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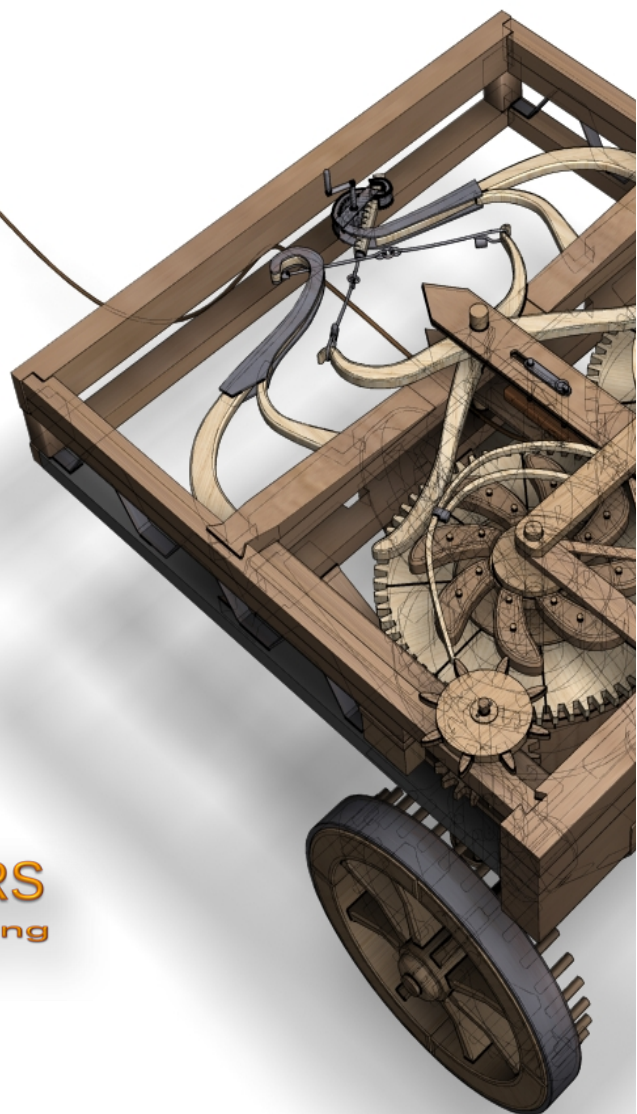
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A Socio-demographic Study of Destination Management for Coastal Tourism in Phuket

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of socio-demographic variables on destination satisfaction with beaches in Phuket, Thailand, a renowned Sea-Sand-Sun destination. Phuket has consistently been top ranked for coastal tourism, with 12.5 million tourists generating USD 9.04 million (34.62 THB = 1 USD as of April 30, 2017) revenue in 2015. In order to study the relationship between demographic variables and satisfaction, a survey was given to 1,221 visitors in the departure hall of Phuket International Airport. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to examine the interaction between tourist socio-demographics and tourist satisfaction. The findings showed nationality had the most significant influence on the overall tourist satisfaction with Maikhao beach, Surin-Bangtao beach, and Kata-Karon beach. Education was a significant factor concerning Patong-Kamala beach, and income was directly correlated with tourist satisfaction in the case of Kata-Karon beach. Additional analysis showed that being a first time visitor or repeat visitor, and number of nights spent had significant effects on tourist satisfaction. The findings reveal considerable differences in satisfaction levels between tourists' profiles and destinations that will be essential in helping tourism decision makers, local government and businesses to comprehensively manage and market to specific tourist segments.

Keywords: coastal tourism; destination management; tourist satisfaction; tourist socio-demographics; Phuket

JEL Classification: Z03; Z32; Z33

Introduction

Phuket is one of the most developed and popular beach destinations in Asia. Tourism is seen as a prosperity engine, accounting for USD 7,872.10 million revenue in 2015. It has increased steadily in the last five years. More than half of international tourists came to Thailand in search of coastal tourism, 30% of these visited Phuket

(Tourism Economic Review 2015). The number of international tourist arrivals is directly related to tourism revenue growth rates (Bunnag 2014).

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of socio-demographic factors and overall satisfaction with coastal beach destinations in Phuket. Tourism literature shows the need for services to match tourists' expectations in order to achieve their satisfaction. Tourists were not treated as a homogenous group and were clustered around motivational factors and different aspects of the destinations resulting in socio-demographic and psychographic variables (Cohen and Ben-Nun 2009, Perović *et al.* 2012).

This study provides overall indicators and valuable predictive information for the development of tailor-made coastal tourism products and services based on target markets by destination. The importance of the tourism sector to Phuket's economy demonstrates the need for a strategic economic development tool. This study is an initial step in analysing data to aid in the creation of an effective method to increase the effectiveness of the management of tourism in Phuket.

1. Literature review

Tourism is a complex system and is transitioning from a service economy to an experience economy in which tourists are more experienced, have higher expectations, demand more personalized services, and anticipate greater flexibility in the service offering (Wang 2016). Satisfaction has been a central focus of business operation and analyzed heavily by tourism researchers within a variety of dimensions of tourist trips. Tourist satisfaction is an important factor in successfully marketing tourist attractions because it affects the selection of destination, consumption of service and decision to revisit (Kozak and Rimmington 2000, cited in Phosikham *et al.* 2015).

Tourism satisfaction has received considerable attention from tourism scholars in regards to the following distinct perspective: tourism satisfaction as a predictor of post-purchase behavior, such as repurchase or recommend to in order to build customer satisfaction for business success (Baker and Crompton 2000, Chi and Qu 2008, Gallarza and Saura 2006, Petrick 2004, Williams and Soutar 2009, cited in Chun-Chu *et al.* 2016). Tourism destinations are operating in an experience oriented economy with consumers seeking more customized products and demanding superior service quality. Tourism destinations and service providers must understand and pay even greater attention to customer satisfaction in the modern tourism industry. The rapidly evolving competitive landscape resultant from recent consumer and technological trends, makes customer satisfaction more important than ever (Confente 2014, Möhlmann 2015). Tourist satisfaction and performance of one sector have significant implications on another therefore the tourism sector constantly needs to monitor its performance in Tourism product; as satisfaction can make or break a business and to a certain extent, make suggestions for the industry as what to focus on regarding product developments.

There are many factors that provide tourists satisfaction with their trip, for instance the quality of services provided, such as infrastructure, security, cleanliness, natural situations, consumer protection and ease of obtainment (Salleh *et al.* 2008, cited in Phosikham *et al.* 2015). Socio-demographic characteristics of tourists have been found to be associated with their satisfaction level. Phosikham *et al.* (2015) indicated that satisfaction levels are significantly related to the type of tourists' socio-demographics. Dündar and Güçer (2015) also found the socio-demographics are the most important feature affecting the image of the destination. The understanding of tourists' socio-demographics, including trip characteristics, is significant for tourism marketing as well as tourism management of destinations. The difference in destination image according to the socio-demographic features of tourists demonstrates that some diversifications are needed in destination marketing and image forming efforts. Therefore, the understanding of tourists' characteristics can assist tourism suppliers to know how to provide the tourist activities, facilities and services to meet the needs of the tourists increasing tourist satisfaction.

In general, previous studies have suggested that destination image is a direct antecedent to satisfaction. This approach that tends to consider image as a concept formed by the consumer's reasoned and emotional interpretation. Cognitive evaluations are referring to the individual's own knowledge and beliefs about the object while affective appraisals are relating to an individual's feelings towards the object (Stern and Krakover 1993, cited in Beerli and Martin 2004). The cognitive image has a direct influence on the affective image and confirmed the formation process of the destination image. Both cognitive and affective evaluations had positive influences on the

overall satisfaction, achieving a consensus that a more favorable destination image is likely to lead to a higher level of tourist satisfaction, and in turn, satisfaction predicted tourist loyalty (Tasci and Gartner 2007, Prayag 2009, Chiu *et al.* 2016).

A traveler's choice of attractions or activities while at a destination is determined by differences in the characteristics of the destinations visited, and the travel elements that can be purchased prior to departure, as well as the characteristics of travelers to those destinations. The literature often portrays the potential distance between expectations and experience, customer loyalty and customer satisfaction, tourists' perceptions and satisfaction toward a destination as result of customer's evaluation of products and services (Prebensen and Nina 2004). However, most of the existing research has mainly paid attention to the influence of cognitive image on satisfaction, but overlooked the more comprehensive effect of tourist characteristics on destination satisfaction. Subsequently, the following question of interest is "What socio-demographic characteristics influence the level of tourist's satisfaction?" One must investigate the distinct influence of a tourist's demographic profile on satisfaction level.

A review of previous studies reveals the existence of a set of factors that influence image formation which, following the model proposed by Beerli and Martin (2004), involve both information obtained from different sources and characteristics of the individual. Information sources are the forces which influence the forming of perceptions and evaluations. They refer to the amount and diverse nature of information sources to which individuals are exposed, including destination information acquired as a result of having visited the place; for instance, the number of visits and their duration, first-timers and repeaters, the number of previous visits, and the degree of involvement with the place for pre-visit and post-visit. Personal factors refer to internal determinants, in other words, the socio-demographic characteristics of the individuals (gender, age, level of education, family lifecycle, social class, place of residence, etc.), as well as those of a psychological nature (motivations, values, personality, lifestyle, etc.) (Beerli and Martin 2004).

Clearly, socio-demographics are a major factor affecting a tourist's experience in any given destination. Gaffar *et al.* (2011) and Valek *et al.* (2014) stated that some characteristics of tourists that are often analyzed are country of origin, gender, age, level of education, occupation, and income. One proposed research model adopted four socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, level of education and income) significantly affecting a tourist's choice of sports tourism related travel either locally within Slovenia or to a foreign country (Valek *et al.* 2014). In respect to gender, many studies have been conducted to find out if gender differences can affect the behavior of tourists. Some researchers identified that men and women have different motivations in their vacation and tourism activities (Gibson 1996, Shaw 1996, Heung *et al.* 2001, cited in Dündar and Güçer 2015). The difference in age among tourists had different behavior during their vacation, such as activities that they do, attractions that they choose, and facilities that they require (Weaver and Lawton 2002, cited in Phosikham *et al.* 2015). The level of tourists' education background is also an important component that many researchers take into consideration because the level of education has an influence on motivating people to travel in order to increase knowledge and experience.

Most of the decision process models for destination choice (Woodside and Lysonsky 1989, Um and Crompton 1990) showed that personal characteristics, such as gender, age, occupation, education and, social class, were internal inputs that influenced the perceptions of places. Harasarn and Chancharat (2014) examined the relationship between income and tourism demand in the short run and long run regarding annual data from 1981 to 2012 for five countries who visited Thailand. The results indicated that there was a long-run relationship between tourists' arrivals and income. The income of tourists was a positive factor in increasing tourism and affected tourism demand because the level of income affects tourist expenditure (Phoummasak *et al.* 2014). The level of income of the population from the origin countries is an important factor when describing tourism demands of foreign tourists (Salleh *et al.* 2008, Honafiah and Harun 2010).

In order to better understand the relationship between tourist satisfaction toward beach destinations and tourist socio-demographics, the given survey classified the determinants of destination satisfaction across five levels: very satisfied, moderately satisfied, neutral, slightly dissatisfied, and very dissatisfied. This paper proposes a tourist's destination satisfaction is considered cumulative satisfaction. Overall satisfaction was highly related to visitor experience and expectations, and had a direct influence on repurchase intentions. Meanwhile, whenever

overall satisfaction was high, transaction-specific satisfaction had little impact on repurchase intentions (Jones and Suh 2000).

Such an approach provides some protection as destinations and tourism providers no longer compete with the entire global tourism market but compete only with destination providers who cater for the same target segment. In this study, we will classify the sample group of tourists by nationality, age, gender, education, and income, isolating specific socio-demographic variables that affect the tourist's satisfaction. We will also determine the travel-related variables (trip characteristics) to gain a better understanding of the correlation between destination and satisfaction. Phuket has yet to benefit from a socio-demographic study of tourist satisfaction with Phuket's many popular beach destinations. The findings of this study can provide valuable insight and direction to establish market positioning plans where government and stakeholders want to invest, manage, and market for the tourism industry in Phuket.

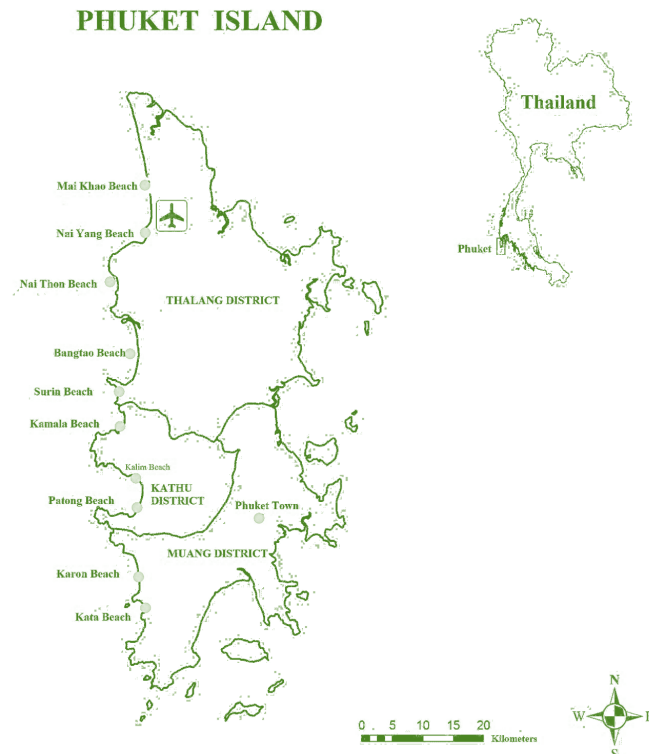
2. Methodology

2.1. Study area

Phuket lies off the West coast of Southern Thailand in the Andaman Sea, approximately 890 kms from Bangkok. It is Thailand's largest island at 550sq km, roughly the same size as Singapore, and is surrounded by many smaller islands that add a further 70 sq. km to its total land area. About 70% of Phuket is mountainous; a Western range runs from North to South from which smaller branches derive. The remaining 30 percent of the island, mainly in the center and South, is formed by low plains. Year-round temperatures in Phuket vary between 21-34 °C. The northeast monsoon season, roughly November till April brings sunny weather, cool breezes and low humidity, with moderate seas. May to October, is called "Low Season" or "Green Season" for the tourism industry. Geography and weather have created two very different sides to Phuket. The east coast is made up of limestone shoals with only a few sandy beaches. The most beautiful beaches are found on the West coast, separated by rocky coves and headlands which attract the largest number of visitors. There were 4.31 million international tourists in 2010, a number that doubled in 2015, while the revenue increased nearly 3 times from 101,286 million (2,925.65 million dollars) to 272,532 million baht (7,872.10 million dollars) for the last 5 years. Phuket is a well-known tourist destination and has been placed in the 3rd spot for the "Top Ten Holiday Destinations" listing 2016 in SmartTravelAsia.com (TAT NEWS 2016). Phuket is also ranked as "Top 10 Island – World," "Top 25 Beaches – World" by Travelers' Choice 2016 from TripAdvisor (TripAdvisor 2016).

The publicity and media exposure has steadily increased the number of international visitors to Phuket. The ratio of revenue between international tourists and Thai tourists is estimated 85:15. Thus, the international tourism sector is one of the most significant economic sectors in Phuket. This is based on the popularity of Phuket as a coastal destination, the expanding range of air travel connections and active marketing campaigns by Thailand targeting affluent visitors. Therefore, these following beaches; Mai Khao beach, Nai Yang-Nai Thon beach, Surin-Bangtao beach, Patong-Kamala beach, and Kata-Karon beach, on the West coast of Phuket were used in this study to rate the degree of tourist satisfaction.

Figure 1. Beach destination in Phuket Island



Source: by author

2.2. Data collection

2.2.1 Sampling plan

The population of this study included tourists who visited and stayed in Phuket at least one night. The method of sample selection was quota sampling with the main criteria being the country of origin following the statistical data from the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2016), which included a majority of tourists from China, Russia, Australia and Thailand. The tourist ratio between international and Thai tourists is estimated at 70:30. The tool in this study was a questionnaire. Questionnaires were distributed at the Phuket International Airport during July 14-18, 2016. The total 1,221 respondents were grouped into Chinese (CHN), Russian (RUS), Australian and New Zealander (AUS&NZL), Thai (THA), Other European (OEU), Other Asian (OAS), and Others (OTH). OEU in this case included all European countries except Russia while OAS were all Asian countries except China and Thailand.

Table 1. Group of participants by nationality

Tourist's Nationality	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Chinese (CHN)	292	24.0
Russian (RUS)	204	16.7
Australian and New Zealander (AUS&NZL)	158	13.0
Thai (THA)	202	16.5
Other European (OEU)	154	12.6
Other Asian(OAS)	143	11.7
Others(OTH)	68	5.5
TOTAL	1,221	100.0

2.2.2 Questionnaire instrument

The questionnaire consisted of 3 parts; (1) General information, (2) Expectation and Satisfaction with Phuket (3) Personal Information. Since the study area is an island, a combination of structured techniques was used in order to capture various aspects of the respondents' satisfactions with destination beaches mostly located on the West of the island. The respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the tourist attractions with the overall travelling experience on a 5-point Likert scale.

2.3. Data analysis

Descriptive analyses were used to examine all variables and represent them as percentages. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the socio-demographic population. Percentages and frequencies were used for categorical variables. The analysis of variance was used to find out if there were statistically significant differences among different groups of tourists. Standard assumptions of normality and constant variance were tested by Q-Q plot and Levene test, respectively. Differences between more than two groups were further assessed by the Neuman-Keuls multiple comparison test. One-way ANOVA tests were conducted to find the predictor variables of respondents' socio-demographic details. The respondents have been classified by nationality, age, gender, income, and education. Age is split in 4 groups, education is separated into three groups and income divided by 2 levels. In order to account for possible travel-related differences such as first time visitor (1st visitor) or repeated visitor, length of stay and the effects of these differences on other groups of factors, we controlled these variables using ANOVA.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Respondent demographics

Table 2 depicts the demographic profile of respondents, a total of 1,221 questionnaires with 44% male and 56% female. The range of ages was largely between 25-34 years old with the majority having a bachelor degree. The majority of respondents were from mainland China, followed by Russia, Thailand, Australia and New Zealand. The participants had an average income between USD 24,000-36,000 annually. Most visitors were traveling to Phuket as a group, and holiday/leisure was 88% quoted as the main purpose of the trip. There were very few solo and business travelers. Sixty-six percent of the participants were first time visitors. The highest frequency for length of stay was on average between 4 and 7 days. Regarding coastal activities, the average hours that respondents spent on the beach, sunbathing and scuba diving were 4.5 hours, 2.8 hours and almost 1 hour respectively.

Table 2. Profile of respondents

Gender		Income Level	
Male	44%	Mean	2,000 (USD/Month)
Female	56%	Education Level	
Age		No University Degree	35%
4 years	20%	Bachelor Degree	45%
25-44 years	40%	Post Graduate Degree	20%
35-44 years	20%	Trip characteristics	
45-54 years	10%	First Time Visitor	66%
55 and above	10%	Repeat Visitor	34%
Origin		Travel Purpose	
Thai	17%	Holiday	88%
Foreigners	83%	Others	12%
Group		Total Stay	
Mainland China	24%	Mean	7.6 days
Australia & New Zealand	13%	Mode	4 days
Russia	17%		
Thai	16%		
Other Asian	12%		

Other Europe	13%
Others	5%
Travel Party	
Alone	8%
With spouse	28%
With family/relative members	32%
With friends	23%
With business associates	5%
With tour group	4%

Activities	
On the beach	
Mean	4.5 hours/time
Mode	2 hours/time
Sunbathing	
Mean	2.8 hours/time
Mode	2 hours/time
Scuba Diving	
Mean	0.89 hours/time
Mode	2 hours/time

3.2. Respondent satisfaction toward five beaches

As table 3 illustrates, the mean satisfaction for all beaches from all respondents was on the higher end of the Likert scale. The maximum average score was 4.26 and minimum was 4 out of 5. Most visitors, regardless of socio-demographic, who came to explore Phuket beaches, had a high level of tourist satisfaction regarding the various coastal destinations in Phuket. Descriptive analysis found that levels of satisfaction with all beaches in Phuket were quite high, which could be explained by destination geography and attachment. Most beaches in this study are located on the West side of the island, which is more beautiful and well-developed. There are a wide variety of activities available on the beaches, catering to virtually all visitor needs and desires, including but not limited to: restaurants, hotels, bars, shopping, markets, and nightlife, all contributing to placing Phuket on the world's destination map for coastal tourism. Thus, it was not surprising that the overall satisfaction for all beaches were high. The finding confirms statements by Polnyotee and Thadaniti (2015), Thirumaran and Raghav (2017) indicating that tourists were entranced by the natural beauty of the beach area and engaged in beach activities rather than urban tours. Phuket's exoticism was the primary pull factor that refers to the attractiveness and specific features of the destination perceived by potential tourists once the decision has been made (Rittichainuwat 2007).

With regards to the beach destination as the main tourist attractions of Phuket, the frequencies were over 80% in the response categories of satisfied (4 out of 5) and very satisfied (5 out of 5) where the highest satisfaction were Kata-Karon beach (4.26), Naiyang-Naithon beach (4.14), Mai Khao beach (4.11), Surin-Bangtao beach (4.03) and Patong-Kamala beach (4.00). Comparison of the overall average satisfactions from all respondents to 6 nationalities has been illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Average destination tourist satisfaction by nationality

Destination	Overall	Chinese	Australian/ New Zealander	Russian	Thai	Other Asian	Other European
Mai Khao	4.11	4.17	4.24	3.94	3.82	4.34	4.27
Naiyang-Naithon	4.14	4.08	4.32	4.09	4.03	4.25	4.27
Surin-Bangtao	4.03	4.11	4.14	3.92	3.81	4.36	4.00
Patong-Kamala	4.00	4.13	4.03	3.98	3.86	4.09	3.94
Kata-Karon	4.26	4.35	4.36	4.26	4.06	4.32	4.17

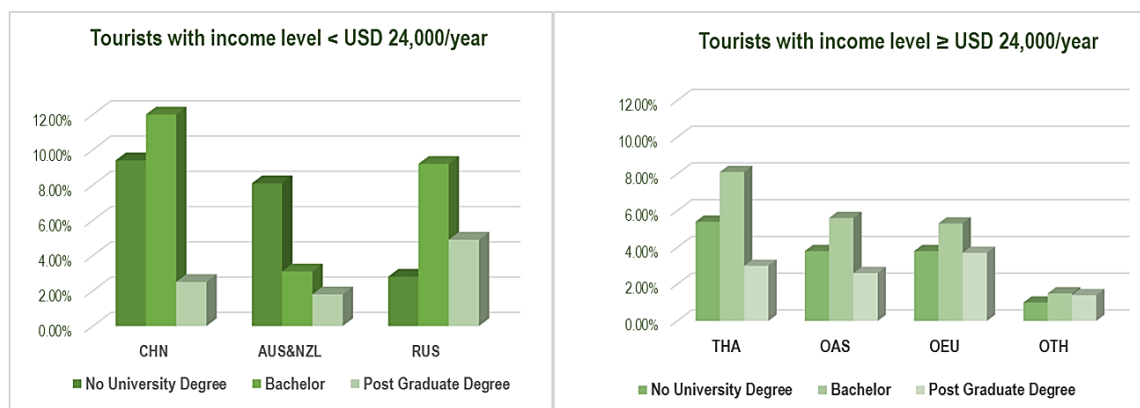
It appears that Thai and Russian nationalities had similar satisfaction levels with Mai Khao, Surin-Bangtao, and Patong-Kamala beach and the value was under the average mean of overall satisfaction. Mai Khao, Surin-Bangtao, and Patong-Kamala are located on the north, central, and south coastal part of the west side of Phuket, which are less crowded compared to very busy beach coast of the Andaman Sea. They are also ranked in the same order for the degree of beach activities, choices for tourists in accommodations, restaurants, and infrastructure. For instance, Mai Khao beach is a more private area and entirely natural with virtually no infrastructure and limited beach activities. Mai Khao has a narrow range of accommodations and restaurants. Meanwhile, Patong-Kamala is on the opposite end of the spectrum compared to Mai Khao beach, having a wide range of activities, restaurants, and lodging to accommodate virtually any budget. Surin-Bangtao beach, located in the middle between these two beaches, also has a wide range of amenities, however not as extensive as Patong's

but more than Mai Khao's. Even though these 3 beaches have their own characteristics in different locations and varying degrees of amenities and number of visitors, it was noted that among all nationalities only THA and RUS had similar less satisfaction scores than others concerning these beaches.

3.3. Underlying socio-demographic predictor variables

Two other categories: level of education and income level were used to analyze socio-demographic profiles of the survey respondents. Education was classified into three groups: no university degree, bachelor degree and post graduate degree. The income level was classified in two groups by using USD 24,000 annual as a reference. Visitors from CHN, AUS&NZL, and RUS with the yearly income less than USD 24,000 came to visit Phuket during green season. The other group with income greater or equal to USD 24,000 annual came from THA, OAS, OEU.

Figure 2. Three major categories of respondents



Based on descriptive analysis, Figure 2 summarizes the respondents in categories of three predictor variables; 7 nationalities, 3 education levels and 2 income levels. As shown, most tourists grouped into bachelor degree and no university degree who made less than USD 24,000/year were Chinese (CHN), Australian and New Zealanders (AUS & NZL), whereas Russian (RUS) visitors with bachelor degrees and higher, who made less than USD 24,000 annual came to visit Phuket during low season. The ratio of no university degree: bachelor: post graduate for CHN, AUS/NZL and RUS were 3:4:1, 4:2:1, and 1:3:2 consecutively while most tourists with bachelor degrees, and no university degree who made greater or equal to USD 24,000 per year were THA and OAS. There was a similar number of tourists with three different education levels for OEU and OTH who visited Phuket. The ratio of no university degree: bachelor: post graduate for THA, OAS, OEU, and OTH were 2:3:1, 1:2:1, 1:1:1, and 1:2:1 respectively.

Upon combining education and income level with nationality, it was found that the majority of tourists who visited Phuket during low season were CHN and AUS/NZL in the groups of bachelor and no degree, earned less than USD 24,000/year while tourists from Russia mostly had bachelor and post graduate degrees. The group with an income higher or equal to USD 24,000 annually were mainly tourists in THA and OAS and within the education level group of bachelor and no university degree. On the contrary, tourists from OEU and OTH who came to visit Phuket during low season were almost equal in education level. This leads to the conclusion that most tourists who came to visit Phuket had no degree or bachelor degrees for all nationalities except Russian, while almost 3 times more AUZ tourists with no university degree came to visit Phuket compared to those with bachelor degree.

A One-way ANOVA analysis was carried out to determine which socio-demographic characteristic influences the level of tourist satisfaction with beaches of Phuket. This tool compares the mean output of tourist satisfaction scores whether it is the same or different between groups by nationality, age, education, income, and gender. The findings were shown in Table 4. The socio-demographic factors that influenced the level of tourist satisfaction in this study were nationality, education, income, and gender, while age was not statistically significant. These results were consistent with previous studies such as Rittichainuwat (2008), Shamsud and Lebel (2012) who showed that travel motivation differed by tourist demographics, which were gender, age, marital status, region of

residence, income level of the country of origin, and education level. However, Perović *et al.* (2012) found that country of residence, occupation and wage were associated with the level of tourist's satisfaction but age and gender were not. Moreover, previous research indicated that knowledge could influence attitude, evaluation and consumption behaviors (Cordell 1997). Knowledge was mostly categorized as familiarity and expertise and also classified according to its content, nature, complexity, valence and the amount of information stored in the memory (Alba and Hutchinson 1987). Consumers with a higher level of knowledge can also realize a product or service's benefits better than those with a lower level of knowledge, thus knowledge is also suggested to influence cumulative satisfaction positively. Harasarn and Chancharat (2014) indicated that there was a long-run relationship between tourist arrivals, and economic growth and income.

For nationality factor, at least two means were significantly different from one another for tourist satisfaction in Mai Khao, Surin-Bangtao, and Kata-Karon beach. The mean difference of visitor satisfaction between education groups was significant at Patong-Kamala beach. The income was significantly different in Kata-Karon beach.

Table 4. One-way ANOVA test

Beach Destination	Socio-Demographic				
	Nationality	Age	Education	Income	Gender
Mai Khao Beach	0.017*	0.855	0.767	0.807	0.781
Naiyang-Naithon Beach	0.299	0.892	0.281	0.754	0.635
Surin-Bangtao Beach	0.020*	0.915	0.119	0.916	0.687
Patong-Kamala Beach	0.208	0.793	0.023*	0.210	0.027*
Kata-Karon Beach	0.042*	0.341	0.555	0.015*	0.073

Note: * The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Additionally, in order to determine which of the means for the seven nationality groups, three education groups, and two income groups significantly different from the others, a Post-hoc Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was applied as shown in Table 5. The finding showed that nationality would not affect the level of tourist satisfaction for Patong-Kamala beach, which is the busiest and most well-known destination. The differences between each pair of means by nationality were statistically significant in Mai Khao, Surin-Bangtao, and Kata-Karon beach. Based on the destination location and attachments, and the pairs of tourists by nationality; THA-CHN, and THA-OAS, affected (1) the north isolated and peaceful beaches like Mai Khao, (2) the middle beach with less crowds and family friendly like Surin-Bangtao beach, and (3) the average busy beach with adequate tourist facilities and services down to the south like Kata-Karon beach. THA-AUZ & NZL had different satisfaction level with Mai Khao beach and Kata-Karon beach while THA-OEU, RUS-OEU, and RUS-OAS had significant differences with Mai Khao beach. The mean satisfaction of RUS for beach destinations differed from OAS and OEU. It was interesting that even though THA, CHN and OAS were Asian, there were differences among them as well as between RUS and OEU.

Table 5. Post hoc Least Significant Difference (LSD)

Variable	Between groups	Destination			
		Patong-Kamala Beach	Kata-Karon Beach	Mai-Khao Beach	Surin-Bangtao Beach
Nationality	THA – CHN	X	X	X	X
	THA – AUZ		X	X	
	THA – OAS		X	X	X
	THA – OEU		X	X	
	THA – OTH		X		
	RUS – OEU			X	
	RUS – OAS			X	X
	OAS – OTH				X
Education	No University Degree and Post Graduate Degree	X			
Income (USD)	<24,000/year and ≥ 24,000/year		X		

For RUS tourists, there were many studies that determined Russians' preference was travelling abroad along the coastal line seeking for sun and beach holiday market with outstanding scenic beauty, historical, and cultural attractions. RUS travelers are adventurous, venture out on excursions, interact with locals, look for opportunity to shop, enjoy nightlife and relax on the beach (Vongvisitsin 2013). One proposed contributing factor concerning Russian tourist's preference to spend holidays abroad came from the historical fact that Russians were banned from travelling out of the country, with the only sea destinations the Black Sea or the Baltic States. Once RUS have been allowed to travel outside their borders, outbound tourism has grown every year and outbound travel was considered far better value for money with an international standard in services. In 2014, the Russian market went through turbulent times with the depreciation of currency causing the price for travelling abroad to increase more than 20% but the total number of Russian outbound trips declined only 1% over the first eight months of 2014. Thailand was one of the top destination for Russians with more than 4 million trips in 2013 (ITB World Travel Trend Report 2014). Moreover, the other important key that Russian tourists found important is the overall price (Atilgan *et al.* 2003, Kozak and Martin 2012, ITB World Travel Trend Report 2014). RUS were influenced by the cost that could come from the RUS currency decreasing in value, with GDP growth of -2.2% for the first quarter of 2015, as compared to the first quarter of 2014 and forecasted to fall in real GDP of 3%-3.5% in 2015, growth of around zero for 2016, and Russia's unemployment rate raised to 6% in 2016 (Bloomberg 2015, NatoReview 2015, Themoscwotimes 2016). Compared to other Europeans, based on the report from "Preferences of Europeans towards tourism" by TNS Political & Social at the request of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry (2013), the most popular reason for going on holiday for 28 European Union member states was spending time in the sun or at the beach, followed by the quality of accommodation and cultural and historical attractions. Due to the European economy's low growth in 2016, Europeans changed their travelling habits by opting for a safe destination and traveling for sun and beach more within their region (ITB World Travel Trends Report 2016).

There were no statistically mean differences between RUS-AUZ & NZL and RUS-CHN was the same as RUS-THA. Based on the results, it became clear that local tourists (THA) demonstrated a level of satisfaction significantly different from the other nationalities except RUS. This corresponded to the same results in the table 3 concerning the average destination tourist satisfaction by nationality. The foremost reasons Thai tourists were exploring the various destinations were to share the landmark with family and guests. Foreign tourists were concerned mainly with satisfaction and familiarity (Mechinda *et al.* 2009).

Concerning Bangtao and Surin beaches, the satisfaction level for Thais was different from that of Chinese and other Asians. The findings indicate that among Asian travellers, Thai, Chinese and other Asian represent a distinct market with specific needs and preferences. The study by Liu *et al.* (2013) has indicated that Mainland Chinese outbound tourists' preferences were shopping and beach tourism. Chinese tourists traveled as families with young children, closely followed by retired couples and singles. Moreover, budget was the primary consideration in planning an outbound trip and two-thirds of Chinese tourists cited the internet as the most influential channel relative to destination selection.

In relation to the other Asian groups, a study by Sabre Corporation, a leading technology company serving the global travel industry, revealed traveler preferences behind the growing Asia Pacific travel market. The findings stated that "travel is no longer a luxury for them, it's a necessity. Over one in three say they would travel for leisure three or more times per year and most Asian explorers were open to truly immersing themselves in their destination and felt more important to embrace the traditions of their travel destination even if that means setting aside their own" (eHotelier 2017). Surin-Bangtao beach is divided into north and south sectors. The south end is a family-friendly area and the north as a quiet, romantic getaway for couples. Surin-Bangtao has variety of affordable accommodations for short and long term stays and has built facilities specifically to accommodate families. Shopping areas, community based attractions including morning and night markets, local and cultural history that satisfies the tourist groups of Thai, Chinese and Other Asian expectations.

The analysis of Kata and Karon beach revealed that both tourist's nationality and income level affected the tourist satisfaction level. This study found there were three different groups in satisfaction level: THA-CHN, THA-OAS, and THA-AUZ. The dissimilar geography between Kata and Karon beach compared to others is that it is

located next to dense evergreen forest and low land village, which causes limitations in business and recreation areas but offers sandy beaches with coconut and palm trees. There are many local places for tourists to explore authentic Thai culture such as temples and markets. The entire area of Kata and Karon provides a full range of facilities, dining, and tourist activities (Thinnukool *et al.* 2014). The beach has coral reefs that enchants snorkelers and divers. The entire area has become a famous spot for tourists during high season (November-April) and a paradise for surfers in the monsoon season (May-October). The findings of satisfaction levels toward Kata-Karon beach for THA, RUS, OAS, and AUZ were statistically significant. THA visitors here would definitely enjoy both nature and culture, and also explore local attractions such as markets, temples and local residences which these beaches offer. Kata-Karon beach is also a suitable beach destination for RUS as being perfect for beach lovers and culture explorers while AUZ & NZL were satisfied with these beaches.

In considering the education factor, the critical mean difference in satisfaction level was between post graduate degree, bachelor and no university degree in Patong-Kamala beach. Based on the fact that tourists with a higher degree level than bachelor could be older than tourists with no university degree, the mean difference toward Patong-Kamala could come from the beach being endowed with everything that younger tourists were looking for, especially adventure beach activities like parasailing or cable skiing, night life, indoor circuses, Thai boxing and cabarets. At Patong beach, tourists can choose accommodation from low end to 5 star hotels, enjoy street food or dine at Michelin-starred restaurants. Patong beach caters to tourists that desire adventure and nightlife rather than history or culture. Visitors' interest lies in beach parties with more activities and entertainments. The travelers with post graduate degree are interested in more cultural activities and less crowded beaches. These tourists are more likely to stay at premium properties and villas with private beach or pool. As a consequence, the income of these groups greatly influences their destination satisfaction.

To gain a better understanding of some possible types of interaction involving qualitative variables, Table 6 displayed the travel-related variables which were first time or repeat visitors, who the tourist traveled with (Travel party), and the number of stays to gain insight into tourists' satisfaction with beaches in Phuket.

The first time or repeat traveler difference was statistically different in tourist satisfaction for Mai Khao, Naiyang-Naithon, Surin-Bangtao and Kata-Karon beach. Tourist satisfaction with Patong-Kamala was significantly affected by the length of stay among groups which corresponded to the study by Shamsub and Lebel (2012) but did not show differences among travel party (see Table 6). The findings show that there is no difference between first time visitors or repeated visitors regarding satisfaction with Patong-Kamala beach but the length of stay influences satisfaction level.

Table 6. Trip characteristic factors

Beach destination	Trip characteristic		
	1st Time /Non first time visitor	Travel party	Length of stay
Mai Khao Beach	0.041*	0.106	0.797
Naiyang-Naithon Beach	0.009*	0.324	0.609
Surin-Bangtao Beach	0.001*	0.222	0.396
Patong-Kamala Beach	0.939	0.421	0.039*
Kata-Karon Beach	0.003*	0.117	0.569

Conclusion

This study examined the correlation between tourists' socio-demographics and tourist satisfaction for coastal tourism in Phuket. The findings showed that nationality, education, and income were associated with different levels of tourist satisfaction for each destination. The effect of socio-demographic characteristics was measured as overall satisfaction with 5 beach destinations classified into two categories. The first category are socio-demographic characteristics of gender, age, nationality, education and income. Category two relates to first time visitation, number of travelling party and the length of stay. The findings showed that the destination travel attributes of each beach explained the tourist's profile, and preference towards beach destinations had predictive relevance. Nationality had significant influence on the overall tourist satisfaction with Maikhao beach, Surin-Bangtao beach, and Kata-Karon beach. Income was significantly correlated with the tourist satisfaction with Kata-Karon beach. The

results found that being a first time visitor or repeat visitor as well as the number of nights had significant effect on tourist satisfaction. Thai tourists showed differences in satisfaction levels compared to others with the attractions of Maikhao beach. There were no significant differences in tourist satisfaction with beach destinations in Phuket for (1) RUS and THA, (2) RUS and AUZ, and (3) RUS and CHN. Education level significantly differentiated the satisfaction level of tourists visiting Patong-Kamala beach. All tourists who had income less than USD 24,000 annually differed significantly from tourists who had above or equal USD 24,000/year in Kata-Karon beach.

The study assessed the effects of different socio-demographics on tourists' satisfaction with five beaches in Phuket. This study has supported previous research done to establish differences between age (Baloglu and McCleary 2000), gender (Chen and Kerstetter 1999) and geographical origin (Calantone *et al.* 1989, Chen and Kerstetter 1999). The results of the study have theoretical and practical significance. The analysis has highlighted important insights on the beach attributes of Phuket that play a significant role in tourist satisfaction and illustrated the role of socio-demographics in the relationship between destination and tourist satisfaction. The implications of the study are useful in the management and marketing of Phuket beach destinations. Understanding the socio-demographics of major tourists who visit the 5 beach destinations in Phuket and their relation to satisfaction can aid in market segmentation and influence higher level management strategies. The results of the study combined with further analysis can help to develop new products, services and specific strategies for different stakeholders in the tourism based Phuket economy.

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