



Urgent keystones of Phuket's cruise tourism development: Challenge or surrender

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Abstract

The objectives of this study are to evaluate the potentials of Phuket's cruise tourism management and to propose the urgent keystones of Phuket's cruise tourism development. The empirical approach for data collection using questionnaire was collected from 400 cruise passengers who visited Phuket port. The data were analyzed by using T-test, gap analysis and Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA). Results revealed from Importance and Performance Analysis (IPA) that destination safety, climate & sea condition, passenger terminal, toilet, waiting area, parking lot, temporary pontoon, public transportation, port security, traffic management at port, carrying capacity of tourist attraction, and welcome ceremony at port were the attributes with low potentials. The urgent keystones for policy makers were suggested to focus on four major issues which are port infrastructure & facility, destination safety practices, accessibility and sustainable tourism products and services. The results can be used to formulate and implement marketing strategies to enchant cruise passengers and manage the tourism destination's competitive development and advantages against business competitors. For this study, the authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Introduction

Cruise Tourism has experienced phenomenal growth worldwide especially in Asia increasing from 500,000 passengers in 1970 to 29 million passengers in 2019 (Cruise Lines International Association [CLIA], 2019). In 2019 before COVID-19 pandemic, 39 cruise liners

deployed 79 cruise ships with a total of 7,154 port calls in Asia, planning to generate 4.02 million passengers (CLIA, 2019). Among those 79 cruise ships cruising in Asia in 2019, 25 cruise ships or 19.75 percent are mega and large cruise ships (CLIA, 2019). Chinese surges as an emerging market has become a significant growth engine that makes East Asia the fastest growing region in Asia.

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Consequently, many countries in Asia have formulated strategic policy to respond to its growth and to drive their cruise tourism effectively. East Asia has rapidly become the most preferred destination for cruise tourism by developing many aspects, including infrastructure in particular while South East Asia has floundered. In parallel, major cruise liners have attracted potential by using innovation, ship design, diverse onboard amenities, facilities, services, and experience during the port visit particularly (Pallis & Arapi, 2016). Hence, ports known as the cruise destination are in higher demand, in providing the memorable cruising experiences for cruise passengers. In order to offer an exceeded experience, the ports or destinations should improve not only the tourism products and services but the port infrastructure, facilities and regulations as the paradigm of cruise tourism has been shifted e.g., bigger size of cruise ships and emerging target market (Monpanthong, 2018). With this regard, many countries have been pressured for port infrastructure and facility development to attract the cruise ships deployed in the region.

Phuket, Ko Samui and Leam Chabang are Thailand's major ports, serving the cruise industry for over three decades due to its prominent tourism products and sophisticated services (Monpanthong, 2018). Recently, in 2020, there were totally 88 calls; at Phuket port 29 calls, Samui Port 12 calls, Leam Chabang and Klong Toey 37 calls, and Phang Nga Bay 10 calls. In 2019, there were 188 calls at Phuket Port, 147 calls at Leam Chabang, and Ko Samui Port 59 calls respectively (CLIA, 2019). Particularly, Phuket has continuously been Thailand's most visited port (CLIA, 2017). Even though Phuket is reputable and attractive for cruise passengers, there are various pain points that have obstructed its growth, causing a fluctuation in number over the past ten years while the cruise tourism in Asia has grown continuously (CLIA 2019; CLIA, 2020; Monpanthong, 2018). So far, several papers have focused on economic (Eusébio & Gouveia, 2019), environmental and social effects (Brida et al., 2012; Santos et al., 2019), cruise passenger's need and behavior (DiPietro & Peterson, 2017; Ioana-Daniela et al., 2018; Petrick, 2011), impacts from cruise development (Penco et al., 2019). The current studies relevant to cruise tourism development in developing countries in ASEAN as well as Thailand ports are not focused. The objective of this study is to evaluate the potentials and propose the urgent keystones of Phuket cruise tourism development.

Literature Review

According to the 34 previous studies relating to cruise tourism management, 32 attributes of cruise tourism management were extracted and used for questionnaire design under 4 major factors, namely, (1) Destination Characteristics, (2) Port, (3) Cruise Tourism Operations and, (4) Tourism Products and Services, which are described as following.

Destination Characteristics

Destination characteristics refer to the tangible and intangible attributes of the destination which are primary and vital factors, affecting the purchasing decision of cruise passengers toward the destination. As the cruise industry sets safety, cleanliness, hygiene, and sanitation as the priority according to the regulations of International Maritime Organization (IMO), Vessel Sanitation Program (VSP) and International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code) when selecting the destination into the cruise itinerary (Busby & O'Neill, 2013; Gibson & Parkman, 2019), the destination should emphasize them primarily to reflect its good image and attractiveness. Thus, destination should highly be aware of passengers and crew's safety and health (Gibson & Parkman, 2019). Additionally, the connectivity between ports as well as the climate and sea condition (Rodrigue & Notteboom, 2012) are also significant criteria of port selection. Referring to the current Asian cruise passenger behavior, they prefer the short cruise which is approximately 3–5 days (CLIA, 2019).

Therefore, the distance between ports is a primary concern helping to save the cost of energy consumption, and passengers can visit a port every day. Lastly, the atmosphere at a port is vital as the port today plays a significant role not only as the gateway of the destination but as a part of a cruise passenger's experience (Monpanthong & Choibamroong, 2015). To sum up, the six attributes under destination characteristic in evaluating the potentials of Phuket's cruise tourism management are (1) destination safety, (2) cleanliness, (3) hygiene and sanitation, (4) connectivity between ports, (5) climate and sea condition, and (6) port atmosphere.

Port

A port is one of the most important factors when the paradigm of cruise tourism has been shifted e.g., bigger size of the cruise ship, larger number of cruise passengers, more diverse cruise market, and shorter cruise itinerary (CLIA, 2019; Gibson & Parkman 2019; Santos et al., 2019).

The port, unlike before, has extremely relevant concerns e.g., infrastructure, facilities to provide comfort and convenience for both cruise passengers and cruise liners. From the literature reviews, certain attributes of port have been found. However, the port management at Phuket is different from other ports in the region as a temporary pontoon has been used as a temporary jetty, serving the cruise ships that anchor off at Patong Bay instead of Phuket Deep Sea Port. With the different context of port management, certain attributes have been reviewed appropriately for this study e.g., temporary pontoon, waiting area and parking lot as all of them are the critical pain points of Phuket cruise tourism (Monpanthong, 2018; Monpanthong & Choibamroong, 2015).

In consequence, there are twelve attributes to be used for this study under the port factor as following (1) temporary pontoon, (2) passenger terminal, (3) waiting area, (4) information service, (5) toilet, (6) money exchange service, (7) convenient store, (8) restaurant, (9) internet and WIFI service, (10) souvenir shop at port, (11) duty fee shop at port, and (12) parking lot.

Cruise Tourism Operations

Apart from port infrastructure and facilities, the cruise tourism operation is also crucial as it mostly involves the cruise ship arrival at port or the gateway from ship to the destination, that affects cruise passengers' first impression. The attributes under the cruise tourism operations are mainly the major touch points, providing comfort and convenience to the cruise passengers. Due to the time constraint at each port, cruise tourism operations must be effective to dispatch cruise passenger out of the port soonest (Santos et al., 2019). With this, cruise passengers have enough time to experience the destination. In creating the first impression in terms of cruise tourism operations, such should start with the disembarkation process and follow with the immigration formality (Gibson, 2012), which should be fast and effective. Another important attribute is public transportation accessible to main attractions and city as cruise passengers tend to organize the visit at the destination by themselves more than before (CLIA, 2019). In addition, security and traffic management within the port are also critical as they handle a huge number of cruise passengers.

In conclusion, the five attributes under the cruise tourism operations are (1) immigration formality, (2) disembarkation process, (3) port security, (4) traffic management at port, and (5) public transportation.

Tourism Products and Services

Tourism products and services can be defined as the sum of physical and psychological aspects, offered to the tourists during their visit at the destination. The role of tourism products and services is to introduce permanent characteristic, value and authenticity of the destination that delivers remarkable experiences for the tourists (Choibamroong, 2017). In the perspective of cruise tourism, tourism products and services are the marketable magnet that motivate the cruise liners to select the destination into their cruise itinerary and the cruise passengers to purchase the cruise package (Brida et al., 2012). The behavior of the cruise passengers today is changed from yesterday as they are looking for new experiences when cruising (Monpanthong, 2018). In addition, such should be diverse to meet the need of the multi-generational mix of cruise passengers. Most importantly, the human touch or psychological aspect acts as a value adding to the destination that can impress the cruise passengers to return to the destination.

So, the eight attributes under the factor of tourism products and services summarized for this study are (1) welcome ceremony at port, (2) authenticity of tourism products, (3) diversity of tourism products, (4) carrying capacity of tourism attraction, (5) quality of service provider, (6) value for money, (7) restaurant onshore, and (8) souvenir shop onshore. From the above variables, a conceptual framework can be written as shown in Figure 1.

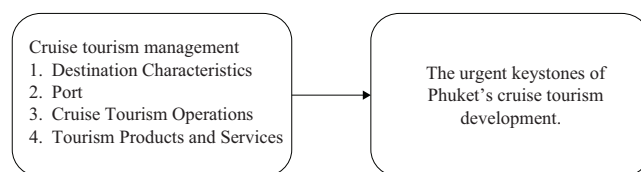


Figure 1 Conceptual research framework

Methodology

The study was guided by the literature; further experimental survey was then engaged in providing data from quantitative research methodology. The questionnaire was therefore employed for this study, using 5-likert scale as an instrument based on the previous empirical studies because the objective of this study is not to propose the new attributes. The questionnaire comprised of 4 sections which are cruise's behavior, potentiality of cruise port management, demographic profile, and suggestion.

The data from this study were used for a comparing of the results of different IPA interpretation approach in evaluating the potential of Phuket's cruise tourism management. Cruise passengers visiting Phuket were the population for this study. The sampling size of the population was totally 400 persons. In order to reduce the bias from the study, the identification of sample used purposive sampling technique with the criteria that they should be international cruise passengers who experienced the destination and quota sampling technique collecting from 4 sizes of cruise ships (Gibson, 2012); (1) mega cruise ship (above 90,000 GRT); (2) large cruise ship (60,001–90,000 GRT); (3) mid-sized cruise ship (30,001–60,000 GRT); and (4) small cruise ship (3,000–30,000 GRT). The questionnaire of this study was analyzed with regard to validity and reliability. The results of content validity were measured by the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), resulting in the score from 0.804 to 0.985. Reliability was tested with the experimental group of 30 samples, resulting in an alpha coefficient between 0.858 definition, which is greater than the standardized at 0.7. The data were analyzed by using *t*-test, gap analysis and Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA). A two-dimensional IPA grid displayed the results of the evaluation about importance and performance of each relevant attribute and mostly used grand means of performance and importance scores as thresholds. Fundamentally, it is interpreted in a grid format,

comprising of four quadrants which are (1) Concentrate Here; this critical quadrant highlights areas that are important to stakeholders but where the organization is underperforming, (2) Keep Up Good Work; this quadrant indicates areas where the organization is performing well, (3) Low Priority; this quadrant is of lesser importance and performance, and (4) Possible Overkill; this quadrant includes areas where the organization is performing well, but stakeholders do not consider them highly important (Martilla & James, 1977).

Results and Discussion

To propose urgent keystones of Phuket cruise tourism development, this study focused on evaluating the potential of Phuket cruise tourism management. In reality, judging the potential from evaluating only the performance of its cruise tourism management does not reflect what to improve. Therefore, this study did so by comparing the importance of what the cruise passengers expect and performance or what the cruise passengers experience as it is essential to understand the customer expectation and perception (Mola & Jusoh, 2011). Finally, the results are summarized in each element by evaluating the gap between the importance and performance of Phuket cruise tourism management as shown in Table 1–4.

Table 1 Level of importance and performance of destination characteristics

Destination characteristic	Level of importance		Level of performance		Gap between importance and performance
	Means	Meaning	Means	Meaning	
1. Destination safety	4.32	Very high	2.66	Moderate	1.66
2. Cleanliness	4.28	Very high	2.70	Moderate	1.58
3. Hygiene & Sanitation	4.16	High	2.70	Moderate	1.46
4. Connectivity between ports	3.02	Moderate	2.70	Moderate	0.32
5. Climate & Sea condition	4.00	High	2.67	Moderate	1.33
6. Port atmosphere	3.88	High	2.72	Moderate	1.16
Total	3.94	High	2.69	Moderate	1.25

Table 2 Level of importance and performance of port

Port	Level of importance		Level of performance		Gap between importance and performance
	Means	Meaning	Means	Meaning	
1. Temporary pontoon	4.37	Very high	2.71	Moderate	1.66
2. Passenger terminal	4.22	Very high	2.66	Moderate	1.56
3. Waiting area	4.07	High	2.68	Moderate	1.39
4. Information service	2.85	Moderate	2.68	Moderate	0.17
5. Toilet	4.17	High	2.67	Moderate	1.50
6. Money exchange service	4.12	High	2.74	Moderate	1.38
7. Convenient store	3.95	High	2.74	Moderate	1.21
8. Restaurant	4.01	High	2.78	Moderate	1.23
9. Internet and WIFI service	3.93	High	2.79	Moderate	1.14
10. Souvenir shop	3.06	Moderate	2.73	Moderate	0.33
11. Duty free shop	2.98	Moderate	2.72	Moderate	0.26
12. Parking lot	4.09	High	2.70	Moderate	1.39
Total	3.82	High	2.72	Moderate	1.10

Table 3 Level of importance and performance of cruise tourism operations

Cruise tourism operations	Level of importance		Level of performance		Gap between importance and performance
	Means	Meaning	Means	Meaning	
1. Immigration formality	4.25	Very high	4.12	High	0.13
2. Disembarkation process	4.33	Very high	2.66	Moderate	1.67
3. Port security	4.43	Very high	2.51	Moderate	1.92
4. Traffic management at port	4.39	Very high	2.63	Moderate	1.76
5. Public transportation	4.48	Very high	2.56	Moderate	1.92
Total	4.38	Very high	2.90	Moderate	1.48

Table 4 Level of importance and performance of tourism products and services

Tourism products & services	Level of importance		Level of performance		Gap between importance and performance
	Means	Meaning	Means	Meaning	
1. Welcome ceremony at port	4.30	Very high	3.04	Moderate	1.26
2. Authenticity of tourism products	4.34	Very high	4.61	Very high	-0.27
3. Diversity of tourism products	4.45	Very high	4.62	Very high	-0.17
4. Carrying capacity of tourist attraction	4.54	Very high	3.05	Moderate	1.49
5. Quality of service provider	4.49	Very high	4.69	Very high	-0.20
6. Value for money	4.55	Very high	4.73	Very high	-0.18
7. Restaurant onshore	4.53	Very high	4.76	Very high	-0.23
8. Souvenir shop onshore	3.06	Moderate	2.92	Moderate	0.14
Total	4.28	Very high	4.05	High	0.23

Referring to the destination characteristics of Phuket (Table 1), the cruise passengers evaluated the level of importance of destination safety and cleanliness at very high level (4.32 and 4.28 respectively) while hygiene & sanitation, climate & sea condition, and port atmosphere were at high level (4.16, 4.00 and 3.88 respectively). In contrast, connectivity between ports is at moderate level (3.02). Meanwhile, the level of performance of all variables under the element of destination characteristics are at moderate level. However, in comparing level of importance and performance, the top three widest gap which revealed the lowest potential of the destination characteristic are destination safety, cleanliness and hygiene & sanitation respectively. The gaps between the levels of importance and performance indicate areas where the destination is falling short of visitor expectations. Specifically, destination safety, cleanliness, and hygiene & sanitation have the largest gaps, highlighting them as priority areas for improvement. By addressing these gaps, the destination can enhance overall visitor satisfaction and achieve higher performance levels in critical areas.

The port is the vital element for today's cruise tourism management when the cruise ships tend to be larger with a higher number of cruise passengers. In this study, it was found that cruise passengers focused on temporary pontoon, passenger terminal, toilet, money exchange service as well as parking lot as the top five most important. In the meantime, passenger terminal, toilet, waiting area, information service and parking lot were rated the lowest performance in the perspective of cruise passengers. In conclusion, the top five lowest

potentials of port in comparison between level of importance and performance are temporary pontoon, passenger terminal, toilet, waiting area, and parking lot respectively. The gaps between the levels of importance and performance highlight areas where the port is not meeting user expectations. The most critical areas for improvement include the temporary pontoon, passenger terminal, and toilets, which have the largest gaps. By focusing on these areas, the port can enhance overall user satisfaction and performance in key aspects (Table 2).

To evaluate the potential of cruise tourism operations as shown in Table 3, the cruise passengers pointed out that public transportation, port security, traffic management at port, disembarkation process and immigration formality are very important. Meanwhile, only immigration formality was rated at high performance while disembarkation process, traffic management at port, public transportation and port security are at moderate performance. When comparing importance and performance of cruise tourism operations, it was revealed that the two widest gaps are port security and public transportation. However, traffic management at port and disembarkation process showed a gap as well. Surprisingly, the immigration formality reflected a good potential as it has a very small gap.

Referring to Table 4, the importance of all variables under tourism products and services are very high except souvenir shops onshore, which is moderate. The top five most important variables are value for money, carrying capacity of tourism attraction, restaurant onshore, quality of service provider and diversity of tourism products respectively.

Moreover, the top five lowest performance are souvenir shop onshore, welcome ceremony at port, carrying capacity of tourist attraction, authenticity of tourism products and diversity of tourism products. Most importantly, when comparing importance and performance of tourism products and services, it was reflected that tourism products and services are the strength of Phuket’s cruise tourism, in particular. The gaps between the levels of importance and performance highlight specific areas where tourism products and services are not meeting visitor expectations, particularly the welcome ceremony

and carrying capacity of tourist attractions. Conversely, several areas such as the authenticity and diversity of tourism products, quality of service providers, value for money, and onshore restaurants are performing exceptionally well, even exceeding visitor expectations.

After finding the gap of each attribute, IPA is the instrument to analyze and identify the attributes that are urgently needed for improvement of Phuket cruise tourism management. The Figures 2–5 revealed the analysis of potential of Phuket’s cruise tourism management in IPA grids.

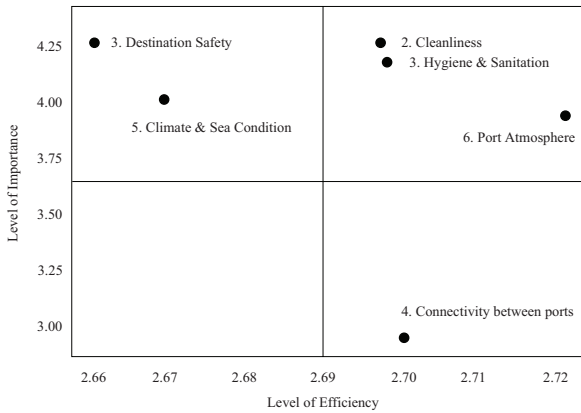


Figure 2 Importance-performance analysis of destination characteristics

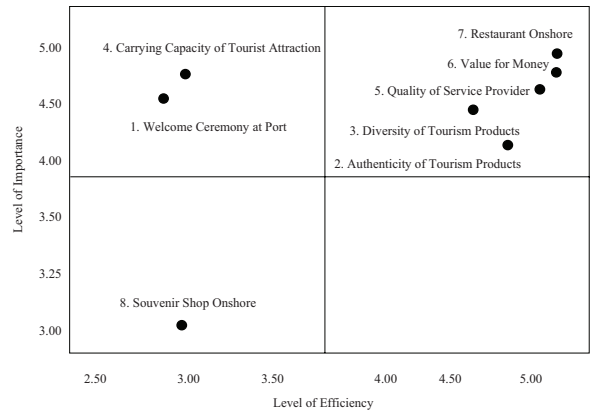


Figure 4 Importance-performance analysis of cruise tourism operations

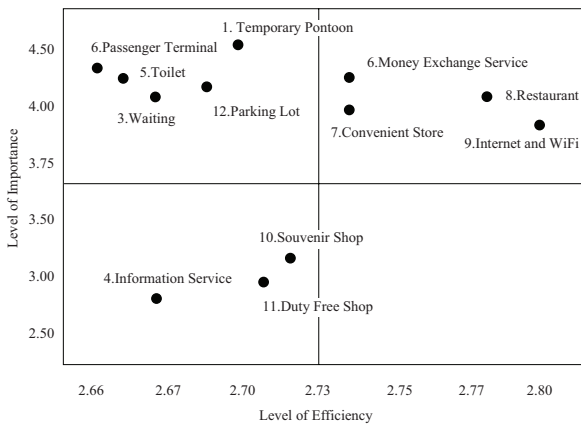


Figure 3 Importance-performance analysis of port

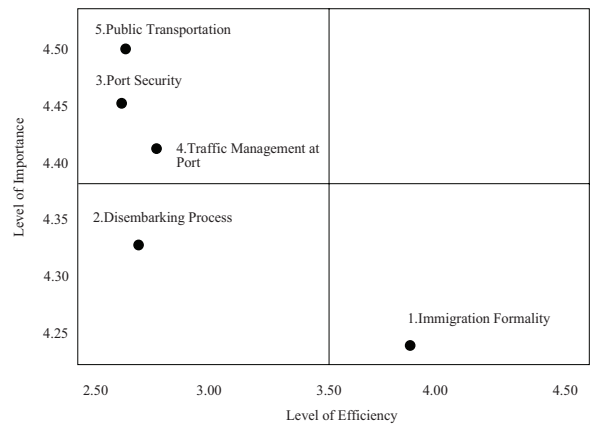


Figure 5 Importance-performance analysis of tourism products and services

Referring to the IPA of destination characteristic (Figure 2), it is found that two major attributes which require urgent improvement are, (1) destination safety, and (2) climate and sea condition as the cruise passengers prioritize them importantly while the performance is low. On the other hand, the three attributes i.e., (1) cleanliness, (2) hygiene & sanitation, and (3) port atmosphere are in quadrant B, which is interpreted as “keep up good work”, and connectivity between port is in quadrant D, which means “possible overkill”. Therefore, the two attributes under destination characteristic which are, (1) destination safety, and (2) climate and sea condition should be concentrated on for improvement.

According to Figure 3 showing the IPA of Port, there are five attributes to concentrate on for improvement which are (1) temporary pontoon, (2) passenger terminal, (3) waiting area, (4) toilet, and (5) parking lot. In contrast, four attributes i.e., (1) money exchange service, (2) convenient store, (3) restaurant, and (4) internet and WIFI service are in quadrant B “keep up good work”, which reflects high important and high performance. In addition, three attributes are in quadrant C “low priority”, in which both importance and performance levels are low. Thus, the urgent keystones under this factor are (1) temporary pontoon, (2) passenger terminal, (3) waiting area, (4) toilet, and (5) parking lot.

In accordance with IPA of tourism products and services as shown in Figure 4, two attributes i.e., carrying capacity of tourism attraction and welcome ceremony at port are the pain points under this factor and require urgent improvement. In addition, only one attribute “souvenir shop onshore” is in low priority as it is in quadrant C. Meanwhile, five attributes i.e., (1) authenticity of tourism products, (2) diversity of tourism products, (3) quality of service provider, (4) value for money, and (5) restaurant onshore are in quadrant B, which is interpreted as “keep up good work”. Therefore, most attributes under this factor are the strengths of Phuket’ cruise tourism management. Only two attributes are to be prioritized, namely, carrying capacity of tourism attraction and welcome ceremony at pier.

IPA of cruise tourism operations (Figure 5) revealed three attributes i.e., (1) public transportation, (2) port security and (3) traffic management at port in quadrant A as “concentrate here”, which indicates such should be set as a priority for improvement. In the meantime, only one attribute is in quadrant C “low priority”. On the contrary, immigration formality is in quadrant D which is “possible overkill”. To sum up, urgent keystones of the attributes under cruise tourism operations are (1) public transportation, (2) port security and (3) traffic management at port.

Conclusion and Discussion

As the paradigm of cruise tourism has changed, the destination or port should be adapted. Due to its great reputation and beautiful natural resources, Phuket is undoubtedly known as a world class destination for international tourists worldwide, which can be proved from the continuous increase of international tourism annual growth rate. In contrast, the growth rate of cruise tourism in Phuket has fluctuated, which is inconsistent with the rapid growth of cruise tourism in Asia as a whole. Since cruise tourism has generated an economic contribution for relevant stakeholders in the supply chain e.g., travel agent, tourist guide, local restaurant, souvenir shop, local taxi, transport agent, and tour operator, many countries have put aside huge budgets for cruise tourism development to be more competitive. Meanwhile, Phuket cruise tourism has certain obstacles and challenges in driving cruise tourism.

Port Infrastructure & Facility Development

Port infrastructure and facility are the major key drivers in attracting the cruise to the destination. Referring to the study of London et al. (2017), it revealed that the cruise industry has grown significantly, and major cruise liners have launched mega cruise ships with incredible capacity, and each cruise ship carries a higher number of passengers. This reflected new challenges of cruise port with obsolete infrastructure to develop or upgrade to overcome the share of this growing market. Kerswill and Mair (2015) stated that many countries, especially in the Asia region, e.g., China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea, and Japan, have put their efforts and budgets into building new infrastructure or redesigning the existing port, driving for their competitiveness as a key factor in port selection.

Thus, the port infrastructure and facilities are vital. Infrastructure and facility development should meet the demand which is concerned more on berthing capacity and accommodating larger cruise ship. However, consideration should be given to the role of the port, either being homeport or port of call. If positing itself as a homeport, it must be easily connected for cruise passenger from arrival to departure touch point. Anyway, some literature has stated that the port for both roles should provide the berth with a minimum depth, the quay with a certain length, and the apron with an enough width to handle the cruise passenger. In addition, the safety procedure to reach the International Ship

and Port Facility Security (ISPS) should be implemented (Vukonić et al., 2016), facility and service for immigration and customs should also be available for cruise line and cruise passenger's convenience, and the connectivity from port to the major tourist attraction is also essential.

Referring to the results of this study, the urgent keystones for port infrastructure and facilities are to improve the operations to enhance comfort and convenience for cruise passengers in the short term. Since the temporary pontoon is used when the large cruise ships with higher number of cruise passengers visit Phuket port, the conditions of the pontoon should be enhanced in terms of safety, equipment, walkway, time management, and service staff while doing embarkation and disembarkation processes. In addition, the waiting area with chairs and cover serving as a temporary terminal must be organized with enough space, mobile toilets at the pontoon must be provided, and parking lots for tour coaches must be available at walking distance area. Meanwhile, the long-term plan of Phuket cruise tourism development should also focus on dedicated port infrastructure and facilities. Since the cost and sources of finance are a significant obstacle, the vital player to invest in port infrastructure and facilities must be the government sector while private sectors play a significant role as a key driver. Most importantly, Thailand strategic cruise tourism policy must be clearly formulated.

Destination Safety Practices

Safety and security are key success aspects of tourism in every destination. They are pointed out as determinants in destination preference as cruise tourism is vulnerable and subject to any unexpected situation e.g., climate, sea condition, pirate, accident, and terrorism. Thus, safety and security for passengers and crew is set as the highest priority and fundamental to the operations through well-planned safety procedure from practical cooperation between destination and cruise lines as stated by several studies (Gibson & Parkman, 2019) in order for cruise lines to maintain an exceptional safety record; making the cruising as one of the safest forms of travel.

The empirical findings from IPA showed that climate & sea condition, port security as well as destination safety are the most critical points for cruise tourism management in Phuket, which should be improved as cruise tourism is sensitive to safety and security. This is consistent with the study of Manui & Wongsai (2019) that showed some related factors e.g., traffic condition, beach lifeguard affecting the perception on safety and

security in Phuket. Therefore, Phuket must highlight the safety and security at every single major touchpoint in the destination not only at port. Referring to Gibson (2012), the safety and security procedure should be well planned by the ship and shore safety officers to reach the standard. Therefore, well trained safety staff together with technology should be provided at the destination. In addition, the risk management from the destination is also significant in keeping up with unforeseen incidents that can happen e.g., accident, weather and sea condition and affect the passengers and crew. In conclusion, the safety and security of all are the top priority for cruise tourism that the destination should focus on.

Accessibility from Port to City and Main Tourist Attraction

Transportation is simply known to carry passengers from one point to another. The travel and tourism experience of tourists and the ideas about tourism products start and end with transportation. Thus, tourism and transportation are inseparable (Mammadov, 2012). Accessibility for cruise tourism refers to travelling from destination to destination and travelling within the destination. Since the cruise ship visits a port under a time limit, the accessibility from port to either city or main tourist attraction is vital as one of major criteria when selecting the port. In many countries, the public transportation networks e.g., monorail, subway, city bus, tram, and metro have been developed in major cruise ports to connect passengers and crews to the city for their comfort and convenience.

Currently, the cruise passengers tend to travel within the destination and organize the tour by themselves increasingly; unlike before, they preferred to book the tours from the cruise ship. Thus, the public transportation from port to town and major attractions are noteworthy. If the accessibility is convenient, it will, for sure, contribute income from dining, shopping, visiting the sites, or joining activities. If looking closely at Phuket, the public transportation will not be built soon. Therefore, the solution to this is that a shuttle bus should be provided from port to town. In addition, the local taxi with transparent price should be available for enough passengers at port. Since the cruise ships today carry a large number of cruise passengers, traffic at the port is chaotic especially when the port is small. In the case of Phuket, the traffic in the port area should be well organized to avoid disorder and congestion. A plan should be prepared and organized with various involved parties e.g., police, shore excursion staff, shipping agent, as well as the people in the port area.

Sustainable Tourism Products & Services

The main purpose of visiting the port is to experience the destination through its uniqueness, culture, and nature. Today, sustainability has been widely practiced as a new paradigm in the tourism industry; many tourism business sectors highlight more on responsibly managed tourism products and services in offering to the tourists (Wehrli et al., 2017), which is known as sustainable tourism. Simultaneously, the tourism industry has challenged the negative impacts from tourism development. Thus, all tourism sectors encourage positive change to tourism practice. In the prospect of cruise tourism, the cruise lines always design the cruise itinerary to reputable ports for more marketability, therefore; popular ports are facing over capacity during the prime season. The destination, therefore, should emphasize the carrying capacity in all major tourism attractions by controlling the number of visitors, type of activity and availability of facility, which is recommended by Brida & Zapata (2010), that the unregulated tourism activities should be monitored since the environmental costs are incalculable.

Phuket is the major port of call for cruise tourism in Asia region due to its natural beauty, reputation, and diverse tourism products. Hence, many cruise lines often add Phuket as a port of call when creating the cruise itinerary visiting the ASEAN region. 9.2 million tourists visit Phuket yearly, an average of 25,452 tourists per day, Phuket has the highest number of tourists per square mile per day than any other tourist destination in the world, and is already over carrying capacity (Monpanthong, 2018). For this reason, carrying capacity should be implemented for Phuket before it is too late by formulating this issue into Phuket's strategic tourism master plan. A welcome ceremony at port seems unimportant, but it is a vital issue in the view of cruise passengers, which is consistent with the study by Monpanthong (2018). Many ports have arranged a welcome ceremony which reflects the culture, tradition, and its authenticity through the performance upon arrival. It presents a good image of the destination, creates a first impression, as well as offering the uniqueness of the destination. Phuket can present a welcome ceremony at port to add the value of port visit as it has a rich tradition and culture.

Recommendation

This study focuses mainly on potential of Phuket's cruise tourism management with some guidelines for improvement. A future study should highlight the best practices of cruise tourism management in the same context of Thailand cruise tourism management. In addition, the study about improvement of cruise tourism management should be specified into the port development as it is the major pain point of Thailand cruise tourism development.

Additionally, the study of cruise tourism management should be concerned more on network management among the countries in ASEAN as the cruise tourism development will be more effective when driving together as a region. Instead of focusing on competitiveness, it should be complimentary among the countries in the area.

The results of this study should be highlighted by some further research into areas in specific issues that have low potential. In addition, it would be worthwhile to do the same research in other ports in Thailand.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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