

# **FACTOR OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM FOR ASIAN TOURIST WHO SPEAK ENGLISH, A CASE STUDY OF THE FOUR FACE BUDDHA (ERAWAN SHRINE) AT RATCHAPRASONG INTERSECTION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The objectives of study of Factor of religious tourism for Asian tourist who spoke English ,a case study of the Four face Buddha(Erawan Shrine) at Ratchaprasong intersection were : 1) to study the behavior of Asian tourists who made religious travelling on the case of the Four face Buddha at Ratchaprasong Intersection ; 2) to study the factor level of religious tourism for Asian tourists who speak English on the case study of the Four face Buddha at Ratchaprasong intersection, and 3) to compare the differences between the factor level of religious tourism for Asian tourists who spoke English on the case study of the Four face Buddha at Ratchaprasong intersection based on personal characteristic, using Questionnaires as a tool to collect data from a sample group, which were 385 Asian tourists who spoke English and traveled to worship the Four face Buddha at Ratchaprasong intersection. The statistics used in the descriptive analysis were frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The statistics used in testing the hypothesis were, t-test and F test. If any difference was found, the LSD pairwise comparison method was implemented.

Keywords-Cultural tourism, religion tourism, the four face Buddha

## **INTRODUCTION**

Hospitality business is a service industrial business which important to enlarge the economy of country. It encourages tourists to spend great amount of money and links to the directly service businesses such as transportation, hotel business, restaurants and travel agencies. Additional, detour related business such as agricultural industry, souvenir business, entertainments etc. This offers income and circulates to different regions. It's also being a catalyst to develop the related businesses. 40 years ago, Thailand started focus on how important of the hospitality business, became created the marketing & promoting plan. Thai government supported to discover the natural tourist attractions where can promote or advertise to Thai travelers and over tourists. This project opened new view points on the hospitality. The modification changed from Modern Tourism which focuses on quantity to Post-Modern Tourism that emphasizes particularly purpose of visiting example religious tourism or cultural tourism.

Another definition is changing from regular tourism to sustainable tourism which encourages people to preserve environment or natural. It called Community Based Tourism, local people organized or managed by self. Nowadays, the trend adapted from traveling in big group to smaller group or solo-traveler instead. The modern tourism activities need harmoniously create to the purpose of travelers for memorable experiences.

In additional, the travelers will become repeating tourists later. Main reason for changing is the tourists prefer tailor-made. Defining strategic research agenda of national tourism during 2012 – 2016 by The National Research Council of Thailand focuses on researching which set as one of the strategic research agenda to promote the national tourism. Current, the religious and cultural tourism is one that receives special attention for Buddhist and Hindu. The highest belief of Hindu is respecting to god and a famous holy place in Bangkok is The Four Face Buddha or Erawan Shrine at Rajaprasong intersection, affects the nearby business to earn good profits and area to be well-known.

As it is importance, researcher realized that there are many people come to pay respect to the Four Face Buddha at this place. The researcher initiated made a research about the factors that affect the travel behavior of English Speaking Asian Religious Tourists.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

World Tourism Organization (WTO) defined as Tourism comprises the activities of the person traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purpose not for the sake of occupation or staying permanently. Tourism is a leisure activity involving the movement of people to destinations away from their usual residence. It is often international in character. According to the definition of the Association of International Scientific Experts in Tourism (AISET), tourism is travel to a country outside of the one's residential country.

World tourism Organization (UNWTO) classified tourism into three categories which are natural based tourism, cultural and religious based tourism and special interest tourism with the objectives of recreation, business or other within less than one year (Rowe, Smith, Borein,2002).

Tourism Authority of Thailand (2548) said promoting on cultural tourism is a specifically lifestyle option of the people who interested in religion's culture, the historical of those people, their art, architecture or leisure fellowship purpose. They concerned that religion tourism had become an important parts of tourism product to support the economy in the future and can be good representative for new product of Tourism industry.

Religion tourism is subset of the conception cultural based tourism; religion tourism has the main leisure purpose same as another tourism classification but also emphasized about seeking peaceful, belief and hopefully to fulfillment of dream including faithful and belief for miracle of religion. (Wongwipak, Chanan,2012)

The assessment of destination potential was related to the five major components of destination or 5A consist of attraction, accessibility, amenities, accommodation and activities. (Dickman, 1996) said the attraction and purpose are an important factor for tourist to choose travel destination as natural attraction, built attraction cultural attraction and social attraction.

Mc Coll et al (1994, p116) defined consumer behavior as the actions a person take towards purchasing and using products and services, including decision making process that precedes and determines those actions that can show how to understand the tourist behavior and become successful manager in the tourism industry by understand consumer needs and wants and subsequently market programs.

Factors impact to Tourist behavior (Taechataweewan Sureerat, 2002) to understanding the tourist behavior, there are many factor that impact to behavior of the tourist as following economic factor, demographic factor, geographic factor, political factor, media factor, factor of timing, situation and healthy, technology factor.

Needs/Interest toward Destination Kotler(1999) states that buyer decision process is composed of five stages: firstly need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post purchase behavior History of Four faced Buddha (Erawan Shrine)

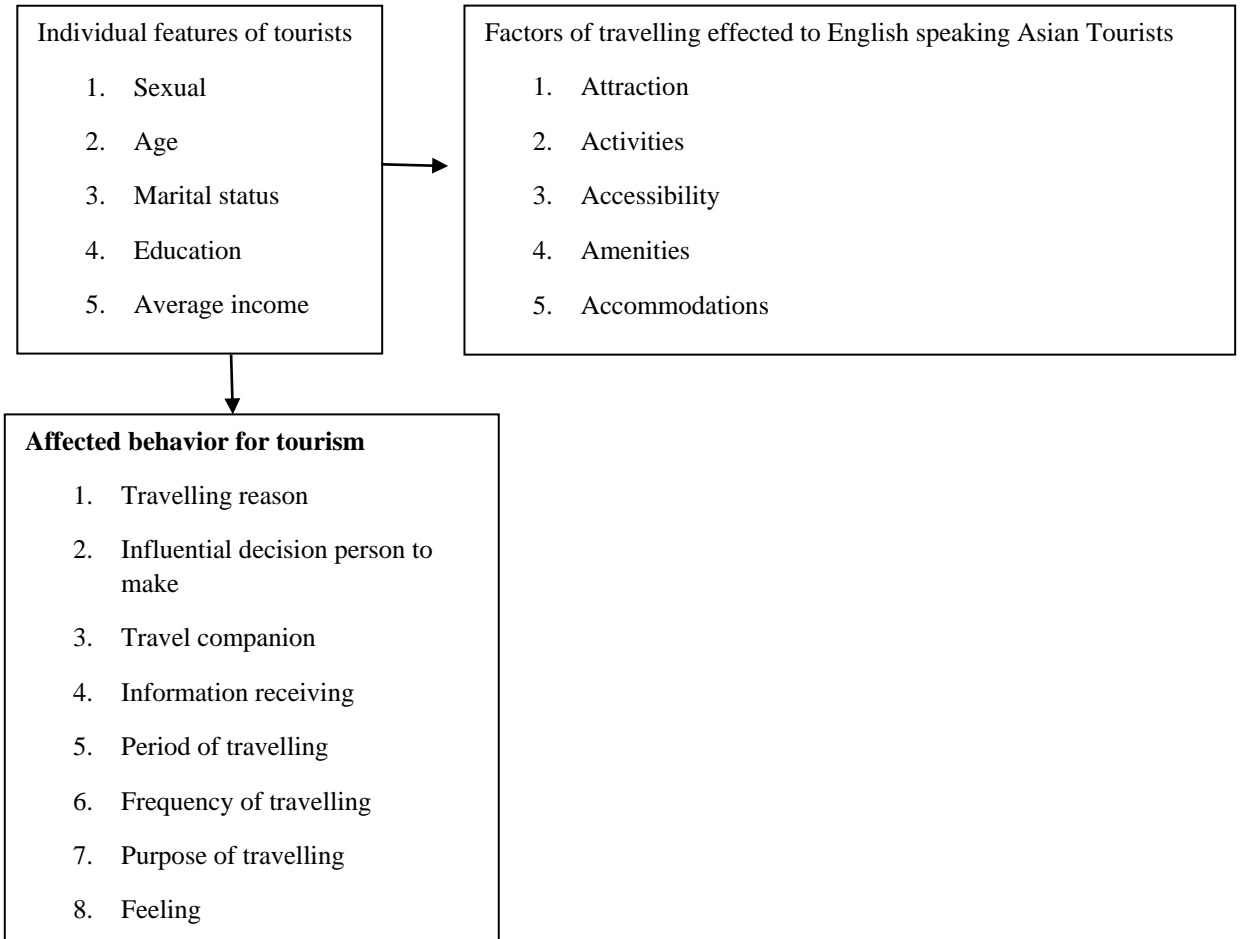
The four faced Buddha (Erawan Shrine) is located in Erawan hotel at the Ratchaprasong intersection, formally the Thao Maha Phrom Shrine was built in 1965 as part of the government owned Erawan hotel to eliminate the bad karma believed caused by laying the foundations of the building was not laid on an auspicious date. The advice of a well-respected astrologer who advised building the four faced Buddha to counter the negative influences. The four face Buddha was designed and built by the department of Fine Arts and enshrined on 9 November 1956 a date carefully chosen this time. After that the construction of hotel proceeded without any further delays problem and the building was soon finished. The four face Buddha stands majestically in glittering gold at Ratchaprasong intersection in the heart of downtown Bangkok.

Everyday thousands of devotees both foreigners and Thai pray at the four face Buddha to seek blessings, fulfillment of dreams, success in personal lives and careers.

**Research Framework**

Independent Variable

Dependent Variable



**Research Hypothesis**

Different of sexual, age, marital status, education and average income are important to factors of making decision on religious tourism for English Asian Tourists.

**Tools**

Section 1 Individual features of tourists such as sexual, ages, occupation, residence location and income. The questionnaire is check list.

Section 2 Behaviors of religious tourism for the English Speaking Asian Tourists reason for travelling, influential person to make decision, travel companion, information receiving, frequency of travelling, purpose of travelling, feeling about tourist attractions, possibility of returning. The questionnaire is check list.

Section 3 The Factor of hospitality (5A) such as attractions, religion activities, accessibility or transportation, amenity such as information, banner and restrooms and last on accommodation. The questionnaire is Likert Scale. Base on the overall respondents opinion (strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree and strongly disagree)

## METHODOLOGY

This research used quantitative methodology. The survey was answered by 385 Asian tourists who speak English, and travelled to visit the Four Face Buddha (Erawan Shrine) at Ratchaprasong intersection Bangkok. Non-probability sampling technique of judgmental and convenience sampling are employed in this research. This research used quantitative methodology. The sample sizes for this research were 385 Asian tourists who spoke English and traveled to worship the Four Face Buddha (Erawan Shrine) at Ratchaprasong intersection. The statistics used in testing the hypothesis were, t-test and F test. If any difference was found, the LSD pairwise comparison method was implemented.

### Respondent Profile

The result showed that the majority of 203 foreigner tourist who traveled to worship the Four Face Buddha were female (52.73%), aged below 30 years old (57.66%), single (69.35%), with bachelor degree (34.55%). Most of them had monthly income between 40,000-50,000 Baht (36.88%).

## RESULT

Based on the behavior of Asian tourist who came as religious travelling on the case of the Four face Buddha at Ratchaprasong intersection, it was found that most tourist had their reason of visit to vow/pray for their wishes (37.14%). Member in the family were persons who influenced the decision making (47.01%), traveled with friends (44.68%), received the information from friends (45.55%), visited during 9:01-11:30 pm., visited for the first time, intentionally visited to worship the Four Face Buddha in particular, was very impressed with the visited place and would come back again because of having admiration and faith in the Four Face Buddha.

The purpose of making worship is being success in the business (37.14%), health concerned (18.44%), personal relationship (11.43%), and study (3.64%).

The overview on the factor level of religious tourism of the Asian tourist who spoke, English, a case study on the Four Face Buddha, Ratchaprasong intersection was at the high level having an average of 4.02. In consideration of individual aspect it was found that the accommodation aspect had the highest average level followed by, transportation aspect, followed by communication aspect, tourism attraction aspect, religious tourism and facilitating aspect respectively. The overview for the attractions was at the high level having an average of 4.08. In consideration of individual by the beauty of sculpture of the Four face Buddha aspect, following by beliefs about motivation of prayers to reinforce in commercial business, health and education aspect, scenery in tourist attraction of Ratchaprasong Intersection aspect, the worthy statue of worshipfulness and respectability lastly about history and reputation of the Four Face Buddha.

Factor about the activities was at the high level having an average of 4.01. In consideration of individual by make a merit and worship aspect, sight-seeing aspect, vow or fulfill the vow aspect and lastly to purchase sacred object aspect respectively. Factor about facilities consideration of individual by the reasonable price for flower, joss sticks and offerings vendor's aspect, safety for tourist's property aspect, good environment management for cleaning and arrangement aspect, cleared signage and banner aspect, staff provided good information aspect respectively. The factor of transportations consideration of individual by safety for travelling to visit aspect, easy to find a public transportation aspect, outstanding location aspect, reasonable fare of transportation aspect and lastly enough transportation lines available for travelling to visit aspect respectively. Factor about accommodation was at the high level having an average of 4.30. In consideration of individual by department stores and shopping centers located nearby aspect, well-known hotels located nearby aspect, good location as BTS stations nearby aspect, the hotel promoted religious activities aspect respectively.

Tourist of different gender, age, educational level and average monthly income had factor level of religious tourism for Asian tourist who spoke English, a case study of the Four Face Buddha at Ratchaprasong intersection differently at the significance level of 0.05 while the status was not very much different.

## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

The survey showed that the behavior of Asian religious tourists mostly for vowing. Mostly of tourist their visit because their family member influenced about decision making and their visited with family during 9:01-11:30 and 18:01-21:00 pm. Visited for the first time intentionally visited to worship the Four Face Buddha in particular, was very impressed with the visited place and would come back again because of having admiration and faith in the Four Face Buddha. For all above shown that the behavior of tourist are related to the concept of 5 steps making decision Kotler(1999) states that buyer decision process is composed of five stages: firstly need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post purchase behavior. *Firstly* the tourism promotion by offering tourist information to potential tourists on public channels or concerned organizations, needs by when the potential tourist received the information it will cause internal demand in their mind, motivation step by there are 2 factor for push factor which caused demand for travelling and pull factor which is attraction to the destination, *step 2 information search* is encouraged to create tourist image of local destination to decide whether to travel anywhere. Step 3 evaluations of alternatives by comparing all the information and then purchasing decision step. Lastly post purchase behavior. So related to tourism organizations and the hotel should develop and promote the destination nearby the areas which influence tourist future travelling intention by:

1. To increase publicize on history and reputation about the Four Face Buddha by provide more historical information.
2. Developing the facilities by provide enough restrooms for tourist and responsible to ensure about cleanliness facilities.
3. Organize for more convenience about amulet purchasing to tourist.
4. To announce the nearby hotels for promoting about religious tourism.
5. The knowledgeable staffs are required to give details of the background of the places in order to satisfy tourists' interest in religious tourism activities.

From this research found that the data collection was conducted with only foreigner tourists from Asia most of them have an average age (middle ages). Thus, this average age might have interest in religion tourism. Then more study for this will provide tourist an opportunity to gain tourists repeat travelling (post purchase behavior) and engagement in tourism activities in the future and positive recommendation to others. And hope that this survey made to find out about the behavior of the English speaking Asian tourists which can lead for business or tourism development later.

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