

# Marketing Mix Factors Affecting Tourist Decision-Making Behavior in Nan Province

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## Abstract

In the context of post-pandemic tourism recovery and the shifting preferences of quality-oriented travelers during 2023–2024, this study examines the influence of marketing mix factors on tourists' decision-making behavior in Nan Province, Thailand. Nan is increasingly recognized for its distinctive cultural heritage, tranquil slow-life atmosphere, and well-preserved natural environment, making it an appropriate setting for analyzing contemporary travel motivations. The study aims to (1) identify key elements of the marketing mix that shape tourists' travel decisions and (2) compare the effects of these factors across demographic groups defined by gender, age, educational attainment, occupation, and monthly income. Data were collected from 400 domestic and international tourists who visited Nan Province between late 2023 and early 2024 using a structured questionnaire. The analysis employed descriptive statistics, independent-sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and multiple linear regression. The results indicate that overall marketing mix factors were perceived as highly important in influencing travel decisions. Among these, physical evidence, people, and distribution channels emerged as the most influential components. Physical evidence, such as preserved heritage sites, authentic local products, and immersive cultural experiences, received the highest ratings, reflecting tourists' strong preference for authenticity and experiential value consistent with current cultural tourism trends. Conversely, price was identified as the least influential factor, suggesting that visitors to Nan Province prioritize quality, uniqueness, and meaningful experiences over cost considerations. Tourists also reported a high intention to revisit and recommend the destination, with word-of-mouth communication playing a critical role in destination promotion in the digital era. Significant differences in decision-making behavior were found across age, education, occupation, and income groups, while gender showed no statistically significant effect. Regression analysis revealed that only the process component, particularly service efficiency related to online booking systems, transportation coordination, and responsive customer service, had a significant positive effect on decision-making behavior ( $p < 0.05$ ), explaining 8% of the variance. These findings suggest that tourism stakeholders in Nan Province should prioritize efficient service processes, maintain high-quality physical environments, and invest in skilled tourism personnel to enhance satisfaction, loyalty, and destination advocacy. Future research should expand this framework to other provincial destinations and incorporate digital marketing dynamics, sustainability practices, and community-based tourism experiences.

**Keywords:** Marketing Mix; Tourist Decision-Making Behavior; Destination Management

## Introduction

Tourism has long been recognized as a vital pillar of Thailand's service-based economy, contributing substantially to national income generation, employment creation, and the development of interconnected industries such as accommodation, transportation, food services, retail trade, and local crafts (Ministry of Tourism and Sports [MOTS], 2023a). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Thailand consistently ranked among the world's leading tourism destinations, with tourism revenue accounting for a significant proportion of gross domestic product. However, the pandemic-induced disruption during 2020–2021 exposed structural vulnerabilities within the tourism sector, particularly in regional destinations that rely heavily on small-scale enterprises and domestic travel flows. In response, the post-pandemic recovery period of 2023–2024 has prompted policymakers and tourism stakeholders to

reassess development strategies with greater emphasis on sustainability, resilience, and balanced regional growth.

One of the Thai government's key strategic responses has been the promotion of secondary tourist destinations as a means of reducing over-tourism in major cities, redistributing economic benefits, and strengthening local economies (Tourism Authority of Thailand [TAT], 2023). This policy direction aligns with broader global tourism trends that encourage diversification of destinations, community participation, and culturally responsible travel (World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2023). Within this national framework, Nan Province has been designated as a secondary city with high potential for cultural and experiential tourism development. Located in northern Thailand, Nan is widely known as the "City of Culture," reflecting its rich archaeological heritage, well-preserved historical temples, ethnic diversity, and distinctive local identity (Office of Nan Province, 2023). Unlike mass tourism destinations, Nan offers a "slow-life" atmosphere characterized by tranquility, authenticity, and close interaction with local communities, appealing particularly to quality-oriented travelers seeking meaningful and immersive experiences.

Despite its cultural and environmental assets, Nan Province has faced considerable challenges in sustaining tourism growth. Tourist arrivals declined by more than 50 percent during the peak of the COVID-19 crisis in 2020–2021, resulting in severe income losses for local businesses and communities dependent on tourism-related activities (MOTS, 2021). Although visitation levels showed signs of recovery during 2022–2023, the pace of rebound has been uneven, highlighting persistent weaknesses in destination marketing, service quality consistency, and tourism management systems. These challenges have become more pronounced in the current tourism environment of 2023–2024, where travelers demonstrate heightened expectations regarding service efficiency, health and safety standards, digital accessibility, and personalized experiences (UNWTO, 2023). Consequently, understanding the factors that influence tourists' decision-making behavior has become increasingly critical for destinations such as Nan that seek to enhance competitiveness while maintaining cultural integrity.

The marketing mix framework provides a well-established theoretical foundation for analyzing consumer decision-making in tourism contexts. Traditionally conceptualized through the 4Ps model, the framework has been expanded to the 7Ps model: product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence, and process to better capture the complexity of service-based industries (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In tourism, this expanded model is particularly relevant, as travel experiences are co-created through interactions between visitors, service providers, physical environments, and supporting systems (Ghadiri et al., 2012). Applying the 7Ps framework allows destination managers to systematically evaluate how various controllable factors shape tourists' perceptions, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions.

In the context of Nan Province, the product element encompasses both tangible and intangible attributes, including historical landmarks, natural scenery, cultural festivals, traditional lifestyles, and community-based tourism activities. Ensuring the quality, authenticity, and sustainability of these offerings is essential for differentiating Nan from competing destinations. Price influences perceived value and affordability, particularly for domestic travelers and emerging international markets, where transparent pricing and value-added packages can enhance destination appeal. Place refers to accessibility and distribution channels, including transportation infrastructure and online travel platforms, which have become increasingly important with the widespread adoption of digital booking systems and mobile applications in 2023–2024.

Promotion strategies in Nan have evolved from conventional advertising toward digital marketing approaches, such as social media campaigns, influencer partnerships, and user-generated content, which enable destinations to communicate authenticity and reach niche segments more effectively. People represent the human dimension of service delivery, encompassing the skills, attitudes, and cultural knowledge of tourism personnel. Well-trained and hospitable staff play a critical role in shaping visitor satisfaction and fostering positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Physical evidence includes the cleanliness, safety, aesthetic quality, and cultural consistency of tourism facilities and environments, which directly affect tourists' trust and emotional responses. Finally, process refers to the efficiency and reliability of service delivery throughout the tourist journey, from pre-trip information search and booking to on-site experiences and post-visit communication. In the post-pandemic era, seamless and responsive processes have become decisive factors influencing travel decisions, as tourists increasingly expect convenience, speed, and personalization.

Given these considerations, examining how each marketing mix component influences tourist decision-making behavior in Nan Province is both timely and necessary. Moreover, tourists are not a homogeneous group; demographic characteristics such as age, education, occupation, and income can shape preferences, expectations, and behavioral responses. Identifying variations in decision-making behavior across demographic segments enables tourism stakeholders to design targeted and evidence-based marketing strategies that align with specific market needs. This study, therefore, seeks to address

an important research gap by empirically analyzing the effects of marketing mix factors on tourist decision-making behavior in a secondary destination context during the 2023–2024 recovery period. In summary, the marketing mix should be viewed not merely as a tactical marketing tool but as a strategic framework for guiding sustainable tourism development. For Nan Province, strengthening all seven marketing mix components in response to evolving traveler expectations offers a pathway toward enhancing competitiveness, increasing tourist satisfaction and loyalty, and ensuring that tourism growth generates inclusive economic and social benefits. By understanding how marketing mix factors influence tourist decision-making behavior, this study contributes valuable insights for policymakers, destination managers, and local stakeholders seeking to position Nan as a resilient and culturally distinctive destination in Thailand’s post-pandemic tourism landscape.

## Objectives

1. To examine the influence of marketing mix factors on tourists’ decision-making behavior when traveling to a secondary city, with specific reference to Nan Province.
2. To compare the effects of marketing mix factors on tourists’ decision-making behavior in traveling to Nan Province across demographic characteristics, including gender, age, educational attainment, occupation, and average monthly income.

## Research Framework

In the post-pandemic tourism landscape of 2023–2024, understanding tourist decision-making behavior necessitates a systematic examination of marketing-related variables that shape perceptions, preferences, and travel choices. Among these variables, the marketing mix remains a foundational strategic tool for influencing consumer behavior across both product- and service-oriented industries, including tourism (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Given the experiential and service-intensive nature of tourism, the expanded 7Ps service marketing mix provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing how multiple controllable factors collectively influence tourists’ satisfaction, behavioral intentions, and destination selection (Booms & Bitner, 1981).

This framework is particularly relevant to Nan Province, a designated secondary tourism city in northern Thailand that is distinguished by its rich cultural heritage, ethnic diversity, and well-preserved natural environment. These attributes closely align with emerging tourist preferences in 2023–2024, which increasingly emphasize authenticity, sustainability, cultural immersion, and meaningful experiences rather than mass tourism consumption (Tourism Authority of Thailand [TAT], 2023). Accordingly, this study adopts the 7Ps marketing mix as the principal set of independent variables to explain tourists’ decision-making behavior regarding travel to Nan Province. Within the context of this research, the seven components of the service marketing mix are defined as follows.

**Product** refers to tourism offerings such as historical and cultural attractions, eco-tourism activities, traditional festivals, local handicrafts, and community-based tourism initiatives. These elements respond to tourists’ growing demand for experiential, authentic, and culturally embedded travel experiences, which have become increasingly prominent in the post-pandemic tourism market (Ghadiri et al., 2012).

**Price** represents the monetary cost incurred by tourists and functions as a determinant of perceived value. In the contemporary tourism environment, flexible pricing strategies, bundled packages, and value-added services tend to influence travel intentions more strongly than low prices alone, particularly among quality-oriented travelers (Kotler & Keller, 2016; UNWTO, 2023).

**Place**, or distribution channels, encompasses the platforms through which tourists access destination-related information and services, including official tourism websites, online travel agencies, mobile booking applications, social media platforms, and digital navigation tools. In 2023–2024, real-time digital accessibility and integrated online services have become critical factors in destination competitiveness, especially for secondary cities seeking greater market visibility (Dao Duean Intetcha et al., 2022).

**Promotion** involves communication strategies designed to create awareness, shape destination image, and stimulate travel interest. For Nan Province, promotional activities such as digital advertising, influencer marketing, social media storytelling, public relations campaigns, and destination branding play a vital role in reaching both domestic and international niche markets (Jintanon et al., 2020).

**People** refer to all individuals involved in the delivery of tourism services, including accommodation staff, tour guides, transportation providers, and community hosts. Their hospitality, service attitudes, cultural knowledge, and professionalism directly influence visitor satisfaction, emotional engagement, and word-of-mouth recommendations (Booms & Bitner, 1981).

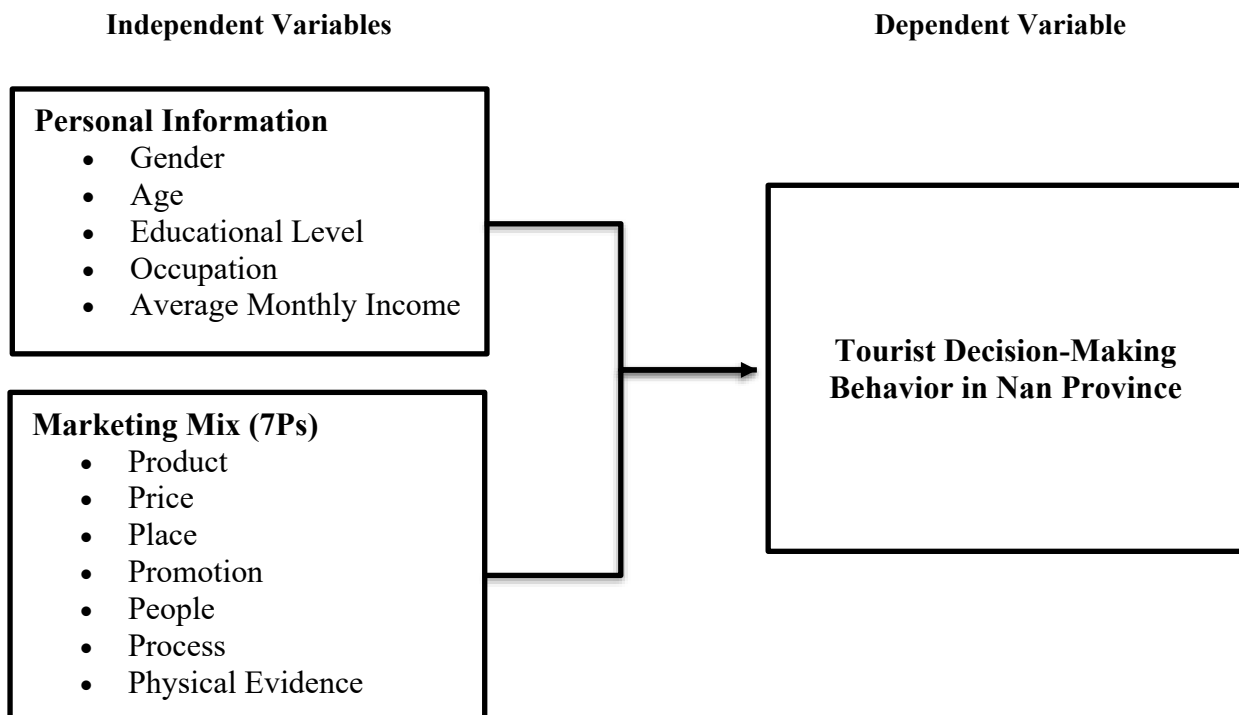
**Process** denotes the efficiency, consistency, and reliability of service delivery across the entire tourist journey, from pre-trip planning and online booking to on-site experiences and post-visit support. In the 2023–2024 tourism context, process effectiveness is increasingly associated with technology integration, service personalization, and responsiveness to tourist needs (Ghadiri et al., 2012).

**Physical evidence** represents the tangible aspects of the tourism experience, including facility cleanliness, safety measures, signage clarity, environmental quality, and overall destination ambiance. In the post-pandemic era, tourists place heightened importance on visible indicators of safety, hygiene, and authentic cultural aesthetics, which serve as cues for trust and quality assurance (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

These seven marketing mix components interact directly with the tourist decision-making process, which typically involves need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. This process is conceptually grounded in the Consumer Decision Model (CDM), which posits that consumer choices are guided by rational evaluation combined with experiential feedback and prior satisfaction (Farley et al., as cited in Voranaphon, 2012). Within this conceptual framework, the seven elements of the 7Ps marketing mix function as independent variables, while tourist decision-making behavior regarding travel to Nan Province constitutes the dependent variable.

To capture heterogeneity among tourists, intervening variables—including gender, age, education level, occupation, and monthly income—are incorporated into the framework to facilitate comparative analysis across demographic segments. This approach enables a deeper understanding of how marketing mix factors influence decision-making behavior among different groups of tourists, thereby supporting more targeted and effective destination marketing strategies. The proposed research framework is particularly significant for evaluating secondary city tourism development in the 2023–2024 period, as it aligns with Thailand’s national tourism policies emphasizing sustainable development, equitable income distribution, and post-COVID-19 recovery (Ministry of Tourism and Sports [MOTS], 2023).

By identifying the relative influence of each marketing mix factor on tourist decision-making behavior, this framework provides a robust analytical foundation for policymakers, destination managers, and community stakeholders. The insights derived from this model can inform evidence-based strategies aimed at enhancing Nan Province’s competitiveness, improving visitor satisfaction, and fostering long-term, sustainable tourism growth, as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework of the Study

## Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the influence of marketing mix factors on tourists' decision-making behavior when visiting Nan Province within the post-pandemic tourism context of 2023–2024. In addition to identifying key determinants of travel decisions, the study sought to compare variations in decision-making behavior across different demographic characteristics in order to capture differences in travel motivations, preferences, and expectations among tourist segments. The research methodology was systematically implemented through the following stages.

**Population and Sample.** The study population consisted of domestic and international tourists who traveled to Nan Province and engaged with its tourism and hospitality services during the study period. According to official statistics reported by the Nan Provincial Statistical Office (2023), the total number of tourists visiting the province in 2023 was 532,902. The required sample size was calculated using the Taro Yamane (1973) formula, applying a 95 percent confidence level and a 5 percent margin of error. Based on this calculation, a sample size of 400 respondents was deemed statistically adequate for inferential analysis and representative of the tourist population.

**Research Instrument Design.** Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from an extensive review of prior studies on the marketing mix and tourist decision-making behavior. The questionnaire was designed to reflect the characteristics of secondary city tourism and the contemporary travel context of 2023–2024. It consisted of four main sections.

The first section collected demographic information, including gender, age, educational attainment, occupation, and average monthly income. The second section measured marketing mix factors based on the expanded 7Ps framework: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. These items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The third section focused on tourists' decision-making behavior, emphasizing travel planning, destination selection, intention to revisit, and recommendation behavior relevant to tourism in Nan Province. The final section included open-ended questions, allowing respondents to provide additional comments and suggestions regarding tourism development and service improvement.

**Instrument Validity and Reliability.** Content validity was assessed through expert evaluation. The questionnaire was reviewed by three specialists in tourism management and marketing to ensure clarity, relevance, and consistency with the research objectives. The Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) index was calculated, yielding a value of 0.85, which indicates a high level of agreement between the items and the intended constructs. To assess reliability, a pilot study was conducted with 30 tourists who had previously visited Nan Province. Participants were selected using simple random sampling. The internal consistency of the instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which resulted in a value of 0.924. This exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, confirming that the questionnaire demonstrated excellent reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

**Data Collection Procedures.** Data collection was conducted during both peak and shoulder tourism seasons between late 2023 and early 2024 to capture diverse tourist profiles. A mixed-mode approach was adopted, combining on-site surveys at key tourist locations with online questionnaires distributed through digital platforms. This approach enhanced response diversity and improved data coverage across different tourist segments. All respondents were informed of the study's objectives and assured of confidentiality and anonymity before participation. Informed consent was obtained, participation was voluntary, and no incentives were provided to minimize response bias.

**Data Analysis.** The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 28. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to summarize tourists' perceptions of marketing mix factors and decision-making behavior. An independent samples t-test was applied to examine differences between two-group demographic variables, such as gender. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to compare differences among demographic variables with more than two categories, including age, education level, occupation, and monthly income. Where statistically significant differences were identified, post hoc analysis using the Least Significant Difference (LSD) method was conducted to determine specific group differences, particularly for occupation and income categories. Finally, multiple linear regression analysis was used to assess the predictive influence of the seven marketing mix components as independent variables on tourists' decision-making behavior as the dependent variable, enabling an evaluation of the relative contribution of each factor.

Overall, this methodological framework is consistent with contemporary tourism research practices in 2023–2024, which increasingly emphasize robust sampling procedures, validated measurement instruments, and multivariate statistical techniques to explain complex consumer behavior in competitive and rapidly evolving tourism markets (UNWTO, 2023).

## Research Results

The demographic analysis of the 400 respondents indicated that the majority were female (62.75%), while male respondents accounted for 37.25%. In terms of age distribution, the largest proportion fell within the 31–40 years age group (26.00%), followed by 21–30 years (24.50%) and 41–50 years (18.75%), respectively. Regarding educational attainment, most respondents held a bachelor’s degree (37.75%), followed by those with higher than a bachelor’s degree (34.50%) and those with below a bachelor’s degree (27.75%). Occupationally, the majority of participants were government officials, state enterprise employees, or public sector personnel (26.50%), followed by private company employees (25.50%) and self-employed individuals or entrepreneurs (19.75%). Regarding average monthly income, the largest proportion earned between 25,001–40,000 THB (24.25%), followed by 10,001–25,000 THB (23.25%) and 40,001–55,000 THB (18.25%). These demographic distributions suggest that the sample consisted primarily of economically active individuals with stable incomes and diverse educational backgrounds, reflecting the profile of quality-oriented travelers in the 2023–2024 tourism context (UNWTO, 2023). In examining the influence of the marketing mix factors on tourists’ decision-making behavior in traveling to Nan Province, the findings revealed that respondents perceived the overall importance of the marketing mix at the highest level. Among the seven individual components, physical evidence was rated as the most important factor, followed by people and place (distribution channels), respectively. This result underscores the significance of tangible service elements such as cleanliness, safety, cultural authenticity, and well-maintained facilities in shaping destination appeal in the post-pandemic period, as well as the critical role of service personnel and accessible distribution platforms in enhancing visitor experiences (Kotler & Keller, 2016; TAT, 2023). Conversely, the price component was rated as the least important factor influencing travel decisions to Nan Province. This suggests that, for many tourists in 2023–2024, quality, authenticity, and experiential value outweigh cost considerations, particularly when visiting secondary destinations known for cultural richness and natural beauty. A detailed summary of the mean scores and standard deviations for each marketing mix component is presented in Table 1, illustrating the relative weight of each factor in influencing tourist decision-making behavior in Nan Province.

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard Deviation of Marketing Mix Factors Influencing Tourists' Decision-Making Behavior.

Marketing Mix Factors	Mean	S.D.	Level of Agreement
1. Product and Service	4.23	0.63	Highest
2. Price	4.12	0.63	High
3. Distribution Channels (Place)	4.30	0.55	Highest
4. Promotion	4.15	0.66	High
5. People	4.34	0.57	Highest
6. Physical Evidence	4.35	0.57	Highest
7. Process	4.16	0.64	High
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.23</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>Highest</b>

According to Table 1, the overall mean score for the importance of marketing mix factors was found to be at the highest level (Mean = 4.23, S.D. = 0.52). When considered by individual components, it was found that the most important factor, as perceived by the respondents, was the creation and presentation of physical characteristics (Mean = 4.35, S.D. = 0.57), followed by personnel (Mean = 4.34, S.D. = 0.57), and distribution channels (Mean = 4.30, S.D. = 0.55). The factor deemed least important was pricing (Mean = 4.12, S.D. = 0.63). 1) Price Dimension, Participants rated the pricing factor as highly important. The most important aspect was the perceived fairness of prices for accommodations, food and beverages, and souvenirs. This was followed by reasonable entrance fees to

tourist attractions and the appropriateness of additional costs for amenities. The least important aspects included the variety and suitability of transportation costs and the appropriateness of tour package pricing. 2) Distribution Channels, this dimension was rated as the most important among all marketing mix factors. Respondents emphasized the accessibility of public/private transportation systems and the convenience of booking via mobile or online systems. The availability of pre-booking services for tourist attractions and convenient options for booking accommodations and related services (via phone, online platforms, or walk-in) were also highlighted. The least important aspect was the availability of diverse booking and inquiry channels through travel agencies. 3) Promotion was perceived as very important. Respondents valued special promotions and complementary services that met their travel needs. Online advertising and information sharing, including customer reviews, were also considered essential. In-person promotion by hotel or restaurant staff was noted, while the least important promotional aspects were online advertising for accommodations (e.g., via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and travel agencies' promotional campaigns and activity offerings. 4) Personnel, this dimension received the second-highest importance rating. The friendliness and interpersonal relations of local vendors and residents were viewed as the most critical factor. Next were the courtesy and informational support provided by hotel, restaurant, and café staff, and the availability of safety personnel at tourist sites. The least important aspect was the adequacy and responsiveness of tour guides and travel agency personnel in helping during travel emergencies. 5) Physical Evidence, this was the most highly rated dimension overall. Tourists appreciated the diversity of attractions in Nan, including natural sites, historical landmarks, religious sites, and distinctive architecture. Respondents also valued the diversity and uniqueness of local products and services offered at hotels, restaurants, and cafés. Local culture, including traditional clothing, language, agricultural practices, and cuisine, was seen as important. The least important factor was the ease and clarity of contacting tour agencies. 6) Process, this dimension was also rated as highly important. Respondents noted the variety and convenience of payment methods at hotels, restaurants, and other service points as the most important. Efficient processes for booking and contacting tourist sites and transportation services were also valued. The least important process aspect was the ability of public officials and service personnel to provide support or information.

**Table 2:** Mean and Standard Deviation of Tourists' Decision-Making Behavior Regarding Travel to Nan Province.

<b>Decision-Making Behavior of Tourists Toward Visiting Nan Province</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Level of Agreement</b>
1. In the future, I will decide to travel to Nan Province.	4.62	0.50	Highest
2. I will decide to travel to Nan Province if the government provides support for tourism.	4.62	0.62	Highest
3. Compared to other tourist destinations, Nan Province is more attractive.	4.50	0.61	Highest
4. I will recommend Nan Province to family, friends, or acquaintances.	4.68	0.50	Highest
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.60</b>	<b>0.45</b>	<b>Highest</b>

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that the overall decision-making behavior of tourists toward visiting Nan Province is at the highest level (Mean = 4.60, S.D. = 0.45). Among the individual items. The highest mean score (Mean = 4.68, S.D. = 0.50) was associated with the intention to recommend Nan Province to family, friends, or acquaintances, suggesting strong word-of-mouth potential and positive tourism experience. Equal importance was assigned to the intention to revisit Nan Province in the future and the influence of government support on decision-making, both scoring Mean = 4.62. The perception that Nan Province is more attractive than other tourist destinations also received a high score (Mean = 4.50), indicating its strong competitive positioning as a secondary city destination. These findings demonstrate that tourists are not only likely to return but also serve as advocates for tourism in Nan Province, particularly when supported by government policies and promotion efforts. From Table 2, it was found that tourists' decision-making behavior regarding secondary tourist

destinations was at the highest level. Specifically, tourists most strongly agreed with recommending Nan Province to their family, friends, or acquaintances as a travel destination. This was followed by their intention to travel to Nan Province in the future, their decision to visit Nan when receiving government support for travel, and the attractiveness of Nan compared to other tourist destinations. These findings clearly indicate that tourists have strong confidence and a definite intention to choose Nan Province as their secondary travel destination.

To compare the factors of the marketing mix that influence tourists' decision-making behavior when traveling to Nan Province, classified by gender, age, education level, occupation, and average monthly income, it was found that there were differences between personal factors and tourists' decision-making behavior regarding travel to Nan Province. The details are as follows: 1) The comparison of tourists' decision-making behavior regarding travel to Nan Province, classified by gender, revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in decision-making behavior between male and female tourists. This indicates that gender does not play a determining role in influencing tourists' decisions to travel to secondary destinations such as Nan Province. 2) Age, it was found that tourists of different age groups exhibited statistically significant differences in their decision-making behavior regarding travel to Nan Province at the 0.05 level. Specifically, tourists aged 31–40 demonstrated significantly higher decision-making behavior compared to those aged 21–30 and 41–50. In addition, tourists aged 21–30 showed significantly greater decision-making behavior than those aged 41–50. Furthermore, tourists aged 51–60 and those over 60 had significantly higher levels of decision-making behavior compared to the 41–50 age group, also at the 0.05 significance level. These results suggest that age is a key factor influencing travel decisions to secondary destinations such as Nan Province. 3) Education level, it was found that tourists with different levels of education exhibited statistically significant differences in their decision-making behavior regarding travel to Nan Province at the 0.05 level. Specifically, tourists with education levels below a bachelor's degree and those with education levels above a bachelor's degree demonstrated significantly higher decision-making behavior than those with a bachelor's degree. These findings suggest that educational background plays a significant role in influencing tourists' travel decisions to secondary destinations such as Nan Province. 4) Occupation, it was found that tourists with different occupations exhibited statistically significant differences in their decision-making behavior regarding travel to Nan Province at the 0.05 level. Specifically, tourists who were students, government officers, self-employed individuals, and those in other occupations demonstrated significantly higher levels of decision-making behavior compared to those employed in the private sector. These results highlight that occupation is an influential factor affecting tourists' decisions to travel to secondary destinations such as Nan Province. 5) Average monthly income, it was found that tourists with different income levels exhibited statistically significant differences in their decision-making behavior regarding travel to Nan Province at the 0.05 level. Specifically, tourists with an average monthly income exceeding 55,000 baht demonstrated significantly higher decision-making behavior compared to those with an average monthly income between 10,000–25,000 baht and 25,000–40,000 baht. These findings suggest that income level plays a crucial role in influencing tourists' decisions to travel to secondary destinations such as Nan Province and 6) Tourists with an average monthly income between 40,000–55,000 baht demonstrated significantly higher decision-making behavior regarding travel to in Nan Province compared to those with an average monthly income between 25,000–40,000 baht, at the 0.05 level of statistical significance. This finding further supports the notion that higher income levels are associated with a greater likelihood of engaging in travel to secondary destinations such as Nan Province.

**Table 3:** Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the Marketing Mix Factors Affecting Tourists' Decision-Making Behavior for Traveling to In Nan Province Using the Enter Method.

Marketing Mix Factors	$b_j$	$t$	Sig.
1. Constant	3.76	19.57	0.00*
2. Product and Service ( $X_1$ )	-0.03	-0.53	0.60
3. Price ( $X_2$ )	-0.06	-1.10	0.27

Marketing Mix Factors	$b_j$	$t$	Sig.
4. Place/Distribution Channel ( $X_3$ )	0.03	0.52	0.61
5. Promotion ( $X_4$ )	0.01	0.21	0.83
6. People ( $X_5$ )	0.04	0.57	0.57
7. Physical Evidence ( $X_6$ )	0.03	0.43	0.67
8. Process ( $X_7$ )	0.17	2.46	0.01*
Model Summary: $R = 0.28$ $R^2 = 0.08$ $SEE = 0.44$ $F = 4.82$ $Sig. = 0.00^*$			
(*Statistically significant at the 0.05 level)			

From Table 3, it was found that the overall marketing mix factors significantly influenced tourists' decision-making behavior when traveling to Nan Province at the 0.05 significance level. The model could explain 8.00% of the variance in decision-making behavior. When considering each factor individually, only the process factor had a statistically significant influence on tourists' decision-making behavior at the 0.05 level. This suggests that the quality and efficiency of service delivery processes such as booking, guidance, transportation, and responsiveness play a key role in shaping tourists' decisions to visit secondary destinations like Nan Province.

### Conclusion and Discussion

This study provides comprehensive empirical evidence on how marketing mix factors influence tourist decision-making behavior in the context of secondary destination tourism, with a specific focus on Nan Province during the post-pandemic period of 2023–2024. The findings contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical applications by demonstrating how the expanded marketing mix framework operates within a culturally rich yet less commercialized destination. By integrating demographic analysis with behavioral and perceptual data, the study offers nuanced insights into the characteristics and motivations of tourists who choose Nan Province as a travel destination.

The demographic profile of respondents revealed a higher proportion of female tourists (62.75%), with the largest age group being 31–40 years (26.00%). This pattern reflects broader global tourism trends in which middle-aged female travelers increasingly play a central role in travel decision-making, particularly in destinations emphasizing cultural depth, safety, and experiential value (Chen et al., 2018; UNWTO, 2023). Tourists within this age group often possess greater financial stability, time flexibility, and decision autonomy, allowing them to prioritize quality and authenticity over cost considerations. Their preference for secondary destinations such as Nan suggests a growing demand for travel experiences that offer cultural immersion, emotional fulfillment, and relief from overcrowding commonly associated with mass tourism destinations.

In terms of marketing mix factors, the overall evaluation of the 7Ps framework indicated a high level of perceived importance across all components, confirming the relevance of this model in explaining tourist behavior in service-intensive tourism contexts. Among the seven elements, physical evidence emerged as the most influential factor shaping travel decisions. This finding underscores the importance of tangible and visible cues, including the preservation of historical architecture, the authenticity of cultural landscapes, environmental cleanliness, and overall destination aesthetics. In the post-pandemic tourism environment, such elements also function as signals of safety, quality, and trustworthiness, which are critical determinants of destination choice (Zeithaml et al., 2018; TAT, 2023). For Nan Province, the well-maintained temples, traditional urban fabric, and unspoiled natural scenery serve not only as attractions but also as strategic assets that reinforce the destination's cultural identity.

The people component ranked as the second most influential factor, highlighting the pivotal role of human interaction in shaping tourist experiences. Service personnel, local guides, and community members collectively contribute to the co-creation of value through their hospitality, cultural knowledge, and interpersonal engagement. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing that positive social interactions enhance emotional attachment and satisfaction, thereby increasing the likelihood of repeat visitation and favorable word-of-mouth communication (Wang et al., 2020). In Nan Province, the friendliness of residents and the professionalism of tourism staff appear to strengthen

tourists' emotional connections to the destination, reinforcing its reputation as a welcoming and culturally authentic place.

Place, or distribution channels, was also rated as highly important, reflecting the increasing reliance on digital platforms for travel planning and service access. The availability of online booking systems, real-time travel information, and integrated payment options was perceived as essential in facilitating convenience and reducing travel uncertainty. This finding aligns with global tourism trends emphasizing digital transformation and smart tourism development, where technological readiness is closely linked to destination competitiveness (UNWTO, 2023). For secondary destinations such as Nan, effective distribution channels play a crucial role in overcoming accessibility barriers and enhancing visibility in competitive tourism markets.

Conversely, price was identified as the least influential factor among the marketing mix elements, although it remained at a high level of importance overall. This result suggests that tourists visiting Nan Province are less price-sensitive and more motivated by perceived value, service quality, and experiential richness. Such behavior is consistent with the experience economy theory, which posits that consumers increasingly prioritize memorable and meaningful experiences over monetary considerations (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). This pattern further supports the positioning of Nan as a destination for quality tourists, characterized by higher education levels, greater spending capacity, and a preference for culturally authentic experiences.

Analysis of tourist decision-making behavior revealed high levels of behavioral intention across all dimensions, including intention to revisit, intention to recommend, and destination preference. Word-of-mouth recommendation received the highest mean score, indicating strong attitudinal loyalty and satisfaction among visitors. As suggested by Baloglu and McCleary (1999), positive destination image and emotional engagement play a critical role in fostering loyalty, particularly in destinations where personal experiences and cultural resonance are central to the tourism offering. In the digital era, such recommendations are amplified through social media and online reviews, further enhancing Nan's potential for organic destination promotion.

The multiple linear regression analysis identified the process component as the only marketing mix factor with a statistically significant effect on tourist decision-making behavior ( $\beta = 0.17, p < 0.05$ ). This finding highlights the critical importance of efficient and seamless service processes in shaping travel decisions, especially in the post-pandemic context where travelers expect convenience, transparency, and responsiveness. Elements such as streamlined reservation systems, clear travel information, coordinated transportation services, and responsive customer support were found to significantly enhance tourists' confidence and satisfaction. This result is consistent with Buhalis and Law's (2008) assertion that well-designed operational and digital processes are decisive factors in destination choice, particularly for secondary destinations that compete with more established tourism hubs.

Furthermore, significant differences in decision-making behavior were observed across age, education, occupation, and income groups, while gender did not demonstrate a statistically significant effect. Tourists aged 31–40 exhibited the strongest behavioral intentions, likely due to their balance of financial capacity and desire for culturally enriching experiences (Li et al., 2020). Respondents with higher income levels and advanced education also demonstrated stronger intentions to visit and recommend Nan Province, reinforcing the notion that destinations emphasizing authenticity and experiential value are particularly attractive to quality-oriented market segments (UNWTO, 2022).

In conclusion, the findings of this study confirm that while all marketing mix elements contribute to influencing tourist decision-making behavior, the process component supported by strong physical evidence and people-related factors plays a particularly decisive role in the context of Nan Province. For destination managers and policymakers, these results suggest that effective tourism development strategies should extend beyond promotional efforts to focus on the holistic quality of the visitor experience. Investments in service process efficiency, cultural preservation, community participation, and environmental sustainability are essential for aligning Nan's tourism offerings with the evolving expectations of post-pandemic travelers. By strategically leveraging the marketing mix, Nan Province can strengthen its position as a resilient, competitive, and culturally distinctive secondary destination within Thailand's tourism landscape.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Practical Recommendations**

Based on the empirical findings of this study, several practical recommendations are proposed to enhance tourism management and marketing strategies for secondary destinations such as Nan Province in the post-pandemic tourism environment.

#### **1.1 Improve Service Processes and Visitor Convenience**

As the process component was identified as the only marketing mix factor with a statistically significant influence on tourists' decision-making behavior, tourism stakeholders should prioritize the improvement of service efficiency and operational convenience. This includes streamlining reservation and booking systems, ensuring transparent and secure payment methods, and improving coordination among transportation providers, accommodations, and local attractions. The integration of digital tools such as destination mobile applications, centralized booking platforms, and AI-based chatbots can enhance real-time communication, responsiveness, and personalization of services. Such improvements would reduce travel uncertainty, increase visitor confidence, and strengthen overall destination competitiveness, particularly for secondary destinations that rely on service quality rather than mass tourism appeal.

### 1.2 Enhance Physical Evidence and Local Cultural Identity

Given the high importance tourists place on physical evidence, destination managers should continue to invest in the preservation and enhancement of tangible cultural and environmental assets. Practical initiatives may include improving interpretive signage at historical and cultural sites, maintaining cleanliness and safety standards in public spaces, and conserving architectural authenticity in both urban and rural tourism areas. In addition, promoting local cultural identity through traditional design elements, community-based tourism activities, and locally produced crafts can enrich the visitor experience and reinforce Nan Province's positioning as a culturally distinctive destination. These efforts not only enhance tourists' perceptions of quality and authenticity but also contribute to sustainable tourism development and community pride.

## 2. Recommendations for Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights, several directions for future research are suggested to extend its scope and address existing limitations.

### 2.1 Expand the Scope Beyond a Single Province

Future studies should examine secondary destinations in other provinces of Thailand or across the broader Southeast Asian region to determine whether the observed relationships between marketing mix factors and tourist decision-making behavior are consistent across different cultural, economic, and geographic contexts. Comparative studies would enhance the generalizability of findings and provide more comprehensive guidance for regional tourism policy and planning.

### 2.2 Incorporate Behavioral Data and Longitudinal Approaches

This study relied primarily on self-reported survey data, which may be influenced by social desirability bias or limitations in respondents' recall. Future research could incorporate objective behavioral data, such as booking records, travel expenditure data, or GPS-based movement patterns, to strengthen analytical rigor. Longitudinal research designs would also allow scholars to examine changes in tourist decision-making behavior over time, particularly in response to evolving market conditions and policy interventions.

### 2.3 Examine the Role of Emerging Technologies

As digital technologies increasingly shape travel planning and consumption, future research should explore the impact of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and blockchain on tourists' trust, expectations, and decision-making processes. Such investigations would be especially valuable for understanding how less-developed or secondary destinations can leverage technology to enhance competitiveness and improve visitor experiences in an increasingly digital tourism ecosystem.

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