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SECURING THE DESTINATION: EVALUATING TOURIST PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY MANAGEMENT IN CHONBURI PROVINCE, THAILAND

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Abstract
This study empirically evaluates tourists' perceptions of security management across Chonburi Province, Thailand, a premier international coastal destination, to determine how these viewpoints directly influence sustainable tourism development. As global travel destinations increasingly face diverse crime and safety challenges, understanding visitor confidence remains undeniably critical for effective destination governance. Using a quantitative research design, the study systematically administered structured questionnaires to 1,500 participants, including 1,250 domestic and 250 international tourists. The research comprehensively assessed satisfaction across four pivotal dimensions: tourist attractions, transportation infrastructure, service establishments, and active security personnel. The empirical findings show generally positive security perceptions among all respondents, although international tourists reported slightly higher satisfaction with staff preparedness and visible safety measures. Furthermore, the analyzed data suggest that destination familiarity and risk tolerance significantly shape how different visitor demographics interpret local safety protocols. Ultimately, this research concludes that sustaining destination competitiveness requires adaptive and collaborative governance. By improving strategic communication, strengthening stakeholder coordination, and implementing proactive risk mitigation, policymakers can reinforce tourist confidence and support resilient growth.
Keywords: Tourism Security Governance, Tourist Safety Perceptions, Collaborative Risk Management, Destination Competitiveness, Visitor Satisfaction Analysis

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Introduction

Thailand remains a premier destination for international travelers, celebrated for its rich cultural heritage and vibrant urban centers, welcoming approximately 28.15 million international visitors in 2023 (Government Public Relations Department, 2024). As a major pillar of the national economy, contributing 12% to 20% of the country's GDP, the tourism sector supports regional development and global competitiveness. However, this rapid growth has intensified critical concerns regarding destination security, overtourism, and long-term resilience (Sriwapee et al., 2025). In highly visited areas like Bangkok—which attracted 25.79 million visitors—and Chonburi Province, destination safety has become a top priority. Chonburi, which includes the internationally recognized city of Pattaya, recorded about 1.89 million international arrivals, while Pattaya itself saw over 12.69 million total visitor movements in the first half of 2024 alone (Bangkok Post, 2024). As global tourism destinations face escalating challenges related to crime risks, public health, and environmental hazards (Santad & Ratchadapunnathikul, 2019), proactive security management strategies have emerged as indispensable for sustaining growth.

Security is now recognized as a critical determinant in tourism development, profoundly influencing destination choices and overall visitor satisfaction. In Chonburi Province, tourism security governance encompasses multidimensional efforts, including crime prevention, transportation safety, hygiene standards, and coastal risk management. Tourists' subjective perceptions of these security measures play a pivotal role in shaping destination image and visitor loyalty (Prasitvipat & Nuangjamnong, 2024). By understanding how domestic and international tourists evaluate safety management, policymakers can address vulnerabilities, optimize resource allocation, and strengthen visible security protocols. Consequently, this study empirically examines tourists' perceptions of safety management across Chonburi Province and provides evidence-based recommendations to strengthen operational preparedness and ensure sustainable destination competitiveness.

Literature Review

Tourism security has long been established as a fundamental determinant of destination competitiveness, sustainability, and visitor satisfaction. Historically focused on protecting tourists from crime, contemporary scholarship increasingly conceptualizes security as a multidimensional, experiential construct that encompasses transportation safety, health and hygiene standards, emergency preparedness, environmental risk mitigation, and the fairness of service practices (Prideaux & Master, 2001; Ritchie, 2008; Mawby, 2016). Tourists' subjective perceptions of these elements play a critical role in influencing their destination choices, overall satisfaction, and future behavioral intentions, including revisit likelihood and word-of-mouth recommendations (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2012; Seabra et al., 2013). Even in destinations characterized by relatively high objective security levels, negative perceptions—often shaped by media coverage, cultural expectations, or past experiences—can significantly undermine tourist confidence (Zou & Meng, 2020). Consequently, effective security management must address interconnected dimensions holistically, including attractions, transportation systems, accommodations, service establishments, and personnel competence (Hua et al., 2020; Mawby et al., 2016). At tourist attractions, visible physical measures such as strategically placed warning signs, clear regulations, surveillance systems, and well-maintained facilities actively contribute to a heightened sense of safety (Bird & Gísladóttir, 2020). Furthermore, clear guidelines and hazard warnings have been shown to reduce perceived risk, particularly in natural environments prone to environmental hazards (Saunders et al., 2019).

Transportation security is another critical operational dimension, particularly in destinations with high tourist mobility. Existing studies emphasize that tourists place considerable importance on safe transit conditions, adequate nighttime lighting, clear directional signage,

and transparent pricing structures (Tasci & Boylu, 2010; Williams & Baláž, 2013). Perceived transit vulnerabilities, such as unclear fares or unsafe travel conditions, can disproportionately reduce overall destination satisfaction, even when other experiential aspects are rated positively (Lepp & Gibson, 2003). Similarly, accommodations, restaurants, and souvenir shops play a central role in shaping tourists' trustworthiness evaluations. Robust hygiene standards, fair pricing, official government certifications, and strict regulatory compliance are frequently cited as key indicators of destination security (Yasami et al., 2020; Popescu, 2011). Beyond physical infrastructure, the competence, visibility, and communicative efficacy of security personnel are paramount. Well-trained staff, readily available rescue teams, and personnel equipped with effective communication devices significantly enhance visitor confidence (Mawby et al., 2015). For international tourists, approachable, knowledgeable staff can substantially reduce feelings of vulnerability associated with language barriers and cultural differences (Batra, 2008). To maximize effectiveness, security-related information—including emergency procedures and risk warnings—must be communicated accessibly, accounting for linguistic diversity and cultural sensitivity so that all tourist demographics can respond appropriately (Saunders et al., 2019; Tölkes, 2018).

The academic literature also highlights substantial disparities in security perceptions between domestic and international tourists, stemming from differences in destination familiarity, cultural norms, and risk tolerance (Timothy, 1999; Tasci & Boylu, 2010). Domestic tourists, who feel more comfortable in familiar environments, often evaluate local security measures more critically or moderately (Woosnam et al., 2015). In stark contrast, international tourists frequently experience greater environmental uncertainty and therefore place a higher premium on highly visible security measures and proactive staff preparedness (Seabra et al., 2013). Furthermore, international visitors actively compare destination security standards with those of their home countries, reporting higher satisfaction when systematic measures exceed their local expectations (Batra, 2008; Zhang & Tang, 2021). While extensive literature demonstrates that effective tourism security requires an integrated approach combining physical measures, communication strategies, and stakeholder collaboration (Becken & Hughey, 2013; Dwyer et al., 2009), a notable empirical gap remains. Existing studies rarely systematically compare domestic and international tourists' multidimensional security perceptions within a single, high-volume emerging tourism hub in Southeast Asia. By addressing this gap, the present study comprehensively examines these four key dimensions in Chonburi Province, providing the nuanced insights required to inform collaborative policymaking and strengthen the region's position as a safe, competitive global destination.

Research Methodology

This study employed a comprehensive quantitative survey research design to rigorously examine tourists' perceptions of security management across Chonburi Province. The structured research instrument was meticulously designed to evaluate subjective visitor evaluations across four interrelated dimensions: security at tourist attractions, transportation infrastructure, service establishments (encompassing accommodations, restaurants, and souvenir shops), and the competence of security personnel actively deployed at tourist sites. To capture a diverse range of travel experiences, the study used a practical stratified sampling approach and administered questionnaires to 1,500 participants over two months. The sample included 1,250 domestic Thai tourists (83.30%) and 250 international tourists (16.7%). The data collection procedure integrated a dual-distribution strategy to maximize reach; online questionnaires were disseminated via tourism-related platforms and social media, while on-site distribution targeted high-traffic tourist attractions, travel service points, and information centers. The final sample distribution reflects practical field conditions, emphasizing accessibility and voluntary participation in major tourism hubs rather than aiming for strict

proportional representation of all provincial tourist populations. Consequently, the empirical findings reflect the precise perceptions of the study participants rather than generalizable statistics for all visitors to Chonburi Province.

The survey instrument included closed-ended rating-scale questions to measure perceptions and optional open-ended sections to capture nuanced feedback systematically. The research process strictly adhered to principles of participant protection and human rights, even though it did not require formal institutional ethical certification. All respondents were fully briefed on the research objectives and provided voluntary consent before participating. To encourage honest feedback, data were collected anonymously without retaining personally identifiable information, and participants were guaranteed the right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. After data collection, the quantitative data were processed using specialized statistical software to ensure consistent accuracy. The analytical framework relied on descriptive statistical techniques—specifically frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations—to summarize respondent characteristics and multidimensional evaluations. Consistent with the exploratory nature of the study's objectives, the methodology emphasized descriptive interpretation of broader perception trends and comparative tendencies between domestic and international cohorts, rather than formal statistical hypothesis testing.

Research Results

After rigorous verification of data accuracy and completeness, the final analytical sample comprised 1,500 respondents: 1,250 domestic Thai participants (83.30%) and 250 international participants (16.7%). To provide a detailed empirical assessment of tourism security management in Chonburi Province, the survey outcomes are systematically divided into two demographic categories. Table 1 presents the specific satisfaction metrics and descriptive statistics reported exclusively by domestic Thai tourists across the four core operational dimensions.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Satisfaction Levels among Domestic (Thai) Tourists Regarding Security Management Dimensions

Security Management	**Mean**	**Satisfaction Level (Percentage)**				
	(S.D)	**Most**	**High**	**Moderate**	**Low**	**Least**
1) The aspect of the tourist attractions	3.30 (0.75)					
1) Rules and guidelines for tourists are clearly communicated.	2.90 0.70	-	5 0.40	610 48.80	625 50.00	10 0.80
2) Warning or prohibition signs are placed in areas where potential hazards may occur, such as slippery floors, head-height caution areas, etc.	3.48 0.72	15 1.20	245 19.60	775 62.00	205 16.40	10 0.80
3) The parking facilities are convenient and sufficient.	3.72 0.77	20 1.60	272 21.76	819 65.52	135 10.80	4 0.32
4) The security of restrooms at tourist attractions	2.61 0.70	-	4 0.32	562 44.96	588 47.04	96 7.68
5) The cleanliness and hygiene of restrooms at tourist attractions	2.32 0.71	-	4 0.32	448 35.84	690 55.20	108 8.64
6) The security regarding service prices is clearly communicated	3.64 0.78	10 0.80	240 19.20	830 66.40	144 11.52	26 2.08
7) The tourist information center or a service for reporting incidents at tourist attractions	3.86 0.81	45 3.60	492 39.36	645 51.60	63 5.04	5 0.40

Security Management	Mean (S.D)	Satisfaction Level (Percentage)				
		Most	High	Moderate	Low	Least
8) Overall Security of the location at tourist attractions	3.84 0.82	42 3.36	440 35.20	648 51.84	120 9.60	-
2) The aspect of transportation	**3.17 (0.74)**					
1) Travel to tourist attractions is convenient and safe	3.77 0.80	25 2.00	293 23.44	747 59.76	180 14.40	5 0.40
2) The clarity of directional signs to tourist attractions	3.35 0.72	10 0.80	130 10.40	960 76.80	125 10.00	25 2.00
3) At night, travel to tourist attractions is properly illuminated	3.61 0.74	64 5.12	288 23.04	808 64.64	80 6.40	10 0.80
4) Travel to tourist attractions is made convenient with public transportation	2.93 0.70	10 0.80	150 12.00	800 64.00	265 21.20	25 2.00
5) The security of public transportation service prices is clearly announced	2.28 0.76	-	40 3.20	492 39.36	623 49.84	95 7.60
6) Overall transportation security in the tourist attractions	3.08 0.74	25 2.00	295 23.60	623 49.84	265 21.20	45 3.60
3) The aspect of the accommodations / Restaurants/Souvenir Shops	**3.70 (0.76)**					
1) The accommodation has a security certification from government authorities	3.88 0.86	105 8.40	493 39.44	535 42.80	92 7.36	25 2.00
2) The security of the restaurant includes cleanliness and proper hygiene.	3.59 0.72	84 6.72	220 17.60	764 61.12	122 9.76	60 4.80
3) The security of purchasing products/souvenirs is ensured with reasonable prices	3.62 0.71	60 4.80	235 18.80	765 61.20	115 9.20	75 6.00
4) Overall security of accommodation/restaurants/souvenir shops	3.70 0.74	96 7.68	445 35.60	584 46.72	105 8.40	20 1.60
4) The aspect of the staff involved in security Management at Tourist Attractions	**3.85 (0.82)**					
1) There are staff members who are well-prepared to assist tourists	3.74 0.75	108 8.64	94 31.52	484 38.72	80 6.40	22 1.76
2) Staff members are stationed at various points, especially in areas prone to potential hazards	3.86 0.81	150 12.00	410 32.80	590 47.20	85 6.80	15 1.20
3) Staff members are equipped with communication devices to report incidents promptly	3.88 0.84	150 12.00	485 38.80	570 45.60	40 3.20	5 0.40
4) The rescue team available in case of emergencies or natural disasters	3.87 0.82	150 12.00	420 33.60	590 47.20	80 6.40	10 0.80
5) Overall Security of the staff providing services	3.92 0.86	164 13.12	492 39.36	529 42.32	60 4.80	5 0.40

Security Management	Mean (S.D)	Satisfaction Level (Percentage)				
		Most	High	Moderate	Low	Least
Summary of Satisfaction Levels in All 4 Areas	3.50 (0.76)					

The data in Table 1 show varying degrees of satisfaction among Thai tourists across the evaluated security dimensions. Overall, domestic respondents reported the highest satisfaction with personnel actively involved in security management (Mean = 3.85, S.D. = 0.82), indicating strong positive perceptions of human resource readiness. Within this dimension, staff readiness to assist tourists and the confirmed availability of emergency response teams in risk-prone areas received the strongest positive evaluations. In the dimension assessing accommodations, restaurants, and souvenir shops, overall satisfaction remained moderate to high (Mean = 3.70, S.D. = 0.76). Thai tourists viewed cleanliness and hygiene-related security measures in dining establishments favorably; however, their responses to government-issued security certifications for accommodations were comparatively moderate. Respondents also reported moderate satisfaction with general tourist attractions (Mean = 3.30, S.D. = 0.75) and transportation networks (Mean = 3.17, S.D. = 0.74). While elements such as the clarity of price announcements at attractions and directional signage toward destinations received positive ratings, overall transportation security and restroom safety received noticeably lower ratings from the domestic sample. Building upon this domestic baseline, Table 2 summarizes the corresponding satisfaction levels and descriptive statistics reported by the international tourist cohort.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Satisfaction Levels among International Tourists Regarding Security Management Dimensions

Security Management	Mean (S.D)	Satisfaction Level (Percentage)				
		Most	High	Moderate	Low	Least
1) The aspect of the tourist attractions	**3.47 (0.75)**					
1) Rules and guidelines for tourists are clearly communicated.	3.11 0.70	5 2.00	25 10.00	200 80.00	15 6.00	5 2.00
2) Warning or prohibition signs are placed in areas where potential hazards may occur, such as slippery floors, head-height caution areas, etc.	3.52 0.72	10 4.00	75 30.00	120 48.00	40 16.00	5 2.00
3) The parking facilities are convenient and sufficient.	3.61 0.76	20 8.00	85 34.00	115 46.00	30 12.00	-
4) The Security of restrooms at tourist attractions	3.16 0.71	5 2.00	20 8.00	210 84.00	10 4.00	5 2.00
5) The cleanliness and hygiene of restrooms at tourist attractions	3.16 0.71	5 2.00	20 8.00	210 84.00	10 4.00	5 2.00
6) The Security regarding service prices is clearly communicated	3.68 0.78	10 4.00	85 34.00	122 48.80	28 11.20	5 2.00
7) The tourist information center or a service for reporting incidents at tourist attractions	3.74 0.81	40 16.00	82 32.80	118 47.20	10 4.00	-
8) Overall Security of the location at tourist attractions	3.78 0.83	40 16.00	108 43.20	97 38.80	5 2.00	-
2) The aspect of transportation	**3.62 (0.79)**					

Security Management	Mean (S.D)	Satisfaction Level (Percentage) Most	High	Moderate	Low	Least
1) Travel to tourist attractions is convenient and safe	3.79 0.85	40 16.00	105 42.00	100 40.00	5 2.00	-
2) The clarity of directional signs to tourist attractions	3.69 0.77	20 8.00	85 34.00	125 50.00	15 6.00	5 2.00
3) At night, travel to tourist attractions is properly illuminated	3.72 0.79	32 12.80	86 34.40	118 47.20	10 4.00	4 1.60
4) Travel to tourist attractions is made convenient with public transportation	3.67 0.77	22 8.80	64 25.60	114 45.60	38 15.20	12 4.80
5) The Security of public transportation service prices is clearly announced	3.10 0.71	5 2.00	20 8.00	200 80.00	20 8.00	5 2.00
6) Overall transportation Security in the tourist attractions	3.76 0.82	35 14.00	100 40.00	85 34.00	25 10.00	5 2.00
3) The aspect of the accommodations / Restaurants/Souvenir Shops	**3.66 (0.81)**					
1) The accommodation has a Security certification from government authorities	3.79 0.82	45 18.0	110 44.00	90 36.00	5 2.00	-
2) The Security of the restaurant includes cleanliness and proper hygiene.	3.79 0.82	45 18.0	110 44.00	90 36.00	5 2.00	-
3) The Security of purchasing products/souvenirs is ensured with reasonable prices	3.14 0.71	10 4.00	35 14.00	180 72.00	20 8.00	5 2.00
4) Overall Security of accommodation/restaurants/souvenir shops	3.91 0.87	45 18.00	110 44.00	85 34.00	10 4.00	-
4) The aspect of the staff involved in Security Management at Tourist Attractions	**3.77 (0.81)**					
1) There are staff members who are well-prepared to assist tourists	3.82 0.84	65 26.00	105 42.00	70 28.00	10 4.00	-
2) Staff members are stationed at various points, especially in areas prone to potential hazards	3.72 0.79	20 8.00	85 34.00	120 48.00	20 8.00	5 2.00
3) Staff members are equipped with communication devices to report incidents promptly	3.78 0.81	35 14.00	96 38.40	94 37.60	20 8.00	5 2.00
4) The rescue team available in case of emergencies or natural disasters	3.73 0.78	25 10.00	80 32.00	120 48.00	20 8.00	5 2.00
5) Overall Security of the staff providing services	3.82 0.84	40 16.00	105 42.00	88 35.20	15 6.00	2 0.80
Summary of Satisfaction Levels in All 4 Areas	**3.63 (0.79)**					

As detailed in Table 2, participants in the international demographic reported relatively high overall satisfaction with the destination's existing security framework (Mean = 3.63, S.D. =

0.79). Mirroring the domestic cohort, international respondents rated the security personnel dimension the highest (Mean = 3.77, S.D. = 0.81), responding particularly favorably to staff preparedness and overall service security. Nevertheless, this demographic suggested potential areas for operational improvement, reporting more moderate satisfaction regarding the strategic deployment of staff in high-risk zones and the immediate availability of emergency rescue services. Within the transportation dimension (Mean = 3.62, S.D. = 0.79), respondents highly regarded key logistical elements, including nighttime illumination, clear directional signage, and public transit accessibility. However, perceptions of the transparency and fairness of public transportation pricing varied notably. Finally, for accommodations and service establishments (Mean = 3.66, S.D. = 0.81), international respondents highly valued official security certifications, rigorous hygiene standards, and overall physical safety, whereas concerns about product pricing elicited slightly more moderate responses. Furthermore, international visitors generally held positive perceptions of location security at physical tourist attractions (Mean = 3.47, S.D. = 0.75), reflecting favorable on-site experiences within the sample group.

Conclusion and Discussion

The empirical findings of this study conclusively demonstrate that securing a high-volume destination like Chonburi Province requires a nuanced understanding of varying tourist perceptions across multiple safety dimensions. The data show that while overall satisfaction remains positive, international tourists report slightly higher satisfaction with staff preparedness and visible security measures at attractions, aligning with literature emphasizing the need for overt safety mechanisms for foreign visitors (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2012). These perceptual differences primarily stem from differing levels of destination familiarity, cultural expectations, and risk tolerance. Domestic tourists, relying heavily on contextual familiarity, often prioritize convenience and hygiene, whereas international visitors, facing greater environmental uncertainty, actively seek structured security protocols, clear signage, and visible personnel deployment to mitigate perceived risks (Tasci & Boylu, 2010; Timothy, 1999; Batra, 2008; Seabra et al., 2013). Ultimately, visitor confidence is built not solely through objective safety metrics, but through strategic communication, accessible information dissemination, and culturally responsive emergency preparedness (Williams & Baláž, 2013; Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Moura et al., 2015; Tölkes, 2018). While these findings offer critical baseline insights, they reflect the perceptions of the specific study sample and encourage future research to use broader, cross-destination analyses to improve generalizability.

To translate these perceptual insights into actionable policy, Chonburi Province must transition toward a highly collaborative governance model for tourism security. Effectively securing the destination requires seamless integration among public law enforcement agencies, private tourism operators, and local community stakeholders. Establishing coordinated communication frameworks, structured contingency planning, and shared operational responsibilities is paramount for sustainable destination management and proactive risk mitigation (Dwyer et al., 2009; Prideaux & Master, 2001; Mawby et al., 2015; Mawby, 2016). Policymakers should prioritize deploying modern technological surveillance tools, enforcing stringent regulatory compliance, and fostering ethical business practices to cultivate a pervasive culture of shared responsibility (Becken & Hughey, 2013; Hua et al., 2020). By recognizing tourism security not merely as a static policing function but as an adaptive and inclusive governance process, Chonburi can reinforce tourist confidence and ensure its resilient, long-term competitiveness in the global market.

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