

Tourist Expectations and Behaviour towards Sport Tourism in Thailand

Abstract

Tourism business has been growing every year which has led to the creation of a business growth that effect on many countries. Sport tourism is one of the most popular tourist destinations that has a positive impact on the economies of each countries. This research investigates tourist expectations and behaviour towards sport tourism in Thailand. The Nine 9's of marketing mixes, Theory of Planned behavior, and Social Cognitive Theory has been used as the main theoretical background for this study. This research will be conducted using quantitative and qualitative methods. The exploratory part of the study involves a survey which will be used to collect preliminary data, via online and paper-based questionnaire. A qualitative approach followed, based on focus group discussion. This increases the depth of understanding of the cases and situations studied. The expected outcome of this research study will be value not only for understanding tourist perspectives, but also for the design of the most effective strategy of sport tourism of Thailand for the future work.

Keywords: Sport tourism, Tourism expectation, Tourist, Tourism in Thailand

Introduction

Many several years ago, Tourism business has been growing every year. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), current tourist arrivals are up 4% from January 2016 to June 2016 when compared to the same period last year. Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization, stated in an article of the Tourism Organization in 2016 that tourism is a very important industry for the world economy. Tourism has led to the creation of a business growth that has had a profound effect on many countries (World Tourism Organization, 2016). Nowadays, there are various types of tourism; for example education tourism, work tourism, leisure, and sport tourism (Anca, 2008)

Sport Tourism

Sport tourism is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. Sports tourism has a different meanings. However, the overall meaning is similar, it is a leisure travel outside of residential areas in order to participate in physical or sightseeing activities, or to visit places of interest related to physical activity or sports (Hinch and Higham, 2011). Several researchers found that sport tourism has a positive impact on the economies of each countries (Gammon and Robinson, 2003; Weed and Bull, 2004; Weed, 2006). World Trade Organization (2016) reports that global travelers grow by more than 4.4 percent by 2015, resulting in more than 1,184 million tourism revenue by the end of year. Gratton, Shibli, and Coleman. (2006) found that increased tourism revenue came from sports tourism. Similar to the study of Weed (2006), He found that tourism in general will grow by 5 percents per year until 2020, and predict that sport tourism will grow up to 10 percents per year.

The United Kingdom is regarded as an outstanding country for sport tourism. The UK news agency reported that in 2011 more than 1.3 million tourists arrived in the UK to visit the football stadium. The most popular stadiums are Old Trafford, Anfield Emirates Stadium and Stamford Bridge respectively which earn revenue from tourism more than 1.1 billion pounds. This information is similar to the report of academic tourism Statistics 2015 that the tourism make a huge income for the country (Tourism Alliance, 2015)

Tourism strategy in Thailand

In case of Thailand's tourism, it found that tourism industry is one of the main revenue for Thai government. Year 2014, tourism revenue reach 1.7 trillion baht calculated as 14.2 percents of Thailand overall revenue which is resulted in direct and indirect from tourism activities and services (Nakorntup, 2015). Arguably, tourism is a vital part for strengthening a country's competitiveness. Thai government perceived the benefit of tourism and has put tremendous effort into and budgets to support Thai tourism. Tourism was announced as one of a national agenda in 2015. The ministry of tourism and sports is the main agency who is responsible for promoting and supporting entire tourism in Thailand. There are various Thai National Plans concerning tourism support and development. For example:

- Strategy of the Office of the Permanent Secretary: Ministry of Tourism and Sports 2011-2016
- Strategy of Ministry of Tourism and Sports 2012-2016
- Reforms of Thailand Tourism Strategy 2015-2017

- Thai National Tourism Development Plan 2017-2021
- ICT master plan for Ministry of Tourism and Sports 2014-2019
- Tourism Strategy of each provinces

Although, much evidence can be found from official documentary that Thai government has developed many strategies and put much support on tourism, there is no evident that sport tourism strategy of Thailand has been existed. Therefore, this research focus on what should sport tourism strategy of Thailand be like? For an exploratory phase, researcher will focus on tourist expectations and behaviour towards sport tourism in Thailand. The outcome of this research study will be value not only for understanding tourist perspectives, but also for develop and design of effective strategy of sport tourism of Thailand for the future work.

Theoretical background

For customer or tourist focus, this study draws on several major theoretical paradigms; namely The Nine 9's of Marketing, Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

The Nine 9's of Marketing

One of the most popular theories of understanding tourist expectation and demands of customer is The Nine 9's or 9P's of Marketing. Anna Antczak-Barzan (2014) has given the meaning of tourism marketing as to put an effort on the growth of the local tourism, organisational tourism, national and international tourism, There are nine elements of 9P's Marketing Mixes, namely product or service, price, place, promotion, process, people, physical environment, presentation, and passion. Marketing mixes have been used for studies and research in various fields, including tourism. The marketing mix theory is the concept of Philip Kotler. Philippe Cottle started his career as an economist. He explained that the most important of marketing is customer whether in demand or supply, or even in services or mechanisms. These will bring the product to the point of development and create a good image for the product and service. It means customer is the center of marketing (Mahajan, 2013).

Theory of Planned Behaviour

This model determines behavioural intention by measuring subjective norms and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). The key determinant of an individual's behaviour is defined by the relationship between attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and also

perceived behavioural control. Ajzen (2002) indicated that attitude toward behaviour has a direct effect on behaviour intention, while attitude toward an object has an indirect effect. In the context of technology usage, to investigate people’s subjective norms on what they care about, will affect the behaviour.

Social Cognitive Theory

This theory is conceptualized by Bandura (1986) as a “theoretical framework for analysing human motivation, thought, and action”. A key concept of SCT is perceived self-efficacy which refers to the belief an individual has in his/her ability to perform certain behaviour.

Research Methodology

This research is conducted using quantitative and qualitative methods as shown in figure 1. The study involved a survey (Collis, 2003), which was used to collect preliminary data, via online and paper-based questionnaire.

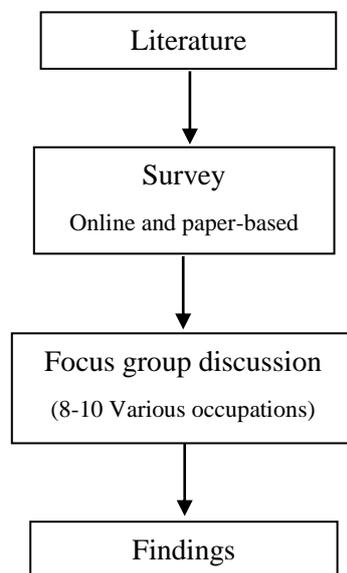


Figure 1: Research methodology

The exploratory questionnaire was developed based on the theories mentioned previously. A qualitative approach followed, based on focus group discussion (Collis, 2003). Zikmund (2000) described the focus group as an unstructured, free-flowing

interview with a small group of people. It is not a rigidly constructed question-and-answer session, but a flexible formation that encourages discussion of, say, a labour issue, a new service, or a new-product concept. Copper and Schindler (2008) argued that the topical objective of a focus group is often a new product or product concept. The output of the session is a list of ideas and behavioural observations with recommendations of the moderator. This increases the depth of understanding of the cases and situations studied (Patton, 2002; Collis, 2003). According to King (2004) the strength of a qualitative method is to gain descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena, and to understand how and why they come to have this particular perspective. According to Bryant (2009), the fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is to express commitment to the perspective of people who are being studied.

Research in progress

- **Data Collection Methods**

The data collection methods employed in this study are survey and focus group interview. The data was collected in Thailand. The exploratory survey collected preliminary data via online and paper-based questionnaire. Lewis and Thornhill (2009) states that questionnaire is one of the most widely methods used for collecting preliminary data - both quantitative data and qualitative data. It is an effective way of collecting responses from a large sample (Collis, 2003; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009) and can be administered to many people at distant sites (Gray, 2004). Gable (1994) argues that although the survey approach can provide general statements about the object of study, it provides only a snapshot of the situation at a certain point. Zikmund (2010) describes the focus group as an unstructured, free-flowing interview with a small group of people. It is not a rigidly constructed question-and-answer session, but a flexible formation that encourages discussion of the research issue.

This survey was followed by focus groups with eight various persons from different occupations such as secretary, office administrator, lawyer, researcher, strategy management planner etc. The focus group discussions will tape recorded, with the

participants' permission, and consent forms were signed. These increased the depth of understanding of the cases and situations studied.

- **Data Analysis**

- Questionnaire survey

Numerical data responses from the closed questions was analysed by computer (using Microsoft Excel or SPSS), while text from open-ended questions was analysed by carefully reading and summarising into categories manually. In the process of questionnaire development, a coding scheme were established which was incorporated into the closed-questions. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) suggest that this method is useful and enables comparisons with other data sets.

- Focus group discussion

The audio recordings of focus groups and interview will fully transcribed word for word. Data analysis was undertaken manually using colour highlight pens. Once data has been categorised and coded, descriptive statements are formed to explain what the participants said. Results were presented using the descriptive text and incorporating comments from the participants.

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