

**UNDERSTANDING RESORT HOTEL CLIENTELE THROUGH
SEGMENTATION: A STUDY OF THAILAND**

Jiraporn Chomsuan

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Understanding resort hotel clientele through segmentation

A Study of Thailand

Jiraporn Chomsuan

Abstract

Tourist resort hotels have been considered a fundamental leisure tourism product in recent decades. Resort style hotels are becoming popular accommodation options in the tourism industry all around the world, as a result of the special services and functions they offer. Resort hoteliers need to understand their customers well so that they can provide better service than their competitors, thereby attracting and retaining customers. One way for resort hoteliers to gain a better understanding of their customers is via segmentation: subdividing a large resort tourist market into clearly identifiable segments for the purpose of responding to the expectations of resort guests in the targeted segment.

This thesis presents research into segmentation of resort tourists visiting Thailand. The distinct segments are identified based on their push factors (tourists' underlying reason to travel), and they are profiled with respect to demographics and travel behaviour. Additionally, each segment is considered in relation to the importance of pull factors (resort hotel attributes, products and services provided, and activities) and the tourists' opinions of the resorts they chose to stay in. Tourists who were visiting beach resorts located in the popular destinations of Phuket, Krabi, Samui, Ranong and Chonburi from May to August 2012 were asked to complete a survey divided into five sections: (1) the main reason they travelled (push factors), (2) the resort's attractions that influenced them to choose it (pull factors), (3) the activities they were interested in participating in while they stayed at the resort, (4) their opinions regarding the resort they chose, and

(5) personal demographic data. A total of 320 usable questionnaires were analysed. Factor analysis was employed to discover the pattern of motivation variables (push factors), and then the K-means method of cluster classification was used to group tourists into similar clusters.

The findings suggest tourists visiting resort hotels in Thailand can be segmented into four distinct clusters on the basis of their travel motivations (push factors): Escaper tourists, Conventional vacationers, Challenge journeyers and Spoil me travellers. The implication of identifying these four clusters is that resort hotel businesses need to choose the right target segment and apply suitable marketing strategies to each segment.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Certificate of Authorship of Thesis.....	iii
List of Tables.....	ix
List of Figures.....	xi
Acknowledgement	xiii
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
1.1 Rationale of the study.....	1
1.2 Major research aim.....	11
1.3 Research objectives	11
1.4 Definition of a resort hotel.....	11
1.5 Scope of the study	16
1.6 Contributions of the study	17
1.7 Organisation of the study.....	19
Chapter 2. Hotel and Resort Industry in Thailand	23
2.1 An overview of the hotel industry of Thailand	23
2.1.1 Revolution of the hotel business in Thailand	23
2.1.2 Types of hotels in Thailand.....	24
2.1.3 The importance of the hotel industry for Thailand	25
2.1.4 Current situation	31
Chapter 3. Review of the Related Literature	35
3.1 Resort hotels	36
3.2 Travel motivation	39
3.2.1 Travel motivation theory.....	39
3.2.2 The push–pull model	44
3.2.3 Contemporary studies utilising travel motivation.....	49
3.3 Tourist segmentation	52
3.3.1 Definition of market segmentation and its significance.....	52
3.3.2 The major segmentation variables	54
3.3.3 Benefit segmentation versus psychographic segmentation	63
3.3.4 A priori segmentation and post hoc segmentation.....	66
3.3.5 Summary of focus of study in recent tourist segmentation literature	67
3.4 Tourists’ reflections on experiences (satisfaction and loyalty)	72

3.4.1	Customer satisfaction.....	72
3.4.2	Customer loyalty	74
3.5	Conceptual framework	77
Chapter 4.	Methodology.....	83
4.1	Research strategies (deductive and inductive approach)	84
4.1.1	Deductive approach	84
4.1.2	Inductive approach.....	85
4.1.3	Research strategy for this study	86
4.2	Types of research design	88
4.2.1	Experimental design	88
4.2.2	Cross-sectional design	89
4.2.3	Longitudinal design	90
4.2.4	Case study	90
4.2.5	Comparative design	91
4.2.6	Research design for this study	91
4.3	Sources of data: primary or secondary data sources.....	93
4.3.1	Primary data sources.....	93
4.3.2	Secondary data sources	94
4.3.3	Sources of data for this study	94
4.4	Sampling design	95
4.4.1	Population frame: resort hotels sampling.....	95
4.4.2	Sample size.....	98
4.4.3	Distributing and collecting questionnaires	102
4.4.4	Questionnaire design and construct	104
4.5	Construct reliability and validity.....	112
4.5.1	Reliability.....	112
4.5.2	Validity	114
4.6	Data analysis	118
4.7	Limitations and weaknesses of overall approach.....	120
4.8	Summary.....	122
Chapter 5.	Data Analysis and Results	125
5.1	Sample profile (from part 5 of questionnaire).....	125
5.1.1	Descriptive analyses concerning tourists' profiles	127
5.2	Result of factor analysis on push factors (from part 1 of questionnaire).....	129
5.3	Results of cluster analysis.....	134

5.3.1 Cluster interpretation through mean component values (regression factor scores)	136
5.4 Results of Chi-square analysis (from part 5 of questionnaire).....	138
5.4.1 Demographics description.....	145
5.5 Result of ANOVA analysis (from parts 2, 3 and 4 of questionnaire).....	149
5.5.1 Clusters explained by pull factors.....	154
5.5.2 Clusters explained by pull factors (activities)	162
5.5.3 Clusters explained by various aspects.....	168
Chapter 6. Discussions, Recommendations and Conclusions	175
6.1 Discussion.....	175
6.1.1 Discussion of travel motivation (push and pull factors)	175
6.1.2 Discussion of resort tourists' segmentation.....	177
6.1.3 Discussion of tourists' reflections on experiences (satisfaction and loyalty).....	186
6.2 Recommendations for Thai resort businesses	188
6.2.1 Macro-level recommendations	188
6.2.2 Micro-level recommendations (applied for operational marketing strategies).....	190
6.3 Recommendations for future researchers	197
6.4 Conclusion	199
References	203
Appendix A Information Sheet for Hotels and Participants	227
Appendix B Questionnaire	233
Appendix C SPSS Results	239
Appendix C.1.....	239
Appendix C.2.....	240
Appendix C.3.....	241
Appendix C.4.....	244
Appendix C.5.....	245
Appendix C.7.....	247
Appendix C.8.....	248
Appendix C.9.....	249

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Number of persons engaged, number of rooms, and average persons engaged per room, by region	29
Table 2.2: Thai hotel occupancy, 2015.....	33
Table 3.1: Tourist segmentation: previous literature	70
Table 4.1: Number of resorts, by region and location	97
Table 4.2: Summarised number of cases of tourism segmentation studies	101
Table 4.3: Reliability of measurement scales of Cronbach’s alpha	114
Table 4.4: Data analysis process	119
Table 5.1: Frequency analysis of respondents’ demographic and trip-related behavior	126
Table 5.2: Factor analysis of determinant factors (1) Challenge/explore journey	132
Table 5.3: Factor analysis of determinant factors (2) Escape trip	133
Four attributes falls into this factor (Get away, Release pressure, Escape routine, and Seek peaceful life) It represents 16.473% of total variance explained with an Eigenvalue of 2.800 and an Alpha at 0.894. An overall mean value of 3.13 was found. This factor was labeled as ‘Escape trip’.	
.....	133
Table 5.4: Factor analysis of determinant factors (3) Simply relax vacation	133
Table 5.5: Final cluster centres	135
Table 5.6: ANOVA output for means analysis with four segments.....	137
Table 5.7: Euclidean distances between final cluster centres.....	138
Table 5.8: Number of cases in each cluster.....	138
Table 5.9: Clusters explained by demographics attributes	140
Table 5.10: Segment cluster differences for pull factors	151
Table 5.11: Segment cluster differences for pull factors (activities)	159
Table 5.12: Segment cluster differences for their visiting experiences	166
Table 5.13: Segment cluster differences for their views.....	167
Table 5.14: Summary of characteristics of tourist segments	170
Table 5.15: Summary of findings: whether the hypotheses are supported or rejected.....	172
Table 6.1: Summary of marketing strategies focused for each segment.....	197

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Thailand GDP: composition by sector	1
Figure 1.2 Yearly tourist arrivals to Thailand (1998–2015)	2
Figure 1.3: Number of tourist arrivals in different Southeast Asian countries, 2012	3
Figure 2.1: Tourists' spending.....	26
Figure 2.2: Migration rate by region (per cent), 2006–11.....	30
Figure 2.3: Total number of hotels and per cent of hotels, by region	31
Figure 2.4: Number and percentage of rooms, by region	32
Figure 3.1: Literature themes	36
Figure 3.2: Conceptual framework	78
Figure 4.1: Steps in the research process.....	83
Figure 4.2: Way of thinking in the deductive approach	85
Figure 4.3: Way of thinking in the inductive approach	86

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