EXAMINING CHINESE TOURISTS' TRAVELING BEHAVIOR ENGAGED WITH CULTURAL TOURISM IN THAILAND

Korawan Sangkakorn[1], Pachernwaat Srichai[2] and Ravee Phoewhawm[3]

[1,2]Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University
239 Huay Kaew Road, Amphur Muang, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 50200
[3] International Business School, Chongqing Technology and Business University, Xuefu Street, No.19, 400067, Chongqing, China
[1]Korawan.phd@gmail.com, [2]dr.pachernwaat@gmail.com, [3]rtcm999@yahoo.com

Abstract

Cultural tourism can bring about challenging viewpoints and adapting to accommodate the requirements of visiting travelers.   This work examines the behavior of Chinese tourists who are engaged with cultural tourism in Thailand This work examines the traveling behaviors of Chinese tourists engaged with cultural tourism in Thailand and offers a proposal for cultural tourism management to accommodate with the behaviors. The examination of the large number of tourists' behavior arriving from mainland China with a specific idea provides plenty of information for the cultural tourism management to develop a strategy and a whole new practical refinement for accommodating tourists.

Keywords: Behavior, Chinese Tourists, Culture, Management, Planning, Traveling

Introduction

Culture is the beliefs and values that identity the people, their custom, and traditional practices that reinforces the ideas for living and lifestyle. In the field of tourism, the local culture can sometimes be challenged on certain viewpoints, tested on the principles uphold, and may have to adapt at times to accommodate the trade and commerce from the demand of visiting travelers (Ali, Ryu and Hussain, 2016).   The record number of foreign travelers coming to Thailand has brought about some contemporary mixed emotions for the locals to provide the very best in offering that ideal service that would leave a lasting impression on them. It's vital to promote a message for goodwill and trust for all sides to make the idea of cultural tourism viable in the long run as it's the source of livelihood for some stakeholders (Engeset and Elvekrok, 2015). There has been investment made in the traveling and communication infrastructure by the government and

organizations in order to cater to the needs of the large number of tourists vacationing in Thailand. Educational curriculums and training have been updated to ensure that the vocation is geared towards making the travelers from mainland China feel welcomed and secured. Tour sites have made the arrangements for Chinese visitors to gain that extra value in purchasing a standard item of service or product. With regards to the infrastructure arranged to support cultural tourism all things need to be ensured that the events taking place meet the well-being and health of the locals as well as the travelers (Zhao and Lin, 2014). However, the question of the Chinese tourists' traveling behavior going through the route of Thai cultural tourism has not yet been fully investigated.

Research aim & questions

The intention of this research is to examine the traveling behaviors of Chinese tourists who are engaged with cultural tourism in Thailand. In addition, the study offers a proposal for cultural tourism management to accommodate with the behaviors displayed. The following questions have been asserted to obtain a proper investigation:

1. What are the traveling behaviors of Chinese tourists taking part in cultural tourism?

2. What are the practical guidelines in cultural tourism management to accommodate with the traveling behaviors of Chinese tourists?

Literature review

Traveling behavior of cultural tourists

The political, social, economic, and technological background of foreign tourists are uniquely diverse in their own ways which provide them a combination of making sense of things from different viewpoints that give them a better purpose for vacationing which can be a sharing experience with others as a source of information to assist in decision making for traveling (Malik, Madappa and Chitranshi, 2017). The environmental living condition that stems from being heavily influenced by the government or elemental factors often shapes how the person thinks and carries out his/her beliefs in practical action that influence the number of times taking a trip, using a specific amount of days to spend on their vacation, and selecting a certain period for traveling (Boland and Shirlow, 2016). Individuals growing up in a highly developed nation have access to channels of education and public media broadcasting which provide updated information to get some understanding about other nation's culture, what kind of accommodations are provided, and figuring out the best transportation that will get them into that country (Murtagh, Boland, and Shirlow, 2016). The event organizers and planners will have to keep in mind that the foreign travelers may know more than the tour guide and even the locals themselves especially when it comes to the traveling preferences that stems from the number of family members or close friends that are accompanying them. To maintain professional credibility and sincere passion the approach for making the tour for the foreign visitors in great hospitality care on behalf of the tour

operators will have to seek for ways to add value into the service or in the marketed product that can give travelers a proper method in planning and organizing their own journey (Iverson, 2010). Some level of stewardship needs to be in placed in order to prevent the culture's beliefs and values from being another exploited commodity that manipulates people into making an expensive purchase. In a sense, tourists from another country should not be 'taken for a ride' just to get some money squeezed out of their pockets otherwise it creates a bad impression that would lead to negative blogging for other travelers to be cautious of; let other choices of vehicles be available for traveling to various destinations along the route (Kalman, 2017). Cultural tourism can act as a vehicle promoting international relations and a good understanding on how to work together for great intentions toward peace and prosperity (Ruhanen, 2013). The tourist sites promoting cultural tourism can be a positive catalyst for alleviating differences between people, creating a bridge that connects people together, brings about a sense of accountability on others to be responsible for their own actions, and instilling appreciation to uphold values in universal camaraderie (Bramwell, 2011). Models for cultural tourism are always going to be challenged as the systems in place can only be efficient and effective as the people who put in their efforts of producing the expected values. Things that are disturbing to the eyes and shocking to the heart such as depletion of natural resources, waste and pollution going out of control, and deviant behaviors that make others uncomfortable can happen abruptly despite strong attempts to prevent them

(Almeida, Costa and da Silva, 2017). However, the feelings can all be forgiven and commendable when action is taken to reinstate a proper balance for putting things at ease for everyone to have a strong confidence that the events are designed to be in concerned for the best interests for all (Yuan, 2013).

In practice for guideline management of cultural tourism

With the idea of cultural tourism in gathering people from different parts of the world to enjoy the experience with one another in unison organizers of the events must ensure that the spiritual elements become the main point over the technical and material elements (Zoltan et. al., 2015). In the midst of wonder and delight the events aim for travelers to be enamored with the heritage and customs on how the local people go about their ways blending the practical beliefs in their social settings and as part of their work functions (Oikonomopoulou et al., 2017). Most important is that the foreign travelers are receiving some valuable education and learning opportunities that give a greater meaning of dignity and respect for others which they can apply back in their home nation (Ross et al., 2017). Cultural tourism requires a strong support for maintaining itself to be sustainable for all stakeholders involved. There's a call for more practical ways that are innovative and creative for the sake of restoring the cultural values that enable the locals to have the time and space for finding solutions to a particular problem and to resolve matters for the benefit of moving forward (Marianne, Bickel and Harrill, 2017). The dynamics within cultural tourism include different

groups and individuals looking to gain something that can fulfill their spirit, life, commercial income, belief or relationship, therefore all group members have to collaborate in coordination to ensure that there's an appreciation for providing the platform for being immersed in the positive changes (Kortegast and Kupo, 2017). Not all plans for cultural tourism will be followed accordingly nor will it guarantee that the mission objectives have been accomplished. Event organizers and planners will need to have a new sense of direction when the changes in attitudes and behaviors occur amongst the foreign travelers and the stakeholders involved so that the concept and ideas that go into cultural tourism don't make things redundant which could stagnate the market (Tomlinson-Clarke and Clarke, 2010).

Methodology

The study was conducted in the Chiang Mai cultural tourist spots with questionnaire that targeted 250 Chinese travelers who were taking part in the activities and event. These visitors were asked about the following with regards to their actions for traveling:

1. Frequency of traveling
2. Favorite season for traveling
3. Travel preferences
4. Traveling in numbers to the northern region of Thailand
5. Method in planning and organizing
6. Source of information used for traveling plans
7. Accommodation chosen
8. Number of days used for traveling
9. Traveling purpose
10. Tourist sites visited
11. Transportation used to enter the northern region
12. Vehicles Used for Traveling to Various Destinations

The feedback gathered from their response was utilized as information for "the practical guidelines for management to accommodate with the behaviors".

Results

Traveling behaviors of Chinese tourists

The results based on the traveling behavior of Chinese tourists are as followed:

Table 1 Frequency of traveling by Chinese respondents

Frequency of traveling	Total	Percentage
1. Rarely traveled / visited a few times.	5	5.1
2. About 2-3 times in a year	13	13.3
3. Once a year	20	20.4
4. 2-3 times a year	46	46.9
5. 4-5 times a year	9	9.2
6. More than 5 times a year	5	5.1
Total	**98**	**100.0**

46.9% of Chinese tourists travel 2-3 times a year. 20.4% of the mainland residents travel once a year. About 13.2% travel 2-3 times in a year, while only 9.2% travel 4-5 times a year. 5.1% rarely travel and travel more than 5 times a year.

Table 2 Favorite season for traveling by Chinese respondents

Favorite season for traveling	Total	Percentage
1. Not specific to a season / every season.	89	89.0
2. Winter	8	8.0
3. Summer	3	3.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

There is no particular season chosen as the favorite time of year for traveling (89.0), most of them will come to travel in the northern region. There's a very small number traveling in the winter (8%) and summer (3%).

Table 3 The travel preferences of Chinese respondents

Travel preferences	Total	Percentage
1. Non-festive days	72	72.7
2. Sunday/non-holiday	2	2.0
3. Public Holiday / Long Weekend	18	18.2
4. Period of the festival - traditions.	1	1.0
5. Other	6	6.1
Total	**99**	**100.0**

Based on their travel preferences, 72.7% of Chinese tourists mostly choose to make trips that fall on the ordinary days. 18.2% choose to travel on the public holiday/long weekend. A very small number of Chinese tourists travel on a Sunday/non-holiday (25) and festival periods (1%).

Table 4 Traveling in numbers to Northern Thailand of Chinese respondents

Traveling in numbers to Northern Thailand	Total	Percentage
1. Come alone	11	11.0
2. Come with spouse	22	22.0
3. Come with the family.	34	34.0
4. Come with friends	33	33.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

When traveling in numbers to the northern region, the Chinese mostly prefer to travel with family (34%) and with friends (33%). 22% do travel with their married partners while only 11% prefer to travel alone.

Table 5 Plan and organization of tour in the upper north based on the Chinese respondents.

Method in planning and organizing	Total	Percentage
1. Plan and organize your own tour.	43	43.4
2. You and your spouse plan and organize your trip together.	17	17.2
3. You and your travel friends plan and organize tours.	31	31.3
4. Use the services of people who know each other.	8	8.1
Total	**99**	**100.0**

For making plans and organizing, the Chinese travelers mostly plan and organize their own tour (43.4%) and make traveling plans with their friends (31%). Only 17% plan and organize with their married partners and 8% use the services of people who know each other.

Table 6 Source of information for northern tourism planning based on the Chinese respondents

Source of information used for traveling plans	Total	Percentage
1. Children	9	9.0
2. Friends / Colleagues	40	40.4
3. Radio / Television	2	2.0
4. Company Travel	8	8.0
5. Travel Magazine	9	9.0
6. Mobile Apps	17	17.0
7. Tourist Information Center	30	30.0
8. Websites	19	19.0
9. Poster/flyers	4	4.0
10. Other	2	2.0

When it comes to using the source of information for traveling plans friends (40.4%) and the tourist information center (30%) are chosen more. Some do choose mobile apps (17%) and websites (19%) to get the sources. The least chosen range from children (9%) and travel magazine (9%), company travel (8%), poster and flyers (4%), and radio/television (2%) and others (2%).

Table 7 Accommodation used in this trip by Chinese respondents.

Accommodation chosen	Total	Percentage
1. Hotel	72	72.0
2. Resort	12	12.0
3. Guest house	8	8.0
4. Apartment / Dormitory / Condo	10	10.0
5. Homestay	6	6.0
6. Other	3	3.0

For accommodation, most of the Chinese travelers are residing in the hotel (72%). Other choices that are not quite popular to stay are the resorts (12%), apartment/dormitory/condo (10%), guest house (8%), and homestay (6%).

Table 8 Duration of travel by Chinese respondents

Number of days used for traveling	Total	Percentage
1. ≤2 days	4	4.0
2. 3–4 days	10	10.1
3. 5– 6 days	46	46.5
4. 7–8 days	15	15.2
5. ≥9 days	24	24.2
Total	**99**	**100.0**

Minimum 1 day   Maximum 17 days
Average of 6.97 days   Standard Deviation of 3.501 days

46.5% of Chinese travelers are more likely to stay for about 5-6 days, while 24.2% would stay for more than 9 days. Some tourists are willing to stay for 7-8 days (15.2%) and 3-4 days (10.1%). Only 4% would stay at less than 2 days.

Table 9 The purpose of taking the trip by the Chinese respondents

Traveling purpose	Total	Percentage
1. To relax and refresh the body / mind.	56	56.0
2. To learn and understand the way of life / culture / beliefs of the community.	27	27.0
3. To admire the beautiful nature and landscape.	48	48.0
4. It is an opportunity to be with your family / friends.	44	44.0
5. To seek new business channels/Looking for new products.	2	2.0

Over half of the Chinese visitors' purpose of traveling is to relax and refresh the body/mind 56%. Other reasons are roughly concentrated on admiring the beautiful nature and landscape (48%) and having the opportunity to be with their family/friends (44%). 27% travel in the northern region for the aim of learning and understanding the way of life/culture/beliefs of the community. Only a low 2% come with the intention of seeking new business channels and look for new products.

Table 10 Tourist sites visited by Chinese respondents

Tourist sites visited	Total	Percentage
1. Ecotourism	31	31.0
2. Sightseeing on arts	18	18.0
3. History	13	13.0
4. Health tourism	33	33.0
5. Recreation and leisure	1	1.0
6. Cultural tourism	33	33.0
7. Natural scenery	51	51.0

51% of the Chinese travelers have visited natural sites. 33% have visited sites dealing with health and culture. 31% of the visitors have taken part in ecotourism. 18% have gone sightseeing places that deal with the arts while 13% have went to the historical sites. 1% have only visited areas that deal with recreation and leisure.

Table 11 Transportation used to enter the northern region of Thailand by Chinese respondents

Transportation used to enter the northern region	Total	Percentage
1. Travel by air	93	93.9
2. Company tour bus	2	2.0
3. Private car	2	2.0
4. Rental van	2	2.0
Total	**99**	**100.0**

93.9% of Chinese tourists travel into the northern region of Thailand from the mainland by airplane. The least chosen are the company tour bus (2%), private car (2%), and rental van (2%).

Table 12 Vehicles used for traveling to various tourist destinations by Chinese respondents

Vehicles used for traveling to various destinations	Total	Percentage
1. Car	2	2.0
2. Public bus	11	11.0
3. Tour bus	13	13.0
4. Car rental	31	31.0
5. Tuk Tuk	48	48.0
6. Taxi	19	19.0
7. Other	6	6.0

When traveling to get to various destinations within the northern region of Thailand, 48% acquire the traveling services of the Tuk Tuk which is a motorized rickshaw. 31% would rent a car to travel around. 19% choose a taxi to get their desired points. 13% would take a tour bus and 11% get on the public bus for traveling about. While 6% have identified other forms of transportation only 2% would take the car in riding to their destinations.

Practical management guidelines for accommodating the behaviors of Chinese tourists

A delicate balance that pushes visitors to take part in a cultural learning and understanding experience while also pulling them to enhance the charm that makes the cultural events alluring for other foreign travelers would be grand in making the cultural tourism economy and environment highly sustainable (Pesonen et al., 2011). For the practical guidelines in accommodating with the behaviors of Chinese tourists the cultural tourism management will have to work with the facts to conjure up the ways to get the tourists feel a great deal of satisfaction

along their traveling journey. With 56% of the Chinese travelers coming to travel for the purpose of resting the body and the mind, 48% coming to admire the beautiful nature and landscape, and 44% taking the opportunity to be with their friends and family the cultural tourism management group will have to design the facilities within the infrastructures to have tourists be exposed to the serenity of the exquisite urban/rural environment that also welcomes them to partake events that involves their family and friends. With regards to the tourists sites visited mainly involving the natural scenery (51%), health and culture (33%), and ecotourism (31%) some financial arrangements will have to be set aside for making re-investments to uphold the systems to keep the services robust throughout a longer period of time. A good number confirming that Chinese travelers are more likely to travel 2-3 times a year (46.9%) during the non-festive days (72.7%), with no particular season chosen as the favorite time of year for traveling (89%), and staying for about 5-6 days (46.5%): this information provides the initiative for the cultural tourism management to be in contact with the hospitality network for having their hotels room available for booking because most of the tourists from the

mainland prefer to stay at a hotel (72%). Security and safety measures have to be aligned as a majority of Chinese travelers are coming by airplane (93.9%) to enter the northern region of Thailand. Cultural tourism management will also need to make use of the social media and other forms of digital communication to keep the Chinese tourists updated about certain events and interesting places to visit because these travelers who mostly prefer to travel with family (34%) and with friends (33%) often get together with people who they are familiar with (40.4%) for making traveling plans; information center (30%) will also need to be modernized to give the best services for the visitors. Since the Chinese travelers mostly plan and organize their own tour (43.4%) and make traveling plans with their friends (31%) management will have to provide the accessible resources that speak in their native language to point out the information about the cultural site and to be aware of what behavior is acceptable and what is not. Cultural tourism management will have to ask for some collaborative assistance with the law enforcement agencies to provide the protection and direction needed for Chinese tourists who prefer to ride in a tuk-tuk (48%), rent a car (31%), or get a taxi (19%) just to get to their various destinations.

Discussion and conclusion

The examination of the large number of tourists' behavior arriving from mainland China with a specific idea provides plenty of information for the cultural tourism management to develop a strategy for in accommodation in the northern region of Thailand. Working with the facts on the traveling purpose, their length of stay, chosen place to stay, how traveling plans are made, and means of transportation all give a better perspective on defining ways in arranging the conditions for traveling and transportation: while the safety and security issue is always the focus the others side is on providing the access to be more positively engaged with the natural beauty of the environment and landscape. For cultural tourism to be at its best the thinking has to be along the value chain to help management discuss about the details and sources that are occurring with fellow members of the tourism network to agree on the services or products that need to be improved upon (Ogaboh Agba, 2010). In conclusion, cultural tourism is already complex and dynamic with the ideas and behaviors meshing, colliding, or sometimes in conflict with one another. The addition of the details from the examination of Chinese tourists' behavior brings the equation to a whole new practice for management in cultural tourism. Unlike working in an office at an organization, cultural tourism needs to have all the key players and resources to be developed in alignment (Muskat, Muskat and Blackman, 2013). Cultural events and activities will need to be organized as a framework for learning how to empower the staff to anticipate for problems or get organizations tightly involved to find the hidden values that can bolster a terrific cultural experience for the Chinese tourists to keep on coming back to visit the northern region of Thailand.

References

Ali, F. Ryu, K. & Hussain, K. (2016), "Influence of Experiences on Memories, Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions: A Study of Creative Tourism," *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, Vol.33, No. 1, pp. 85–100.

Almeida, J. Costa, C. & da Silva, F.N. (2017), "A Framework for Conflict Analysis in Spatial Planning for Tourism," *Tourism Management Perspectives,* Vol.24, October, pp. 94-106.

Baum, T. (2012), "Human Resource Management in Tourism: A Small Island Perspective", *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research,* Vol.6, No. 2, pp. 124-132.

Bickle, M. C. & Harrill, R. (2010), "Avoiding Cultural Misconceptions During Globalization of Tourism", *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research,* Vol.4, No. 4, pp. 283-286.

Bramwell, B. (2011), "Governance, the State and Sustainable Tourism: A Political Economy Approach", *Journal of Sustainable Tourism,* Vol.19, No. 4–5, pp. 459–477.

Engeset, M. G. & Elvekrok, I. (2015), "Authentic Concepts: Effects on Tourist Satisfaction", *Journal of Travel Research,* Vol.54, No. 4, pp. 456–466.

Iverson, T. J. (2010), "Cultural Conflict: Tourists Versus Tourists in Bali, Indonesia", *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research,* Vol.4, No. 4, pp. 299-310.

Kalman, H. (2017), "Destruction, Mitigation, and Reconciliation of Cultural Heritage", *International Journal of Heritage Studies,* Vol.23, No. 6, March, pp. 538-555.

Kortegast. C. & Kupo, V. L. (2017), "Deconstructing Underlying Practices of Short-term Study Abroad: Exploring Issues of Consumerism, Post-colonialism, Cultural Tourism, and Commodification of Experience", *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy,* Vol.8, No. 1, pp. 150-172.

Malik R., Madappa, T. & Chitranshi, J. (2017), "Diversity Management in Tourism and Hospitality: An Exploratory Study", *Foresight*, Vol.19, No. 3, pp. 323-336.

Murtagh, B. Boland, P. & Shirlow, P. (2016), "Contested Heritages and Cultural Tourism", *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol.23, No. 6, pp. 506-520.

Muskat, B. Muskat, M. & Blackman, D. (2013), "Understanding the Cultural Antecedents of Quality Management in Tourism", *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal,* Vol.23, No. 2, pp. 131-148.

Ogaboh Agba, A. M. Ikoh, M. U. Bassey, A. O. & Ushie, E. M. (2010), "Tourism Industry Impact on Efik's Culture, Nigeria", *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research,* Vol.4, No. 4, pp. 355-365.

Oikonomopoulou, E. Delegou, E. T. Sayas, J. & Moropoulou, A. (2017), "An Innovative Approach to the Protection of Cultural Heritage: the Case of Cultural Routes in Chios Island, Greece", *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports,* Vol. 14, August, pp. 742–757.

Pesonen, J. Komppula, R. Kronenberg, C. & Peters, M. (2011), "Understanding the Relationship Between Push and Pull Motivations in Rural Tourism", *Tourism Review,* Vol.66, No. 3, pp. 32-49.

Ross, D. Saxena, G. Correia, F. & Deutz, P. (2017), "Archaeological Tourism: a Creative Approach", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol.67, pp. 37–47.

Ruhanen, L. (2013), "Local Government: Facilitator or Inhibitor of Sustainable Tourism Development?", *Journal of Sustainable Tourism,* Vol.21, No. 1, pp. 80–98.

Tomlinson-Clarke, S. M. & Clarke, D. (2010), "Culturally Focused Community Service Learning: an International Cultural Immersion Experience", *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development,* Vol.38, No. 3, pp. 166-175.

Yuan, Y. (2013), "Adding Environmental Sustainability to the Management of Event Tourism", *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research,* Vol.7, No. 2, pp. 175-183.

Zhao, D. & Lin, I. Y. (2014), "Understanding Tourists' Perception and Evaluation of Inter-cultural Service Encounters: a Holistic Mental Model Process", *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research,* Vol.8, No. 3, pp. 290-309.

Zoltan, B. Lorant, D. Anett, T. Gyongyi, K. Veronika, M. K. Gulmira, U. Peter, K. & Maria, V. (2015), "Basis of Heritagization and Cultural Tourism Development", *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences,* Vol.188, pp. 307 – 315.