

## **MARKETING STRATEGIES AFFECTING CHINESE TOURISTS' DECISION MAKING AND LOYALTY TOWARD MEDICAL AND WELLNESS TOURISM IN THAILAND**

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### **Abstract**

Research in the demands of tourist needs and marketing strategies on the impact of decision making of Chinese tourists towards medical and wellness tourism will be very beneficial. The purposes of this research were to (1) explore personal factors, travel behavior, and the demand of Chinese tourists for medical and wellness tourism (health tourism) in Thailand; (2) to analyze the influence of service marketing mix has on Chinese tourists when choosing their health tourism services; (3) to analyze the influence of service marketing mix factors on Chinese tourists' loyalty towards health tourism in Thailand. This research was quantitative research, which included a sample of 400 Chinese tourists. This research use a stratified sampling technique in which a survey will be conducted. The data were collected by questionnaires. The statistics used in the research were descriptive statistics and testing the hypothesis by a multiple regression analysis. The research found that (1) the majority of Chinese medical tourists were women between the ages of 26-30 years old, worked at private companies, had a bachelor's degree, and earned an income of 50,001-100,000 baht/month. For the most part, Chinese tourists use health services such as spas and massages. Information was given to the tourists via hotel employees, friends and family as well as online forums, tour companies, magazines, travel websites, and travel books. There was a high demand for general health, health screening, operations, cure of diseases, dental work, plastic surgery and health promotion by using traditional medicine, alternative medicine, anti-aging and medical spa. (2) there were 6 marketing factors of the variables, which were product elements, people, physical environment, price and other user outlays,

promotion and education and service process had influence on the level of Chinese tourists' decision making on health tourism in Thailand with predicted ratio 86.7 % ( $R^2=0.867$ ) (3). The marketing factors of product elements, productivity and quality, people and promotion and education had influence on the level of Chinese tourists' Loyalty on health tourism in Thailand with predicted ratio 88.3% ( $R^2=0.883$ ). Therefore, Entrepreneurs of the medical and health tourism industry should focus on marketing strategies that influence the decision making and loyalty of Chinese tourists. This includes business planning, strategies, practices leading to marketing success and loyalty.

**Keywords:** marketing strategy, decision making, tourists' Loyalty, Chinese tourists, medical and wellness tourism

## Introduction

Medical and wellness tourism (health tourism) in Thailand is a new emerging style of tourism that is becoming popular with many travelers all around the world. Health Tourism has been divided into two sections; Medical tourism and wellness tourism. During the first quarter of 2016, there were 1.2 million individuals who traveled to Thailand for medical tourism, which is the highest it's ever been in the world leading to 100 billion dollar contribution for the economy. Not only does Thailand's health standards offer superior service, it also offers advanced modern technology, and qualified professionals equal to Singapore standards. Thailand's medical health industry is world renowned and is as inexpensive as India (Leelawatananun, 2016).

Chinese tourists are starting to spend more money and invest in themselves, which is something to be interested in.

Thailand and South Korea are the main competitors when it comes to medical and wellness tourism in Asia, especially in cosmetic surgery. Unfortunately during the past year, South Korea has been confronted with problems regarding the quality of services provided and also the qualifications of the business and doctors offering these services. This has impacted Chinese tourist's decision making and an increase in the Thai medical and wellness tourism (Ackarapun, 2017).

Today, Chinese tourists have used a tour agencies for their medical and wellness travels, this research was conducted by the EIC (Economic Intelligence Center). The Siam Commercial Bank found that in 2016 Chinese tourists made up 7.9million of the total tourist economy in Thailand. That is a 71% increase from the past year. Chinese tourists also have more spending power from 4,425 baht per day in 2010 to 5,748 baht per day in 2015 (Marketeer, 2017).

This has impacted the tourism industry in many other aspects as it is very sensitive to various influences from inside and outside Thailand. To cope with these influences, policies and standards need to be set up in order to maintain a standard of reliability in the Thai medical and wellness tourism. In the past, there have been problems involving the way businesses are conducted and the impact it had on standards of health and quality. By increasing standards of services provided, health and wellness businesses also increase the ability to compete and also hold themselves to a higher reputation.

The literature review, Previous Related research on marketing strategies affects the decision making of tourists and Loyalty of Tourists, This research indicates that marketing strategies; promotions, product elements, concerning the quality and availability to a customer influenced the decision to use tourist services and behavioral intention. In addition, the concept of service marketing strategies, research by Lovelock and Wirtz (2007), They found the 8 P's included: (1) product elements, (2) place and time, (3) promotion and education on the product, (4) price and other outlays, (5) physical environment, (6) process (7) people, and (8) productivity and service Quality are the key to building a loyal of customer. Thus, research in the demands of tourist needs and service marketing strategies on the impact of decision making of Chinese tourists towards medical and wellness tourism will be very beneficial.

## Objectives

- 1) To investigate personal factors, travel behaviors, demand, marketing factors, decision making and loyalty of Chinese tourists towards the Thai medical and wellness tourism.
- 2) To research marketing strategy that impact the decision making of Chinese tourists towards medical and wellness tourism in Thailand.
- 3) To research marketing strategy that impacts the loyalty of Chinese tourists towards the medical and wellness tourism Thailand.

## Concept, theories and related research

This research applies the following concepts:

The first concept is health tourism; this concept can be broken down into two different categories which include the focus points of tourists and their needs. (1) Health screening tourism (Health Promotion Tourism) for example, massages spa, herbal wraps, aroma therapy and water therapy, meditation, and other wellness factors such as health foods. (2) Health healing tourism; these programs are designed to help cure diseases and rehabilitation such as dental work and plastic surgery. These are the reasons why tourists use hospitals and qualified health facilities for their health needs (Department of International Health, 2010).

The second concept is tourist behavior, based on an analytical study by Kotler (2000) included 6W1H was used to evaluate tourist behaviors; (1) characteristics of the purpose of these tourists, (2) the needs of the tourists, (3) The purposes of the travel, (4) individuals involved in decision making, (5) opportunities to travel, (6) how tourists select their type of travel, (7) types of products for travel, (8) types of activities encouraging tourism, (9) price range of accommodations, (10) information outlets for tourists, (11) average budget for one day per person.

The third concept is marketing strategy, research by Lovelock and Wirtz (2007), They found the 8 P's included: (1) every part that makes up a product (product elements), concerning the quality and availability to a customer, elements that comprised products that are used, such as quality ingredients and how they were sourced; (2) place and time, convenience and readiness of the service provided for customers, When a customer is making a decision in the product, the place and time are very important, financially and emotionally. The satisfaction of having a quality product delivered when it is needed is important as well; (3) promotion and education on the product, promotion and education of the product provided to the customer for a better understanding; (4) price and budget of the individual who is receiving the service; (5) physical environment of each tourist destination, exemplifying the quality and overall look and feel; (6) the process in which the product is built and delivered to the customer; (7) people are

very important in the delivery of the product as well as the presentation, ie. Quality training and good personal hygiene; (8) productivity and service Quality; the quality of service that is provided for customers is key to building a loyal fan base as well as customer satisfaction.

The fourth concept deals with customer loyalty. Research done by Oliver (1999, p. 33-34) explained that to measure the level of loyalty, and to build a fan base, it must meet all the needs of the customer down to the small details of service. Three steps to meet these demands including; (1) satisfaction with brand elements, i.e. the brand signifies quality and a level of consistent satisfaction; (2) satisfaction from the customer; (3) the willingness to promote and buy the product. Attitudinally loyal means that one feels positive about the brand, where as behavioral loyalty means that the person shops at the same place regularly. To measure customer loyalty to a business involves the attitude of the tourist/customer, which also includes a pattern of tourist decision making or repeat travel behavior. These will help maintain and increase the market share of repeat tourists.

### **Research on service marketing strategies affects the decision making of tourists**

Research conducted by Juntapukon and Songruksa (2013), found that marketing strategy related to public relations

through social media, promotions, community organizations and tourist activities have greatly influenced the decision to use certain tourist services. Srisomyung (2016) concluded that strengths in health tourism include qualifications of health care professionals and standards of services provided. More negotiating power is given to the customer for their healthcare travel needs because more health facilities are opening, thus more competition. Public relations for these services are most important in order to fulfill specific needs of the customer. In order to promote their business and reach out to more customers, an outlet like Facebook is utilized. It is very important to build prestige especially in the healthcare service industry in order to have a loyal following. Lee, Petrick, & Crompton (2007) found that product elements, concerning the quality and availability to a customer influenced the decision to use tourist services and behavioral intention

This research indicates that strategic marketing has a big impact on the decision making of tourists, thus hypothesizing ( $H_1$ ) that marketing strategies affect the decision making of Chinese tourists towards medical and wellness tourism in Thailand.

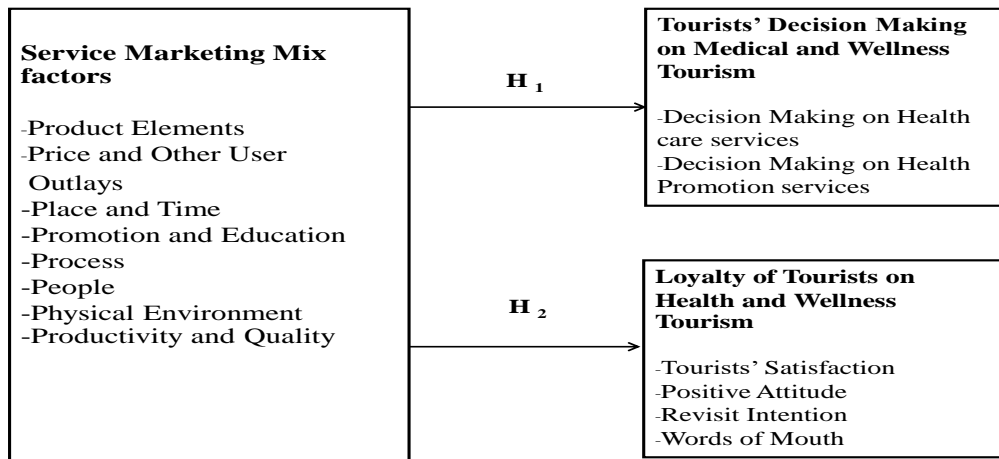
### **Research on service marketing strategies related to the loyalty of tourists**

Rust and Chung (2006) researched “marketing models of service and

relationships” founded that marketing strategies in the hospitality industry, service management, and individual customer management, has an impact on the satisfaction and relationship with the customer. Leading to a loyal following and referrals (He & Song, 2009) Quality perception affects repeat behavior, thus leading to customer satisfaction. Hui, Wan and Ho (2007), found that activities that promote tourism involving food and accommodations greatly contribute to the overall satisfaction of customers. Allowing them to tell their friends and family and continue to come back and use these services with no concern on inflation or price change. Zabkar et al., (2009), found that the outlook and perceived quality of tourist attractions/destinations predicts the behavior of tourists, including friendliness of the local people, variety, quality of accommodations and services. Ladhari (2009), found that service quality had relationship with emotional satisfaction of customer and behavioral intentions. Meng and colleges (2008), found that the quality of accommodations and services leads to overall customer satisfaction leading to repeated habits of tourists. Overall customer satisfaction also includes positive feelings and attitude towards the quality of the overall services (Lee, Lee, & Yoo, 2000). The results support the hypothesis that service marketing strategies affect tourist loyalty. This is measured by repeat behavior and intentions. Thus, researchers need to consider 2 ( $H_2$ ): Marketing strategies affects Chinese tourist loyalty to medial tourism and health in Thailand.

## Research framework

Researchers have set a framework to conduct research, as shown in figure 1.



**Figure 1** Conceptual framework to conduct research

## Methodology

This research uses the quantitative method, sampling 400 Chinese tourists who used to travel to Thailand for medical and health tourism from March-April of 2017. Using a sample table created by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). This method uses a 95% confidence level. This research use a stratified sampling technique and systematic random sampling in which a survey will be conducted.

Data is collected using a questionnaire, the quality of the questions was tested by content validity. Identification of

Concepts (IOC) was more than 0.66 with 70 questions, and an adjustment of 13 questions were made for reliability using the reliability coefficient test, Alpha Coefficient from Cronbach the whole questionnaire was 0.96. The data analysis and statistics used in the research were descriptive statistics, containing frequency values and percentages to describe personal factors and behaviors of tourists. This consists of the mean and standard deviation to explain the needs of Chinese tourist health tourism needs. The Hypothesis was tested by statistical analysis, and multiple regression analysis.

## Results

### Part 1 Results of survey involving Chinese tourists and their demands and travel behaviors

Personal factors involved with Chinese health tourism sample were mostly female (72.6%), with an age range of 26-30 years (29.4%), they worked in private enterprises (37.9%), with a bachelor's degree (53.2%), and an income of 50,001-100,000 baht/month (50.1%).

The Tourist behavior of Chinese tourists for medial and wellness tourism for health purposes made up of 47.7% of overall tourists. 32.7% traveled for spas/messages for health purposes, 37.6 of these facilities were spa or rehabilitation facilities related to health. 48.1% stayed for more than 3-4days,

41.9% traveled with friends, 58.1% traveled to Thailand solely for health purposes. Supporting travel services consist of hotels/resorts, restaurants, souvenir shops, malls, golf courses, and travel agencies. Hotels made up of 62.6% of the destinations, ranging from 3000 baht/night (54.8%), and services provided were less than 50,000baht (54.8%). Information sources about Thailand's medical and health tourism is usually provided by employees, friends, relatives, social media outlets such as Facebook, twitter, blogs, travel agencies, brochures, travel websites and travel guides.

The data of demands of health services for tourists on medical tourism and health, is presented as a mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and standard deviation (SD), split into 5 ratings (Pisanboth, 2010)

| Average rating | Definition       |
|----------------|------------------|
| 0.01-1.80      | Least needed     |
| 1.81-2.60      | Somewhat needed  |
| 2.61-3.40      | Average needed   |
| 3.41-4.20      | Very much needed |
| 4.21-5.00      | Most needed      |

**Table 1** Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and Standard Deviation (SD) of health service demands of tourists.

| The Demands of health services of tourists   | Tourists    |             |                 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
|  | mean        | SD          | Degree of needs |
| <b>Health care service requirements</b>  |             |             |                 |
| Demand for disease treatment   | 3.63        | .875        | Very Much       |
| Demand for surgeries for disease   | 3.38        | .930        | average         |
| Demand for cosmetic surgery  | 3.32        | .940        | average         |
| Demand for dental health care  | 3.34        | .981        | average         |
| Average demand for health care services  | <b>3.41</b> | <b>.827</b> | Very much       |
| <b>Health promotion needs for health care</b>                                      |             |             |                 |
| Demand for health checkups   | 3.30        | .998        | average         |
| Demand for beauty services such as Botox and laser treatments                      | 3.23        | .944        | average         |
| Demand for Thai traditional medicine such as massages and aromatherapy             | 3.47        | .942        | Very much       |
| Demand for spa services  | 3.20        | 1.008       | average         |
| Demand for alternative medicine such as hydrotherapy, acupuncture and health detox | 3.28        | .946        | average         |
| <b>Average demand for health promotion</b>   | <b>3.29</b> | <b>.830</b> | <b>average</b>  |
| <b>Average demand for health services as a whole</b>                               | <b>3.35</b> | <b>.802</b> | <b>average</b>  |

As seen in table 1, the results of the survey show the needs of health services of Chinese tourists towards medical tourism and health. The sample of tourists has a moderate need for health care promotion ( $\bar{x}$ =3.35). There was a high demand for health care services in medical needs ( $\bar{x}$ =3.41), the highest demand for tourist needs is health screening and checkups ( $\bar{x}$ =3.63). The demands for surgery treating disease was also pretty high ( $\bar{x}$ =3.38). Demand for dental services was moderate ( $\bar{x}$ =3.34), and plastic surgery ( $\bar{x}$ =3.32), respectively.

Considering the needs for health promotion services, the average sample was moderate ( $\bar{x}$ =3.29), there is a high demand for traditional Thai medicine, such as Thai message ( $\bar{x}$ =3.47), followed by a moderate demand for health checkups ( $\bar{x}$ =3.30). Alternative medicine

such as hydrotherapy, acupuncture, and health detox had a moderate demand ( $\bar{x}$ =3.28), Beauty services, such as laser treatments and Botox had a low demand averaging at ( $\bar{x}$ =3.23) and health spa services had a moderate demand ( $\bar{x}$ =3.20) respectively.

## Part 2 Analysis of mixed marketing factors affecting decision making of Chinese tourists on health and wellness tourism in Thailand

The first hypothesis was tested and found that marketing factors on human resources, physical environment, price, and communications all greatly influence positive decision making on health services. The prediction ratio in Chinese tourist's decision making was 86.7 %.



**Table 2** Analysis of regression of marketing factors and decision making of medial tourism and health services as a whole.

| Variable  | Regression Coefficient (b) | t     | Sig. | Multicollinearity Indicator |       |
|---|----------------------------|-------|------|-----------------------------|-------|
|   |                            |       |      | Tolerance                   | VIF   |
| Constant  | .264                       | 4.362 | .000 |                             |       |
| Marketing Communications  | .126*                      | 2.460 | .014 | .112                        | 8.966 |
| Personal  | .202**                     | 5.542 | .000 | .192                        | 5.195 |
| Product   | .203**                     | 4.620 | .000 | .146                        | 6.833 |
| Physical Environment  | .175**                     | 4.290 | .000 | .150                        | 6.650 |
| Price   | .139**                     | 3.081 | .002 | .127                        | 7.885 |
| Process   | .086*                      | 2.063 | .040 | .169                        | 5.913 |
| $R^2 = 0.865$ , $SEE = 0.29565$ , $F = 480.380$ , $Sig. of F = .000$ , * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ |                            |       |      |                             |       |

From figure number 2, the researcher selects regression analysis by a stepwise method. Result analysis found independent variables including marketing communication, staff, the product, physical environment, price and process. These variables are able to explain a variation of variable (an overview of a level of decision making on health service) to 86.7 % from the 8 variables is in positive way to decision making for choose service. With the product variable have a significance of 0.203 followed by staff with a significance of 0.202, physical environment had a significance of 0.175, price had a significance of 0.139, marking communication had a significance of 0.126 and process had a significance of 0.086. The unexplained variables, tolerance had a significance higher than 0.19 (Phetrot et al., 2004) and the IVF was less than 5.3. The independent variables didn't not interfere with one another.

The analysis can be written in as a linear equation as follow: an overview of a decision making on health service =  $0.237 + 0.203 \text{ product} + 0.202 \text{ Personal} + 0.175 \text{ physical environment} + 0.139 \text{ price} + 0.126 \text{ marketing communication} + 0.086 \text{ process}$ .

### Part 3 Analysis of mixed marketing factors affecting the degree of loyalty of tourists on health and wellness tourism in Thailand

The second hypothesis was tested and found that marketing factors on product, efficiency, service quality, staff and marketing communications all greatly influence positive decision making on the degree of loyalty of tourists was 88.3%.

**Table 3** Analysis of regression of marketing factors and the degree of loyalty of tourists on health and wellness tourism in Thailand.

| Variable   | Regression Coefficient (b) | t     | Sig. | Multicollinearity Indicator |       |
|--|----------------------------|-------|------|-----------------------------|-------|
|  |                            |       |      | Tolerance                   | VIF   |
| <b>Constant</b>  | .237                       | 4.134 | .000 |                             |       |
| Marketing Communications   | .124**                     | 2.638 | .009 | .113                        | 8.880 |
| Productivity and Service Quality   | .195**                     | 4.795 | .000 | .143                        | 7.013 |
| Product  | .200**                     | 5.037 | .000 | .146                        | 6.833 |
| Physical Environment   | .175**                     | 4.290 | .000 | .152                        | 6.560 |
| Personal   | .160**                     | 4.643 | .000 | .184                        | 5.440 |
| <i>R<sup>2</sup> = 0.883, SEE = 0.27150, F = 474.426, Sig. of F = .000, * p&lt;.05 ** p&lt;.01</i> |                            |       |      |                             |       |

From figure number 3, this research used four independent variables including marketing communications, performance and service quality, the product, and staff. These variables are able to explain customer loyalty to 88.3% from the 8 variables with the product variable have a significance of 0.20 followed by performance and quality with a significance of 0.1965, staff had a significance of 0.160, and marketing communication had a significance of 0.124. The unexplained variables, tolerance had a significance higher than 0.19 (Phetrot et al., 2004). The VIF value was less than 5.3. The independent variables didn't not interfere with one another. In conclusion, the analysis can be written in as a linear equation as follows:

The degree of loyalty of tourists = 0.237 + 0.200 product + 0.195 productivity and quality + 0.160 personal + 0.124 marketing communication.

## Conclusion and discussion

**The hypothesis test results concluded that product marketing, personal, physical environment, price, market communication and process all influence decision making towards medical and healthcare services.** Based on the research involving marketing factors, products, staff, physical environment, and the process positively influences decision making in medical and health care services. The results are consistent with the service marketing concept of Lovelock and Wirtz (2007). This concept discusses marketing strategies in service management, integrated services, or integrated services business consider as marketing tools to satisfy customer loyalty, and motivate them to choose specific services or products. The results of the research were consistent with the results of research done by Srisomyong (2016). Marketing strategies is a tool for promotion especially referrals, via social media. In terms of service management

for health travelers, this greatly impacts the reputation and value of the business (Juntapukon & Songruksa, 2013). Marketing strategy, public relations, various media outlets, including marketing promotions and organization activities have influenced the decision making of services for tourists.

The results from this research involving Chinese tourists, gives importance to products the most. Research involving products used by tourists for travel greatly influences the decision making by Chinese tourist for health and wellness tourism in Thailand. With lots to choice from, this attracts and influences Chinese tourists to use health and wellness services. There is a high demand for health care services including, surgical treatment, dental services, and traditional Thai medicine (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Product value management needs to meet the demands of the consumer and convey the quality of the product, enhancing customer satisfaction. The results of the research are related to the research conducted by Lee, Petrick, & Crompton (2007) product elements, concerning the quality and availability to a customer influenced the decision to use tourist services and behavioral intention.

Personnel and staff also have a great significance in the decision making of Chinese tourist when choosing services. Quality training and specialized knowledge should be implemented to all personnel of health and wellness, insuring quality service to customers.

Physical environment is also an important factor in the decision making of Chinese tourist when choosing health and wellness services. When choosing a facility, tourist tend to look at

cleanliness, parking and seating for maximum convenience.

Price of services, the sample group of Chinese tourists give importance to the goods and services the most while traveling (Kotter & Armstrong, 2010). The overall cost of services and value is considered by the tourists when evaluating the price of services, customer-perceived value (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007). The customer's perception of value put upon the services and goods is derived from the total cost estimate by the customer (total customer cost) compared to the total benefits received by the costumers. Parasuraman et al. (1985), points out the view of service quality in the eyes of the customer, the level of quality should be appropriate to the satisfaction of the customer. Even if the service is excellent, if the cost is too expensive, customers may deem it at a lower quality (Rust & Oliver, 1994). This contradicts research done by Hui, Wan and Ho (2007), which concluded that the price has no correlation with customer satisfaction.

Marketing communication founded that Chinese tourists focus on referrals the most before deciding to travel for health and wellness purposes. This is followed by travel media, web advertisements, and e-mails. The research results are consistent with mixed marketing (Kotter & Armstrong, 2010). In marketing communications, customers look at clear communication, two-way communication for more information, and feedback in order to make in order to make the travel industry more receptive. The results of the research are related to the research conducted by Srisomyong (2016). Marketing strategy from promoting marketing with public

relations is a great tool for promoting a business. Social media outlets are the best to reach out to a bigger group of people. Service management for health and wellness tourism is important in creating value and a reputation for a business (Chantapakul, & Sangruksa, 2013). Public relations via social media, promotes proactive marketing in the community and tourists activities. Marketing factors in production and quality have no positive influence on the decision making of tourists towards the health and wellness tourism. The quality of service provided leads to the level of satisfaction of the tourists, which intern leads to the development of long-term relationships leading to the loyalty of the customer. The final decision made by the tourist for health and wellness services is up to the level/standard of service quality perceived by the tourist. The evaluation of service quality is harder to deliver than product quality because not only is the outcome of service measured, but also the delivery of services as well.

**Findings from hypothesis 2 test holds true that product marketing in the efficiency and quality of staff services and communication have a positive influence on the loyalty of tourists.**

Tourist loyalty towards health and wellness tourism in the sample group was satisfied with the quality of services provided by the health care facility (treatment room etc.) The highest level of satisfaction correlated with the service value compared to the service price. A positive attitude toward health and wellness tourism is beneficial to the customers.

The intentions to repeatedly use the services from experience tourists is much

higher. Facilities with new locations that have never been used can benefit from referrals and experienced tourists, since there is already a reputation to the brand name. Returning customers can recommend these services to family and friends for medical tourism.

Based on this research product marketing, efficiency and quality of staff services and marketing communication have a positive influence on the loyalty of tourists with results consistent of the mixed marketing concept by Lovelock & Wirtz (2007). Marketing strategies and services in marketing management must be put into consideration as marketing tools to satisfy customer loyalty and motive customers to choose specific services or goods, these research findings are consistent with Rust and Chung's (2006).

Service marketing strategies affect customer satisfaction and returning customer relationships. Research done on Chinese tourists concluded that they give importance to products the most. Travel products are the most important factor influencing Chinese tourists' loyalty to health and wellness tourism in Thailand. Tourists give a higher importance to product services that have to do with programs involving healthcare services with lots of variety the most. Health checkup and alternative medicine services are more popular than beauty services. The results are constant with the production concept by Kotler and Armstrong (2010), stating that the value placed upon a product must meet the demands of the consumer and convey the quality of the product and also enhance customer satisfaction.

Performance and quality of service are important factors that tourist loyalty

depends on. Research results are consistent with the research results by He and Song (2009), who founded that the quality of information greatly impacts the overall satisfaction and the repeated behaviors of customers. Overall customer satisfaction also includes positive feelings and attitude towards the quality of the overall services (Lee, Lee, & Yoo, 2000). The service quality had relationship with emotional satisfaction of customer and behavioral intentions (Ladhari, 2009). Hui, Wan and Ho (2007) found that activities that promote tourism involving accommodations and food have an impact on the overall satisfaction of tourists leading to referrals of friends and family. Intent to return to the same accommodations is not influenced by price, but the overall satisfaction of the consumer (Zabkar et al., 2009).

Perceived quality of tourist attractions and customer satisfaction affect the predicted behavioral intentions of tourists. Tourist attractions include friendliness of local people, variety of attractions, and the quality of accommodations. Service is positively correlated with perceived quality of services, customer satisfaction and behavior of tourists. Meng et al. (2008) found that the quality of accommodations and services affects the overall satisfaction of customers and repeat behavior.

## Research suggestion

### Suggestions for actions and implementation of research findings

**Business operators in health tourism should focus** on developing marketing strategies to build Chinese tourists' loyalty towards medical and health tourism by targeting specific group of tourists based on their demands. Tourist objectives and demands for health services.

**Using service marketing strategy** to build Chinese tourist loyalty towards medical and health tourism consist of 2 concepts; marketing factors and quality of activities supporting tourism. Marketing factors should focus on four components: (1) product elements, (2) the product itself and quality, (3) staff, (4) marketing that promotes information and education or marketing communication.

1) Tourism product strategy should focus on service needs and health services. Health promotion such as Thai traditional medicine such as massages and followed by health examination and alternative medicine services. Health care services requirements.

2) Productivity and service quality emphasis on the quality of management of health care facilities including clean, beautiful, modern, fast-paced and attentive care facilities. Tourism support services should focus on quality management of accommodations, restaurants, and travel agencies. Hotels should have quality assurance of good service and standards such as room service.

3) Service personnel or staff members should give importance to the medical team and the general health team and

should have training and knowledge in their specific field. They should give services with a positive attitude and a smile on their face. Services should be provided at a certain standard of quality.

4) Promoting marketing and educating customers should be available. Strategic marketing should make use of ads, brochures and travel magazines. Marketing communication via websites, advertisements and e-mail. Promotional booths and events should offer travel packages. Promoting marketing should give importance to accommodations, restaurants, agency relations, giving special privileges such as discount travel packages, and value added services to customers, such as gift certificates, discounts, restaurant services hotels and shopping centers.

### **Limitations and further research future research implications**

Limitation From the study of “Marketing Strategies Affecting Chinese Tourists’ Decision Making and Loyalty toward Medical and Wellness Tourism in Thailand”

It appears that the limitation has been issued as: The sampling groups come

from various backgrounds, which may cause an effect on the questionnaires. Some respondents understand the questionnaires and some respondents needed more explanations. All of these may impact on the accuracy of the answer given.

### **Future research implications**

Firstly, this research only focuses on some main variables (marketing mix) relating to decision making of Chinese tourists and customer loyalty. There might be other variables influence on customer decision making and customer loyalty. Therefore, future researcher may investigate more variables relating to customer decision making and customer loyalty towards medical and wellness tourism to deeply understand in order to fulfill specific needs of the tourists. Secondly, this research only focuses on the cross section study. Therefore, the next research for the person who is interested in this issue can focus on the demands of Chinese tourists for medical and wellness tourism in each period in order to developing marketing strategies to build Chinese tourists’ loyalty by targeting specific group of tourists based on their demands.





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