

RESEARCH BRIEF

Antecedents to Thai Night Market Visitor Revisit Intention

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The Thai night markets are world-renowned for their uniqueness and exotic flair. After the sunsets and the hot tropical heat starts to dissipate, the markets come alive with the smell of delicious aromas, delectable tastes, music for all ears, and vendors wielding products of every type and description. Most international travelers to Thailand have heard of these markets, and before they have even touched down, international visitors have scheduled multiple evenings roaming their targeted market's unique and enchanted passageways.

According to Iqbal et al. (2017), night markets contribute to an urban environment's sustainability. Seamons (2003) and Smith (2015) also contended that night markets have specific characteristics, which include physical, social, and psychological. Moreover, these places are not known by a single landmark, but instead by the local community's process (Seamons, 2003). An individual's experience is at the center of phenomenology and is essential in enriching an urban environment (Iqbal et al., 2017). Activities that help to produce the economy are reflected by the integration and experiences of the individuals in the community. Some might even refer to night markets as a "place ballet," in which the daily repetition of activities creates its tempo of activity, bustle, and calm (Jacobs, 1961; Seamons, 2003).

Night markets have also been identified as sources of potential employment and business development during economic hard times. Iqbal et al. (2017) explicitly stated that due to the 1997 recession, night

markets in both Thailand and Malaysia became weekly fiestas, where unemployed individuals tried their hand at being small business owners and managers. In Malaysia, Ishak et al. (2012) referred to night markets as business incubators for aspiring entrepreneurs, with minimal risk and opportunity to earn a significant income. Another benefit to the local community of night markets is their ability to provide younger workers who work long hours fast, healthy, and inexpensive food in a social setting. All of these elements are, therefore, part of the market's reputation (MR).

In Taiwan, night markets have also been referred to as a "religious experience," as night markets were first introduced near many Buddhist temples to serve as a source of nourishment for the faithful (Boudreau, 2012). For the Taiwanese, night markets are similar in social function to the western style corner pub, where friends meet, while also offering the opportunity to indulge in delicious delicacies from curbside cooks.

Furthermore, when one discusses culinary tourism in Asia, one would be hard-pressed not to have a large section concerning night markets. This is consistent with Tsai (2013), who contended that night markets are a critical element in a destination's image. Food also helps define a country's culture, and night markets are essential in this presentation. Additionally, night markets enhance interpersonal and cultural interactions and act as a mechanism in cultural diplomacy on a personal level. This is consistent with Hsieh and Chang (2006), in which they reported that tourist night

markets in Taiwan ranked among the top three most popular leisure sight-seeing spots.

A wide range of individuals, from locals, tourists, and academic scholars, have witnessed the importance of night markets and their vibrant mix of activities, food, and products. Given the importance of these night markets to Thailand's economy and SME/entrepreneurial sustainability, we further identified some critical variables for investigation of a visitor's night market revisit intention (RI).

In research from Bali, Indonesia, Dewani et al. (2019) determined that good impressions encourage travelers to revisit and recommend their destinations to their relatives and colleagues. Han and Jeong (2013) also related that positive experiences with a firm significantly influence loyalty by revisiting and recommending it to others. Huang and Hsu (2009) also added that in Hong Kong, positive shopping experiences positively affected Chinese tourists' RI. Finally, Goh (2015) added that overall, attitude plays a significant role in a guest's RI.

Another aspect of a guest's RI is visitor satisfaction (VS). Various scholars have determined that business success depends on VS, which is a core element in RI (Danaher et al., 2003; Day, 1976; Henderson, 2000; Jones & Sasser, 1995; Seeman & O'Hara, 2006). Other scholars have suggested that VS is derived from the destination's products and their perceived values (Alegre & Garau, 2010; Chen & Chen, 2010; Chi & Qu, 2008; Kozak, 2001).

Moreover, Lai and Hitchcock (2016) have indicated that the perception of service quality (SQ) comes from a consumer's process of evaluation, where individuals compare expectations with the reality of the services received. Kuo et al. (2009) agreed and indicated that the same conditions applied to places. Whang et al. (2016) further discussed SQ and indicated that its importance to guest's RI. Liu and Lee (2016) also indicated that a good SQ in Taiwan positively affected tourists' intention to re-use transportation services. In Alanya, Turkey, Tosun et al. (2015) also validated the importance of proper SQ on tourists' RI.

Furthermore, Do Valle et al. (2001) have suggested that the more a visitor is satisfied with a destination's cultural offerings, the more likely the visitor views the experience as enriching their knowledge and intellectual horizons. In a related way, Vargo and Lusch (2008) discussed service innovation importance

and customer satisfaction as critical aspects of an organization's reputation.

Another important aspect of RI is visitor trust (VT). Research from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) has suggested that brand uniqueness might be due to brand trust. Skogland and Siguaw (2004) also added that VT within the hospitality industry is directly influenced by the hotel's staff effectiveness and the guests' loyalty. This is consistent with research; Delgado-Ballester (2004) stated that VT is dependent on the vendor's good intentions and product reliability.

This study's objectives are as follows:

1. To investigate the interrelationships through structural equation modeling of the factors influencing a visitor's RI to one of five Bangkok night markets.
2. To conduct a goodness-of-fit analysis to confirm the model's fit before the SEM.
3. To make recommendations to night market entrepreneurs on which aspects lead to visitor revisits and, therefore, increased profitability.

From a review of the literature, we present the following hypotheses:

- H1: VS directly influences MR.
- H2: VS directly influences RI.
- H3: VS directly influences VT.
- H4: SQ directly influences VS.
- H5: SQ directly influences MR.
- H6: SQ directly influences RI.
- H7: SQ directly influences VT.
- H8: MR directly influences VT.
- H9: MR directly influences RI.
- H10: VT directly influences RI.

Methods

The study's population was the total number of visitors entering one of five Bangkok night markets over three months between the hours of 19:00–22:00. Sample size determination was derived from a study of the related theory. From both response sampling error discussions (Dillman et al., 2013) and sample size discussion (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010), a ratio of 20:1 was determined to be sufficient to meet

adequate sampling reliability requirements. As the study's questionnaire contained 17 item statements, 340 questionnaire responses were initially set. This was increased to 430 due to anticipated response errors.

Over three months, a survey of five Thai night markets was conducted by the researchers and their faculty's graduate assistants. From the use of systematic sampling (nth name selection technique), every fifth visitor group was selected between the hours of 19:00–22:00 and solicited for their participation and time to answer the study's questionnaire (Mohamad & Ghani, 2014). Of the 430 questionnaires collected, after an audit for completeness, 410 were found to be suitable for data analysis, which represented a 95.35% response rate.

The research questionnaire was segmented into six parts; the first part contains eight items related to each night market visitor's characteristics and night market visits. In parts two–six, a 7-level agreement scale was used to obtain the opinions of each night market visitor. The number 7 was used to anchor opinions in which the visitor had the “most agreement” (6.50–7.00), whereas the number 1 was used to anchor visitor opinions with the “least agreement” (1.00–1.49). Also, Cronbach α assessment was used, whose scores of 0.86–0.94 (Table 1) indicated good reliability (Nunnally, 1978).

Over three months, the research team targeted five Bangkok night markets famous with both locals and foreign tourists. These included the Sai Mai Night Market, the Runway 3119 Night Market near Suvarnabhumi Airport, the Indy Night Market at Pinklao-Thonburi, the Proud Market RCA Night Market on Rama IX Road, and the Udomsuk Walk Night Market at BTS Udomsuk. An initial target was set to collect 86 questionnaires from each targeted market (439 in total). Due to the relaxed and pleasant atmosphere at the time, the questionnaire response was excellent, with the team able to collect 410 fully completed questionnaires.

The study's SEM path analysis was conducted using LISREL 9.10. However, before the final SEM, a GoF was accomplished, as well as a CFA analysis.

Results

Night Market Visitor Personal Characteristics

From each market visitor's questionnaire response, we noted that 97.32% indicated they visited night markets in groups. Also, men seemed to enjoy this

atmosphere a bit more frequently (59.27%), with most visitors between 24–30 years of age (41.71%). Many had already obtained a bachelor's degree or higher (46.58%), but most were still single (55.85%). Finally, most visitors surveyed indicated that they had been to that particular market 4–6 times (46.59%), whereas another 40% indicated they had been to the market over six times already.

The Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) Analysis

The study's LISREL 9.1 CFA analysis entailed a GoF analysis to determine how well the model fits with the data. From this, we noted that the recommended Chi-square (χ^2) value of $p \geq 0.05$ was met (study value = 0.41). The relative Chi-square (χ^2/df) of ≤ 2.00 was also met (study value = 1.03). Numerous authors have also suggested that the values for RMSEA, RMR, and SRMR should be ≤ 0.05 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). These criteria were met as the study's values were 0.00, 0.01, and 0.01, respectively. Moreover, the GFI, AGFI, NFI, and CFI should all be ≥ 0.90 (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). The study's values for these three values were 0.98, 0.95, 0.99, and 1.00, respectively. Finally, Cronbach's α values have been stated to be acceptable if they are ≥ 0.70 . The study's values for the latent variable items were 0.86–0.94 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Based on the suggested values from the literature and those provided from the analysis, we concluded that the data matched the model.

CFA and Variable Testing Results

In Table 1, the results of the analysis are detailed, and show the internal latent variables VS, MR, VT, and RI, as well as the external latent variable SQ and their associated manifest variables. Final testing results supporting reliability and internal consistency also showed that all factors met established criteria of ≥ 0.70 as CR values were 0.86–0.96 (Barclay et al., 1995).

Standard Coefficient of Influence Analysis

Table 2 details the correlation coefficient analysis results (Bollen, 1987), which indicates that SQ plays an important role in a visitor's RI, with the TE = 0.93. This is followed by the MR (TE = 0.55), and the VS (TE = 0.51). An interpretation of the data strongly suggests that vendors must be keenly aware of their SQ efforts as it plays an important role in RI.

Table 1*Results from CFA Analysis for the Study's Latent and Manifest Variables*

Latent variables	α	AVE	CR	Manifest variables	Loading	R²
SQ	0.94	0.77	0.93	The market has good physical facilities (x1).	0.84	.70
				Vendors offer reliable services (x2).	0.85	.72
				Vendors provide fast service (x3).	0.93	.86
				Vendor staff can communicate well (x4).	0.89	.79
VS	0.86	0.77	0.91	Satisfaction met my expectations (y1).	0.88	.76
				Satisfaction exceeded my expectations (y2).	0.87	.75
				I was satisfied with both the market's product and service price and quality (y3)	0.89	.79
MR	0.90	0.71	0.88	The market has sufficient space, a good atmosphere, stylish decorations, and an overall good design (y4).	0.84	.70
				The market's location is convenient and easily accessible, with convenient parking, and easy access to vendors (y5).	0.83	.69
				The market's reputation for shopping, food, and entertainment is excellent with good overall value (y6).	0.87	.75
VT	0.88	0.67	0.86	I trust the market's products (y7).	0.84	.70
				Market products have good value for the price paid (y8).	0.82	.66
				Market products are reliable and widely known (y9).	0.80	.63
RI	0.92	0.88	0.96	Given the opportunity, I will revisit the market again in the future (y10).	1.0	1.0
				This market will be my first choice in the future should I need to purchase or use similar products/ services (y11).	0.90	.80
				I intend to revisit the market whether or not I need to purchase a product or use a particular service (y12).	0.95	.90
				Given the opportunity, I will most assuredly revisit the market again in the future (y13).	0.89	.79

Table 2*Standard Coefficient of Influence in the Causal Models of Variables Influencing RI*

Dependent variables	R ²	Effect	Independent variables			
			SQ	VS	MR	VT
RI	.86	DE	0.33**	0.14	0.53*	0.03
		IE	0.60**	0.37**	0.02	–
		TE	0.93**	0.51**	0.55**	0.03
VT	.78	DE	0.19*	0.08	0.72**	
		IE	0.69**	0.48**		
		TE	0.88**	0.56**		
MR	.76	DE	0.30**	0.68**		
		IE	0.57**	–		
		TE	0.87**	0.68**		
VS	0.71	DE	0.85**			
		IE	–			
		TE	0.85**			

*Sig. < .05, **Sig. < .01

Table 3*Latent Variable Correlation Coefficients (Below the Bold Diagonal)*

Latent variable	VS	MR	VT	RI	SQ
VS	1.00				
MR	.93**	1.00			
VT	.91**	.95**	1.00		
RI	.93**	.96**	.94**	1.00	
SQ	.84**	.87**	.88**	.92**	1.00

**Sig. ≤ .01.

Table 4*Final Results From the Hypotheses Testing*

Hypotheses	Coef.	t-test	Conclusion
H1: VS directly influences MR	0.68	9.78**	Conform
H2: VS directly influences RI	0.14	1.31	Inconsistent
H3: VS directly influences VT	0.08	0.63	Inconsistent
H4: SQ directly influences VS	0.85	18.21**	Conform
H5: SQ directly influences MR	0.30	4.82**	Conform
H6: SQ directly influences RI	0.33	4.32**	Conform
H7: SQ directly influences VT	0.19	2.60*	Conform
H8: MR directly influences VT	0.72	4.45**	Conform
H9: MR directly influences RI	0.53	2.02*	Conform
H10: VT directly influences RI	0.03	0.10	Inconsistent

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

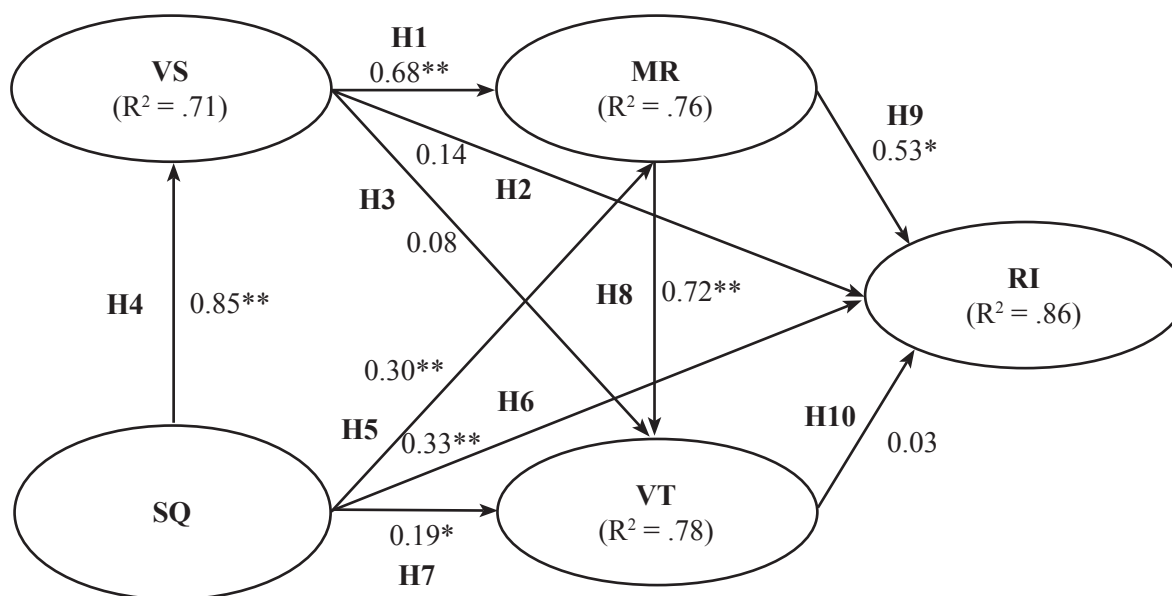


Figure 1. Final Path Analysis of Visitor RI

Moreover, the analysis results in Table 3 show that the data presented under the bold diagonal numbers are the correlation coefficients (r) of the variable pairs, with the strongest of the pairs being between MR and RI (.96). This is closely followed by MR and VT (.95). However, the weakest correlation is between VS and SQ (.84). Table 4 shows the results of the final hypotheses testing.

Discussion

The research determined that the causal variables of the model positively affected a market visitor’s RI, which was determined partially by the fact that RI’s R^2 was calculated as 86% (Table 2). Moreover, the latent variable importance to visitor RI when ranked in importance by TE values was SQ (0.93), MR (0.93), VS (0.51), and VT (0.03), respectively.

Interrelationship Strengths (Highest to Lowest)

The standard Pearson’s and Spearman’s correlation coefficients strength interpretation indicates that values from 0.1–0.3 are the weakest. Values from 0.4–0.6 are considered moderate, whereas the strongest values are from 0.7–0.9 (Akoglu, 2018). Finally, “1” is considered perfect. As such, the following hypotheses results are presented using these criteria.

H4: SQ → VS

From the LISREL 9.1 SEM analysis, the results determined that there was a positive and very strong relationship in H4 between the vendor’s SQ and each visitor’s VS due to $r = 0.85$, $t\text{-test} = 18.21$, and $p \leq 0.01$. This hypothesis result also agrees with Ariffin and Maghzi (2012), who indicated that in Southeast Asia, SQ importance relies on international guests’ views of on personal care and their host’s warmth, friendliness, and personal acknowledgment.

H8: MR → VT

The MR was also shown to have a very significant and positive effect on each visitor’s trust as $r = 0.72$, $t\text{-test} = 4.45$, and $p \leq 0.01$. This hypothesis result is confirmed by other studies, including Aaker’s (2013) perceived quality in destination tourism, and Ekinci et al. (2008), who also indicated that a destination’s personality is a contributor to VT and satisfaction.

H1: VS → MR

The study also determined that visitor satisfaction had a moderate and positive effect on each market’s reputation as $r = 0.68$, $t\text{-test} = 9.78$, and $p \leq 0.01$.

This is consistent with Liu et al. (2013), in which the study's results showed that price, convenience, and recreational benefit are key elements in a group's buying behavior.

H9: MR → RI

Moreover, we determined that MR had a moderate and positive effect on each visitor's RI as $r = 0.53$, $t\text{-test} = 2.02$, and $p \leq 0.05$. This interrelationship strength is supported by other studies in which attitude and reputation have been shown to significantly influence visitor RI (Ekinici et al., 2008; Goh, 2015; Han & Kim, 2010; Prayogo & Kusumawardhani, 2016).

H6: SQ → RI

Additionally, we determined that each vendor's SQ provide a moderate and positive effect on each visitor's RI as $r = 0.33$, $t\text{-test} = 4.32$, and $p \leq 0.01$. The hypothesis result is in agreement with Hou and Wonglorsaichon (2011), who also indicated that a visitor's quality perceptions positively influence the loyalty to a brand. Ahn (2015) also reported that in small restaurants, food quality had a positive effect on the guest's satisfaction, whereas Al-Tit (2015) determined that food and service quality positively were important factors on VS.

H5: SQ → MR

Additionally, we determined that each vendor's SQ had a weak but positive effect on MR as $r = 0.30$, $t\text{-test} = 4.82$, and $p \leq 0.01$.

H7: SQ → VT

We also determined that each vendor's SQ had a weak but positive effect on VT as $r = 0.19$, $t\text{-test} = 2.60$, and $p \leq 0.05$.

Rejected Hypotheses

H2: VS → RI

The study's questionnaire for VS was focused on expectations ($y1$ & $y2$), and the market's products, quality, and vendor prices ($y3$). As such, we contend

that local visitors place higher values on other items (such as the group's enjoyment) over values where a single visitor might be more concerned with, such as price. When one views the photos from the markets surveyed for the study, one will immediately notice numerous vendors and market features that seem to play into the growing importance of "selfie tourism" in a location's dynamic (Bressolles et al., 2014; Kuta, 2019; Baseline Staff, 2020). Thus, past things such as price and quality appear to be taking a back seat when the 'herd' or 'group think' is involved.

H3: VS → VT

H3 was also rejected due to $r = 0.08$ and the $t\text{-test} = 0.63$. We feel the explanation for this is very similar to the reasons used for the rejection of H2.

H10: VT → RI

Finally, H10 was rejected due to $r = 0.03$ and the $t\text{-test} = 0.10$.

Descriptive Analysis Results

Finally, from the study's results from the descriptive analysis of each observed variable using the mean, standard deviation (S.D.), skewness, and kurtosis, as well as the interpreted meaning from the 7-level Likert type agreement scale, the interpreted results indicate that each market exceeded each visitor's expectations (mean = 5.76, S.D. = 1.10), whereas also offering reliable and widely known products (mean = 5.76, S.D. = 1.04). Additionally, market visitors indicated they hoped to revisit (mean = 5.76, S.D. = 1.03).

Conclusion

The study has set out to investigate the interrelationship of a night market's VS, the SQ on each visitor's experiences, the MP, the VT, and how these variables affect each visitor's RI. Results revealed the importance of group participation and their overwhelming demand for excellent SQ. The MR was also deemed to be a key element in RI. There can be no doubt under the current global health crisis that locals will be key to each entrepreneur's sustainability and, hopefully, profitability. In the short term, it will be locals who bring life and definition to Thailand's night

markets, and every effort should be made to entice and retain these local visitors.

Declaration of ownership

This report is our original work.

Conflict of interest

None.

Ethical clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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