

## The Students' Decision on Selecting the Accommodations in Surat Thani Province

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### Abstract

The purposes of this study were 1) to study the decision of the university students on selecting accommodations in Surat Thani province, and 2) to analyze the relationship between marketing mix factors (4Ps) and students' decision on the selection for accommodations. The samples of the study were 391 undergraduate students selected by stratified random sampling. The research instrument was a questionnaire. The statistics used for data analysis were the percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation, and Pearson's product moment correlation was used for this study.

The study indicated that the main purpose of the most students was for traveling and relaxing with their family. They mostly stayed for 2 nights. They booked and preferred mostly a hotel room in advance by phone, and they searched the information about the accommodations from the internet. The research findings revealed that the location and promotion regarding the marketing mix factors were related significantly to the students' decision on selecting the accommodations at the .01 level. Additionally, the factors for the decision making on the accommodation of the students were price, service, promotion, and location or distribution channels respectively. The study recommended that the hotel staff should be trained to improve language skills. The accommodations

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must be clean and fully equipped. Moreover, special offers and promotions should be provided clearly on the website and online booking.

**Keywords:** Decision, Accommodations, Selection, Surat Thani Province

## Introduction

Tourism is an industry that involves positive impacts, especially the employment and income distribution of people in local communities. It is obvious that tourism industry has grown rapidly in many countries that has affected the international trading system of the countries. Tourism has become an important industry for the world economy. As scholars stated, tourism is crucial for the global and national economic, social and political development, especially in developing countries (Mowforth and Munt, 2015; Netsuwan et al., 2012; UNWTO, 2005).

Thailand is one of many countries, where main national incomes are from tourism and hospitality industry. According to the Authority on World Travel and Tourism (2018), tourism has contributed over 2.1 billion in THB to the Thai economy in 2018. Undoubtedly, tourism industry is important for prosperous, economic,

and social stability of Thailand, especially at the local level.

Thailand has become world tourist destination. The country not only consists of unique natural and cultural attractions, but tourism and recreation facilities are readily served to tourists, such as various rated accommodations, golf courses, spas, restaurants, entertainment, and travel services with full facilities. These are able to attract both Thai and foreign tourists to visit more and more every year (Charoenphon, 2012).

Hotel or accommodation business is a basic need in the tourism industry. Accommodation is considered as a significant factor of the tourism products for the tourists (Banerjee, 2014). Different styles of the accommodation are offered to the tourists regarding to their needs such as hotels, motels, guest houses, apartments, homestays, bungalows, etc. Different types of tourists may prefer different styles of

accommodations based on different purposes of the tourists (Gunasekaran and Anandkumar, 2012). As such, the accommodation service business has been continually developed and grown along the way with the tourism industry.

Consequently, the competition is more serious. Some entrepreneurs are successful in accommodation business and others are not. The tourists' needs are important for choosing their favorite accommodation (Warichwattana and Mongkol, 2013). Hotel or accommodation is a business concerned with many services of room, food, and leisure, which serves the tourists, business travelers, and travelers with various purposes. At present, the accommodation service is increased in both urban and rural destinations due to the increase in tourism and the development of transportation system. Surat Thani Province is located in southern Thailand, where consists of world popular destinations such as Koh Samui, Koh Phangan and Khao Sok National Park. Moreover, as there have

an increase of teenager population, Grover and Prideaux's (2009) work suggested that the group of young people placed specific value on the notion of travelling for the experience. The demand for tourism products and services is influenced by a number of factors including tourists' age and occupation (Jefferson and Lickorish, 1988). Therefore, tourism operators and businesses relating to accommodation should have strategies for giving satisfying services to those young aged tourists.

## **The Purposes of the Research**

- 1 . To study the decision of students on selecting accommodation in Surat Thani province
2. To analyze the relationship between marketing mix factors (4Ps) and students' decision on accommodation selection

## **Research Methodology**

### **1. Population and Sample**

1 .1 The population was 17,454 undergraduate students of Suratthani Rajabhat University.

1.2 The samples of the study were 391 undergraduate students of Suratthani Rajabhat University. They were selected by stratified random sampling.

### 2. Instruments

The 5-point-rating-scale questionnaire with a .804 reliability index was used for data collection.

### 3. Data collection

The quantitative research was done by using questionnaire as tool for data collection.

### 4. Data Analysis

Frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's product moment correlation were used to analyze the data.

## Results of the Study

The analysis results of the students' travel behaviors can be shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Travel Behaviors

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Main reasons of traveling		
For relaxing	207	52.9
For visiting relatives	80	20.5
For business	62	15.9
For education	19	4.9
For health	16	4.1
For religion	7	1.8
Travelling Companion		
Family	137	35.0
Girlfriend/boyfriend	135	34.5
Alone	68	17.4
Friends	51	13.0

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sources of travelling information		
Telephone	89.5	22.9
Internet	82.5	21.1
TV / Radio	61.5	15.75
Internet	59	15.1
Friends	31.5	8.05
Reservation acquaintances	26	6.65
No reservation	21	5.35
Billboards	20	5.1
Type of accommodation		
Hotel	125	32.0
Resort	122	31.2
Guesthouse	60	15.3
Relative house	57	14.6
Home stay	27	6.9
Duration of stay		
1night	101	25.8
2 nights	205	52.4
3 nights	50	12.5
More than 4 nights	35	9.2

From Table 1, the research results showed that most of the respondents had the aim of travel for relaxing. They traveled with family members, girlfriend/boyfriend, and alone, respectively. The study revealed that the students got

travelling information from telephone, internet, television/radio, and friends respectively. They preferred to stay in hotel and resort. Most of them spent two nights of staying.

**Table 2.** Marketing mix factors (4Ps: Product, Price, Place and Promotion)

Variables	Mean	S.D.
Service factor	4.26	0.27
Price factor	4.33	0.21
Location or distribution channels factor	4.16	0.30
Promotion factor	4.24	0.37
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.25</b>	<b>0.29</b>

From Table 2, the results showed that the overall opinion of the respondents toward the marketing mix factors (4Ps: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion) in selecting accommodation was at a high level ( $\bar{x} = 4.25$ , S.D. = .29). The four

high rated factors of the selection for accommodation were price ( $\bar{x} = 4.33$ , S.D. = .21), service ( $\bar{x} = 4.26$ , S.D. = .27), promotion ( $\bar{x} = 4.37$ , S.D. = .37), and location ( $\bar{x} = 4.16$ , S.D. = .30) respectively.

**Table 3.** Correlation of 4Ps and decision on the selection for accommodation in Thailand

Variables	M (SD)	Decision on accommodation selection in Thailand
Product	4.26 (0.27)	-.047
Price	4.33 (0.21)	.056
Place	4.16 (0.30)	.337**
Promotion	4.24 (0.37)	.584**

Notes. \*\*Significant Level at .01

From Table 3, the result showed that marketing mix factors on place and promotion had the

significant correlation with students' decision on

accommodation selection ( $p>0.01$ ).

## Discussion and Conclusions

The findings showed that the students' decision on accommodation selection in Thailand was significantly related to the marketing mix factors (4Ps) at good level. The study revealed that the students received travel information from the internet, television, and friends telling, respectively. Most of them reserved an accommodation by telephone booking with the purpose of relaxing. They traveled with family, girlfriend/boyfriend, and alone, respectively. This is consistent with the research of Charoenphon (2012) and Praneetham et. al. (2016) claimed that most of foreign tourists had aim of the trip for traveling and they usually travel with their family. They decided on accommodation by themselves and made the room reservation via telephone in advance. The accommodation that the

European tourists chose is close to the sea or the beach while Asian tourists chose to stay close to the communities.

This study found that the students considered on condition and size of the room or accommodation. They chose to stay in hotel or resort which had several rates of room price to choose. As Warichwattana and Mongkol (2013) asserted that hygiene and clearly mark price of the accommodation were factors of product. For this recent study, respondents rated the quality of the room as expected and complied with the booking conditions are most important for making the decision to stay at the guesthouses.

Moreover, the study of relationship between 4Ps and the accommodation selection found that place and its distance between accommodation and tourist attraction was the main factor on making a decision. This finding is align with Pringprasert et al.'s (2011) research. They confirmed that the main factors

ffecting Bangkok tourists' decision making on accommodation selection were personal interested in place and comparison of many accommodations. Clearly, the accommodation should be seen prominently and easily. It should be easy and convenient to access to the accommodation. According to Taweephol and Siriwong (2017), the main reason for choosing accommodation via social media were place sign, location of accommodation, room facilities, activities for supporting their happiness and allocation area for customers.

Additionally, this study notably uncovered that the promotion in giving of discount for using of service next time and subscribing as members to receive privilege were factors influencing the students' decision. As such, the sale promotion can communicate and attracts the customers. Aziz Abdullah & Hairil Hamdan (2012) also agreed with the active promotions and competitive price, they can lure potential and

regular guests to Malaysian Hotels. Those potential guests and regular ones would decide to stay in a hotel or return to the same ones simply because of the lower room prices. Marketing promotion becomes a vehicle of great importance for management of hotel (Hiransomboon, 2012).

The results from this study indicated that marketing mix factors on place and promotion mostly had significant correlation with students' decision on accommodation selection. As Warichwattana and Mongkol's (2013) emphasize, 4Ps marketing mix factors; namely product, price, place, and promotion had the significant correlation with tourists' behavior. Lomsetthi (2011) revealed that experience in staying overnights of foreign tourists and making the decision in using the accommodation service according to marketing mix factors on the accommodation and quality of services, prices, place of channel of distribution, marketing promotion, service personnel, service process, and

physical characteristics were all correlated. Gunasekaran and Anandkumar (2012) stated that homely atmosphere, value for money, local touch and guest-host relationship are factors influence the tourists to choose alternative accommodation such as guest houses, service apartments, and commercial homes, this also includes homestay and bed & breakfast. Their study revealed the value for money perception of the tourists concerning alternative accommodation. The value proposition is not only in terms of pricing but includes the overall experience for the overall cost incurred by the tourists also. Kamau et al. (2015) revealed that the main reason in determining choice of accommodation by local tourists in Kenya was price, products/service, location, people, processes, physical evidence, and promotions. Most of the tourists travelled with family, relatives, and friends. Price played an important role in choosing accommodation of local

tourists in Kenya. This is consistent with the research of Dumitras et. al. (2017) that location, facilities, price, cleanliness, and safety add value to the trip are the most important factors affecting the choice of an accommodation unit.

## Recommendations

The study results of the accommodation selection factors have shown interesting points and ideas. It has been shown by the result that there are two main factors, promotion and place that are to be clearly addressed before making the final decision for the tourist visiting destinations. Therefore, entrepreneurs should set a clear accommodation pricing approach to create the same standard. The accommodation business should provide information through the accommodation website and give more special offer and promotions on online booking.

The results of the study can be used to develop the accommodation, to create a high level of service image in order to provide customers with high level of

satisfaction and return to use the service again. This study hence suggests that the most important thing in developing a hospitality business is the development of employees. The employees should work more effectively to impress the tourists. Language barriers can impact the quality of customer service and customer satisfaction levels. Therefore, the staff should be trained to improve their language skills and employee productivity. They should communicate effectively and professionally with the customers in order to provide important tourist information and give impression to the customers. Moreover, facilities both in accommodation and in the rooms should be developed, clean, and fully equipped, such as laundry, wireless internet, bathroom facilities, shuttle, etc. to meet the needs of customers.

Considering the priorities of tourists in selecting accommodation service, we need more comprehensive studies and surveys based on the well-established factors and indicators with different type of tourists. It is a sustainable way for the brand to stay

sustainable, increase reservation as different tourists expected.

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