A Cross-National Comparative Analysis of Destination Satisfaction and Loyalty Between Chinese and Australian Independent Tourists: A Study of Phuket

Pornpisanu Promsivapallop and Tatiyaporn Jarumaneerat
Prince of Songkla University, Thailand
promsivapallop@gmail.com

Abstract: This study primarily aims to offer a comparative analysis of destination satisfaction across two nationalities of international tourists, namely Chinese and Australians, on their holiday experience in Phuket. The results are drawn from 259 Chinese and 277 Australian independent tourists. The findings illustrate more differences than similarities in terms of destination satisfaction between the two nationalities. The Chinese tourists were found to be less satisfied with most aspects of their holiday, as compared to the Australian tourists, although no differences were detected in their destination loyalty. In addition, destination loyalty was found to be influenced by the satisfaction of accommodation and safety, and the quality of beaches.

Keywords: Destination satisfaction, loyalty, Chinese, Australian, independent tourists, Phuket

As competition among tourist destinations has increasingly intensified, tourists are presented with more competing destinations for their holiday choice. It is, thus, essential for destination managers to consistently assess their destination's performance and ensure that the destination remains competitive. The significance of destination performance measurement from the viewpoint of tourists who have visited and experienced the destination is widely recognized (Wang, 2016). With information obtained from the

tourist's destination assessment, destination planners and marketers are able to identify destination strengths and weaknesses, and, hence, make more effective and informed management and marketing decisions (Meng, Tepanon, & Uysal, 2008). Indeed, customer satisfaction has been central to managerial endeavors in all business sectors, as it has been confirmed that satisfied customers tend to develop loyalty through repurchase behavior and product referral intention (Della Corte, Sciarelli, Cascella, & Gaudio, 2015;

Valle, Silva, Mendes, & Guerreiro, 2006). This is no exception in the tourism industry.

Tourist satisfaction and loyalty have fully been recognized as crucial issues in destination marketing. These topics have been some of the most widely studied areas in the field of tourism research (Wang, 2016; Wang, Zhang, Gu, & Zhen, 2009). Although these topics have been extensively studied, little is known about comparative analysis on the satisfaction of tourists from different nationalities. Few studies have focused on examining destination performance across tourists from different cultures (Kozak, 2001; Yu & Goulden, 2006; Aktas, Cevirgen, & Toker, 2009). The majority of past research have either studied tourist satisfaction in particular market segments, such as that of Sangpikul (2017) for European markets on Phuket, or for international tourists in general (Guo & Sanposh, 2015) on Kunming. Limited information is available on comparative analysis of tourist satisfaction by tourists from different nationalities or cultures. For example, Kozak (2001) compared tourist satisfaction between British and German tourists. Yu and Goulden (2006) analyzed and reported tourist satisfaction regarding Mongolia as a tourist destination by comparing the results obtained from tourists visiting from Europe, the US, Japan, and other Asia–Pacific countries.

Although the results obtained from general tourists are useful, they may not be applicable to specific tourist segments or cultures that may have unique characteristics and perception. According to Kozak (2001), it is unfruitful to examine tourist satisfaction of general groups since destinations attract tourists from different cultures and nationalities. He argued for the need to conduct comparative satisfaction research between groups of tourists to better understand their similarities and differences.

In addition, including general tourists, who may be either independent travelers or those who have been on package tours, could produce unreliable results. This is due to the inherent dissimilarities in holiday behavior between independent and group tour tourists. Tourists on package tours normally follow tight and strict programs and tend to miss out on opportunities to experience many aspects of the tourist destination, such as the use of public transport, experiences of the local way of life, interactions with the local people,

trying authentic local food, and so forth. Including both types of tourists, who have different characteristics and different purposes of visit, may bring the validity of the findings into question. This study attempts to fulfill these research gaps by offering a comparative analysis of tourist satisfaction and loyalty among two key nationalities, namely, Chinese and Australian tourists. In addition, it focuses on independent tourists only, as this group of tourists generally has more flexible travel programs, and usually are exposed to more opportunities in experiencing local aspects of the destination.

The choice in selecting the mentioned two nationalities is due to two main reasons. First, they are culturally different based on Hofstede's national cultural framework (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede Insights, 2017). While Australian culture is described as highly individualistic and indulgent, Chinese culture scores lower in these cultural dimensions. On the other hand, Australian culture has much less power distance and long-term orientation when comparing it to Chinese culture, which is dominant in the two cultural aspects. The Australian cultural framework also scores a little lower than Chinese culture in terms of muscularity but has a relatively higher score than Chinese culture on uncertainty avoidance. The second reason is due to the significance of these markets in the studied destination, Phuket. Statistically, based on the report by C9 Hotelworks (2014; 2015), the two selected groups of tourists have been among the largest market sources of tourism in Phuket, with Chinese and Australian being the first and third largest sources of market, respectively.

The aims of this paper are twofold. First, it seeks to conduct a comparative assessment of the performance of Phuket as a tourist destination, through an assessment of tourist satisfaction by Chinese and Australian tourists. Second, it aims to assess and compare the influence of satisfaction factors on destination loyalty across the two nationalities.

Literature Review

Tourist Satisfaction

Satisfaction is regarded as an important factor in determining business success, as past literature

has linked its impact to customer loyalty and future intentions (Altunel & Erkut, 2015). It is defined as the perceived differences between expectations and actual experiences after consumption (Chen & Chen, 2010). Tourist satisfaction occurs when actual experiences exceed the tourist's expectations resulting in a positive feeling of pleasure, while dissatisfaction would occur when experiences fail to meet their expectations resulting in a feeling of displeasure (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Reisinger & Turner, 2003). In the tourism context, tourist destinations are unique in features and comprise a variety of tourism products. Consequently, tourists normally evaluate a single destination by combining their experiences and form feelings in response to multiple products. Hence, tourist satisfaction is the aggregate emotional state of tourist experiences toward a destination, in comparison to their prior expectations (Altunel & Erkut, 2015; Baker & Crompton, 2000).

According to Dmitrović et al. (2009), customer satisfaction has been assessed based on four models including perceived overall performance (performance only approach), expectation/disconfirmation (expectation-performance approach), equity, and importance-performance. With regard to tourism, two main approaches have been most frequently adopted to measure tourist satisfaction—performance only approach and the expectation-performance approach (Park & Yi, 2016). While the former measures only the satisfaction of tourists toward destination attributes, the latter asks tourists to evaluate both their expectations and satisfaction, and then both of these evaluations are compared to derive satisfaction levels. The performance-only approach has been found to be more reliable because it avoids the use of expectations, which tourists may find hard to recall precisely after having had actual experiences at the destination (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Crompton & Love, 1995). The use of the performance-only approach is also supported by a number of researchers due to the empirical evidence of its reliability and validity (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Kozak, 2001).

Cross Culture Studies in Tourist Satisfaction

Kozak (2001) contended that it is imperative to conduct tourist satisfaction research by comparing different groups of tourists, as tourist destinations welcome tourists from different cultural backgrounds, and thus they may have different perceptions and satisfaction. For this reason, there have been a small number of studies that attempt to conduct comparative tourist satisfaction research between tourists from different nationalities. Generally, the results show vast differences in the nature of satisfaction between tourists from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, destination marketers and tourism business operators need to understand these differences in order to design appropriate service offers accordingly, to enhance the satisfaction of different tourist groups.

Within a few comparative tourist satisfaction studies, a particularly notable research study was conducted by Kozak (2001). The author conducted a comparative analysis of tourist satisfaction between British and German tourists visiting Mallorca and Turkey. His results showed that there were many differences in satisfaction between the two tourist groups, where British tourists were more satisfied than German tourists in most aspects. Another research study conducted by Lee and Lee (2009) compared tourist perceived image and satisfaction of Guam using importance-performance analysis. Similarly, more differences than similarities were identified between studied nationalities. A similar pattern of results was also discovered in the study comparing destination satisfaction between Russian and German tourists (Aktas et al., 2009).

Within the context of Thailand tourism, Sereetrakul (2012) examined the influence of the nationality of tourists on their satisfaction towards Bangkok. The results reveal both differences and similarities in tourist satisfaction among six regional groups including East Asian, South Asian, European, American, Oceanian, and Middle Eastern. While differences existed in the satisfaction of tourists among these groups toward accommodation, accessibility, and attraction, equal satisfaction levels were found with regard to utilities, shops, and activities. Another study by McDowall and Ma (2010) also discovered differences in demographic profiles and satisfaction levels between international and domestic tourists for their holiday in Bangkok.

Destination Loyalty

Destination loyalty is another research area that has been extensively studied. It is recognized as one of the most important indicators used to determine the success of destinations or organizations. Destination loyalty has been conceptualized to include two key indicators: intention to revisit the destination and willingness to recommend it to their friends and relatives (Valle et al., 2006; Sangpikul, 2017; Toyama & Yamada, 2012; Oppermann, 2000). As explained by Albaity and Melham (2017), determinants of destination loyalty have been reported in the literature, including satisfaction, destination image, service quality, experience, emotion, destination attachment, and perceived value. In addition, based on their study of 17 of the most well-known attractions in Taiwan, Lin and Kuo (2016) discovered the mechanism of the satisfaction and loyalty relationship within the tourism context, including the causal effects of positive experience on perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty. Among the mentioned determinants, the satisfaction of tourist experience in a destination has been recognized as key to destination choice, as well as destination loyalty (Valle et al., 2006; Bajs, 2015; Sangpikul, 2017).

The relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty within the context of Thailand as a tourist destination was investigated by Sangpikul (2017) and McDowall and Ma (2010). Sangpikul (2017) examined satisfaction of European tourists on their holiday in Phuket and confirmed the destination satisfaction and loyalty relationship. The study revealed that the destination loyalty of European tourists depends on their satisfaction with the natural environment, local culture, and safety. Likewise, in the study investigating satisfaction among international and domestic tourists visiting Bangkok, McDowall and Ma (2010) also confirmed that tourist satisfaction leads to intention to revisit and provide recommendations. The safety and security factor was revealed to be the key contributor to destination loyalty.

Methodology

As previously mentioned, the performance only satisfaction measurement approach has been proven to provide more accurate results, and hence, this study utilized this approach in measuring tourist satisfaction. This practice has been adopted by previous tourist satisfaction studies such as the one by Kozak (2001) and a recent study in Phuket by Sangpikul (2017).

Research Instrument

A face to face survey was adopted as the study method for this study. The questionnaire was developed to include the assessment of satisfaction with destination attributes based on past literature (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Kozak, 2001; Sangpikul, 2017). Two other main parts of the questionnaire included questions asking respondents about their demographic profiles and their loyalty to Phuket as a tourist destination.

The questionnaire was prepared in two languages: Chinese and English. The English Chinese translation was completed by a team of professional translators. The questionnaire was checked for content validity by a panel of tourism university lecturers and it was later pre-tested with 20 Chinese and Australian tourists at the Phuket International Airport. This resulted in minor changes in the wording to enhance the clarity of the questionnaire.

Measures

Satisfaction. Thirty items of tourist destination attributes were gathered from previous research (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Kozak, 2001; Sangpikul, 2017) to form the measurement of destination satisfaction. These items were based on natural resources; general infrastructure; tourist infrastructure; tourist leisure and recreation; culture, history, and art; natural environment; social environment; and atmosphere of the place as suggested by Beerli and Martin (2004). These 30 items were adopted partly from Kozak (2001) who used 44 items to measure tourist satisfaction in Mallorca and Turkey. Eighteen items of the tourist satisfaction study in Phuket by Sangpikul (2017) were also incorporated into the measurement as these items reflect the characteristics of Phuket as a tourist destination. These items were rated based on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 refers to very dissatisfied and 5 means very satisfied. The 30 items were then

factor analyzed to identify the dimensionality of the attributes.

Loyalty. Destination loyalty was measured with two items—intention to revisit Phuket for a holiday and willingness to recommend Phuket to their friends and relatives—on a five-point Likert scale. This measurement is consistent with previous studies such as the one by Sangpikul (2017). The two items demonstrated sufficient reliability of scale with Cronbach's alpha of 0.829 (Pallant, 2013). They were combined to form destination loyalty, the dependent variable of the study.

Survey Administration

Face-to-face surveys were conducted at Phuket International Airport in December 2016. The survey took place both during the day and night times based on international flights to China and Australia. The survey was implemented during the time tourists waited at the departure areas to board the airplanes to China and Australia, giving them more time to complete the questionnaire. Screening questions were asked prior to the start of the survey in order to ensure the participants meet the criteria, which include only Chinese and Australian tourists who were 18 years of age or older, have stayed at least two nights in Phuket during the current trip, and were independent travelers. The two-night minimum length of stay was applied to ensure that the respondents had adequate leisure experience to reflect on their satisfaction. On average, it was found that the Australian participants spent 8.85 days on the current trip, a longer holiday period as compared to the Chinese participants who were on an average of 5.45 days holiday period.

In total, 536 valid responses were gathered for analysis. The demographic profiles of the sample of both nationalities are reported in Table 1. Of the 536 respondents, the sample consisted of slightly more Australian tourists (51.68%) than Chinese tourists (48.32%). Australian tourists reported greater past visit experience to Thailand and Phuket than Chinese tourists, with 52.71% of them having visited Thailand before, and 38.99% having visited Phuket before. These numbers were lower for Chinese tourists who reported their past visit experience as 39.77% and 25.10% for Thailand and Phuket, respectively. While

the Australian sample consisted of more male tourists, the Chinese sample was comprised of slightly more female than male tourists. The majority of Chinese tourists were between 25–34 years old (50.79%), while Australian tourists were relatively younger with 34.78% belonging to the 18–24 years old category. In terms of income, overall, it is clear that the Chinese tourists generally have less income than the Australian tourists. The majority of Chinese respondents earned below 2,000 USD per month, while the Australian respondents indicated their income to be more diverse, spread rather evenly across all income categories.

Results

Factor Analysis Results on Satisfaction of Destination Attributes

The 30 items of destination attributes were factor analyzed to explore the underlying dimensions. Principal component analysis with a Varimax rotation was performed to the destination attributes of the overall data, the same approach as that used by Kozak (2001). To determine the number of factors, only factors that meet the minimum eigenvalue of 1.0 or higher were retained for further analysis (Pallant, 2013). A cut-off point of factor loadings was identified at 0.5, the same level identified in previous studies such as that of Lee and Lee (2009).

As reported in Table 2, the factor analysis exacted seven factors, with a total of 67.083% of variance being explained. Five items—friendliness of local people, variety of tourist attractions, availability of facilities for children, availability of shopping facilities, and signposting of tourist attractions—demonstrated cross-loadings and were removed from further analysis. The seven factors were labeled (1) Food, (2) Accommodation and safety, (3) Beaches, (4) Local transportation services and prices, (5) Cultural attraction and souvenir, (6) Leisure activities, and (7) Traffic and cleanliness. Internal consistency of the items within each factor was examined by calculating the Cronbach's alpha values. The alpha values for the first six factors were satisfactory to warrant their reliability, ranging from 0.72–0.84 (Pallant, 2013). However, the seventh factor—traffic and cleanliness—demonstrated insufficient Cronbach's alpha value of

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic characteristics	Total frequency (*n* = 536)	Percentage	Chinese (*n* = 259)	Australian (*n* = 277)
First time/repeat visit				
First visit to Thailand	287	53.54	156 (60.23%)	131 (47.29%)
Repeat visit to Thailand	249	46.46	103 (39.77%)	146 (52.71%)
First visit to Phuket	363	67.72	194 (74.90%)	169 (61.01%)
Repeat visit to Phuket	173	32.28	65 (25.10%)	108 (38.99%)
Gender				
Male	266	49.63	116 (44.79%)	150 (54.15%)
Female	270	50.37	143 (55.21%)	127 (45.85%)
Age				
18–24	138	25.79	42 (16.22%)	96 (34.78%)
25–34	218	40.75	132 (50.97%)	86 (31.16%)
35–44	98	18.32	53 (20.46%)	45 (16.30%)
45–54	51	9.53	23 (8.88%)	28 (10.14%)
55–64	24	4.49	8 (3.09%)	16 (5.80%)
65 or above	6	1.12	1 (0.39%)	5 (1.81%)
*Personal monthly income**				
Below 1,000 USD	112	21.62	71 (27.84%)	41 (15.59%)
1,000–1,999 USD	114	22.01	81 (31.76%)	33 (12.55%)
2,000–2,999 USD	72	13.90	41 (16.08%)	31 (11.79%)
3,000 –3,999 USD	63	12.16	19 (7.45%)	44 (16.73%)
4,000–4,999 USD	53	10.23	15 (5.88%)	38 (14.45%)
5,000–5,999 USD	31	5.98	7 (2.75%)	24 (9.13%)
6,000–6,9000 USD	21	4.05	3 (1.18%)	18 (6.84%)
7,000 USD and above	52	10.04	18 (7.06%)	34 (12.93%)

Remarks: *Income for both nationalities has been converted from Chinese RMB and Australian Dollar to USD for further comparison

0.60. Nevertheless, the correlation between the two items—safety of traffic and overall cleanliness of the destination—was run and the result demonstrated a reasonable level of correlation at 0.42 (*p* = 0.00). Therefore, this factor will be borne in mind when interpreting the t-test and multiple regression results.

In terms of the grand means of each factor of the overall respondents on a five-point Likert scale, Factor (2) Accommodation and safety received the highest score (Mean = 4.13, SD = 0.56), followed by Factor (1) Food (Mean = 3.99, SD = 0.68), and Factor (3) Beaches (Mean = 3.93, SD = 0.67). Factor (4) Transportation and prices and Factor (7) Traffic and cleanliness were rated with the lowest mean scores of 3.66 (SD = 0.80) and 3.72 (SD = 0.80), respectively. When considering individual items within all factors, quality of accommodation (Mean = 4.20, SD = 0.73), variety of accommodation (Mean = 4.18, SD = 0.76), and overall safety and security while traveling (Mean = 4.15, SD = 0.72) were the three attributes rated with the highest mean scores. On the other hand, the three attributes rated with the lowest mean scores in ascending order include prices of local transport (Mean = 3.42, SD = 1.10), network of local public transport (Mean = 3.43, SD = 1.08), and safety of traffic (Mean = 3.60, SD = 1.03).

Table 2

Factor Analysis on Destination Attributes of Tourist Satisfaction

Factor	Loading	Eigen value	% of variance explained	Cronbach's alpha	Mean	S.D.
Factor (1) Food		**11.40**	**11.74**	**0.84**	**3.99**	**0.68**
Taste of local food	0.824				4.06	0.84
Opportunity to try local food	0.785				4.14	0.84
Variety of local food	0.785				4.04	0.86
Availability of fresh seafood	0.652				3.96	0.89
Hygiene of food	0.505				3.72	0.92
Factor (2) Accommodation and safety		**2.07**	**11.35**	**0.80**	**4.13**	**0.56**
Quality of accommodation	0.748				4.20	0.73
Variety of accommodation	0.718				4.18	0.76
Overall safety and security while travelling	0.688				4.15	0.72
Overall value for money of the trip	0.678				4.07	0.80
Availability of nightlife and entertainment activities	0.506				4.05	0.77
Factor (3) Beaches		**1.65**	**10.45**	**0.79**	**3.93**	**0.67**
Cleanliness of beaches and sea	0.755				3.84	0.91
Availability of space on beaches	0.732				3.98	0.85
Attractiveness of beaches	0.690				4.13	0.81
Facilities provided on beaches	0.656				3.76	0.89
Factor (4) Local transportation services and prices		**1.48**	**9.86**	**0.78**	**3.66**	**0.80**
Prices of local transport	0.820				3.42	1.10
Network of local transport within Phuket	0.788				3.43	1.08
Prices of food and beverages	0.546				3.81	0.97
Attitude of local drivers	0.528				3.94	0.94
Factor (5) Cultural attraction and souvenir		**1.33**	**9.05**	**0.77**	**3.86**	**0.69**
Local architecture and heritage sites	0.748				3.85	0.83
Temples and cultural attractions	0.746				3.98	0.83
Variety of souvenir	0.520				3.74	0.85
Factor (6) Leisure activities		**1.14**	**7.37**	**0.72**	**3.96**	**0.69**
Availability of touring services to nearby attractions	0.684				3.89	0.85
Variety of leisure activities	0.569				4.02	0.72
Factor (7) Traffic and cleanliness		**1.05**	**7.27**	**0.60**	**3.72**	**0.80**
Safety of traffic	0.793				3.60	1.03
Overall cleanliness of the destination	0.705				3.83	0.87
Total variance explained			67.083			

Remarks: Mean is calculated on scale 1 - 5, where 1 = very dissatisfied and 5 = very satisfied.

Comparison Between Satisfaction Levels of Chinese and Australian Tourists

This section reports two main findings. The first part compares the ranking of satisfaction levels between the two nationalities based on the satisfaction dimensions exacted from the factor analysis. The second part presents the t-test results comparing mean values of satisfaction on the seven factors between the Chinese and Australian tourists.

The ranking of mean scores of the seven satisfaction factors by each nationality is shown in Table 3. It appears that there is no consistency in terms of the rank order for both nationalities, except for Factor (2) Accommodation and safety. Both the Chinese and Australian tourists ranked this factor as the most satisfactory, with relatively similar mean scores of 4.12 and 4.15 in each sample group, respectively.

While the Chinese tourists rated Factor (3) Beaches as the second highest source of satisfaction (Mean = 3.98), the Australian tourists did not rate Factor (3) Beaches very highly (Mean = 3.78, ranked 5). The Australian tourists scored Factor (1) Food as their second most popular satisfaction factor (Mean = 4.14). Conversely, the mean value of Factor (1) Food according to the Chinese respondents was ranked in 5th place (Mean = 3.84). It is interesting to note that the Australian tourists were least satisfied with Factor

(7) Traffic and cleanliness (Mean = 3.56), while the least satisfying factor for the Chinese respondents was Factor (4) transportation and prices (Mean = 3.57). In addition, both the Chinese and Australian tourists demonstrated similar levels of destination loyalty with the mean scores of 4.04 and 4.00, respectively.

In order to compare the satisfaction levels between the Chinese and Australian tourists, a series of independent t-tests were performed on all main satisfaction factors, individual satisfaction destination attributes, and destination loyalty under study. The results are summarized in Table 4. Overall, four main satisfaction factors were observed to display significant differences in satisfaction levels between the two nationalities—(1) Food, (4) Local transportation services and prices, (6) Leisure activities, and (7) Traffic and cleanliness. Generally, the Chinese sample was found to be statistically less satisfied than the Australian sample with regard to three main factors, namely, (1) Food ($t = -5.02$, $p = 0.00$), (4) Local transportation services and prices ($t = -2.41$, $p = 0.02$), and (6) Leisure activities ($t = -2.98$, $p = 0.00$). Conversely, the results from the Chinese tourists were discovered to have a significantly higher mean value than those of the Australian tourists in one main factor—(7) Traffic and cleanliness ($t = 4.85$, $p = 0.00$). In terms of destination loyalty, no significant difference was observed between the Chinese and Australian samples ($t = 0.59$, $p = 0.56$).

Table 3
Ranking of Mean Values on the Satisfaction Factors by Nationality

Factor	Mean (Rank)	
	Chinese	**Australian**
Factor (1) Food	3.84 (5)	4.14 (2)
Factor (2) Accommodation and safety	4.12 (1)	4.15 (1)
Factor (3) Beaches	3.98 (2)	3.87 (5)
Factor (4) Local transportation services and prices	3.57 (7)	3.74 (6)
Factor (5) Cultural attraction and souvenir	3.82 (6)	3.89 (4)
Factor (6) Leisure activities	3.86 (4)	4.05 (3)
Factor (7) Traffic and cleanliness	3.89 (3)	3.56 (7)
Dependent variable: Destination loyalty	4.04	4.00

Table 4

T-test of Satisfaction Factors Between the Chinese and Australian Tourists

Factor	Mean		T-test		Mean difference (C - A)
	Chinese (C)	Australian (A)	*t*	*p*	
Factor (1) Food	**3.84**	**4.14**	***-5.02***	***0.00***	***-0.30***
Opportunity to try local food	3.97	4.30	*-4.55*	*0.00*	-0.33
Variety of local food	3.88	4.20	*-4.32*	*0.00*	-0.32
Taste of local food	3.86	4.26	*-5.59*	*0.00*	-0.40
Availability of fresh seafood	3.85	4.07	*-2.81*	*0.01*	-0.22
Hygiene of food	3.71	3.74	-0.36	0.72	-0.03
Factor (2) Accommodation and safety	**4.12**	**4.15**	**-0.55**	**0.58**	**-0.03**
Variety of accommodation	4.14	4.22	-1.19	0.24	-0.08
Quality of accommodation	4.15	4.25	-1.56	0.12	-0.10
Overall safety and security while travelling	4.18	4.13	0.87	0.39	0.05
Overall value for money of the trip	4.05	4.10	-0.75	0.46	-0.05
Availability of nightlife and entertainment activities	4.01	4.08	-1.06	0.29	-0.07
Factor (3) Beaches	**3.98**	**3.87**	**1.81**	**0.07**	**0.11**
Attractiveness of beaches	4.11	4.15	-0.51	0.61	-0.04
Cleanliness of beaches and sea	3.95	3.73	*2.72*	*0.01*	0.21
Availability of space on beaches	4.08	3.89	*2.53*	*0.01*	0.19
Facilities provided on beaches	3.84	3.68	*2.06*	0.04	0.16
Factor (4) Local transportation services and prices	**3.57**	**3.74**	***-2.41***	***0.02***	***-0.17***
Network of local transport within Phuket	3.17	3.66	*-5.20*	*0.00*	-0.49
Attitude of local drivers	4.13	3.77	*4.39*	*0.00*	0.35
Prices of local transport	3.27	3.55	*-2.92*	*0.00*	-0.28
Prices of food and beverages	3.68	3.93	*-3.00*	*0.00*	-0.25
Factor (5) Cultural attraction and souvenir	**3.82**	**3.89**	**-1.02**	**0.31**	**-0.07**
Temples and cultural attractions	3.88	4.07	*-2.41*	*0.02*	-0.19
Local architecture and heritage sites	3.88	3.83	0.57	0.57	0.04
Variety of souvenir	3.69	3.79	-1.39	0.17	-0.11
Factor (6) Leisure activities	**3.86**	**4.05**	***-2.98***	***0.00***	***-0.19***
Availability of touring services to nearby tourist attractions	3.78	4.00	*-2.92*	*0.00*	-0.22
Variety of leisure activities	3.92	4.10	*-2.71*	*0.01*	-0.17
Factor (7) Traffic and cleanliness	**3.89**	**3.56**	***4.85***	***0.00***	***0.33***
Safety of traffic	3.73	3.48	*2.86*	*0.00*	0.25
Overall cleanliness of the destination	4.04	3.63	*5.61*	*0.00*	0.41
Destination loyalty	**4.04**	**4.00**	**0.59**	**0.56**	**0.04**
Willingness to recommend	4.12	4.18	-0.85	0.40	-0.06
Intention to revisit	3.96	3.82	1.69	0.09	0.14

The differences between the satisfaction of the Chinese and Australian tourists in Factor (1) Food were significant throughout all individual items except in food hygiene. The remaining five items under (1) Food, indicated by the t and p values were generally in the same direction, and showed that the Chinese tourists were less satisfied than the Australian tourists. On the other hand, no differences were recorded in any destination attributes of Factor (2) Accommodation and safety. This illustrates that both nationalities were equally satisfied with this factor.

Although there was no difference observed at the overall level of satisfaction in Factor (3) Beaches, the Chinese tourists reported being more satisfied than the Australian sample with three individual attributes under this factor. These attributes include cleanliness of beaches and seas ($t = 2.72$, $p = 0.01$), availability of spaces on beaches ($t = 2.53$, $p = 0.01$), and facilities provided on beaches ($t = 2.06$, $p = 0.04$).

Differences in satisfaction levels were clearly recorded in Factor (4) Local transportation services and prices. Although the Chinese tourists were less satisfied than the Australian tourists with this factor in general, as well as in most individual attributes, a higher satisfaction level was observed in one attribute, namely, the attitudes of local drivers ($t = 4.39$, $p = 0.00$).

It was observed that there were no differences in the satisfaction levels both in general and in individual attributes of Factor (5) Cultural attraction and souvenirs, with the exception of one individual item, temples and cultural attractions. It was recorded that the Chinese tourists were less satisfied with this attribute than the Australian tourists ($t = -2.41$, $p = 0.02$).

Significant differences in satisfaction levels were clearly observed in Factor (6) Leisure activities. The Chinese tourists reported being less satisfied, both in general and with regard to all attributes under this factor. Conversely, the satisfaction levels on Factor (7) Traffic and cleanliness were illustrated to be in the opposite direction to Factor (6). The Chinese tourists were more satisfied with traffic and cleanliness of the destination than the Australian tourists in all aspects. In addition, in terms of destination loyalty, both groups were identified as having relatively equal levels of destination loyalty both in general as well as in individual attributes.

The Influence of Satisfaction Factors and Nationality on Destination Loyalty

Standard multiple regression was used to test the effects of satisfaction factors and nationality on destination loyalty. To facilitate the multiple regression, nationality, which was a dichotomous variable (Chinese and Australian), was coded in dummy form. The satisfaction and nationality factors were entered as predictor variables and destination loyalty was entered as the outcome variable. Assumptions of multiple regression, based on Pallant (2013), were examined. All conditions, including linearity, normality of scale, multicollinearity, outliers, and the number of case observations, was of no concern.

The results of the multiple regression are reported in Table 5. Overall, the model is significant and explains 21% of the total variances ($R^2 = 0.21$, $F = 11.59$, $p = 0.00$). Two factors—(2) Accommodation and safety and (3) Beaches—were found to be significant contributors to the model. Both factors had significant positive influences on destination loyalty. The (2) Accommodation and safety factor was observed to have the higher effect on destination loyalty ($\beta = 0.29$, $t = 4.19$, $p = 0.00$), while (3) Beaches demonstrate a lesser influence on the outcome variable ($\beta = 0.13$, $t = 2.07$, $p = 0.04$). Nationality was not found to be a significant predictor in this model ($\beta = -0.04$, $t = -0.74$, $p = 0.46$). The results indicate that destination loyalty depends on the tourists' satisfaction with the quality of accommodation on offer and their safety during the holiday, as well as the quality of the beaches. In addition, the Chinese and Australian tourists under study had no difference in the level of destination loyalty.

Discussion

A number of key issues have arisen from the findings in this study. The first issue relates to the results of destination satisfaction. The dimensions of destination satisfaction were discovered to be in line with previous research (Kozak, 2001; Sangpikul, 2017), although they were named differently. Furthermore, many differences in the satisfaction aspects between the two nationalities were found, confirming that

Table 5

Multiple Regression Results: Satisfaction Factors on Destination Loyalty

Factor	Standardised β	Std. Error	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
					Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		0.29	5.13	0.00		
Food	0.10	0.07	1.48	0.14	0.51	1.95
Accommodation and safety	0.29	0.09	4.19	*0.00*	0.47	2.13
Beaches	0.13	0.07	2.07	*0.04*	0.54	1.85
Local transportation services and prices	-0.01	0.06	-0.17	0.87	0.51	1.96
Cultural attraction and souvenir	-0.07	0.07	-1.00	0.32	0.53	1.88
Leisure activities	0.03	0.07	0.50	0.62	0.53	1.90
Traffic and cleanliness	0.07	0.05	1.13	0.26	0.69	1.44
Nationality (Dummy: Chinese - Australian)	-0.04	0.08	-0.74	0.46	0.85	1.18
R^2	0.21					
Adjusted R^2	0.19					
d/f	8/353					
F	11.59					
p	0.00					

it is misleading to attempt to measure and draw conclusions about destination satisfaction in general, as destinations welcome tourists from different cultures and background (Lee & Lee, 2009; Aktas et al., 2009; Kozak, 2001). Chinese tourists were discovered to be generally less satisfied than Australian tourists with many aspects of their holiday experiences. The three main areas that the Chinese tourists were less satisfied with included food, local transportation services and prices, and leisure activities but they were more satisfied with traffic and cleanliness than the Australian tourists. In addition, both the Chinese and Australian tourists were most satisfied with accommodation and safety. On the other hand, while the Chinese tourists were least satisfied with transportation and prices, Australian tourists had the lowest level of satisfaction with traffic and cleanliness.

Another issue that emerged from the study relates to destination loyalty. The two nationalities exhibited equal levels of loyalty toward Phuket as a holiday destination. Furthermore, accommodation and safety and beaches are the two factors that positively determine tourist loyalty to Phuket in this study. The finding confirms previous studies into tourist

satisfaction in Thailand. The studies of Sangpikul (2017) and McDowall and Ma (2010) discovered natural attractions, local hospitality and culture, safety, and cleanliness to be the determinants of the tourists' loyalty toward Phuket as a destination.

In addition, the differences in satisfaction levels between the Chinese and Australian tourists require further discussion. Despite the realities of Chinese tourists generally having more similarities in culture and living standards to Thailand than Australian tourists, they were generally found to be less satisfied with their holiday experiences in Phuket than the Australian tourists. This result is a rather surprising phenomenon. There could possibly be a number of explanations for this occurrence. First, this study included only independent travelers, those who are generally more demanding and have higher expectations than tourists who are on tour packages. This is particularly the case for Chinese tourists. A previous study by Choibamrung (2017) discovered that higher income Chinese tourists tend to arrange their own travel and stay in more luxurious hotels than lower income tourists. As a result, independent Chinese tourists tend to form higher expectations

toward their holiday experience than those who are on package tours. Therefore, it could be more likely for Chinese tourists in this study to have less satisfaction when compared to Australian tourists. In addition, another study by Lu and Feng (2010) also confirmed that Chinese tourists were more value conscious, and therefore more demanding than other international tourists in terms of hotel and personal services.

The second reason explaining this issue is due to the fact that this study has shown that Australian tourists are more likely to have had previous holiday experiences in Thailand and Phuket. This was reflected by the longer current length of stay and more numerous previous travel experiences to Thailand and Phuket by Australian tourists. Consequently, they are more familiar with Phuket and are more precise with what they can expect from their holiday experiences in Phuket. Evidence from the literature has suggested that repeat travelers tend to be more familiar and satisfied with the destination than first-time travelers (Assaker, Vinzi, & O'Connor, 2011).

However, Chinese tourists reported higher levels of satisfaction than Australian tourists with traffic, cleanliness, and availability of space at beaches. The results are not surprising as Thailand and China have similar environments and standards of these attributes, whereas Australians might not be as familiar with these circumstances in their country back home. This is reflected by the recent world "Quality of life index" (2017). Australia is ranked 9th in the world, whereas China and Thailand are ranked 51st and 55th respectively. The report further suggests that China and Thailand share similar scores in costs of living, pollution, and traffic commute time, all of which are at significantly lower standards than in Australia. Therefore, for these reasons, Chinese tourists may have lower expectations regarding these factors than Australians, and may also have a higher degree of tolerance in this respect.

Limitation

There are several limitations to this study, and hence one must interpret the study results with caution. First, as it was not practical to use probability sampling in this study, convenience sampling was utilized as the study method. As a result, the results may not be fully generalized to the overall Chinese and Australian tourist markets. Second, the data collection was implemented only during the tourist high season in December 2016. Future research may need to compare whether there are differences between high-season and low-season tourists. There is also a potential for future research to include other types of tourists, such as different market segments, package tours vs independent tourists, and perhaps bring other nationalities into the wider analysis framework.

Conclusion

This study provided a comparative analysis of tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty between Chinese and Australian tourists on their holiday experience in Phuket. In terms of similarities, both Chinese and Australian tourists were mostly satisfied with accommodation and safety. In addition, no differences were detected in their levels of destination loyalty.

The findings further discovered key differences in terms of destination satisfaction between the two nationalities. This suggests that destination satisfaction should not be studied on general tourists, but it should be examined based on different cultures and backgrounds of tourists. The Chinese tourists were found to be less satisfied with most aspects of their holiday, as compared to the Australian tourists. These elements include food, local transportation services and prices, and leisure activities. This could be attributed to the fact that the independent Chinese tourists had less travel experience to Thailand than the independent Australian tourists and, thus, were less familiar with the destination. As a result, they could be less precise with their holiday expectations than the Australian tourists. This could have resulted in the Chinese tourists having higher levels of expectations on these factors. Furthermore, as reported in the literature, independent Chinese tourists generally form higher expectations than Chinese tourists who are on packaged tours due to their higher spending and greater efforts put into the trip arrangement.

On the other hand, the Chinese tourists were found to be more satisfied with traffic and cleanliness than

the Australian tourists. This could possibly be due to the lower expectations of the Chinese tourists than the Australian tourists in these aspects, as Thailand shares similar living standards and conditions of these factors with China, but not with Australia.

Finally, the study confirms previous literature on the positive effect of destination satisfaction on loyalty. In addition, the findings of the research contribute to the body of knowledge of destination satisfaction and loyalty, as it reveals that the positive influence of destination satisfaction on destination loyalty holds true across the two nationalities.

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