Abstract

Tourists’ destination loyalty is an important measurement of the success of tourist destinations. Therefore, it is vital to examine the experiences of international tourists. The objectives of this research were to examine international tourists’ destination loyalty during their Bangkok visiting, during January to March, 2015 and to study their tendency to revisit Bangkok in the near future. A probability random sampling was utilized to obtain 400 samples. In order to check gender effect, half of the sample group was male and the other half was female. A Likert-five-scale questionnaire was developed to collect the data. The findings revealed that the majority of respondents had a high level of destinations’ loyalty. However, the destinations’ loyalty indicators can be ranked according to the mean average from high to low as follow: to recommend friends and family to visit Thailand, to say positive things about Thai tourism, to search for more information about Thai tourism, to revisit with friends and family in the future, and to plan to revisit Thailand in the next year. In addition, the findings revealed that the major obstacles that often prevented international tourists from revisiting Thailand in the future were cheaper prices offered by other ASEAN nations, local traffic congestions, high crime rates, and political and exchange rate instability.

Keyword: Tourist Destinations, Loyalty, International Tourists

Introduction

Tourists’ destination loyalty is one of the most important tourism topics frequently investigated by researchers. This is because tourists’ destination loyalty is linked to the success of tourist destinations and tourism in general (Chen & Gursoy, 2001). It is important to understand tourists’ destination loyalty in order to develop marketing strategies to secure a long term success. Conditions of competition in tourism or any business change rapidly and the tourism business needs to react to the changes promptly and quickly (Brosekhain, Velayutham, and Phil, 2006). A high rate of tourists’ destination loyalty means a high rate of revisiting the same tourist destination. In other words, it can be said that frequent travels to Thai tourist destinations is a good sign of Thai tourists’ destination loyalty. The entering of ASEAN Economic Community has created both opportunities and problems for Thai tourism. One opportunity includes a big market while one problem includes a highly competitive tourism industry for all ASEAN nations. In order for Thailand to remain competitive, it is vital for the Thai tourism to understand tourists’ destination loyalty. Many tourism researchers and scholars in the past often pointed out that high customers’ satisfaction was a major factor that led to customers’ loyalty (Kotler, 2003). An increasing rate of tourists’ destination loyalty from satisfied tourists can offer many benefits such as a sustainable demand from both domestic and international tourists to revisit the same tourist destination, a positive image created by word of mouths from many satisfied tourists, and a steady tourists’ revenue from revisiting of tourists (Wongleedee, 2013). In other words, a high tourists’ satisfaction level from a past trip can be the key to revisit a particular destination. Also, Chen (1998) studied the tourists’ decision making process and reported that past trip experiences, whether it was good or bad, often directly or indirectly influenced the future decision of tourists either to revisit or not to revisit the same destination. In fact, there is limited research concerning tourists’ destination loyalty in Bangkok, Thailand; this study was aimed to examine the tourists’ destination loyalty from the perspective of international tourists who visited Bangkok, Thailand during the first quarter of year 2015.
Literature Review

The premise of tourists’ destination loyalty in this study was based on the idea of business loyalty theory of Philip Kotler (2000); the guru of marketing who explained that loyalty was positive feedback; the willingness to repurchase; recommend the product or service to others. Tylor (1998) coined the loyalty of customers as the likelihood to purchase the goods and services again because there was an overall satisfaction in the previous purchase. Chen and Gursoy (2001) explained that tourists’ destination loyalty should be measured by three different factors: a continuation to revisit the same tourist destination, an intention to revisit more of the same tourist destination, and a willingness to recommend others to visit that particular tourist destination. Yoon and Uysal (2005) stated that travel destination loyalty happened when the destination could be resold to the same tourists and with a recommendation to friends and family who were potential tourists. Many researchers believed that there were a connection among satisfaction, loyalty, and profit (Pine, et al, 1995). This is because loyal customers can reduce costs such as marketing costs, service costs, and recruiting cost as well as gain from current customers from a word of mouth recommended new customers (Oppermann, 2005). Some researchers offered the idea that there were three techniques to elicit destination loyalty information from international tourists: these include interviewing tourists directly, using questionnaires with target international tourists, and observing international tourists on sites (Bowen, 2001). Rauyruen, Miller, and Barret (2007) explained that there were two areas of research in customer loyalty which were behaviour loyalty and attitude loyalty. While the behaviour loyalty emphasized the pattern or repetition of buying, while attitude loyalty emphasized on the willingness to positively recommend the goods and services to others. For the concept of destination loyalty, many researchers have argued that the intension to revisit the same tourist destination alone should be sufficient as an indicator of destination loyalty while other researchers pointed out that the positive recommendation to other tourists is also an important indicator of loyalty.

Methodology

This was a quantitative research method used to examine international tourists’ destination loyalty during their visit in Bangkok, Thailand during January to March, 2015 and to study their tendency to revisit Bangkok in the near future. An English Likert-five-scale questionnaire was designed specifically to examine the international tourists’ destination loyalty from the perspectives as well as their experience during their visit of Bangkok, Thailand and to evaluate their level of interest in revisiting tourist destinations of Thailand in the near future. There were three parts of the questionnaire: demographic questions, destination loyalty questions, and comments. The population included all international tourists visiting Bangkok, Thailand during the first quarter of 2015. The probability sampling technique was performed to obtain a sample group that included 400 international passengers from the departure lounge of Don Muang international airport. Taro Yamane Sampling Technique was utilized to obtain a proper sample size. Descriptive statistics utilized in this research including percentage, mean, and standard deviation. For reliability, 30 pilot questionnaires were performed. In which, each question had to pass the Cronbach Alpha criteria with at least 0.7. In addition, the validity of the questions in each part was evaluated by using Item Objective Congruency Index (IOC) technique with three experts. The experts were researchers in the area of Tourism and Hospitality. Two out of three experts had to agree with the questions for the question to be valid.
The findings illustrated TABLE I reveal five different levels of importance from the perspectives and the experience of international tourists as follows: 1) the respondents rated their intention to recommend friends and family to visit Thailand as the number one indicator of loyalty with a mean of 4.47 and 0.904 SD. 2) the respondents rated their intention to say positive things about Thai tourism as the number two indicator of loyalty with a mean of 4.42 and 0.659 SD. 3) the respondents rated their intention to search for more information about Thai tourism as the number three indicator of loyalty with a mean of 4.31 and 0.897 SD. 4) the respondents rated their intention to revisit with friends and family in the future as the number four indicator of loyalty with a mean of 4.23 and 0.771 SD. 5) the respondents rated their intention to plan to revisit Thailand in the next year as the number five indicator of loyalty with a mean of 4.10 and 0.996 SD. The overall mean was 4.30 with 0.845 SD.

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the majority of international tourists in Bangkok had only a high level of loyalty since the overall mean was higher than 4.25. When examined in detail, the destination loyalty indicators can be ranked according to the mean average from high to low as follow: to recommend friends and family to visit Thailand, to say positive things about Thai tourism, to plan to revisit Thailand in the next year, to refer the Thai Tourism information to others, and to search for more information about Thai tourism. From these findings, it was found that the attitude loyalty was more important than the behaviour loyalty since the first indicator to the third indicator were attitude loyalty and the fourth and the fifth were behaviour indicators. In addition, the findings revealed that the major obstacles that often prevented international tourists from revisiting Thailand in the future were cheaper prices offered by other ASEAN nations, local traffic congestion, high crime rate, and political and exchange rate instability.

Conclusion and Implication

One of the implications from the findings was about the vitality of attitude loyalty and behaviour loyalty. The majority of respondents rated attitude loyalty more important than behaviour loyalty. Both attitude loyalty and behaviour are equally important and should have an equal number on the indicators for the respondents to evaluate. The research findings showed that there were some setbacks or negative factors that prevent international tourists to revisit Bangkok. In other words, the tourists’ destination loyalty had both positive factors and negative factors that need to pay heed. Moreover, future studies should use more in-depth interviews to find the reasons behind their decision making to revisit Bangkok, Thailand. In this way, it would be possible to generalize more specific.
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References


