Factors Analysis of the Factors Affecting Customer Satisfaction on Accommodation Alternatives

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the factors contributing to customers' decision in choosing an alternative accommodation. A questionnaire survey was carried out among randomly selected Thais aged 18 – 51 who have leisure traveling experience. A total of 520 questionnaires were distributed on May-June 2016. Out of the total sample of 520, only 488 completed responses were valid (with a response rate of about 93.8%). An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to identify selection factors adopted by Thais when they chose the alternative accommodation. The major findings revealed five factors in choosing an accommodation which were: (1) security, (2) recreational facilities, (3) local landscape, (4) availability of special services, and (5) nice host. Finally, the marketing implications and some suggestions were presented.

Keywords: Factor analysis, Selection, Service marketing, Customer, Satisfaction

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1. Introduction

A key factor in increasing the revenue of the tourism industry is the improvement of facilities for travelers such as accommodation, transportation, security, and traveling information. In 2016, Kasikorn Bank research center reported that there is a growing trend in accommodation business sector due to the increasing number of travelers. The growing demands necessitate massive expansion of businesses in the accommodation sector in Bangkok as well as other provinces, including businesses that have expanded overseas.

Medium and small businesses invest in unique building designs to attract travelers and providing them new experience with their stay. Some businesses use pricing strategy where the tourists get a good value for their money with quality service at a lower cost. The Thai government launched a campaign to further strengthen the tourism sector. As part of the campaign, the government has increased the available domestic flights and transportation not only to the popular tourists' spots but also to other provinces that are equally worth visiting. Making the travelling convenient encourages travelers to visit the major cities as well as the small towns and provinces in Thailand. Hosting sports event, festivals and other special festivities also draw tourists to visit other less popular destinations. The influx of tourists wanting to partake in the festivities or unique occasions opens the opportunity to expand accommodation business in the local areas of Thailand.

The opening of local areas for tourists paved the way to alternative accommodations. This year, the businesses that provide alternative accommodations have grown substantially. Alternative accommodations refer to hostels like guest houses, service apartments, and commercial homes that provide paid lodging to the visitors on a short-term period. They differ from the conventional hotels in terms of the limited service provided with an intrinsic cues and local culture. The commercial homes, on the other hand, particularly refer to accommodations where guests pay to stay in private homes. The host and/or the host family usually live in the rented premises. Commercial homes provide an interaction with the local/s (the host or the host family), an experience that is not present in a conventional hotel stay. Alternative accommodations are focused on satisfying the customer needs in a competitive environment. The owners provide customers with rooms that are clean and neat as they are able to furnish, depending on the level, grade and standard of the accommodation.

All information above stimulated researcher to study the factors affecting customers' satisfaction on accommodation alternatives. However, this research paper focused only on research methodology called factor analysis, which was a one part of the whole research.

2. Literature Review

A number of considerable literatures on hotel selection, factors that affect the choice of alternative accommodations, and impact of customer reviews had been studied and selected.

The research at Pondicherry, a heritage coastal town in India of Gunasekaran N. &Victor Anandkumar (2012) concluded that there are four factors that affect the decision of the customers in selecting an alternative accommodation. These four factors are: homely atmosphere, value for money, local landscape and guest-host relationship. They also found out that the perception on value for money is one of the concerns of the visitors in choosing an alternative accommodation.

The studies on rural lodging sites conducted by Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, (2008); Ng, David, & Dagger, (2011) revealed that accommodation services are very important intangible feature. The purchase process was inherently risky because customers cannot assess the services before checking in. The researchers recommended increasing interpersonal communication to influence the customers' buying decisions.

Most customers prefer to purchase accommodation services independently rather than relying on professional advice from a travel agent, and the Internet had emerged as a primary source of rural lodging sites information (Hernández-Maestro, 2010; Hernández-Maestro et al., 2007). The internet has become a useful tool for tourists to do researches on places they will be travelling to and the alternative accommodation choices. The study of Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, (2009) revealed that among the various communication channels rural lodging sites use, highly influential online communication model relies on infomediaries or web bloggers that gather information from different accommodation service providers and customer reviews. When the web bloggers post more information, it becomes of greater value to viewers. In addition, the researches of Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006), Pathak et al. (2010), and Zhu and Zhang (2010) on the impact of customer reviews all revealed that the number of online reviews positively affect the business performance. While the studies of Duan et al., (2008a, 2008b), Liu, (2006) and Ye et al. (2011) revealed that the volume of online reviews, separated from the ratings, emerged as the primary influence on sales. The researches even specified a positive relationship between the number of reviews and the number of bookings for hotels. These only accounted the number of reviews regardless whether they are positive or negative. The research showed that the reviews increase consumers' awareness of the lodging sites and any publicity (positive or negative) may be good publicity (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Duan et al., 2008a, 2008b; Liu, 2006; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009). Overall, the accommodation services attract travelers by the service they provide. On the other hand, the measures that travelers use as their criteria for selecting alternative accommodations remain to be a topic of discussion. Figure 1 shows a conceptual model from the studies that were reviewed.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

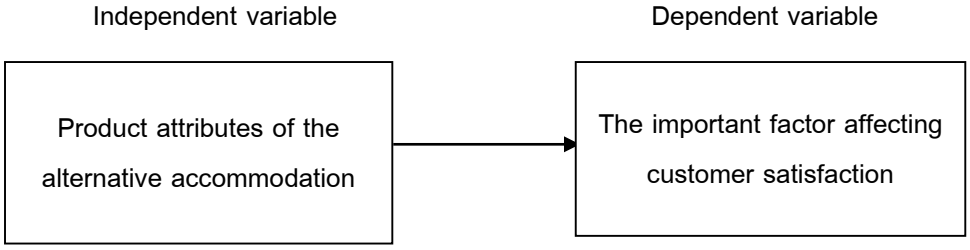

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of This Study

Research conceptual framework related to attributes of the alternative accommodation that affecting customer satisfaction when they make decision to buy services.

Based on research methodology, grouping observed variables as known as factor analysis has been widely used. Factor analysis has a key concept that many observed variables have similar responses because they are all rely on an unobservable (latent) “factors”. Significantly, the unobserved factors are more interesting among social researchers than the observed factors. There are two types of analysis: exploratory analysis and confirmatory analysis. The relationship of each variable to the underlying factor (latent) is expressed in terms of factor loading. Normally, factor analysis is generally an exploratory method that requires many subjective judgments by the user. Although, it is a widely used tool, it can be disputed because of more flexibility leading to more debates about result interpretations (Maike Rahn, 2016).

3. Methodology

This paper aims to identify the most important factor that influences customers’ decision in choosing the alternative accommodation services. It attempts to understand customers’ needs and what satisfies them when choosing an alternative accommodation. The study uses survey questionnaire and statistical software to analyze the factors that customers consider when choosing an alternative accommodation. The findings may serve as a useful reference for the owners of alternative accommodations.

This section is divided into three sub-sections: research design, data collation and data analysis. The details of each sub-section are described as below.

3.1 Research Design

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for this study. The questionnaire was based on the inductive approach with an initial proposal of the relevant literatures for qualitative synthesis as mentioned in part two. The preliminary scale (with 28 items) was administered to 95

students of Khon Khaen University. The students were asked to rate the important attributes for selecting alternative accommodation items on a five point Likert scale (ordinal measurement scale) with '5' indicating much more, '3' indicating neutral and '1' indicating little. The questionnaire was tested by selecting a convenient sample of 95 regular students enrolled in the hotel management course of Khon Kaen University. The average age of the participants was 18.39 year with an SD of .755 year. The data were collected during the consumer behavior in hospitality industry class. Out of 92 participants, a total of 95 usable responses were returned (with a response rate of about 96.8%). In testing the instrument, score variability and mean (descriptive statistics) were used to analyze and select the variables in the measurement scale. The mean and standard deviation of each variable was calculated. Variable with lower standard deviation (SD<1) were selected for final measurement scale as they represent greater unanimity among the participants. This was the only criterion for selection. In this process out of 28 variables, only 24 were selected for the final measurement scale as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. List of Accommodation Attributes

Item	Variables	Item	Variables
A1	Own space	A13	Online reviews
A2	Wanted a change	A14	Personalized hospitality
A3	Cleanliness	A15	Interaction with local
A4	Security	A16	Touch local culture
A5	Food quality	A17	Avoid the crowd
A6	Something different	A18	Cordial relationship with host
A7	Local environment	A19	Swimming pool
A8	Flexibility stay	A20	High-speed internet
A9	Value for money	A21	Hot tub
A10	Local lifestyle experience	A22	Fitness Centre
A11	Readily available	A23	Room service
A12	Not exorbitantly price	A24	Set price range

Furthermore, the researcher measured the internal consistency of this scale using Cronbach's alpha coefficient value. The alpha coefficient for the twenty-four items is .880, suggesting that the variables had relatively high internal consistency.

3.2 Data Collection

A self-administered questionnaire with two sections was developed as the data collection instrument. The survey instrument was organized into two sections as follows:

Section 1 collected information on respondents' demographic data. Frequency distribution was used based on gender, age, education level, and income level.

Section 2 was designed to find out the factors that affect the decision-making of customers for selecting alternative accommodation (guest houses, service apartments, commercial homes/bed &breakfast).The second section also presents the results derived from decision-making items for selecting alternative accommodation by comparing the ancillary attribute importance ratings of individual attributes with an average rating of 24 attributes and determining which ancillary attribute importance ratings are significant.

Data collection was conducted on randomly selected days over a two-month period. Target respondents included Thais aged 18 – 51 (Gen Z =18-21, Gen Y =22-30 and Gen X =31-51) and who have leisure traveling experience. The survey was collected from people who are working and studying in Bangkok. A total of 520 questionnaires were distributed on May-June 2016. Out of the total sample of 520, only 488 usable responses were considered (with a response rate of 93.8%). The responses of some of the participants who have no leisure traveling experience were considered not valid since these responses do not apply to the sample condition. The responses of 488 participants who responded carefully to all24 items in the measurement scale were retained for further analysis.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 13.0. The descriptive data, including demographic information of respondents, were expressed in percentage. The component on the decision-making was interpreted using a factor analysis (principal component method) on all responses on the 24 items with regard to the product attributes. Factors with eigenvalues of 1.0 or higher were considered as dimensions for accommodation evaluation. Following varimax rotation, items with factor loadings of above 0.4 were set to as the evaluation scale. The perceptions of selection variables on 24 attributes (A1-A24) were examined. Before moving to factor analysis, the raw data was tested for sampling adequacy (through Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling Adequacy) and sphericity (Bartlett's Test of Sphericity) to decide whether the data was suitable or not. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test were used to measure the strength of relationship among the variables. The testing results are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.901
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5443.387
	df	276
	Sig.	.000

Note: statistical significance at 0.01 level

In reference to Table 2, the KMO measurement was 0.901 and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity revealed a statistical significance at 0.01 level. This means that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix. The above figures indicate that the data collected from the respondents were suitable for factor analysis.

The next table (Table 3.) shows how much of the variance in the variables has been accounted for by the extracted factors. The communality value should be more than 0.5 to be considered for further analysis. These variables (highlighted in bold) are to be removed from further steps of factor analysis.

Table 3. Initial, Extraction Communalities and Interpreting

	Variables	Initial	Extraction	Interpreting
1	Own space	1.000	.609	60.9 % of the variance in "own space attribute"
2	Wanted a change	1.000	.679	67.9 % of the variance in "wanted a change"
3	Cleanliness	1.000	.654	65.4 % of the variance in "cleanliness"
4	Security	1.000	.675	67.5 % of the variance in "security"
5	Food quality	1.000	.602	60.2 % of the variance in "food quality"
6	Something different	1.000	.584	58.4 % of the variance in "something different"
7	Local environment	1.000	.615	61.5 % of the variance in "local environment"
8	**Flexibility stay**	1.000	**.484**	48.4 % of the variance in "**flexibility stay**"
9	Value for money	1.000	.589	58.9 % of the variance in "value for money"
10	Local lifestyle experience	1.000	.530	53.0 % of the variance in "local lifestyle experience"
11	Readily available	1.000	.541	54.1 % of the variance in "readily available"
12	Not exorbitantly price	1.000	.603	60.3 % of the variance in "not exorbitantly price"
13	**Online reviews**	1.000	**.397**	39.7 % of the variance in "online reviews"

Table 3. Initial, Extraction Communalities and Interpreting (Cont.)

	Variables	Initial	Extraction	Interpreting
14	Personalized hospitality	1.000	.578	57.8 % of the variance in “personalized hospitality”
15	Interaction with local	1.000	.669	66.9 % of the variance in “interaction with local”
16	Touch local culture	1.000	.715	71.5 % of the variance in “touch local culture”
17	**Avoid the crowd**	1.000	**.485**	48.5 % of the variance in “avoid the crowd”
18	Cordial relationship with host	1.000	.821	82.1 % of the variance in “cordial relationship with host”
19	Swimming pool	1.000	.577	57.7 % of the variance in “swimming pool”
20	**High-speed internet**	1.000	**.477**	47.7 % of the variance in “high-speed internet”
21	Hot tub	1.000	.755	75.5 % of the variance in “hot tub”
22	Fitness center	1.000	.760	76.0 % of the variance in “fitness center”
23	Room service	1.000	.630	63.0 % of the variance in “room service”
24	**Set price range**	1.000	**.496**	49.6 % of the variance in “set price range”

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The next table (Table 4.) shows eigenvalue, actually reflects the number of extracted factors which its summation should be equal to number of variables which are subjected to factor analysis. The eigenvalue table has been divided in three subsections; initial eigenvalues, extracted sums of squared loadings, and rotation sums of squared loadings. For analysis and interpretation purpose, this study concerned with rotation sums of squared loadings, it showed only those variables that met the cut-off criterion (extraction method). In this case, there were five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. The “% of variance” column reveals the first factor accounts for 23.948% of the variance, the second 13.105%, the third 12.793%, the forth 6.196% and the fifth 4.489%. All the remaining factors are not significant.

Table 4. Eigenvalue

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.956	33.150	33.150	7.956	33.150	33.150	5.748	23.948	23.948
2	2.762	11.508	44.658	2.762	11.508	44.658	3.145	13.105	37.054
3	1.713	7.137	51.795	1.713	7.137	51.795	3.070	12.793	49.846
4	1.076	4.482	56.277	1.076	4.482	56.277	1.487	6.196	56.043
5	1.021	4.254	60.531	1.021	4.254	60.531	1.077	4.489	60.531
6	.945	3.936	64.468						
7	.840	3.499	67.967						
8	.811	3.379	71.346						
9	.746	3.108	74.453						
10	.672	2.800	77.253						
11	.619	2.579	79.832						
12	.562	2.341	82.173						
13	.493	2.054	84.227						
14	.490	2.040	86.266						
15	.443	1.846	88.112						
16	.439	1.831	89.943						
17	.409	1.706	91.649						
18	.374	1.557	93.206						
19	.351	1.463	94.669						
20	.338	1.407	96.076						
21	.295	1.229	97.305						
22	.255	1.061	98.365						
23	.206	.859	99.224						
24	.186	.776	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The Table 5 shows the loadings (extracted values of each item under 5 components) of the 24 variables on the five factors extracted. The higher the absolute value of the loading, the more the factor contributes to the variable (We have extracted five components wherein the 24 items are divided into 5 components according to most important items which similar responses in component 1 and simultaneously in component 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. The gap (empty spaces) on the table represent loadings that are less than 0.5, this makes reading the table easier. We suppressed all loadings less than 0.5 (Table 5).

Table 5 Component Matrix

	Component				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Food quality	.736				
Not exorbitantly price	.707	-.285			
Security	.705	-.413			
Value for money	.696	-.295			
Personalized hospitality	.683		-.263		
Readily available	.660	-.268			
High-speed internet	**.652**				
Flexibility stay	**.652**	-.242			
Cleanliness	.645	-.473			
Set price range	**.640**				
Touch local culture	.608	.227	-.518		

Table 5 Component Matrix (Cont.)

	Component				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Interaction with local	.605	.312	-.423		
Online reviews	**.587**				
Own space	.544	-.231	.238	.413	
Wanted a change	.534	-.247	.335	.424	.201
Something different	.518	.295		.437	
Local lifestyle experience	.517	.224	-.451		
Local environment	.498		-.457	.348	
Fitness center	.411	.678	.362		
Hot tub	.439	.649	.372		
Room service	.466	.566	.245		
Swimming pool	.455	.494	.343		
Cordial relationship with host	.210			-.372	.789
Avoid the crowd	.282	.325			.480

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

3.4 Rotated Component Matrix

The idea of rotation is to reduce the number variables on which the variables under investigation have high loadings. Rotation does not actually change anything but makes the interpretation of the analysis easier. These factors can be used for further analysis. Because of the communality value lower than 0.5, The five factors: set price range, flexibility stay, high-speed internet, online reviews, and avoid the crowd attributes were removed from further steps of factor analysis. The rotated component matrix is represented below:

Table 6. Rotated Component Matrix

	Component				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
security	.791				
cleanliness	.760			.261	
not exorbitantly price	.744				
value for money	.720		.233		
readily available	.716				
food quality	.672	.212		.279	
set price range	**.648**	**.256**			

Table 6. Rotated Component Matrix (Cont.)

	Component				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
flexibility stay	**.628**		.229		
high-speed internet	**.624**	**.262**			
personalized hospitality	.582		.454		
online reviews	**.446**	**.381**	**.225**		
hot tub		.853			
fitness center		.853			
room service		.749			
swimming pool		.730			
touch local culture	.327		.736		
local environment			.721	.260	
interaction with local	.291	.261	.689		
local lifestyle experience	.220		.681		
something different		.269	.566	.382	
avoid the crowd		**.201**	**.440**	**.299**	**.386**
wanted a change	.447			.679	
own space	.441			.634	
cordial relationship with host					.887

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

4. Research Results

The fourth section is classified into 2 parts: demographic factors of respondents and the results of factor analysis. The details of each part are given below.

4.1 Respondent Profiles

Out of the 520 questionnaires that were distributed, only 488 of the questionnaires were completed having the response rate of 93.8%. In terms of gender, the females are at 59.8%while the males are at 40.2%.This reflects that there were more than 19.6 percent female respondents than male respondents. The survey respondents were composed primarily of Gen Y (22-30 years) accounting for 34.4%, Gen X (31-51 years)in33.6% and Gen Z (18-21 years) in32% of the respondents. Other demographic data are given in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Demographic Profiles of Respondents (N=488)

	Frequency	**Percentage (%)**
Gender		
Female	292	59.8
Male	196	40.2
Age (years)		
18-21	156	32.0
22-30	168	34.4
31-51	164	33.6
Education		
College and below	155	31.8
University	306	62.7
Graduate school	27	5.5
Monthly household income (Baht/USD in parentheses)		
Less than 10,000 (285)	168	34.4
10,001-15,000 (286-427)	195	40.0
15,001-20,000 (428-570)	100	20.5
20,001 or above (571 or above)	25	5.1

4.2 Derivation of Dimensions by Factor Analysis

Using the factor analysis, five dimensions/factors with eigenvalues of 1.0 or higher were obtained. Factor loadings after a varimax rotation with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were retained. The results are shown in Table 8. The analyses rendered five factors. Factors were named after the attributes that had their highest loadings on that factor. Table 8 shows the details of the factors identified through exploratory factor analysis.

Table 8. Results of Factor Analysis

Dimension/evaluation items	Factor loadings	Eigenvalue	% Variance
Factor 1: Security		5.748	23.948
Security	0.791		
Cleanliness	0.760		
Not exorbitantly price	0.744		
Value for money	0.720		
Readily available	0.716		
Food quality	0.672		
Set price range	0.648		
Flexibility stay	0.628		
High-speed internet	0.624		
Personalized hospitality	0.582		
Online reviews	0.446		
Factor 2: Recreational facilities		3.145	13.105
Hot tub	0.853		
Fitness center	0.853		
Room service	0.749		
Swimming pool	0.730		
Factor 3: Local landscape		3.070	12.793
Touch local culture	0.736		
Local environment	0.721		
Interaction with local	0.689		
Local lifestyle experience	0.681		
Something different	0.566		
Avoid the crowd	0.440		
Factor 4: Availability of special services		1.487	6.196
Wanted a change	0.679		
Own space	0.634		
Factor 5: Nice host		1.077	4.489
Cordial relationship with host	0.887		

Factor loading after a varimax rotation are also shown in Table 4. Twenty-four evaluation items with factor loading of more than 0.4 were categorized into five evaluation scales. In cases where the factor loading was above 0.4 for two items, they were categorized into the factor having

the greater factor loading. Based on the content of the items included, the scales are defined as the following:

Factor 1 Security

This factor garnered 23.948% of explained variance. It means that this factor gains the maximum yield for the alternative accommodation selection. Factor 1 includes security - 0.791, cleanliness - 0.760, exorbitant price - 0.744, value for money - 0.720, readily available - 0.716, food quality - 0.672, set price range - 0.648, flexibility stay - 0.628, high-speed internet - 0.624, personalized hospitality - 0.582, and online reviews - 0.446 factors loading. All the attributes, except online reviews, have high factor loading that suggests the superiority of the factor itself. This factor implies that security, cleanliness and affordability are always important in selecting an alternative accommodation.

Factor 2 Recreational facilities

This factor converged at 13.105% of explained variance, with four attributes retained. It includes hot tub - 0.853, fitness center - 0.853, room service - 0.749, and swimming pool - 0.730 factors loading.

Factor 3 Local landscape

This factor gained 12.793% of explained variance, with six attributes retained. This factor includes touch local culture - 0.736, local environment - 0.721, interaction with local - 0.689, local lifestyle experience - 0.681, something different - 0.566, and avoid the crowd - 0.440 factors loading.

Factor 4 Availability of special services

This factor landed at 6.196% of explained variance, with two attributes retained. It includes wanted a change - 0.679, and own space - 0.634 factor loading.

Factor 5 Nice owner

Finally, the least important factor among the Thai traveler respondents is “nice host” accounted at 4.489% of explained variance. It includes cordial relationship with host - 0.887 factor loading.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The results generated five factors contributing to customer satisfaction towards choosing an alternative accommodation. These include security, recreational facilities, local landscape, availability of special services, and nice owner.

To attract more customers, owners of alternative accommodations should focus on security together with cleanliness of the place and affordability. They should also consider providing recreation facilities and choose a location that shows the local landscape. Ideally, alternative accommodations should feature local life with rooms having relaxed atmosphere. In terms of pricing,

alternative accommodation should retain its economical pricing – a feature that would less likely be available in conventional hotels. Since the distribution strategy heavily relies on information technology, social media, and internet, the promotional advertisement theme should highlight on security, recreational facilities, local landscape, availability of special services, and the characteristic of the owner.

5.1 Acknowledgments

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