



Importance and performance analysis on tourism components in the south of Thailand

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Abstract

This research aimed to assess the perceived importance level and performance efficiency level of tourism components in a tourist destination in the southern part of Thailand. To propose management guidelines for a tourist destination in the southern part of Thailand, the assessment of tourists' perceptions covered seven factors, namely, accommodation, attraction, activity, accessibility, amenity, safety and security and service. Data were collected from 400 tourists in the southern part of Thailand. Results were analyzed using the technique of Importance Performance Analysis (IPA) revealing that data could be classified in four quadrants, i.e., (1) Quadrant A (Concentrate Here) amenities and safety and security (2) Quadrant B (Keep up the Good Work) accessibilities and service; (3) Quadrant C (Low Priority) accommodation and attraction and (4) Quadrant D (Possible Overkill) activities. Hence, amenity and safety and security were found to be the key important factors for managing a tourist destination in the southern part of Thailand.

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Introduction

According to Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), Thailand is considered to be a developing country that is well known as one of the world's greatest tourist destinations. The tourism industry in Thailand has continued to grow rapidly, despite a few incidents in 2019. When compared with 2018, arrivals continued to increase 7.35 percent. The tourism industry continues to generate income for the country, and as a result, Thailand's Ministry of Tourism and Sports has proposed a national tourism policy plan to increase national income from tourism to 169,771.51 million baht. In 2019, income continued to increase 6.16 percent distributed to all areas throughout Thailand to improve the quality of life of

the people. This plan aimed to achieve the target by adding value to destinations in areas with tourism potential and ability to accommodate tourism activities. The southern part of Thailand has also been chosen to be promoted as a tourist destination by highlighting its unique characteristics as selling points and to differentiate the area from other tourist destinations. Moreover, it needs to serve the needs of tourists and understand what they value as important factors in tourist destinations (Griffin & Edwards, 2012).

The literature review shows a limited amount of research has been conducted on tourist destination management in remote areas in developing countries that depend almost entirely on the tourism industry. Most of the previous tourism research regarding similar types of areas tend to focus on impact studies but very few studies have focused on the assessment of tourists' perceptions on how they rate the importance of tourism components and the level of performance effectiveness of the host destination to manage the components of tourism. Hence, without this set of information it can be challenging for a host to manage the destination appropriately. More importantly, considering

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the components of tourist destinations is necessary as they are the key consideration for tourists when they decide where to travel. Previous tourism research such as (Litman, 2007; Middleton, Fyall, Morgan, & Ranchhod, 2009) proposed many tourism components to develop and manage tourist destinations. However, many scholars only focus on the use of the most well-known components of tourism, i.e., the 5A's: accommodation, attraction, activity, amenity, and accessibility (Dickman, 1997; Middleton & Hawkins, 1998). Therefore, this research aimed to add two more components to the study that are believed to also play an important role in tourists' consideration when visiting a tourist destination, especially in a developing country. These components are service from the host destination and safety and security in the host destination (Murphy, Pritchard, & Smith, 2000). Service is considered not only to help differentiate and add value to a tourist destination but is also a key factor to attract tourists and maintain repeat visitors (Handszuh, 1995). According to Narayan, Rajendran, and Sai (2008); Murphy et al. (2000) safety and security is another major concern for tourists and needs to be considered in a tourist destination. A safe destination tends to create less pressure and more peace of mind for tourists during their visit.

According to a review of literature from previous studies, most studies in tourist destinations mainly discuss tourism development. However, there is still a lack of views on the part of tourists, who also value the needs and feelings towards a few tourism destinations. It is difficult to assess how to develop a tourism destination, to enhance tourism that has taken place considering the needs of tourists. According to the potential of tourism resources within the destination, it is necessary to study the importance and performance analysis on tourism components in the south of Thailand under the view of tourists under the composition of tourism destination. Therefore, this research underlines on 5As and 2Ss as tourism components assessment using IPA to determine tourists' perceived level of importance and performance effectiveness of the host destination (Martilla & James, 1977). The findings from this research can more or less be a guideline for managing tourist destinations in the south of Thailand that wishes to depend on tourism revenue.

Literature Review

Importance-Performance Analysis

Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) was developed in 1977 by Martilla and James and was used to assess the importance and performance effectiveness of attributes in the business marketing context (Martilla & James, 1977). The assessment will classify attributes in four quadrants according to the level in comparison with the overall means of the level of importance and level of performance effectiveness. IPA includes four important steps, namely, literature review, data collection on the measurement of importance and performance of attributes, data analysis by comparing overall means of importance and performance and designing the graph (Lai & To, 2010). According to Martilla and James

(1977), IPA consists of four quadrants; the first quadrant, "Concentrate Here", represents high importance but low performance. The second quadrant, "Keep up the Good Work", represents attributes showing high importance and high performance. The third quadrant, "low priority", includes attributes with low importance and low performance. The last quadrant is "Possible Overkill" representing attributes showing low importance but high performance. The importance-performance analysis is explained in Figure 1.

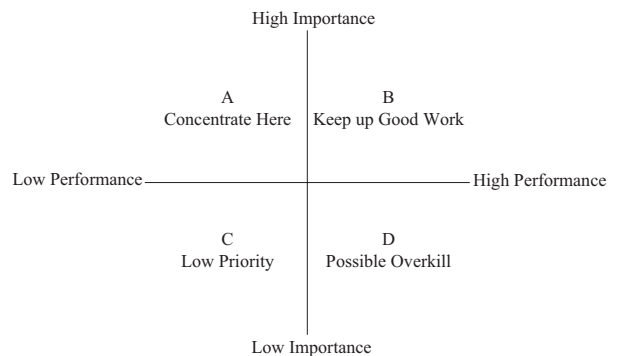


Figure 1 Importance-performance analysis grid

Many tourism research studies have used IPA to examine various aspects in tourism contexts such as exploring competitiveness of tourist destinations (Dwyer, Cvelbar, Mihalič, & Koman, 2014), and service requirements for convention centers (Breiter & Milman, 2006). Moreover, IPA was also used to improve service quality in the tourism industry such as (Chu & Choi, 2000; Martilla & James, 1977; Wade & Eagles, 2003), park management (Lai & To, 2010) and tourist attractions (Griffin & Edwards, 2012).

Destination Components

McIntosh, Goeldner and Ritchie (2007) proposed four tourism components: natural resources, infrastructure, transportation, and hospitality. The tourism industry also requires many other related components as part of tourism. Many previous studies such as (Dickman, 1997; Mill & Morrison, 2002) affirmed relationships exist between the tourism industry and other businesses both direct and indirect relations. The well-known tourism components that have been categorized in five aspects are; accessibility to the tourist destination (Dickman, 1997; Middleton et al., 2009). Meanwhile, accommodation is an important factor for the tourism industry because tourists will need a place to stay during their travel at least one night (Cooper, 1998; Holloway, 1998; Wight, 1997). In addition, attraction plays a vital role in the tourism context because it attracts tourists to visit the destination (Swarbrooke & Page, 2012). Moreover, activity is also important as it serves tourists' demands to gain new experiences (Inkpen, 1998). Finally, amenities regarding tourist destinations are also necessary to facilitate tourists'

stay (Cooper, 1998). Moreover, safety and security have been mentioned and focused on by many other scholars (George, 2003; Murphy et al., 2000; Narayan et al., 2008) who believe that safety and security act as essential fundamentals for the tourism industry as it relates to tourists' decision making whether they will visit the destination or not. Yet, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports in Thailand has also identified another four more components on top of the above-mentioned including restaurants, services, souvenirs and local products, which are included in those components.

In summary, previous studies indicators of significant components in order to study the importance and performance on tourism components. Therefore, taking the 7 components of the tourism destination that many scholars consider to be the components of the tourism components which are attraction, accommodation, activity, amenity, accessibility, services and safety and security. These 7 key components are very important components that tourists and scholars pay more attention to in tourism destination. Therefore, the significant indicators of tourism destination in this study are the 7 components as mentioned above.

Methodology

Population and Sample

This was a quantitative research using questionnaires to collect data. Due to the lack of information on number of visitors visiting the southern part of Thailand, this research applied the calculation technique by Cochran (1953) to determine the sample size for this research with 95 percent confidence and reliability of 95 percent. The suggested sample size was 384; however, to prevent a low response rate, a total of 400 questionnaires were used to collect data. The convenience sampling method was used to collect data from the target sample group which comprised domestic visitors to the southern part of Thailand, such as Nakhon si Thammarat, Patthalung, Surat Thani, and Ranong.

Research Tool

This research was divided into three parts. The first part was designed to collect demographic profiles and travel information of the respondents. The second part aimed to explore the level of perceived Importance and Performance of tourism components (5A2S) in the tourist destinations in the southern part of Thailand. The questions in this part consisted of seven main topics about tourism components. The last part of the questionnaire comprised an open-ended question asking for their suggestions.

In the second part, visitors were asked to rate each question on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1, 'least important' to 5, 'most important'. A careful screening for appropriate and relevant questions was conducted by three academic professionals who had expertise in this field and came up with a total of 50 questions regarding the tourism components in the tourist destinations in the southern of Thailand. Before the actual data collection process, a pilot test

was performed to improve the comprehensibility and increase the clarity of the questions in the questionnaire. The pilot test was conducted with 30 visitors of different nationalities in the southern part of Thailand resulting in an α -coefficient = .995 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). That said, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to discover the stability of variables and only those variables that contained greater than or equal to 0.70 were considered acceptable reliability (Cronbach, 1951). The results in Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each dimension of a construct were attraction, importance α -coefficient = .827, performance α -coefficient = .900, accommodation, importance α -coefficient = .916, performance α -coefficient = .932, activity, importance α -coefficient = .947, performance α -coefficient = .943, amenity, importance α -coefficient = .939, performance α -coefficient = .908, accessibility, importance α -coefficient = .960, performance α -coefficient = .765, services, importance α -coefficient = .961, performance α -coefficient = .916 and safety and security, importance α -coefficient = .990, performance α -coefficient = .968.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics was used in this study for the respondents' demographic profiles (Creswell, 2009). IPA was used to assess perceived level of importance and performance (Martilla & James, 1977) of each tourism component. They were calculated and plotted on a graphical grid. Vertical and horizontal lines were used to divide attributes in four identifiable quadrants (see Figure 1). The data were shown on a grid where each attribute was plotted according to visitors' perceived importance and performance in the four Quadrants (Chu & Choi, 2000).

Results

A total of 400 respondents completed the questionnaire. Respondents were 55.25 percent female aged between 31 to 40 years old, about 32 percent. The majority (53.5%) had a mean educational level at the undergraduate level. In addition, 40.5 percent represented their first time visiting the destination in the south of Thailand.

Importance Level of Destination Components

Table 1 shows the results concerning the perceived importance of the tourism components rated by 400 respondents visiting the tourist destinations in the south of Thailand for the first time. The most important tourism component perceived by the respondents was safety and security at the tourist destination. According to the results of the study, the average of importance the respondents focus on safety and security because in a tourist destination o safety and security is necessary for tourists. That factor is followed by services, an important consideration that tourists pay attention to in the tourist destination and which is the one of tourists who decide retention to revisit. The amenities provided in the tourist destination will be convenient for tourist in destination. In addition, accessibility to tourism spot accommodation is

an indicator that can allow tourists to travel to the tourist destination. Moreover, tourist attraction is a factor that tourists pay attention to for variety in destination. Finally, tourism activity is also a factor that makes tourists decide to travel to that destination, where there are various tourism activities and worth traveling for.

Performance Level of Destination Components

Table 1 also shows results of the perceived performance of the tourism components in the tourist destination in the southern part of Thailand. The findings revealed the overall mean value ranked as service tourists perceive service in destination at the best level because in each area, there is standard of service. In addition, there are various activities in tourism destination, which make the perception of tourism activities at a good level. There are developments for the accessibility, that are organized to support tourism destination. The attraction has been renovated to bring in visitors and manage the tourist destination. The accommodation has a standardized management system with a wide range of prices for tourists. There is a good safety and security management and CCTV cameras are established. There are inspections by responsible parties, such as police in the area. Lastly, amenities are arrangements to ensure the readiness to accommodate tourists in destination.

The comparison of the perceived importance level and performance efficiency level of the attraction (5A2S) is shown in Figure 2. Importance-Performance Analysis: IPA revealed that data could be classified in four Quadrants described below.

Quadrant A Concentrate Here included amenities followed by safety and security, which clearly reflected that majority of visitors are concerned about these two issues. They perceived the low performance effectively about amenities and safety and security in the destination. Therefore, this represented the weak points in the destination and shows tourism stakeholders in the destination must take serious action to improve amenities and increase the level of safety and security in the destination.

Quadrant B Keep up Good Work included accessibility and services. The respondents showed a strong concern about these two issues and also perceived a high level of

performance on these two points. Although these two issues are in quadrant B, the need to maintain the effectiveness of the performance remains as the strength of the tourism destination.

Quadrant C Low Priority included accommodation and attractions. The findings indicated that visitors showed a very low concern over these two components in tourist destinations and also perceived very low effectiveness of the performance regarding accommodation and attraction. Because visitors did not show a strong concern or need for it, these two components can be addressed as less important when compared with other components. However, the need to develop these components is still required to meet the overall tourists demand in tourist destinations in the southern part of Thailand.

Quadrant D Possible Overkill included tourism activities. It clearly reflected that most respondents focused less on tourism activities available in the destination yet, they could perceive a very high performance concerning effectiveness for this component. Maintaining the quality standard is important even though it received less attention from the visitors.

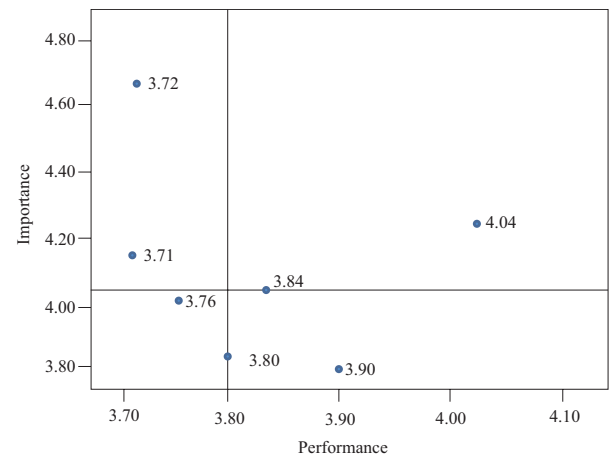


Figure 2 Comparison of the perceived importance level and performance efficiency level of the attraction (5A2S)

Table 1 Mean scores and standard deviations of the perceived Importance and Performance levels on the tourist destinations in the south of Thailand

Destination Components	Importance			Performance			Quadrants
	$\bar{x}$	<i>SD</i>	Result	$\bar{x}$	<i>SD</i>	Result	
1. Attraction	3.85	0.680	high	3.80	0.740	high	C
2. Accommodation	4.05	0.724	high	3.76	0.646	high	C
3. Activities	3.80	0.674	high	3.90	0.676	high	D
4. Amenities	4.14	0.716	high	3.71	0.739	high	A
5. Accessibilities	4.07	0.686	high	3.84	0.664	high	B
6. Service	4.24	0.659	high	4.04	0.727	high	B
7. Safety and Security	4.63	0.469	highest	3.72	0.745	high	A
Total	4.11	0.658	high	3.82	0.705	high	

Discussion

This study showed that the most important tourism components in the southern part of Thailand that need strong encouragement and improvement were amenities and safety and security, which fall in Quadrant A. This finding is in line with previous tourism studies (George, 2003; Middleton et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 2000; Narayan et al., 2008), who affirmed that visitors are often concerned about their safety when they go on holiday. Moreover, accommodation and attraction, which fall in Quadrant C, are also perceived as important components, which was supported by (Cooper, 1998; Mill & Morrison, 2002; Murphy et al., 2000; Swarbrooke & Page, 2012), who affirmed that choice of accommodation and well managed attraction play a key role as tourism components as they can attract tourists to visit the destination and increase length of stay. However Lee, Petrick, and Crompton (2007) and Murphy et al. (2000) believed that amenity was one of the important components in tourist destinations as it helps serve tourists' need and facilitates their stay; hence, it should be developed as a priority. Nevertheless, to successfully develop tourist destinations, the readiness of the destination is not the only reason behind achievement of goals and successful development. The destination will need to have effective tourism components together with local participation and involvement of all the tourism stakeholders to help develop, make decisions and manage the destination together to maximize the mutual benefits to all sectors (Wilson, Fesenmaier, Fesenmaier, & Van Es, 2001). In conclusion, IPA reveals that to develop tourist destinations, especially in the southern part of Thailand, studying the needs of visitors to find out what they perceive as important factors and how they experience such at the destination is important. Once this has been answered it will be more direct to the point for the destination to both develop and improve accordingly. The implication of this study suggests the tourism industry can be integrated with the organization's strategy and action plan to enhance the competitive capability. In addition, leaders in the tourism destination can be used to adapt and work in the tourism area together with various sectors in the tourism industry. As for the tourism industry associations, it can be used for event planning and activities to promote tourism development in tourist destination. Regional government agencies and local government organizations can conduct strategic planning and action plans for integration with various departments in the tourism industry.

Limitations and Future Research

Time limitation was one of the issues in conducting this research. As a result, this research had to apply IPA on the overall tourism components needed in the southern part of Thailand. For the future, a more specific focus will be on finding out the correlation between each component. Also, the study should look into ways to encourage and improve each tourism component to perform more effectively in the tourist destination.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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