkok ($\bar{x} = 3.46$, S.D. = 1.04). Amenities or facilities provide pleasant experience for tourists, such as meeting points, quality food and beverage outlets, resting areas, waste bins, and toilets. Important are staff to provide knowledge, information, public relations, location symbols and signs, and parking spaces. This point was earlier made by Choochart (2000) who said that amenities are conveniences that allow tourists to reach places quickly, safely and comfortably, such as transportation systems, communication systems, including electricity and water. Other preceding researchers also emphasized the importance of amenities or facilities. There should be enough food outlets and restaurants serving a number of tourists, together with clean and adequate restrooms (Kangsanan, 1986; Injanin, 2011; Dabphet, 2017; Losiripat, 2017).

It should be noted that at the time of study in 2018-2019, Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market had amenities sufficient for the current number of coming tourists, but the tourist site management would certainly need to provide more facilities for larger groups of tourist groups.

8. Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study on the factors that affect Thai tourists' decision on visiting Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market, Phasi Charoen District, Bangkok, the researchers would like to suggest the following:

(1) Tourist attractions

Tourist attractions need to bring out more uniqueness of the community by including conservation and continuation of local culture under good local management. Community meetings should be held to urge people to be aware of the importance of community-based tourism to benefit members of the community. The unique identity of the community can create a selling point to attract tourists and give good impression and good experience for visitors.

(2) Tourism activities

Small puppet shows are appealing to tourists as well as other activities, such as mask coloring, making strings of beads and stucco painting. There should be more publicity to inform tourists about schedule and availability of these cultural activities.

(3) Access to tourist attractions

There should be the community's arrangement for more frequent public buses or a passenger boats to the tourist site. Standard and safe transportation routes and clear signs to tourist attractions could ensure more visitors to Khlong Bang Luang Floating Market. The community should provide more information via social media.

(4) Amenities

Khlong Bang Luang Community is a small and peaceful community and therefore needs to increase parking space for incoming tourists. Tourists also want more restaurants, resting spots, toilets, and trash cans to meet their needs. The local management of the site should carefully plan for improvement of the needed facilities.

9. The Authors

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