

THE DEVELOPMENT OF VALUE PERCEPTION TOWARD CULTURAL TOURISM DESTINATION: A NORTHEAST THAILAND CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to measure value perception toward cultural tourism destination. This study employs a quantitative approach and uses a survey questionnaire form for the data collecting process. A total of 212 samples were collected and multiple regression techniques were used to analyze data. The findings revealed that five value components, including functional, social, emotional, epistemic and conditional, influence tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit the destination. This study provides insight knowledge for both academic and managerial contributions. For the academic part, this study offers foundation knowledge on perceived value toward cultural tourism development theory. In terms of managerial contribution, the findings of this study are useful for several stakeholders, such as the outcome can help local authorities and communities develop destinations by adding value. Notably, the most effective way to promote a cultural tourism destination is best done through online marketing and by having influential community leaders.

Keywords: Culture tourism development, Value perception, Destination development, Tourist satisfaction, Intention to recommend

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a tool to develop a country and preserve its various aspects, such as social-cultural, economic and environment to sustainable development (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004; Lane, 1994). It was discovered that many study areas had been explored within cultural tourism. For instance, the area of cultural development and the environment, a practice on the interconnectivity of nature, society and culture sustainability (Movono, Dahles, & Becken, 2018). Alternatively, a study on cultural tourism also has an emphasis on the connection of local heritage tourism related to political heritage (Su, Bramwell, & Whalley, 2018). It can be looked at in terms of the intangible, especially studies on religion or spiritual practices, local music and traditional activities (Esfehani & Albrecht, 2018). On the other hand, value perception development is essential to consider when developing a tourism destination (Bajs, 2015). Consequently, tourists will perceive value at a destination, definitely have intent to be involved, visit/revisit, and be willing to recommended (Ashton, Scott, Solnet, & Breakey, 2010; Gallarza & Saura, 2006).

As discussed, there has been much research on culture tourism and value perception. However, there is a lack of study on value perception development toward cultural tourism destination; hence this study aims to bridge this gap. A study on value development toward cultural tourism destination is crucial for several reasons. For instance, value-added helps to improve marketing strategy in terms of service and product development at a destination (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996). Moreover, it helps the local community earn more income if tourist numbers increase, also with the intent to revisit due to good value received at a destination (Trejos & Chiang, 2009).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture Tourism Destination Concept

Cultural tourism is defined in different ways, for example, in terms of cultural tourism experiential or aspirational definitions, it refers to an experiential activity, with many people feeling it also includes an aspirational element (McKercher & Du Cros, 2002). However, culture is all about arts, learning, and a way of life, such as how different peoples' social life relate to arts, activities, or wisdom. The meaning of culture can refer directly to history, heritage, arts, and performances (Smith & Smith, 2009). Culture also can be described as something that applies to values, beliefs, language, arts and science, traditions, institutions, a way of life for people and groups of people, and as a tool to develop and sustain life (Hartmann, 2010).

Tourism studies often apply theory from many disciplines such as anthropology, literature, philosophy, and sociology and integrate into different study areas. Therefore, cultural tourism can be defined as a form of cultural environment tourism that includes cultural-historical heritage destinations, beliefs, and values, local lifestyle, arts, crafts, traditions, and customs of a community (International Council on Monuments and Sites, 1999). Furthermore, cultural and cognitive routes may include visitor participation in cultural activities and events, museums, concerts, exhibitions, and galleries. Tourists will get to know the history, beliefs, perspectives, ideas, faiths, and all things related to culture from past to present. Cultural tourism definition is also widely expressed depending on the researcher's aspect, as cultural tourism based on the meaning of culture, such as beliefs, arts, customs, attractive activities, as well as crafts such as music and dance (Altunel & Erkurt, 2015).

Moreover, cultural tourism, in broad terms, is one type of travelling for personal improvement (Adams, 1994). Therefore, cultural tourism destination in this study refers to a destination of culture, namely: temples, palaces, historical sites, traditions, customs, ways of life, as well as all kinds of arts. Tourists will obtain and learn knowledge of history, beliefs, different ways of thinking, customs, and values from the past to the present generation.

Perceived value and Tourist Choices

Value is one of the important components for creating a competitive advantage in destination development. It can be defined as an evaluation of the consumer's overall picture of the product's utility based on perceptions of what we get from what we give (Zeithaml, 1988). Perceived value is the consumer's choice, with a multidimensional and independent view, to make different contributions in any choice situation (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991). In the tourism industry, perceived value refers to the price, quality, and benefit that is suitable for what tourists need and want, and includes both monetary and non-monetary price (Ashton, 2013, 2015). Thus, this study refers to perceived value as a tourist's choice with a

multidimensional view as to the benefit that is suitable for what is needed and is both monetary and non-monetary and tangible and intangible.

Perceived Value Concept

The value perception development for cultural tourism destinations in this research will explore the multidimensional value. The concept comprises five key dimensions of value: firstly, functional value, focusing on five attributes secondly, social value, focusing on interaction/experiences with the lifestyle of the local community at a cultural destination; thirdly, emotional value will emphasize on emotions and feelings to the local community and their culture in a cultural tourism destination; fourthly, epistemic value will focus on the local wisdom of a local community at the destination, and finally, conditional value refers to a holistic value occurring once in a lifetime, or a special occurrence (Sheth et al., 1991). As discussed below:

Functional value

Functional value is ‘the perceived utility acquired from an alternative’s capacity for functional, utilitarian or physical performance.’ An alternative acquires functional value through the possession of salient functional, utilitarian, or physical attributes. Functional value is measured on a profile of choice attributes (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991, p. 160). The functional value defines as the utility, function, or physical attributes of price and products: good quality of package tours, reasonable prices, quality of service, convenience, and great experience (Ashton, 2015; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). Hence, in this study, functional value refers to the functional, utilitarian, or physical appearance of a destination in both tangible and intangible attributes (such as good price, quality of product and destination, quality of service, infrastructure, local life, culture, and sense of experience) (Dickman, 1996). As discussed, the hypothesis for this study is stated:

H1A: Perceived functional value is positively related to tourist satisfaction.

Social value

Social value is ‘the perceived utility acquired from an alternative’s association with one or more specific social groups. An alternative acquires social value through association with positively or negatively stereotyped demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural-ethnic groups. Social value is measured on a profile of choice imagery’ (Sheth et al., 1991, p. 161). Social value can be defined as a socio-demographic of age and gender; interaction in participating and communicating with local people, getting a warm welcome from the local community, and receiving authentic experiences; cross-culture, for instance, learning to respect another culture (Ashton, 2015; Henkel et al., 2006; Sheth et al., 1991; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000), and cultural-ethnic groups (Ashton, 2015; Sheth et al., 1991). Therefore, the social value in this study is defined as the value of the tangible and intangible, which may consist of interaction, social experience, and local community lifestyle. As discussed, the hypothesis for this study is stated:

H1B: Perceived social value is positively related to tourist satisfaction.

Emotional value

Emotional value is ‘the perceived utility acquired from an alternative’s capacity to arouse feelings or affective states. An alternative acquires emotional value when associated with specific feelings or when precipitating or perpetuating those feelings. Emotional value is measured on a profile of feelings associated with the alternatives’ (Sheth et al., 1991, p. 161).

Emotional value creates feelings associated with tourism services and experience to the destination (Ashton, 2015; Henkel et al., 2006; Kim & Park, 2017; Sánchez et al., 2006; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). This dimension includes positive and negative aspects such as comfort, passion, security, excitement, fun, confidence, happiness, or unhappiness (Bajs, 2015; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Feeling creation is an important component for tourist destination marketing strategy, in turn, helping them to relax while visiting the destination (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). Thus, in this study, emotional value is defined as the gain acquired from tourists' feelings to a cultural tourism destination through the feelings and emotions of having a memorable experience, relaxation, interacting with local people, the destination atmosphere, and feelings of things related to the culture of the destination. As discussed, the hypothesis for this study is stated:

H1C: Perceived emotional value is positively related to tourist satisfaction.

Epistemic value

Epistemic value is the perceived utility acquired from an alternative's capacity to arouse curiosity, provide novelty, and satisfy a desire for knowledge. An alternative acquires epistemic value by questionnaire items referring to curiosity, novelty, and knowledge (Sheth et al., 1991, p. 161). It is a multidimensional measure of value from novelty or curiosity of desire items or places that consumers receive and creates new knowledge or new experiences to consumers (Ashton, 2015; Henkel et al., 2006; Sheth et al., 1991; Williams & Soutar, 2000). In a tourism context, perceived epistemic value is mostly presented by new knowledge, new experiences in different types of tourism through challenging, storytelling (Ashton, 2014), novelty-seeking (Bello & Etzel, 1985) culture, or participating in activities (Chan & Baum, 2007). Tourists seek new knowledge and novelty by participating in activities and learning about nature and environments from the destinations they visit (Chan & Baum, 2007). Storytelling, such as presenting experiences from Queensland, Australia to Southland, New Zealand, also give tourists a feeling of the challenge to gain new knowledge (Ashton, 2015).

Consequently, in this study, epistemic value is defined as the knowledge gained from cultural destinations by learning customs, culture, local wisdoms, including ways of life in order to provide tourists' curiosity, novelty, new knowledge and experience or satisfaction. As discussed, the hypothesis for this study is stated:

H1D: Perceived epistemic value is positively related to tourist satisfaction.

Conditional value

Conditional value is the perceived utility acquired by an alternative as the result of the specific situation or set of circumstances facing the choice maker. An alternative acquires conditional value in the presence of antecedent physical or social contingencies that enhance its functional or social value, but that does not otherwise possess this value (Sheth et al., 1991).

Based on this concept, a consumer will choose the alternatives to derive utility from its association with an antecedent situation. Conditional value focuses on the extrinsic utility rather than the intrinsic utility of alternatives (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). It is presented as the value that occurs in specific situations, seasoning or once in life, and enhances the circumstance of other values (Ashton, 2015). The hypothesis for this study is stated:

H1E: Perceived conditional value is positively related to tourist satisfaction.

The perceived value of Cultural Destinations and Tourist Satisfaction and Intention to revisit

Several tourist satisfaction studies have revealed, for example, that the multidimensional value for money, emotional, and novelty value very positively influence tourist satisfaction in

adventure tourism (Williams & Soutar, 2009a). Likewise, perceived functional, emotional, and economic value are core elements affective to tourist satisfaction within the resort context (Lee, Bendle, Yoon, & Kim, 2012). Similarly, the role of functional and emotional value in the festival evaluation was found to influence tourist satisfaction (Lee, Lee, & Choi, 2011). Therefore, an exploration of satisfaction can be predicted from the multidimensional value in different aspects. Hence the relationship between perceived value and satisfaction will be positive or negative depending on tourists' expectations and experience after traveling in the situation.

H2: Tourists' satisfaction is positively related to the intention to recommend.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research methodology for this study employed a quantitative approach. The local villages in North East Thailand were selected as they are famous as cultural tourism communities and are tourism destinations. A multiple regression analysis was used to analyze data because this technique is suitable for measuring the relationship between multiple variables.

The research instrument was developed based on the core contents of this study, including; functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and condition value. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: section1, tourists' perceived value, consisting of 5 variables, and each variable having five items. Section two consists of one variable with four items of tourists' overall satisfaction (Sheth et al., 1991). In section three, the questionnaire comprises one variable containing three items, including the intention to recommend. The last section asked for the respondent's socio-demographic information for sample background information.

The research instrument was checked for validity and reliability; scales lower than .075 were rewritten and checked. Thus the instrument for the main study was a new set that had reliability above the accepted level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sample's Profiles

A total of 212 samples were received, and it was found that about 59 percent of the respondents were female, and the remaining male (41percent). The age group of 41-50 years represented the highest number (29.25%), followed by ages between 21 and 30 years (24.47%), and between 31 and 40 years (21.70%). This study targeted to collect data from Thai tourists, with more than fifty-four percent having obtained a bachelor's degree. In contrast, those under bachelor's degree, master's degree, and others were less represented. It was revealed that samples' occupations were mainly in the government sector (33 percent), while 25.94 percent worked in private or the business sector.

Results and Discussion

The main aim of this study is to examine the influence of tourists' perceived value towards cultural tourism destinations, and two research questions were raised to respond to the main aim, including first question; what is tourist perceived value (functional, emotional, social, epistemic and conditional value) related to tourist satisfaction. Second question, does tourist satisfaction relate to intention to recommend? The results of the twenty-five hypotheses tests on perceived value consisting of perceived functional value, perceived social value, perceived emotional value, perceived epistemic value, and perceived conditional value relating to tourist satisfaction are summarized in Table 1. The results supported H_{f1} , H_{f3} and H_{f4} of $H1A$, with the functional value being positively related to tourist satisfaction in a cultural tourism destination value development context. The perceived functional value explained 38.8% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. These results indicated that the destination components (5A's concept of

Dickman), especially, the attraction presented good value for money (Williams & Soutar, 2009b). Hence, for a homestay, were surrounded by the natural environment, a safe and secure destination explained a significant proportion of perceived functional value related to tourist satisfaction. The result from the hypothesis test found that functional 3 (H_{f3}), ‘It gives me high value when I stay in a homestay where it is surrounded with the natural environment.’ is the most important content to explain the functional value. As a result, it can be highlighted that perceived functional value is directly involved with tourist satisfaction (Kim & Park, 2017; Rasoolimanesh, Dahalan, & Jaafar, 2016; Waheed & Hassan, 2016).

Table 1: Hypothesis Test Results

Model	Standard Coefficient (β)
Perceived Functional Value (explained variance = 38.8)	
H_{f1} - Functional 1: The attraction of this destination represents ‘good value for money’.	.271 .348
H_{f3} - Functional 3: It gives me high value when I stay in a homestay where it is surrounded with natural environment.	.188
H_{f4} - Functional 4: I feel it is safe and secure to walk around this village.	
Perceived Social Value (explained variance = 41.5)	
H_{s7} - Social 7: I have an opportunity to interact with the local community in every activity they organized during my visit.	.363
H_{s8} - Social 8: I have a very good relationship with the local community during my stay, even though our languages are different.	.368
Perceived Emotional Value (explained variance = 58.1)	
H_{e11} - Emotional 11 - When entering this village, I feel the atmosphere around the place is very culturally reserved.	.311 .325
H_{e14} - Emotional 14 - Sitting here in this village, I feel very content every moment, especially when observing the local community presenting their welcoming emotion toward visitors.	.315
H_{e15} - Emotional 15 - The atmosphere around this village makes me feel I am a part of this place when I think about it.	
Perceived Epistemic Value (explained variance = 40.5)	
H_{ep17} - Epistemic 17 - I learned many things about local wisdom knowledge, such as how to cure sickness by ritual merit, or train how to do clothing by hand or handicrafts or art.	.341 .333
H_{ep20} - Epistemic 20 – Overall this place provides me with new knowledge about a unique culture from the Phuthai ethnic group.	
Perceived Conditional Value (explained variance = 45.7)	
H_{c23} - Conditional 23 - Visiting this village totally completes my travel goal for exploring new experiences in life.	.424 .377

Model	Standard Coefficient (β)
H _{c25} - Conditional 25 - The community considers all possible activities and experience that they can give me; I am really impressed with this village.	

The results supported H_{s7} and H_{s8} of H1B, with the social value being positively related to tourist satisfaction in a cultural tourism destination value development context. The perceived social value explained 41.5% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. These results indicate that the relationship and interaction with the local community during visiting explain a significant proportion of perceived social value related to tourist satisfaction. These supported the previous literature reviews carried by many scholars (Kim & Park, 2017). Social value is one of the crucial components in a multidimensional scale to measure tourists perceived value. Moreover, perceived social value has a significant effect on tourist satisfaction (Bajs, 2015; Henkel, Henkel, Agrusa, Agrusa, & Tanner, 2006; Prebensen, Woo, Chen, & Uysal, 2013; Waheed & Hassan, 2016).

The results supported H_{e11}, H_{e14}, and H_{e15} of H1C, with the emotional value being positively related to tourist satisfaction in a cultural tourism destination value development context. The perceived emotional value explained 58.1% of the variance in tourist satisfaction, which is the most influential perceived value for tourist destinations. These results indicate that the feeling to the local community with their welcoming tourists and the feeling of the atmosphere explain a significant proportion of perceived emotional value related to tourist satisfaction. It supported the previous literature review which mentioned that emotional value creates the feeling for cultural tourism experiences, (Ashton, 2015; Kim & Park, 2017; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000) such as the feeling of a local life experience or a homestay experience, (Bajs, 2015; Kim & Park, 2017; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016) moreover, perceived emotional value influences tourist satisfaction of the destination (Bajs, 2015; Kim & Park, 2017; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016).

The results supported H_{ep17} and H_{ep20} of H1D, with the epistemic value being positively related to tourist satisfaction in a cultural tourism destination value development context. The perceived epistemic value explained 40.5% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. These results indicate that the local wisdom which gave new knowledge and experiences to tourists explains a significant proportion of perceived epistemic value related to tourist satisfaction. These are supported from previous studies stating that tourists learn new knowledge by participating in local activities, and learned about nature and the environment at the destination they visited (Chan & Baum, 2007; Waheed & Hassan, 2016), for example, by picking up mushrooms from the forest with local people. It also gave them a feeling of the challenge to learn new knowledge, as Williams and Soutar (2009b) and Tapachai and Waryszak (2000) proposed that new knowledge is an important contributor to tourist satisfaction.

The results supported H_{c23} and H_{c25} of H1E, with the conditional value being positively related to tourist satisfaction in a cultural tourism destination value development context. The perceived conditional value explained 45.7% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. These results indicate that the travel goal of new experiences in life, such as activity experience, explain a significant proportion of perceived epistemic value, related to tourist satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

It can be summarized that the findings of this study revealed that perceived emotional value (58.1%) is the most crucial component related to tourist satisfaction, and tourist satisfaction related to intention to recommend in the study of cultural tourism destination value development. Hence, this research has provided a theoretical and managerial contribution to tourism study and the industry, especially within the development of cultural tourism destination value, which is tied to the two key points discussed below. For academic contribution, the theory on perceived value toward cultural tourism destination was derived from a study based on creating functional, social, emotional value, epistemic and conditional value, hence to increase tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit. However, such a study needs to emphasize emotional value as it the most crucial component within this context.

For the managerial contribution, the relevant stakeholders must consider providing a destination with physical products and services, especially those with good value for money that tourists pay for and a good atmosphere with a feeling of safety and security when visiting the place. Secondly, consider how to create activities for locals and tourists to interact with each other and exchange each other's cultural background for great memorable experiences. Furthermore, the stakeholders must be concerned with cultural awareness by providing activities that tourists can take part in, such as ceremonies or festivals. Moreover, the host providers must give new knowledge to tourists, such as physical information on local cultural history, or storytelling of the unique culture and local lifestyle. Finally, providing a complete set of values to suit any circumstance, such as facility, activity, emotions toward the cultural destination, and learning new things from the locals.

The limitation of this study is due to the data collecting process taking place during the low season. Hence, to receive a sufficient number of samples takes longer. However, the researcher managed to obtain enough samples to perform data analysis. Future research should look at foreign tourists and compare whether their perception of value toward cultural tourism is significantly different or the same and in which value components.

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