



Exploring the factors of destination image, destination satisfaction affecting destination loyalty for cruise passengers in Thailand

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the factors relating to destination image and destination satisfaction which affect the destination loyalty of cruise passengers. The data were collected at Southern ports of Thailand: Phuket port and Samui port from foreign tourists who had experienced onshore excursions. A questionnaire is used as a data collection tool with 440 sample size. The data analysis is performed by using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation model analysis (SEM). The findings revealed that destination image has a positive influence on destination satisfaction, which in turn, strongly affects destination loyalty. Consequently, destination managers should establish a higher destination satisfaction to create destination loyalty, by developing the diverse attraction, improving tourism infrastructure, and enhancing the tourism environment such as the standard of hygiene and cleanliness at destinations. The practical implication may further enhance tourists' satisfaction, and hence their intention to revisit such destination as land-based tourists and to give positive recommendations to others.

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Introduction

Cruise tourism is the constantly fastest growing sector in the tourism industry (Chen, 2016; Fan & Hsu, 2014) with a global growth average of 7.6 percent per annum (Neuts et al., 2016). In regard to the growth rates, the cruise market in the Asia regions have noticeably evolved at an impressive rate (Cruise Lines International Association [CLIA], 2018). It is also dominant in Southeast Asia, including Thailand, and continues growth

with the second rank of regional market share (Monpanthong, 2018). Moreover, cruise tourism provides an important economic inducement to several destinations, in particular for cruise ports (DiPietro & Peterson, 2017). It also impacts the global economy by generating total output of up to 134 billion dollars and 1,108,676 jobs (CLIA, 2019; Larsen et al., 2012). However, the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) starting in December 2019 has disrupted the tourism industry with a decline in tourist travel between 2019 to 2020 of about 98 percent or approximately 2 billion tourists (United Nations [UN], 2020). It, therefore, affects cruise tourism with stranded ships due to port closures and the temporary ban of cruises in some countries (Muritala et al, 2022; Gössling et al., 2020).

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Over thirty years, Thailand ports have had the advantages from the maturation of the cruise industry in the region. Thailand's cruise tourism emerged from Phuket port with weekly regular calls. After that, more cruise ships have deployed to call at other ports. Thailand has become a famous tourist destination (Vongurai, 2018) with the most visited ports of call due to its different characteristics of the port (Monpanthong & Choibamroong, 2013). Thailand's ports demonstrated the strengths of Thailand with various tourist attractions and unique travel experiences. A report on the number of cruise ships visiting Thailand's ports of CLIA (2019; 2020) stated that the most visited ports were Phuket port, Leam Chabang port, and Samui port. Phuket port was the most visited port in Thailand, having 188 ship calls in 2019 while Samui port was the third rank visited port. These two ports were well-known destinations in Thailand. Moreover, these two ports are located with the same characteristics, gorgeous scenic locations, the growth rate, and the most popular destination of these ports. Thus, Phuket port and Samui port were selected for the focus of this study. With the occurrence of COVID-19, the cruise industry in Thailand also paused operations from March 2020 until now. However, CLIA (2020) predicted the number of cruise passengers and the growth rate will recover to the pre-pandemic numbers of recent years. Interestingly, cruise passengers after the COVID-19 pandemic, require great experiences and relaxed destinations such featuring entertainment, pleasant dining, etc (CLIA, 2022).

Likewise, the paradigm of the cruise market has shifted from small to large size, and in increasing the multi-generation target groups, the quality of tourism products and services is offered as a magnet to attract them (Monpanthong, 2018). The cruise ship, therefore, provides a destination to create the additional advantage of long-term customer relationships because cruise passengers have a positive experience that may encourage them to return as land-based tourists in the future (Brida et al., 2012). On the other hand, some scholars indicated that it is difficult to attract cruise passengers to revisit a destination (Brida et al., 2012). Josiam et al. (2009) indicated that cruise ships offering pleasure products and services to cruise passengers can make the passengers feel satisfied and to prefer to stay on the cruise ships rather than disembark to experience the destinations.

Consequently, the destination at the port is one of the vital factors influencing cruise passengers' positive onshore experience in parallel with the onboard experience (Sanz Blas & Carvajal-Trujillo, 2014). Wu (2016) detailed that the destination is an essential

consideration when cruise passengers decide to choose the destination as a vacation on the cruise ship. The various destinations as ports of call, particularly in the Asia region, are forced to contend with strong competition and greater arising challenges. The destination of each port of call is considered as the primary reason for cruise passengers to choose their trip (Niavis & Tsiotas, 2018). According to the significant growth situation of cruise tourism, the Ministry of Tourism and Sport of Thailand considered cruise tourism policy for the first time, namely, The Strategies for promoting cruise tourism, 2018–2027. This strategy creates, in particular, to formulate, implement and drive cruise tourism as a national cruise tourism policy in short-term, middle-term, and long-term strategies. The core of the first cruise nation policy emphasizes promoting Thailand's cruise tourism as a cruise center in the South East Asia Region in all dimensions of quality and standard, increasing revenue together with income distribution fairly and creating stability, prosperity, and sustainability for the participation of all sectors including national. In addition, this strategy also aims to develop tourist destinations in order to encourage cruise tourism and attracts potential passengers to revisit as well (The Ministry of Tourism and Sport of Thailand, 2018).

In terms of revenue, cruise passengers may generate less revenue for the destination than other tourists (Brida et al., 2012; Sanz Blas & Carvajal-Trujillo, 2014). The limited time during the port of call is the reason why cruise passengers spend less money than other tourists (Dowling & Weeden, 2017; Petrick, 2004). However, the destination will earn more money if they are satisfied with the destination, and they may revisit or recommend the destination to others.

Referring to the research interest in cruise tourism, most of the published research on cruise tourism in Thailand focuses on specific issues which are the topic of port development (Cheewatragoongit & Ngamvichaikit, 2018; Monpanthong, 2017; Monpanthong & Choibamroong, 2013), port efficiency (Monpanthong, 2018; Monpanthong & Choibamroong, 2016; Panumart Kedkaew, 2018) and followed by cruise passenger's behavior (Thangthong, 2017; Mulkunee, 2017) respectively. In Thailand, however, most of the relevant studies are inadequate and rarely focus on destination loyalty especially cruise passengers both revisiting the destination as land-based tourists and recommending it to others.

Therefore, it is necessary for cruise destinations to understand the components of destination image affecting loyalty. This information will also be valued by policy and destination makers for strategies to increase profits

and develop the destination, products, and services that are suitable for tourist demand for enhancing cruise passengers' loyalty from those who visited Phuket port and Samui port to revisit as land-based tourists or recommend such to others in the future.

Literature Review

Cruise tourism

The situation of global and Asia-Pacific region cruise tourism is continually growing providing Thailand and nearby countries with an opportunity to service cruise tourism within the region as well (Singh, 2000). In the beginning, there were a few cruise ships targeting mainly aging and high-end North Americans and European tourists to Phuket, Thailand during the high season. Afterward, in 1990, Star Cruises deployed two cruise ships to cruise in this region and call into Phuket as a weekly call. The number of cruise ships visiting Thailand port has continuously and rapidly increased. According to the report of CLIA (2019, 2020), the growth rate of cruise ships visiting Thailand's ports between 2014 to 2020 is unstable. The thorough comparison in each year found that in 2014 the number of cruise ships which called into Thailand decreased by 11 percent while in 2015 it increased by 28 percent. In 2016 the number of cruise ships calling into Thailand decreased by 22.2 percent. The cruise rose by 75 percent in 2017 and continuously in 2018 up by 14 percent. However, the number of cruise ships calling into Thailand decreased another time to 5 percent in 2019 and decreased by 74 percent in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The comparison of the growth rate in Thailand, South East Asia, and Asia between 2014 to 2018 before

the COVID-19 pandemic indicated that Thailand has a higher proportion of growth than Asia up to 152 percent, and higher than Southeast Asia up to 67 percent (CLIA, 2018). Hence, it showed that Thailand is considered one of the potential destinations to serve cruise tourism.

Additionally, Thailand has become the most well-known tourist destination due to its unique attractions, diverse activities, and Thai hospitality (Sangpikul, 2018; Vongurai, 2018). Such drove an increase in the number of calls to this destination to 581 accommodating up to 624,000 cruise tourists in 2018. The potential of the destination is emphasized to support the higher cruise demand. Most importantly, cruise tourism increases the country's economic impact by generating revenue of over 3.5 billion baht, increasing employment, and improving the quality of life (Neuts et al., 2016; Niavis & Tsiotas, 2018).

Figure 1 shows the number of cruise ships visiting Thailand's ports. The most visited port is Phuket port over four years with 29 calls in 2020, 188 calls in 2019, 219 calls in 2018, and 150 calls in 2017 while Samui had 12 calls in 2020, 59 calls in 2019, 59 calls in 2018, and 53 calls in 2017. Laem Chabang port had 37 cruise ships visiting in 2020 and 147 calls in 2019 and was followed by Phang Nga Bay respectively (CLIA, 2019; 2020).

The number of cruise ships visiting Thailand's ports indicate that Phuket port is easily the most frequently visited due to its reputation as a world tourist destination. In addition, Samui port, located in Surat Thani province is also considered as one of the potential ports to serve cruise tourism (Monpanthong, 2018; Mulkunee, 2017). These two locations are well known for the gorgeous scenery, diversity of tourist attractions, unique culture and traditions, and a variety of activities. Due to the growth rate and the ports being the most popular

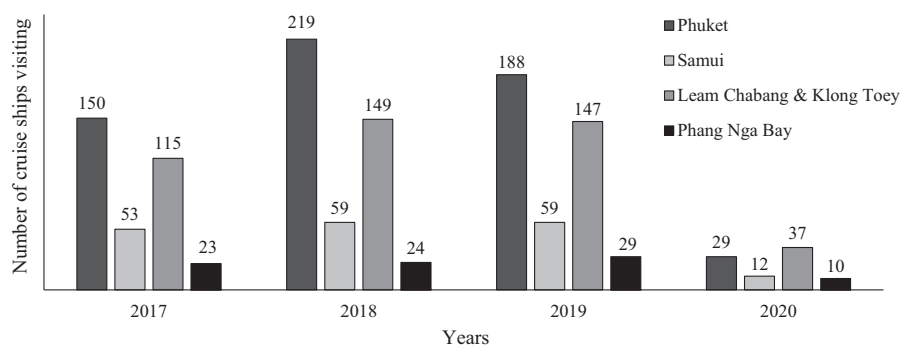


Figure 1 Top port of call in Thailand between 2017 to 2020

Source: CLIA (2019; 2020)

destination, the potential to support higher cruise demand and the potential to service cruise tourism can be emphasized. Because of the above evidence, it is better to study Phuket port and Samui port to encourage destination loyalty and to be the center of cruise tourism in Southeast Asia in the future.

Destination Image of cruise tourism

The destination image is the tourist's perception or impression of the destination with the expected benefits of consumption value: functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional. These perceptions or impressions will be conducive to the determination to visit a country as a holiday destination (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). And Tasci and Gartner (2007) defined the destination image as a collaborating system of thoughts, opinions, feelings, visualizations, and intentions toward a destination. Moreover, destination image has been identified as part of the key considerations and significant contributions to understanding the tourist behavior in tourism marketing theory (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Rajesh, 2013). In terms of cruise tourism, the destination is an essential consideration when cruise passengers decide to choose the destination as a vacation on the cruise ship (Wu, 2016).

The selection of the destination image attribute used in the formation scale will depend on theory and cruise tourism situation. Beerli and Martin (2004) categorized attributes of destination image into nine dimensions which comprised general infrastructure, tourist infrastructure, natural resources, tourist leisure and recreation, culture, history and art, political, and economic factors, natural environment, social environment and atmosphere of the place. Correspondingly, Echtner and Ritchie (2003) demonstrated that the axis concept of destination image can be divided into four components. The functional characteristics are concerned with more tangible aspects of the destination such as infrastructures, transportation, types of accommodation, attractions, scenery, price levels, climate, etc. while the psychological characteristics are defined as more intangible and abstract such as level of friendliness, safety, atmosphere, quality of service expected, etc. Moreover, the continuum of destination image also includes unique features, event and auras.

This study categorizes attributes of destination image into six main elements which are the tourism environment including being safe and secure, tourist resources, tourist activities, tourist infrastructure, social environment, and accessibility. Each element was measured by observed variables to understand the destination image of cruise passengers. Such can be summarized as below.

Tourism environment is measured by observed variables as follows; safe and secure, unpolluted environment, clean and neat environment, peaceful and restful atmosphere and weather (Hassani & Maroofi, 2017; Park & Njite, 2010; Ramseook-Munhurrin et al., 2015; Sanz Blas & Carvajal-Trujillo, 2014; Toudert & Bringas-Rábago, 2016; Wang & Hsu, 2010).

Tourist resources are comprised of observed variables as follows; variety of attractions, scenery and natural attractions, history and heritage, cultural events and festivals, entertainment and colorful nightlife (Toudert & Bringas-Rábago, 2016; Sanz Blas & Carvajal-Trujillo, 2014).

Tourist activities are the main element, which are measured by observed variables as follows; recreation activities, water sports, boating, fishing, and outdoor activities (Sanz Blas & Carvajal-Trujillo, 2014; Wang & Hsu, 2010).

Tourist infrastructure is measured by observed variables as follows; tourist information, tourist signs, tourist services providers, accommodation, restaurants and cuisine, shopping facilities, transportation systems, and financial service facilities (Sanz Blas & Carvajal-Trujillo, 2014; Toudert & Bringas-Rábago, 2016; Wang & Hsu, 2010).

Social environment is measured by observed variables as follows; no language barrier for tourists, friendly and helpful of local residence, price of shopping, price and quality of restaurants, price and quality of accommodation (Sanz Blas & Carvajal-Trujillo, 2014; Wang & Hsu, 2010).

Accessibility is measured by observed variables as follows; easy access to the destinations, parking areas, and traffic congestion (Hassani & Maroofi, 2017).

However, the attributes in this study can be conceptualized as attribute-based, which are some of the keys to the evaluation on the basis of each attribute. By understanding what attributes directly influence cruise passengers on the destination, it is possible to create and develop a positive image in accordance with cruise passengers in the future.

Destination Satisfaction of cruise tourism

Cruise tourism is a more complex concept than other manufacturing industries due to the unique characteristic of products and services. The unique characteristics are the intrinsic service nature of heterogeneity, perishability, inseparability, and intangibility. Because of these characteristics, the purposeful aim in the tourism and service industry is to create the related service and products for tourists to meet their satisfaction. Tourist satisfaction

is a phenomenon of behavior that arises from emotional factors and cognitive factors of tourism service and activities as well as evaluating of the various elements of the destination and leading to increasing revisit tourists (Allameh et al., 2015).

Tourist satisfaction is one of the major tools that are generally used to accumulate information about the destination in the opinions of tourists (Alegre & Garau, 2010). The tourist destination satisfaction is an emotional expression of cruise passengers' behavior and is combined with the most relevant variables and the consumption of services and products that influence to choose the destination to revisit. Therefore, this study measures satisfaction as mediating variable by comparing the level of expectation between the level of cruise passengers' perceived performance while price-quality satisfaction is referenced to compare the price of the products and services with their quality. Besides, comparison with other places is measured by comparing Thailand destination with other destinations and overall satisfaction refers to the holistic perspective of satisfaction.

Destination Loyalty of cruise tourism

The destination loyalty phenomenon has been extensively studied within the tourism industry (Ozturk & Gogtas, 2016). Customer loyalty or destination loyalty can be illustrated as the behavioral intention of the customers to revisit (Mohamad et al., 2011) and disseminate the positive word of mouth. Although the tourist is satisfied with the destination, they may not return or positively recommend it to others, which has no value to the destination. Therefore, the destination loyalty of tourists demonstrates being more valuable than tourist satisfaction (Hudson, 2008).

According to Oliver (1999), the theory of tourist loyalty is the relationship between attitudes and behavior towards the destination, services, or organization. Destination loyalty is based on past experience which can be classified into the form of attitudes and behaviors as follows: The first form is cognitive loyalty. It refers to the ideas and knowledge which is attitudes of tourists to evaluate the trip including attraction, accessibility, products and services, facilities, services provided at the destination. In this category, tourists consider the trip and decide the destination is a favorite or not. The second form is affective loyalty, which is an emotional expression through actions and manners to demonstrate that tourists appreciate their trip, including attractions, tourism products, and services. When tourists are satisfied with their trip, they commit to returning to travel to the destination in the future. The third form is conative loyalty.

It is defined as a form of loyalty that is affected by current experience referring to tourists' willingness to return in the future. The fourth form is action loyalty, which refers to a strong loyalty seen through the expression of the behavior of tourists, who return to travel to the destination as a result of the impression of the previous trip.

Furthermore, the concept of Zeithaml et al. (1996) indicated that consumer loyalty is principally considered from their behaviors, attitudes, and cognitive processes. The loyalty can be measured as consumer loyalty to the organization from the concept of Behavioral Intention Battery business, which contains four dimensions, namely, word of mouth communication, purchase intention, price sensitivity, and complaining behavior. Robinson and Etherington (2006) presented key elements to measure the tourist's destination loyalty which consists of three parts as follows: returning or revisiting, the recommendation, and willingness to pay.

Therefore, for this study, the researcher used the theory of destination loyalty in two categories, namely, revisiting and recommendation.

Research Objective

To explore the factors relating to destination image and destination satisfaction, which affect the destination loyalty of cruise passengers.

Research Framework

From the conceptual research framework (Figure 2), the hypotheses for the study can be proposed as below:

H1: Destination image positively influences destination satisfaction

H2: Destination satisfaction positively influences destination loyalty

H3: Destination image positively influences destination loyalty

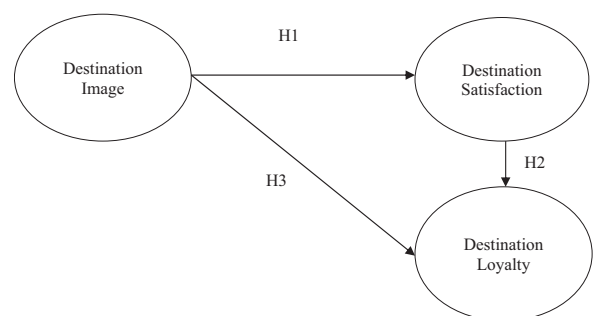


Figure 2 Conceptual research framework

Methodology

Quantitative research method was employed in this study, which aimed to explore the factors relating to destination image and destination satisfaction, which affect the destination loyalty from cruise passengers who visited and had experienced Phuket port and Samui port.

Population and Sample

The size of the sample is important for ensuring the possibility of finding a statistically significant result (Baggio, 2011). Hair et al. (2011) stated that the widely used sample size in the minimum method is the ten-time rule, and based on the questionnaire, was designed consisting of 44 items. Therefore, the sample size for this study was 440 samples.

Data Collection

The data were collected at Phuket port and Samui port. Purposive sampling is a technique to select the suitable sample qualification, which is a foreign tourist cruising to Thailand's port and being a tourist who had experience at Thailand port during their cruise. The data collection was conducted over approximately 2 years from May 2020 until May 2022.

A questionnaire was analytically designed to achieve data from cruise passengers, using a five point Likert scale. Destination image was developed from the literature review and previous studies; the questions were composed of thirty-one items. Satisfaction is employed to measure the level of agreement with satisfaction with four indicators; expectation-satisfaction, price-quality satisfaction, comparison with other places, and overall satisfaction, which comprise of seven question items. Destination loyalty comprises of revisit the destination and recommendation to others, totally six question items. The questionnaire was analyzed with regards to validity and reliability. The results of validity were measured by the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), resulting

in the score from 0.904 to 0.958. The reliability was tested with the experimental group of 30 samples, showing an alpha coefficient between 0.830 to 0.911.

Data Analysis

The data was finally analyzed by Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Model analysis (SEM).

Results

A total of 440 respondents completed the questionnaire. Respondents were 52 percent females, aged between 36–40 years old, about 25.50 percent. The majority had a Bachelor's degree, equivalent to 61.80 percent. Additionally, the majority of respondents stated their purpose to visit Thailand was leisure/holiday with 96.36 percent, and they had visited Thailand less than 3 times, sharing a proportion at 65.68 percent.

The analysis of the latent variables of destination image was done using the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) technique. The result of the variables of destination image is shown in Table 1.

From the result, the following latent variables were found; "Tourism environment (DITE)" was the factor loading at 0.837, "Tourism resources (DITR)" was the factor loading at 0.881, "Tourism activities (DITA)" was the factor loading at 0.742, "Tourism infrastructure (DITI)" was the factor loading at 0.862, "Social environment (DISE)" was the factor loading at 0.797 and "Accessibility (DIAC)" was the factor loading at 0.787.

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which is an index that examined the observable variables in each component, could correspondingly define latent variables reliably with the discriminant validity. The AVE value should be more than 0.50 and the composite reliability (CR) values for constructs in the model were above the verge value of 0.70. The result from the analysis was the AVE value between 0.531 – 0.709, which is interpreted as the reliability of the observable variables used to explain

Table 1 Analysis statistic of Confirmatory Factor Analysis model of destination image

Variable	Factor loading	S.E.	CR	AVE	R ²	Cronbach's Alpha
DITE	0.837	0.027	0.531	0.891	0.700	.846
DITR	0.881	0.019	0.549	0.907	0.777	.911
DITA	0.742	0.028	0.615	0.905	0.550	.910
DITI	0.862	0.021	0.555	0.897	0.742	.908
DISE	0.797	0.025	0.709	0.880	0.636	.878
DIAC	0.787	0.030	0.575	0.802	0.620	.830

the first-order latent variable while the result found the composite reliability ranged from 0.802 – 0.907, which is interpreted as the reliability of the observable variables. In the testing of the reliability of destination image variables, the result showed the Cronbach's Alpha rating between 0.830 to 0.911, which was a value more than 0.70, greater than the standardized definition.

Furthermore, the result of the model consistency analysis (Figure 3) using the appropriate consistency index of the model under acceptance index values was found that the Chi-square/Degree of Freedom (X^2/df) was 2.699, which was less than 3 through the criteria set. When considering the index of CFI = 0.974, TLI = 0.971, RMSEA = 0.062, SRMR = 0.035 it passed acceptable criteria. The acceptable fitness of the model comprises of CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.97, RMSEA = less than 0.05 but not more than 0.07, and SRMR = less than 0.05. However, the P-value at 0.000 could not determine the goodness of fit of the model, and it was a result of the complexity of the model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

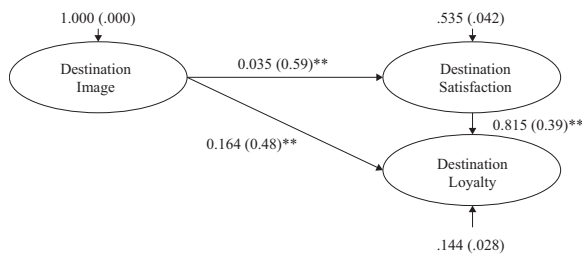


Figure 3 Structural model of destination image, destination satisfaction, and destination loyalty for cruise passengers.

Note: ** $p \leq .001$.

From Figure 3, showing the factor loading of the variable within the measurement model, the structure model result of the destination image also has a positive direct effect on destination satisfaction with the direct effect at 0.305, the indirect effect at 0.164, and the total effect at 0.469. Destination image has a positive direct effect on destination loyalty with the direct effect at 0.164, indirect effect at 0.359, and total effect at 0.523. Finally, destination satisfaction has a positive direct effect on destination loyalty with the total effect and direct effect at 0.815.

Table 2 shows the hypotheses test result. The hypothesis testing results of destination image positively influence destination satisfaction. Secondly, the hypothesis testing results at the statistical significance of 0.001 indicated that destination image has a positive influence on destination loyalty. Lastly, the hypothesis testing results at the statistical significance of .001 indicated that perceived destination satisfaction has a positive influence on destination loyalty.

Discussion

The result of destination image for six dimensions; tourism environment, tourism resources, tourism activities, tourism infrastructure, social environment, and accessibility showed Tourism Resources performed the highest factor loading, the same as in the study by Sanz Blas and Carvajal-Trujillo (2014). They indicated that the image of the destination, in order of significance is tourism resources, and infrastructure is the strongest dimension to contribute to the formation of cruise passengers' image at the port destination. This dimension result is consistent with the finding by Toudert and Bringas-Rábago (2016) on the greatest impact factor of tourism resources. When considering these issues superficially, tourism resources should be improved as the first priority to increase the number of tourists visiting the destinations because the image will lead to the decision-making process.

The second-highest factor loading is tourism infrastructure. Tourism infrastructure is one of the vital factors influencing cruise passengers' positive onshore experience. Moreover, it is also the vital criteria used by cruise liners for port selection (Monpanthong, 2018).

On the contrary, tourism activities is the weakest dimension with the lowest factor loading. The finding also confirms the study results by Wang and Hsu (2010) that activities were not appropriately represented because of the low factor loadings. As a result, it can be noted that the low factor loading of tourism activities for cruise passengers may depend on the short duration of time that they spend at port (Chen & Nijkamp, 2018).

Table 2 The hypotheses test results

Hypothesis	Path	Standard path coefficient	p-value	Result
H1	Destination image → satisfaction	0.305	.000**	Accepted
H2	Destination image → loyalty	0.164	.000**	Accepted
H3	Satisfaction → loyalty	0.815	.000**	Accepted

Note: ** $p \leq .001$.

The structural relations analysis of destination image and destination satisfaction, which affect the destination loyalty of cruise passengers indicates that destination image appears to have the most important influence on destination satisfaction, which in turn, strongly affects destination loyalty. Destination image positively influences destination satisfaction only as direct effect with a statistical significance level at .01. The empirical results are consistent with the study by Toudert and Bringas-Rábago (2016), which studied destination image on cruise repeaters at the port of Ensenada, Baja California, and illustrated strong total effect size, and the study by Sanz Blas and Carvajal-Trujillo (2014). This can be summarized that the destination image of cruise passengers is an antecedent of satisfaction with the destination.

Second, the analysis of the structural relations between destination satisfaction and destination loyalty shows that destination satisfaction positively influences destination loyalty with only an indirect effect. The result is much the same as Sanz Blas and Carvajal-Trujillo (2014), who tested the structural model relationship between satisfaction and destination loyalty in three items and found that cruise passengers' satisfaction with port-destination is positively influenced on port-destination loyalty.

Third, the analysis of the structural relations between destination image and destination loyalty show that destination satisfaction positively influences destination loyalty in two ways: direct and indirect effect. The finding is similar to the study by Toudert and Bringas-Rábago (2016), who found that destination image (tourist resources, urban environment, infrastructure, and atmosphere) has a direct impact on behavioral intention as well as Chen and Tsai (2007), who pointed out that destination image performs as the most significant effect, both direct and indirect, on behavioral intention.

In this study, destination satisfaction is a mediator between destination image and destination loyalty. Hence, the analysis of the structural relations between destination image, destination satisfaction, and destination loyalty confirms that destination image has a direct effect on destination satisfaction, and destination satisfaction has a strong directly effect on destination loyalty. The empirical results demonstrate that cruise passengers choose Thailand destinations to revisit as land-based tourists or give a positive recommendation to others. Satisfaction plays a significant role in affecting destination loyalty. Similarly, other studies in the field of tourism pointed out that satisfaction is a mediator between destination satisfaction and destination loyalty

(Ramseook-Munhurrun et al., 2015; Mohamad et al., 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to strive to create positive destination image for cruise passengers to establish higher satisfaction levels, and consequently, influence their loyalty both intentions to both revisit and recommend the destination to others

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study revealed that the most important destination image in the southern part of Thailand, that needs strong encouragement and improvement, was tourism resources, which takes the highest factor loading. This latent is conformed in a context of cruise tourism, in that tourism resources are the core attributes of tourism. Interestingly, the destination of cruise tourism has become increasingly considered in the decision-making of cruise passengers (Singh, 2000). Currently, as the target market of cruise passengers has moved from aging passengers to a multigenerational mix, destinations can achieve a wide range of needs and expectations of experienced cruise passengers and encourage the repeater with diverse tourism resources. Meanwhile, entertainment attractions, historical and heritage attractions, and cultural attractions are the new trend of today's tourists due to the shift in cruise passenger target market. Most importantly, these results confirm the significance of destination satisfaction for a mediator, which is a strong path from satisfaction to loyalty. It can act in achieving a better understanding of intentions to revisit and recommend the destination for cruise passengers.

Once this has been answered, it will be more direct to the point for the destination to both develop and improve accordingly. The practical implications of this study suggest that cruise tourism can be integrated to enhance the competitive capability. In addition, destination managers also have the opportunity to influence first-time tourists as well as potential return tourists. The destination should be developing the diversity attraction, improving tourism infrastructure, and enhancing the tourism environment such as the standard of hygiene and cleanliness at destinations. The implication may further enhance tourists' satisfaction, and hence their intention to revisit such destination as land-based tourists and to give positive word-of-mouth feedback. Furthermore, the development of destination image will increase the number of cruise passengers, leading to higher spending from cruise passengers, influencing their satisfaction, and performing on revisiting as destination loyalty in the future.

Furthermore, the finding of this study can only be generalized to the sample population as the location of the study is Southern Thailand ports with data collected from Phuket and Surat Thani. Thus, other port areas such as Leam Chabang port and destinations may produce different results in the destination image, destination satisfaction, and destination loyalty. Therefore, future studies should explore the relationships between factors in other ports for a holistic cruise policy to enhance cruise passengers to revisit as land-based tourists or recommend such to others.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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