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Comparing travellers' experiences in Phuket Island and Samui Island: A sentiment analysis of TripAdvisor

Tanawat Iabsap*,†, Chayanon Phucharoen†

Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism, Prince of Songkla University, Phuket 83120, Thailand

Article Info

Abstract

This manuscript compares user-generated content from two top island destinations in Thailand, Phuket and Samui, through the lens of destination competitiveness referring to Figure 2. The study employs Lexical Salience and Valence Analysis, along with the Naive Bayes algorithm. From an initial dataset of 33,108 reviews, a detailed analysis was conducted on 904 reviews from travellers who had visited both destinations. Although beaches are a shared core experience at both locations, the results show that, in the eyes of identical travellers, travel experiences related to created resources (like food and restaurants) and demand elements of the destination (like crowd levels and calm) significantly differentiate the two destinations. Consequently, recommendations for demand and destination management can be proposed, focusing on pricing strategies, environmental protection, and infrastructure development to effectively differentiate and imprint each destination in travellers' minds.

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Introduction

Tourism has contributed significantly to global economic growth, ranking third in the world's largest export category after fuels and chemicals in 2019 and growing faster than merchandise exports for the seventh year in a row since 2012 (World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2020). In addition to Thailand, where tourism has played an important role, such accounted for 17.79 percent of Thailand's GDP and 11 percent of Thai employment rate in 2019 (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2020a). In Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA), the Ministry of Tourism and Sports has classified nine tourism development regions, with the Andaman Tourism Cluster Area (Phuket, Krabi, Phang Nga, Trang and Satun) having the highest value of 625,451 million baht in tourism expenditure, followed by the Active Beach Area (Chonburi, Rayong, Chanthaburi and Trat) having a value of 341,837 million baht in tourism expenditure. The Andaman Tourism Cluster Area, and the Southern Island Area (Koh Tao, Koh Phangan, Koh Samui and Ang Thong Islands) are the areas that have the highest tourism ratio,

in which Tourism Direct Gross Domestic Products (TDGDP) covered more than 50 percent share to regional GDP, which significantly reflected tourism industry as an important driver (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017).

In terms of tourism revenue, Phuket is the top contributor for the Andaman Cluster area, with international travellers contributing more than 89 percent of its tourism revenue, as presented in Figure 1. Phuket, also called the Pearl of the Andaman, is the biggest island in Thailand and is located in the Andaman Sea. It is rich in natural beauty, history, and culture, attracting over 29.1 million visitors in 2019 (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2020b). Similarly, Samui Island (Koh Samui) generates the most revenue within the Southern Island Area, accounting for 93 percent revenue from international travellers, it is situated in the Gulf of Thailand, is the third largest island in the country and a key economic driver for Surat Thani Province, accounting for 38 percent of its revenue tax (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2020b; Surat Thani Provincial Statistical Office, 2019).

The tourism industry is considered the backbone of economic activity in these destinations. Without the tourism engine, the economy paralyses, as evidenced by the COVID-19 situation. During this period, only these two destinations, initiated pilot projects known as the Phuket Sandbox and the Samui Plus Model, which were designed to help people survive the outbreak and stimulate economic activity in these tourist-heavy areas. (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2021). Both destinations are islands, geographically defined as areas of land surrounded by water and remaining above water at high tide (United Nations, 1982).

Despite differing administrative statuses, Phuket as a province and Koh Samui as a subdistrict of Surat Thani, both destinations are notable for their geographic similarities, type of traveller, significant tourism infrastructure, and comparable sizes. Phuket covers 543 square kilometres, making it nearly the smallest province in Thailand, while Koh Samui spans 227 square kilometres (Koh Samui City Municipality, 2021; Phuket Provincial Administrative Organization, 2021).

The Thai government has developed a national strategy to adhere to Thailand's tourism development plan. It is essential to understand our current position and evaluate how effectively destination management performs their duties. Moreover, adapting technology within the tourism ecosystem is a crucial part of the national strategy (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2023). This adaptation has become increasingly important in the digital age, facilitating the collection of feedback for destination management, as travellers' behaviours are evolved from offline to be online, as a result of an advances of technology. A wealth of online data has become essential for travellers to efficiently plan their trips, which helps travellers to reduce confusion, and time (Mathew & Soliman, 2020) on both before, and during trips (Kang et al., 2019), hence the rise of online travel review, helping travellers have a better understanding by guidance from those travellers who have visited the places before. Travelers are allowed to leave both positive and negative comments, which are treated as a trustworthy source, as written by actual travellers, and experiences which have a significant effect on travellers' purchase intention (Yang & Gong, 2023).

Although Phuket and Koh Samui are rapidly gaining recognition as top tropical island spots in Southeast Asia, there is a lack of comprehensive research that compares and assesses their qualities thoroughly through the utilisation of user-generated content on travel platforms.
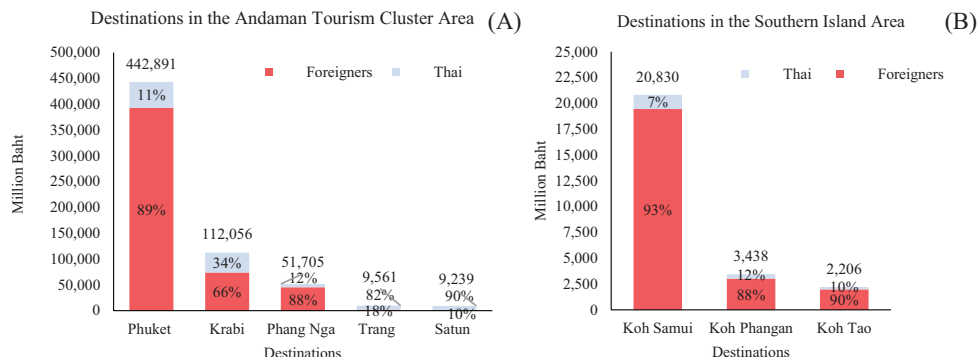

Figure 1 Percentage of international vs. domestic visitors and tourism revenue; (A) the Andaman tourism cluster area and (B) the Southern island area.
Source: Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2020b)

Previous research in Southeast Asian island destinations has primarily focused on separate analyses for different traveller groups. For example, Mustafa et al. (2019) measured destination competitiveness for six top island destinations. Their study involved interviewing different subsets of 1,644 international travellers, including Langkawi, Bali, Palawan, Koh Samui, Phuket, and Boracay. In another distinct approach, Taecharungroj and Mathayomchan (2019) analysed Phuket's tourist attractions by categorising 25,458 beach reviews and 12,584 island reviews. Additionally, Kalnaovakul and Promsivapallop (2021) conducted a study using 13,833 Google reviews from nine different night markets in Phuket. However, none of these studies cross-compared traveller experiences across multiple locations, overlooking a side-by-side comparison from the feedback based on the same travellers who have actually visited all the selected compared destinations. This gap in research leaves travellers, businesses, and decision-makers with a piecemeal understanding of what truly sets these destinations apart. Consequently, essential questions regarding travellers' experiences of Phuket and Samui, including whether they perceive any differences between the two destinations, as well as insights into the advantages and areas for improvement of both Phuket and Koh Samui, remain largely unexplored. The objectives of this study aim to distinctly analyse the user-generated travel experiences in Phuket and Koh Samui, comparing the elements that contribute to positive and negative travel experiences in each destination. By identifying and addressing the pain points of each location, the research seeks to offer actionable recommendations for destination marketers and policymakers to enhance the travel experience and destination competitiveness by understanding travellers' online discussions.

Literature review

Island Tourism

Island tourism plays a pivotal role in the economies of numerous island destinations around the world, driven by their unique natural resources and cultural heritage. The concept of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was developed by the United Nations in 1992, comprising 39 states and 18 associated members, to describe island nations that face specific challenges like limited resources and environmental challenges. These challenges make them highly dependent on tourism and imports. Island tourism is crucial for many SIDS; for example, in the

Maldives, tourism accounts for 30 percent of GDP and 60 percent of foreign exchange (United States Department of State, 2022), In some countries, like St. Lucia and Palau, tourism accounts for 98 percent and 88 percent of total export revenue, respectively (Meddebis, 2020). Island destinations have specific issues ranging from environmental to socio-cultural due to limited natural resources and labour, leading to high migration (McLeod et al., 2021), which is similar to (Clergeau, 2018), in which many island destinations face significant economic and environmental challenges, including tourism dependence, diversification difficulties, unemployment, drug problems, and environmental degradation such as global warming and poor water and waste management. Island travellers are a unique type of traveller, distinct from those visiting non-island destinations, the travel style and preferences of island travellers are often drawn by the allure of seclusion and the exotic nature of islands (Graham, 2021). Similarly, Sastre and Phakdee-Auksorn (2017) found that environment and relaxation are push factors, while natural sceneries, such as beaches, are the main pull factors for international travellers to Phuket. Additionally, an investigation of an island destination by Sangpikul (2017) indicated that beach attraction is a key player in tourists' satisfaction, and intention to revisit Phuket, followed by people, and safety. Unlike other top destinations in Thailand like Bangkok, where Seyanont (2017) found that local values, shopping, and historical values are pull factors for European senior tourists, a study by Komalasari and Ganiarto (2020) on Indonesian Millennials identified social status, culture, and friendship as push factors, and historical and cultural values as pull factors whereas travelling to Chiang Mai is driven by various factors, such as its unique cultural heritage and diverse nature (Choe & Regan, 2020). Moreover, the study by Lhakard (2022) found that Chiang Mai is the best destination for digital nomads, according to their communication networks like internet, cafés, and service. Even though natural resources are the main driver for island tourism, they are not strong enough to create demand without built resources and support facilities. As evident by McKercher and Prideaux (2020), an attraction is a combination of natural resources, built resources, and supporting factors that serve as the primary allure for people visiting a destination. In conclusion, island tourism encompasses a wide range of natural and built elements that contribute to the attractiveness of a destination. These resources are critical for generating demand and providing satisfaction to tourists. Understanding the diverse aspects and interplay between natural and built resources is essential

for destination managers and policymakers to develop strategies that maximise the potential of these attractions and create memorable experiences for visitors.

Travel Experiences and Destination Competitiveness

Travel experiences refer to different activities that people do in their own way, like visiting nice and unforgettable places. It lets each traveller create their own unique experiences that meet various personal desires, from having fun to finding deeper meaning (Kim & Chen, 2018). Travel experiences are not only gained from individually travelling to a place, but they also include the periods before, during, and after participating in activities as a tourist (Beevor et al., 2022). In the context of the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), the value of travel experiences extends beyond the basic consumption of goods and services. The experience economy is characterised by businesses creating memorable events and interactions that engage customers on an emotional and sensory level.

Travel experiences act as a crucial form of evaluation for destination competitiveness. The quality and nature of these experiences provide direct feedback on how well a destination meets the expectations and needs of tourists. When travellers engage with a destination, their experiences encompass a range of elements, such as attractions, amenities, services, and interactions with the local community. These elements collectively shape the overall satisfaction and perception of the destination (Sangpikul, 2018). Additionally, the study by Neto et al. (2019) in the SCUBA diving tourism niche found that tourists who have a higher level of travel experience significantly influence their importance of destination competitiveness attributes. Suryaningsih

et al. (2023) found that memorable tourism experiences are a significant variable in building destination competitiveness.

Destination competitiveness is linked to how well a destination can provide goods and services that are better than those of other places. Many destination competitiveness models focus primarily on objective measures, such as visitor numbers, market share, tourism expenditure, employment, and the economic value added by the tourism industry, For instance the models develop by Dupeyras and MacCallum (2013), Porter (1990), Ritchie and Crouch (1993), and the World Economic Forum (2017) emphasise these quantifiable aspects of competitiveness. However, the model proposed by Dwyer and Kim (2003), as shown in Figure 2 stands out because it also incorporates subjective measures like culture and the quality of travellers' experiences. Their model uniquely includes demand conditions related to travel experiences, such as tourist preferences, perceptions of quality and safety, and overall satisfaction. These subjective measures are crucial for understanding and enhancing the tourist experience, making the model proposed by Dwyer and Kim (2003) a more comprehensive tool for evaluating destination competitiveness. Mohd Hanafiah and Zulkifly (2019) highlight that travel experiences capture tourists' preferences for destinations, their perceptions of destination quality, and their overall satisfaction. These factors significantly influence the likelihood of tourists revisiting or recommending the destination to others.

The Destination Competitiveness Integrated Model uniquely combines insights from national competitive advantage and the specific factors influencing tourism destinations. It evaluates destination competitiveness through six core elements: the natural and inherent Endowed Resources; human-crafted Created Resources;
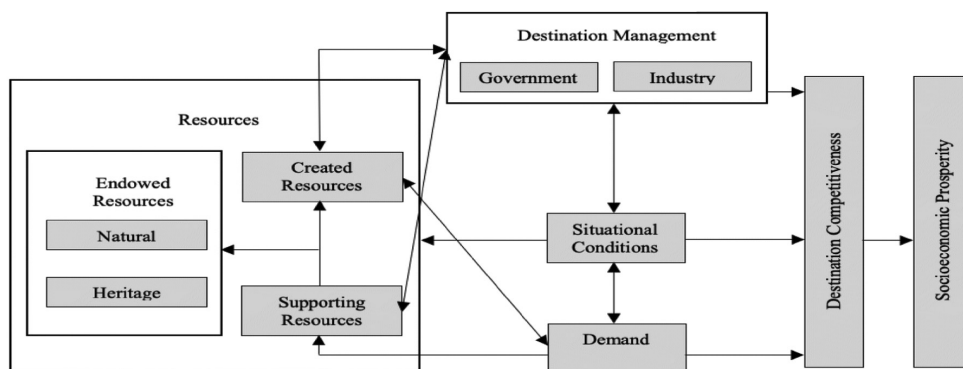

Figure 2 Destination competitiveness integrated model
Source: Dwyer and Kim (2003)

visitor-supporting facilities and services; strategic Destination Management; the demands and preferences of tourists; and the external Situational Conditions impacting tourism. This holistic approach provides a comprehensive framework for assessing and enhancing a destination's appeal and performance in the tourism industry (Dwyer & Kim, 2003).

Methodology

As technology rapidly changes, big data analytics surpasses traditional surveys by quickly and effectively handling rapidly changing data, providing deeper insights, and enabling timely decision-making (Shi, 2022). Furthermore, the use of user-generated content from visitors in this study serves as an authentic data source, helping to avoid the participant errors commonly associated with traditional surveys (Schindler, 2022). The methodology of this research is structured into three main phases: Data Collection, Data Preparation, and Data Analysis. This approach involves gathering TripAdvisor beach reviews, cleaning and preprocessing the data into a "bag of words" model, and then analysing it with a paired samples *t*-test and a Naïve Bayes algorithm to uncover significant differences in word usage and predict term occurrence. Additionally, a lexical analysis was conducted to evaluate the importance and emotional tone of the words.

Data Collection

The choice to focus on the beach stems from the fact that beaches are the primary natural attractions that play a crucial role in drawing travellers to island destinations (Carvache-Franco et al., 2020; Sastre & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017). This research studies user generated content using travellers' reviews on TripAdvisor, the "beach" category was selected in "Things to do in Phuket, and Koh Samui", using Octoparse, an extraction programme.

Reviews published after January 2017 were included in the study. This timeframe was marked by a significant peak in tourism for Phuket and Koh Samui, according to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2023a), which were translated into English with the Google Translate function in Google Sheets. Title, comment text, and rating were collected to analyse, along with reviewers' usernames, country, and reviews contributed, to identify unique reviewers who visit both Phuket and Samui

Data Preparation

A spreadsheet application is implemented to identify unique users who have travelled to both islands. A rating of 1–3 has been treated as negative, while a rating of 4–5 is positive, refer to the platform's review guidelines (Tripadvisor, 2021), and previous studies by Phucharoen et al. (2022), Sangkaew and Zhu (2022), Taecharungroj and Mathayomchan (2019). KNIME, an open-source data analytics platform that has previously been employed in tourism research for sentiment analysis (Kalnaovakul & Promsivapallop, 2021; Phucharoen et al., 2022; Sangkaew & Zhu, 2022; Taecharungroj & Mathayomchan, 2019). It was utilised to preprocess the data. Initially, all punctuation was subsequently removed from the content. All letters were converted to lowercase (e.g., "Big" to "big"). Following that, numerals were replaced with words (e.g., "9" to "nine"), and different English word forms were handled using the Porter stemming algorithm to chop off common word endings in English (e.g.,"swimming" to "swim") (Porter, 2006). Once data preprocessing was completed, a bag of words was created to list unique terms in travellers' reviews. Frequency of each term being counted (Term Frequency).

Data Analysis

As demonstrated by its successful use in previous studies, the Naive Bayes algorithm has proven to be a powerful tool for sentiment analysis (Kalnaovakul & Promsivapallop, 2021; Phucharoen et al., 2022; Sangkaew & Zhu, 2022; Taecharungroj & Mathayomchan, 2019). It is recognised as a probabilistic classifier due to its roots on Bayes' Theorem (Hartigan, 1983). The algorithm computes the likelihood that a given review pertains to a positive or negative sentiment, relying on word frequencies. Afterward, the paired sample *t*-test was employed to assess the significant difference of word terms between Phuket and Koh Samui. To address the research questions at hand, the researchers employed the Lexical Salience–Valence Analysis (LSVA) technique implemented by Taecharungroj and Mathayomchan (2019), to identify the experiences, advantages, and pain points of travellers visiting Phuket and Koh Samui. Salience was calculated using the logarithm 10 of term frequency, indicating keyword prominence. Valence, on the other hand, was defined as the difference between the average number of positive and negative keywords. A higher valence score indicated a greater likelihood of positive reviews, while a negative valence score indicated that a keyword was commonly used in negative reviews. The formula used to calculate valence is provided as $Valence = (\overline{x}POS - NEG) \div (\overline{x}POS + NEG)$.

Results and Discussion

Details of the selected Tripadvisor beach reviews are reported in Table 1. Of a total review of 33,108 TripAdvisor evaluations for beaches across Phuket and Koh Samui among these, 43 beaches were identified, with Phuket's 24 beaches garnering 27,365 reviews and Koh Samui's 19 beaches collecting 5,743 reviews.

A subsequent analysis highlighted 904 reviews from travellers who visited both Phuket and Koh Samui were identified, comprising 501 reviews from Phuket and 403 reviews relating to Koh Samui as shown in Figure 3.

Table 2 presents the transformed frequency (Salience), and review likelihood (Valence). Both Phuket and Koh Samui are characterised by "Beach", "Sea", "Sand", "Sun", "Water", and "Beauty", which emphasise tourists' enjoyment of natural resources. Local dining experiences are reflected in terms like "Restaurant", "Food", "Bar", and "Drink", which appear more in Phuket. This is similar to the finding of Phucharoen et al. (2022) and Kalnaovakul and Promsivapallop (2021), who spotlighted the role of food in Phuket's markets, underlining its culinary significance, and linking it to its designation as a UNESCO City of Gastronomy (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization[UNESCO], 2015).
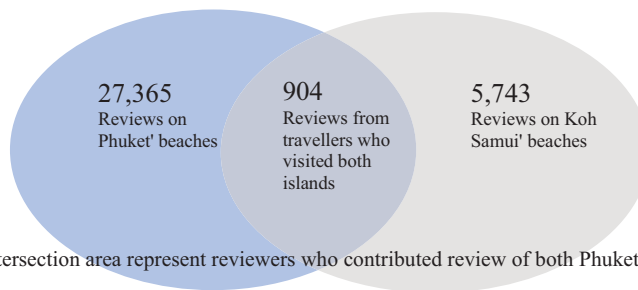

The Intersection area represent reviewers who contributed review of both Phuket, and Koh Samui

Figure 3 The number of travellers' beach reviews for Phuket and Koh Samui

Table 1 Number of beach reviews for Phuket and Koh Samui

Phuket	n	Samui	n
Patong Beach	7,079	Chaweng Beach	3,175
Kata Beach	3,770	Maenam Beach	768
Karon Beach	3,063	Lamai Beach	691
Nai Harn Beach	1,966	Choeng Mon Beach	300
Freedom Beach	1,870	Thong Takhian Beach	284
Banana Beach	1,860	Lipa Noi Beach	132
Kamala Beach	1,676	Chaweng Noi Beach	129
Surin Beach	1,068	Coral Cove Beach	92
Kata Noi Beach	972	Bang Po Beach	71
Paradise Beach	750	Bophut Beach	24
Rawai Beach	581	Malibu beach	20
Naiyang Beach	451	Thongson Beach	15
Bang Tao Beach	444	Samrong Beach	14
Banana Beach	292	W Beach	7
Tri Trang Beach	271	Bang Kao Beach	4
Mai Khao Beach	243	Thong Takhian Beach	3
Ao Sane	210	Laem Nan Beach	1
Nai Thon Beach	170	Hua Thanon Beach	1
Laem Sing Beach (Phuket)	138		
Kalim beach	42		
Laem Ka Beach	30		
Friendship Beach	29		
Long Beach	1		
Total Reviews	27,365	Total Reviews 5,743	

Table 2 Top 35 words appearing for Phuket, and Koh Samui

				Phuket				
Term	Salience	Valence	Term	Salience	Valence	Term	Salience	Valence
Beach	3.12	0	Time	1.93	-0.1	Best	1.79	0.23
Water	2.34	0.06	Swim	1.92	-0.05	Busy	1.79	-0.42
Beauty	2.32	0.36	Tourist	1.91	-0.1	Drink	1.78	0.41
Good	2.2	0.21	Long	1.91	0.1	Big	1.77	-0.09
Nice	2.19	0.01	Visit	1.89	-0.05	Sun	1.77	-0.09
Restaurant	2.12	0.29	Love	1.89	0.57	Little	1.77	-0.02
Sea	2.1	-0.19	Walk	1.89	0.09	Bar	1.76	0.24
Clean	2.1	0.04	Food	1.87	0.42	Look	1.75	-0.28
Sand	2.08	0.21	Crowd	1.86	-0.25	Shop	1.74	0.31
People	2.03	-0.24	Price	1.85	-0.25	Hotel	1.74	0.16
Day	2.01	-0.23	Road	1.83	-0.06	Stay	1.72	0.02
Great	2.01	0.39	Wave	1.81	0.08			
				Koh Samui				
Term	Salience	Valence	Term	Salience	Valence	Term	Salience	Valence
Beach	3.02	0.03	Great	1.94	0.17	Wave	1.75	-0.16
Beauty	2.28	0.33	Walk	1.93	0.19	Koh	1.75	0.11
Water	2.27	0.03	Bar	1.92	0.11	Love	1.74	0.63
Nice	2.13	-0.01	Swim	1.9	-0.08	Relax	1.74	0.4
Chaweng	2.11	0.33	Day	1.83	0.1	Island	1.73	-0.01
Sand	2.1	0.07	Resort	1.81	0.2	Best	1.72	0.7
Hotel	2.09	-0.11	Visit	1.81	0.25	White	1.72	0.53
Restaurant	2.09	0.05	People	1.8	0.05	Lamai	1.67	0.25
Sea	2.08	-0.2	Stay	1.79	0.28	Little	1.62	0.11
Samui	2.06	0.27	Quiet	1.77	0.65	Look	1.6	-0.22
Clean	2	0.15	Long	1.76	0.18	Clear	1.6	0.08
Good	1.98	-0.29	Time	1.75	0.11			

Note: Words underlined appear in the lists for both Phuket, and Koh Samui. While non-underlined ones are unique to their respective destination settings

Additionally, words such as "Swim", "Walk", "Shop", "Price", and "Stay" reflect activities that travellers engage in during their stay in both islands. However, terms like "People", "Crowd", "Busy", and "Tourist" highlight the social experiences that travellers often face in Phuket, in contrast with Koh Samui, where keywords like "Quiet" and "Relax", indicate a tranquil atmosphere experience.

The differences in word frequency and salience between the two destinations are supported by a paired-sample t-test, as shown in Table 3, where Phuket had significantly higher salience ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 0.30$) and review frequency ($M = 39.75$, $SD = 34.60$) than Koh Samui ($M = 1.67$, $SD = 0.32$; $M = 32.52$, $SD = 28.70$), $p < .01$.

The analysis of traveller reviews from Phuket and Koh Samui employs Lexical Salience and Valence, as depicted in Figure 4, to understand the prominence and tone of specific words. Through the Lexical Salience and Valence Analysis (LSVA), keywords are categorised into four quadrants. The first quadrant, 'High Salience - Negative Valence,' includes frequently used keywords in negative feedback. The second quadrant highlights words often found in positive reviews,

Table 3 Paired sample t-test

Variable	Destination	Mean	SD	t Stat	Observation	p
Frequency (Salience)	Phuket	1.75	0.30	4.12	64	.00*
	Koh Samui	1.67	0.32		64	
Sentiment (Valence)	Phuket	0.05	0.28	-0.69	64	.25
	Koh Samui	0.08	0.28		64	
Review Frequency	Phuket	39.75	34.60	4.3	64	.00*
	Koh Samui	32.52	28.7		64	

Note: *indicated statistically significant difference $p < .01$.

indicating terms that express praise. The third quadrant, 'Low Salience - Negative Valence,' contains terms associated with negative comments but are less frequently used. Lastly, the 'Low Salience - Positive Valence' quadrant covers terms appearing in positive feedback but with a lower frequency. This classification aids in identifying how certain words correlate with positive or negative travellers' experiences on these islands.

Figure 4 reveals significant keyword differences between Phuket and Koh Samui, with terms like "Water," "Beach," and "Beauty" reflecting positive travel experiences in their natural appeal. Phuket stands out for "Food" and "Restaurant" showing that the positive travellers' experiences are often associated with heritage and created resources. However, both destinations face challenges like overcrowding, as indicated by shared terms like "People", whereas Phuket is often associated with the negative sentiment of "Busy", "Crowd", "People", and "Tourist". Additionally, the negative sentiment towards "Sea" and "Road" indicates environmental and infrastructural stress from tourism (Weber, 2017; Kruczek, 2019) highlighting the need to implement sustainable tourism practices.

The following example of a negative review demonstrates these points.

"It is so funny that such a beach is so advertised as one of the best and that hundreds of tourists are going there. The only positive is that is next to Patong town *which to say the truth has many advantages but also big disadvantages like smell of sewage all around city, luck of garbage bins. Regarding the beach is a big one but extremely crowded full of annoying sellers, not so safe with very dirty waters. All the sea is full of jet skis and boats. Beach is also dirty with any kind of plastic and papers [...]"*

(TripAdvisor, n.d.a).

The negative sentiment towards "Price" in Phuket is a noteworthy pain point. This finding is consistent with prior research by Taecharungroj and Mathayomchan (2019), who similarly suggested that all retailers should consider implementing a fair pricing mechanism to address this issue. This approach is similar to the strategies observed in other Phuket attractions, such as the local market research conducted by Sangkaew and Zhu (2022) on seven local markets, and the night market study conducted by Kalnaovakul and Promsivapallop (2021) on nine-night markets. Both studies emphasise that pricing is a notable pain point in the market. The following review, entitled "Price" is from a tourist who visited beaches in Phuket.

"[...] The price of the restaurant in the bay is a bit high. Put also missing sunbeds and cushions. Since these are not, you sit in the sand or sleep. This is a little disturbing."
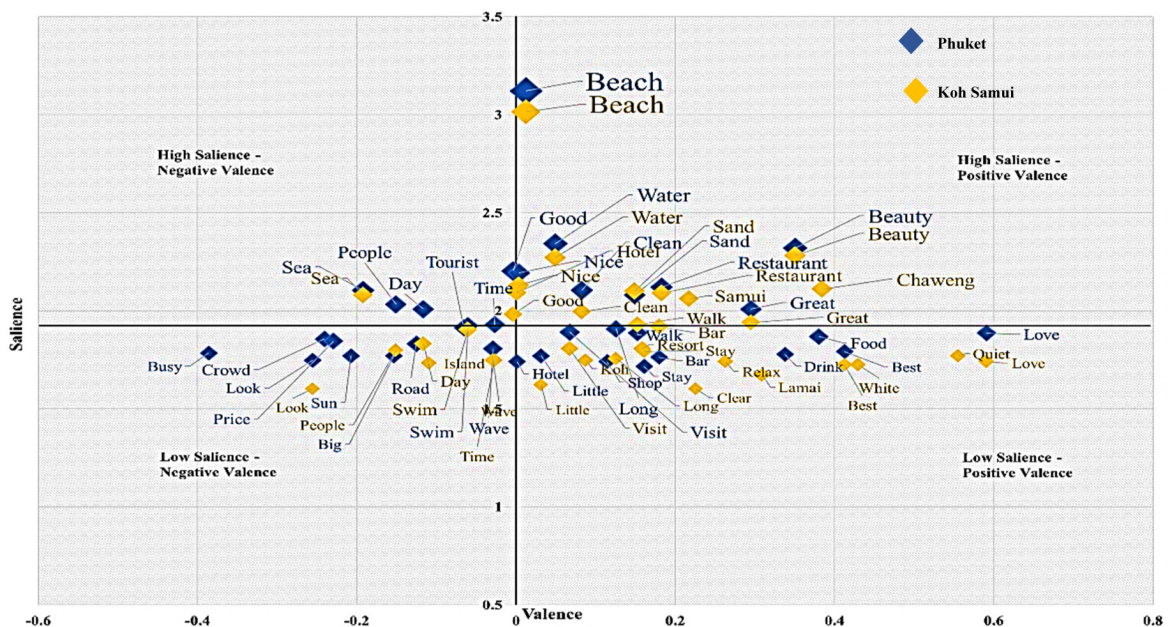
(TripAdvisor, n.d.a).

Figure 4 Lexical salience and valence for Phuket, and Koh Samui

In reviews for Phuket and Koh Samui, "Hotel" and "Resort" are prominent terms, especially in beach categories, due to many accommodations being beachfront, allowing travellers to go directly from their rooms to the sand. However, travellers staying in hotels away from the beach often raise concerns about accessibility, as beachfront hotels can obstruct pathways to the beach.

"Chaweng Beach is the best Koh Samui beach! Located in the best spot has restaurants and hotels in front of the beach! The beach is quiet and pretty!"

(TripAdvisor, n.d.b).

"[...] Most of the hotels own the sea front so it's harder to get to than most beaches. This is because hotels don't let you walk through them. There isn't much beach and is only a thin strip going down the sea front."

(TripAdvisor, n.d.b).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study found a significant difference in travel experiences between Phuket and Koh Samui. Travellers engaged extensively with natural resources and local attractions in both destinations. Eating and staying experiences are significant in both islands, with travellers frequently mentioning enjoying the local food and restaurant scene. They also participate in activities such as swimming, walking, shopping, and staying at local accommodations, reflected by terms like "Swim", "Walk", "Shop", "Hotel", "Resort", and "Stay". In Phuket, this is particularly prominent, with terms like "Restaurant", "Food", "Bar", and "Drink" appearing more frequently, reflecting its status as a UNESCO City of Gastronomy. Social experiences in Phuket often involve dealing with crowds, noted by terms such as "Price", "People", "Crowd", "Busy", and

"Tourist." In contrast, Koh Samui offers a more tranquil experience, highlighted by terms like "Quiet" and "Relax." The local culture and notable locations in Koh Samui are reflected in terms like "Samui", and "Chaweng". These findings provide different insights compared to existing literature. For example, the frequent mentions of accommodation-related keywords like "Hotel" and "Resort" highlight both positive experiences of travellers staying at beachfront hotels and negative experiences due to blocked beach entrances. These nuances are not reflected in the study by Taecharungroj and Mathayomchan (2019) on TripAdvisor reviews of Phuket's beaches, despite focusing on the same area.

However, these two islands face the same issue from tourism impact. This is evident from the high frequency of negative keywords such as "People", "Tourist", "Crowd", and negative keywords related to "Price", "Sea", and "Island". However, the keyword "Beach" received a neutral score, indicating an equal chance of positive and negative reviews, suggesting that there is room for improvement in this area. This aligns with Butler's Concept of a Tourist Area Cycle of Evolution (Butler, 1980) which suggests that when a destination reaches a certain number of travellers, its natural resources, prices, and tourism infrastructure can become degraded. As travel experience acts as an evaluation form of destination competitiveness, Table 4 highlights how both Phuket and Koh Samui offer a range of experiences that touch upon every element of the model.

The findings require policymakers to tailor their promotional strategies for Phuket and Koh Samui based on the unique travel experiences of each destination. Gastronomy and lively beach activities can be highlighted to promote Phuket, while Koh Samui can be marketed as a serene and relaxing beach destination. To manage environmental impact, policymakers could temporarily close sensitive areas until they recover, regulate visitor access to high-traffic sites, and enhance traveller awareness about environmental protection

Table 4 Keywords connected to destination competitiveness integrated model

Destination Competitiveness Model Element	Keywords Identified	
	Positive	Negative
Natural Resource	Beach, Water, Sand, Wave	Sea, Island
Heritage	Local, Thai, Food, Drink	
Supporting Resource		Road
Created Resources	Bar, Hotel, Resort, Restaurant, Shop, Food, Drink	
Destination Management	Stay, Visit, Beauty, Clean	Dirty, Crowd, Price
Situational Conditions		Day, time
Demand	Beauty, Nice, Clean, Great, Quiet, Relax, Love, White, Clear, Calm, Pretty, Fine, Best, Enjoy	People, Tourist, Family, Crowd, Good, Price, Dirty

through collaborations with travel agencies, airports, and government sectors (Insani et al., 2020). Problems with infrastructure are reflected by the negative keyword "Road". These should feature well-maintained roads, clear signage, and cutting-edge traffic control systems. Overtourism has also inflated price (Weber, 2017), policymakers should enforce price transparency regulations to prevent price discrimination against tourists. This can be achieved by conducting public awareness campaigns, rigorously enforcing pricing regulations, establishing direct tourist complaint channels to authorities, and regularly monitoring prices at tourist sites.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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