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The Influence of Thailand's Image and Foreign Tourist Satisfaction on Foreign Tourist Loyalty for Thailand

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Abstract

Thailand has been famous for being a travelling destination due to its natural tourist attractions, variety of accommodations, food and beverages, quality of services, etc. Foreigners from several countries around the world have selected Thailand as their travelling destination. The tourism sector plays an important role in contributing to Thailand's GDP. Additionally, the Thailand's government also supports the tourism sector by launching advertising and organizing events to promote Thailand's image as an interesting travelling destination and to persuade not only Thai people but also foreigners to travel in Thailand. Even the number of foreign tourists continuously increases over time, there are some situations, such as bad news with foreign tourists, political instability, etc., which can destroy Thailand's image and result to a decline in the number of foreign tourists and affects Thailand's tourism sector, GDP, and economy. This research is, then, conducted to study the influence of Thailand's image and foreign tourist satisfaction on foreign tourist loyalty for Thailand. Simple Linear Regression and Multiple Linear Regression has been employed to investigate all hypotheses with 400 respondents who are non-Thai and visit Thailand for travelling purpose. The result reveals that cognitive image significantly influences affective image, cognitive image and affective image significantly influence tourist satisfaction on the tour, and affective image and tourist satisfaction on the tour significantly influence tourist loyalty for Thailand.

Keywords: cognitive image, affective image, satisfaction on the tour, tourist loyalty for Thailand

Introduction

Thailand's cities have been famous as travelling destinations selected by international travellers for a long time. Thailand's positive image, as being a traveling destination on both global and regional level, is continuously being strengthen as in 2016 Thailand won the awards from MasterCard Asia Pacific Destinations Index 2015 and Euromonitor International for three most popular tourist destinations in 2015, i.e. Bangkok, Phuket, and Pattaya, announced by Tourism Authority of Thailand Newsroom. Bangkok is well known among international tourists for having several shopping places, tasteful Thai food, cultural heritage, lively nightlife, and beautiful historical attractions. Pattaya and Phuket are both popular for being beach resort cities and recreational destinations which attracts several types of international travelers such as holidaymakers, families, honeymooners, adventure and sports enthusiasts to the destinations each year (TAT News.org, 2016).

Recently, in 2016 Global Destination Cities Index by Mastercard also ranked Thailand's city, i.e. Bangkok, as number 1 for Global Top 20 Destination Cities by International Overnight Visitors (2016) (Yuwa & Desmond, 2016).

From the awards mentioned above, Tourism sector is very important for Thailand as it is one of the sectors that drive Thailand's economy. In 2016, tourism sector contributed approximately 17.7% to Thailand's GDP (Bangkokbiznews, 2017). In addition, the number of foreign tourists has been continuously growing with CAGR of approximately 10% in the past five years (2012 – 2016) (Department of Tourism, 2017). Foreign tourists are the major source of revenue for Thailand's tourism as they spent approximately THB 1.6 trillion last year, which accounted for more than 60% of Thailand's tourism revenue (Bangkokbiznews, 2017).

However, there are several bad news with foreign tourists as well as the political instability situation, which are widely spread, can cause a gradual decline in the number of foreign tourists. As a result, the researcher is worried about the image of Thailand which may be affected by political instability and any bad news occurred, and consequently cause a decline in the number of foreign tourists visiting Thailand. Therefore, the researcher would like to study the influence of Thailand's image and foreign satisfaction on the tour on tourist loyalty for Thailand in order to find the impact and provide recommendations which can be applied to create tourist loyalty for Thailand.

Literature Review

Destination Image

The concept of image was first applied in the early 70s by Hunt (1971) (as cited in Melo, Moniz, Silva and Batista, 2017) that tourist destination image is impressions of individuals or group of people about a place where they do not stay as their residence. According to Wang (2000), Beerli and Martin (2004), Kim and Richardson (2003), and Fakeye and Crompton, (1991) (as cited in Melo, Moniz, Silva & Batista, 2017), many definitions have been developed however no consensus has been reached on its definition, formation and measurement. Thus the concept of tourist destination image is complex and subjective. Choi et al. (2007) (as cited in Greaves, and Skinner, 2010) mentioned that destination image plays an influential factor to the traveler's decision-making process. According to the researchers, destination image consists of two key components: cognitive and affective images (Greaves and Skinner, 2010).

Cognitive Image

Cognitive image is considered to be one of the components of destination image as there is a lot of researches that support the assumption that cognitive and affective are two components of destination image (Crompton, 1979). Cognitive is referred to as a personal belief or knowledge about tourist destination's characteristics or attributes (Baloglu, 2000; Pike & Ryan, 2004). Since researchers generally agree that cognitive component is prior to affective evaluation (Baloglu, 2000; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1994), therefore, it can be noted that cognitive image significantly influences affective image. Besides, there are empirical studies that revealed a significant and positive relation between the cognitive destination image and affective destination image (Gartner, 1993; Stern & Krakover, 1993; Baloglu, 1999; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Beerli & Martin, 2004a; Beerli & Martin, 2004b; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Boo & Busser, 2005; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Lin, Morais, Kerstetter, & Hou, 2007; San Martin & Rodriguez del Bosque, 2008; Li, Cai, Lehto, & Huang, 2010; Wang & Hsu, 2010; Agapito, Valle, & Mendes, 2013; Fan & Qiu, 2014).

Affective Image

The affective component means a personal feeling toward the tourist destination (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Kim & Yoon, 2003). Traditionally, cognitive is considered to be only one component of destination image. However, several recent studies have used both cognitive and affective components to evaluate the destination image and argued that the coexistence of both cognitive and affective components may explain the destination image more precisely (Kim & Yoon, 2003; San Martín & del Bosque, 2008; Zeng, Chiu, Lee, & Park, 2015).

Satisfaction on the Tour

Satisfaction of tourist is a behavioral phenomenon which is shaped by emotional and cognitive factors of tourism activities as well as the evaluation of various elements and forms of destination (Sayyed, Javad, Akbar, Reza, & Hassan, 2014). In tourism, the level of satisfaction is generally a function of the expectations from before and after the trip, i.e. a tourist will be satisfied when having pleasant experiences but unsatisfied when having unpleasant experiences (Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

In general, past findings have proposed that destination image precedes satisfaction and has a consensus that a more favorable destination image is likely to lead to a higher level of tourist satisfaction (Chen & Phou, 2013; Chi & Qu, 2008; Prayag, 2009; Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Additionally, there are previous researches showing that satisfaction influences revisit of tourism destinations (Chen, 2008; De Rojas & Camarero, 2008; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Zabkar, Brenčič, & Dmitrović, 2010). Therefore, there is a possibility that satisfied tourists will revisit a destination, recommend it to others or have a positive attitude toward that destination while dissatisfied tourists will not revisit a destination or recommend it to others, and they may have negative attitudes toward that destination which can damage destination's marketing reputation (Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

Tourist Loyalty

Tourist loyalty can be considered as an extension of customer loyalty in the tourism setting (Backman & Crompton, 1991; Baloglu, 2001). Customer Loyalty is determined by customer satisfaction which is regarded as the main driver of loy-

alty in relation to the availability of destination image (Gartner, 1993; Alexandris, Douka, Papadopoulos, & Kaltsatou, 2008). High-loyalty tourists are more likely to stay longer at the destination than first-time tourist, spread positive word of mouth, and join consumptive activities more intensively (Li et al., 2010; Zhang, Fu, Cai, & Lu, 2014).

Destination image is the key predictor of many tourist behavioral outcomes (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Researchers have suggested that the destination image perceived by tourists can influence the tourists' behaviors related to loyalty (i.e. intention to revisit and willingness to recommend) (Bigné, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001; Cai, Wu, & Bai, 2003; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Li et al., 2010; Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

Research Framework and Methodology

Referring to the theoretical framework that studied the influence of destination image and tourist satisfaction on tourist loyalty: a case study of Chinese tourists in Korea, four variables were used for the framework: cognitive image, affective image, satisfaction, and tourist loyalty. Therefore, to study the influence of Thailand's image and foreign tourist satisfaction on foreign tourist loyalty for Thailand, the following *conceptual framework* is developed:

Research Methodology

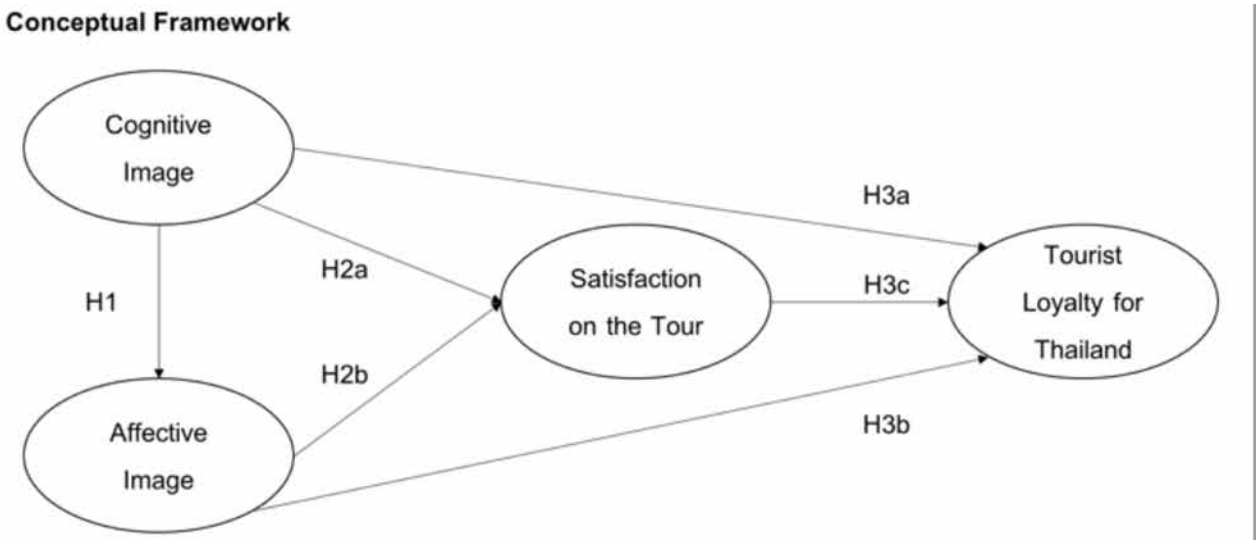
This study was conducted questionnaire surveys to collect the data by distributing on-site survey questionnaires to Non-Thai visitors at famous tourist sites. The data was collected from tourists in Bangkok, both male and female.

The data was selected by using a non-probability technique which is convenience sampling method. To measure the hypotheses, the Likert scale is used in questionnaires. The Likert scale is composed of 5 scales ranging from 1 (representing "Strongly Disagree") to 5 (representing "Strongly Agree").

Measurement of variables. The target respondents of this survey were non-Thai tourists who visit Thailand for travelling purpose.

Population and sample. Questionnaires were distributed to 400 Non-Thai respondents at tourist sites in Bangkok.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



To reach the objective of this study, six hypotheses are examined which are:

H1: Cognitive image significantly influences affective image.

H2a: Cognitive image significantly influences tourist satisfaction on the tour.

H2b: Affective image significantly influences tourist satisfaction on the tour.

H3a: Cognitive image significantly influences tourist loyalty for Thailand.

H3b: Affective image significantly influences tourist loyalty for Thailand.

H3c: Satisfaction on the tour significantly influences tourist loyalty for Thailand.

Reliability test. Before distributing questionnaires to the target population, the *reliability test* is done for each variable by using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient with acceptable level of greater than 0.7 (George & Mallery, 2003). Therefore, 30 people were asked to be the respondents of the pilot test. The results of Cronbach's alpha of each variable are as follows:

Table 1. Consistency of the Scale Test

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's alpha
Cognitive Image (CI)	7	0.868
Affective Image (AI)	4	0.755
Satisfaction on the Tour (ST)	3	0.948
Tourist Loyalty for Thailand (TL)	3	0.973

After doing the reliability test, the Cronbach's alpha of each variable is greater than 0.7, therefore, the paper questionnaires were distributed to the target population who are foreigners visiting Thailand for travel purpose with 5% margin of error. The total valid results for this research study were 400 respondents.

Result and Discussion

By analyzing the data in order to investigate the influence of independent variables on dependent variable, Multiple Linear Regression technique, from statistic application, was used.

Demographic Factor Explanation

This section explains the characteristics or demographic of 400 respondents. All of them are non-Thai and visit Thailand for travelling purpose. Therefore, these 400 respondents were accounted for 100% of valid sample. The demographic details of all 400 respondents were summarized in the Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographic Factors	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	202	50.50
Female	198	49.50
Age		
16 – 25 years old	134	33.50
26 – 35 years old	163	40.75
36 – 45 years old	75	18.75
More than 45 years old	28	7.00
Monthly Income		
Less than or equal to THB 25,000	79	19.75
THB 25,001 – 50,000	152	38.00
More than THB 50,000	169	42.25
Experience for Visiting Thailand		
First time visit	250	62.50
Repeated visit	150	37.50
Length of Stay for Travelling in Thailand		
1 – 3 days	102	25.50
4 – 6 days	202	50.50
More than 6 days	96	24.00

Majority of respondents' gender is male (202 respondents) while the number of respondents who are female is 198. For the age of respondents, most of respondents (297 people) are in 16 – 35 years old which accounted for 74.25% of all respondents: 33.50% of all respondents are 16 – 25 years old, and 40.75% of all respondents are 26 – 35 years old. Respondents' monthly income level mostly are more than THB 50,000 (42.25% of all respondents). Additionally, majority of the respondents are first-time visitors (accounted for 62.50% of all respondents), and stay in Thailand for travelling for 4 – 6 days (50.50% of all respondents.

For the mean, standard deviation (SD), and correlation of all variables: tourist loyalty for Thailand (TL), cognitive image (CI), affective image (AI), and tourist satisfaction on the tour (ST), correlation matrix is developed and demonstrated as below:

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis and Correlation Matrix

Variables	Mean	SD	TL	CI	AI	ST
TL	4.4503	.62785	1.000			
CI	3.7490	.45122	.396*	1.000		
AI	4.0650	.55592	.463*	.489*	1.000	
ST	4.3810	.53739	.788*	.399*	.468*	1.000

*Note. * Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (1-tailed).*

Correlation matrix reveals that all independent variables have positive correlation with each other and with dependent variables.

However, according to Evans (1996), strength of correlation can be defined as below:

- 0.00 – 0.19: "very weak"
- 0.20 – 0.39: "weak"
- 0.40 – 0.59: "moderate"
- 0.60 – 0.79: "strong"
- 0.80 – 1.00: "very strong"

Therefore, from the results shown in Figure 2, only the correlation between satisfaction on the tour and tourist loyalty for Thailand shows strong relationship with coefficient of correlation at 0.788. On the other hand, correlation between affective image and tourist loyalty for Thailand, affective image and cognitive image, and affective image and satisfaction on the tour show moderate relationship with coefficient of correlation at 0.463, 0.489, and 0.468 respectively. Correlation of cognitive image and tourist loyalty for Thailand shows a weak relationship, with coefficient of correlation at 0.396, which is the same as correlation between cognitive image and satisfaction on the tour with coefficient correlation at 0.399.

Inferential Analysis

For the inferential analysis, two techniques are used to analyze: Simple Linear Regression (SLR) and Multiple Linear Regression (MLR). SLR is used to investigate H1: cognitive image significantly influences affective image. MLR is used to investigate H2a and H2b: cognitive image and affective image significantly influence tourist satisfaction on the tour, as well as used to investigate H3a, H3b, and H3c: cognitive image, affective image, and tourist satisfaction on the tour significantly influence tourist loyalty for Thailand.

Table 4. Result of Investigating H1 by SLR

Variable	Beta Coefficients	P-Value	VIF
Cognitive Image	.489	.000	1.000
R Square			.239
Adjusted R Square			.237

Table 4 demonstrates the SLR analysis by using cognitive image as independent variable and affective image as dependent variable at the 0.05 significant level.

The value of r square is 0.239 (or 23.9%) which indicates that cognitive image can explain variation in affective image at 23.9%.

The result from Figure 3 also reveals that cognitive image significantly influences affective image as the p-value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 significant level. Therefore, H1 is supported.

In term of standardized beta coefficients, the value shows the level of influences of independent variable on dependent variable. As revealed, cognitive image's standardized beta coefficient is 0.489.

Variance inflation factors or VIF was investigated in term of multicollinearity problem. The result shows that VIF of cognitive image is 1.000 which is below 5.000. Hence, the multicollinearity is not critical problem in this study (Studenmund, 1992).

Table 5. Result of Investigating H2a and H2b by MLR

Variables	Beta Coefficients	P-Value	VIF
Cognitive Image	.223	.000	1.314
Affective Image	.359	.000	1.314
R Square			.257
Adjusted R Square			.254

Table 5 represents the MLR analysis by using cognitive image and affective image as independent variables while using tourist satisfaction on the tour as dependent variable at the 0.05 significant level.

The value of r square is 0.257 (or 25.7%) which indicates that cognitive image and affective image can explain variation in tourist satisfaction on the tour at 25.7%.

The result from Figure 4 reveals that cognitive image and affective image significantly influence tourist satisfaction on the tour as the p-value of both independent variables are 0.000 which is less than 0.05 significant level. Therefore, H2a and H2b is supported.

In term of standardized beta coefficients, the value shows the level of influences of independent variables on dependent variable. As revealed, cognitive image's and affective image's standardized beta coefficient are 0.223 and 0.359 respectively.

Variance inflation factors or VIF was investigated in term of multicollinearity problem. The result shows that VIF of both cognitive image and affective image is 1.314 which is below 5.000. Hence, the multicollinearity is not critical problem in this study (Studenmund, 1992).

Table 6. Result of Investigating H3a, H3b, and H3c by MLR

Variables	Beta Coefficients	P-Value	VIF
Cognitive Image	.063	.080	1.382
Affective Image	.096	.010	1.488
Satisfaction on the Tour	.718	.000	1.347
R Square			.635
Adjusted R Square			.632

Table 6 demonstrates the MLR analysis by using cognitive image, affective image, and tourist satisfaction on the tour as independent variables while using tourist loyalty for Thailand as dependent variable at the 0.05 significant level.

The value of r square is 0.635 (or 63.5%) which indicates that cognitive image, affective image, and tourist satisfaction on the tour can explain variation in tourist loyalty for Thailand at 63.5%.

The result from Table 6 reveals that cognitive image does not significantly influence tourist loyalty for Thailand as the p-value is 0.080 which is greater than 0.05 significant level. Therefore, H3a is not supported. On the other hand, affective image and tourist satisfaction on the tour significantly influence tourist loyalty for Thailand as the p-value of affective image and tourist satisfaction on the tour are 0.010 and 0.000 respectively, which are less than 0.05 significant level. Therefore, H3b and H3c are supported.

In term of standardized beta coefficients, the value shows the level of influences of independent variables on dependent variable. As revealed, affective image's and tourist satisfaction on the tour's standardized beta coefficient are 0.096 and 0.718 respectively.

Variance inflation factors or VIF was investigated in term of multicollinearity problem. The result shows that VIF of cognitive image, affective image, and tourist satisfaction on the tour are 1.382, 1.488, and 1.347 respectively, which are all below 5.000. Hence, the multicollinearity is not critical problem in this study (Studenmund, 1992).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The objective of this research is to study the influence of Thailand's image and foreign tourist satisfaction on foreign tourist loyalty for Thailand. To achieve the objective, six hypotheses were conducted, and 400 respondents, who are foreigners visiting Thailand for travelling, are collected the data. The hypotheses are investigated with collected data analyzed through statistical application, using SLR and MLR.

It can be concluded that five of the six hypotheses are supported which are H1, H2a, H2b, H3b, and H3c. Therefore, cognitive image significantly influences affective image, and both cognitive image and affective image significantly influence tourist satisfaction on the tour. Lastly, affective image and tourist satisfaction on the tour significantly influence tourist loyalty for Thailand. On the other hand, there is one hypothesis which is not supported: H3a. Therefore, cognitive image does not significantly influence tourist loyalty for Thailand.

Chiu, Zeng and Cheng (2016) studied the influence of destination image and tourist satisfaction on tourist royalty. They studied Chinese tourists by on-site survey at popular tourist sites in Seoul city. The findings revealed that the cognitive image had a direct influence on affective image. Both cognitive image and affective image influenced on satisfaction and in turn satisfaction predicted tourist loyalty. However, the cognitive image showed no influence on tourist loyalty and there had an indirect influence on tourist loyalty through affective image and satisfaction (Chiu, Zeng, & Cheng, 2016).

Due to the fact that tourist loyalty for Thailand is significantly influenced by affective image and tourist satisfaction on the tour, tourist satisfaction on the tour is significantly influenced by cognitive image and affective image, and affective image is significantly influenced by cognitive image, the recommendation is proposed for creating tourist loyalty for Thailand as follows:

Promoting Thailand's image. Thai government and private companies in tourism sector should coordinately promote Thailand's image in various aspects by presenting Thailand's interesting information or knowledge in the attractive ways through several channels. This can create awareness and knowledge about Thailand for foreigners which can enhance Thailand's cognitive image and influence Thailand's affective image. Besides, this can also build foreigners' emotional engagement with Thailand. Once, foreigners have good knowledge and well aware of Thailand, they can have good affective image of Thailand which, then, can influence tourist satisfaction on the tour and tourist loyalty for Thailand.

Providing best service with sincere help. Not only promoting a good image, tourism service providers, both government and private entities, should do their best in providing their services, e.g. hotels, restaurants, tourist guide service providers, tourist agencies, transportation, tourist attractions, etc. Importantly, the government should focus more on the security of foreign tourists to ensure their safety also. Best services in tourism provided by all service providers will create a good image of Thailand which then can create satisfaction on the tour for tourists and tourist loyalty for Thailand in the long run

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