

THE STUDY ON MILLENNIALS CHINESE INDEPENDENT TRAVELER'S DECISION TO VISIT BANGKOK, THAILAND

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this study is to understand the factors that influence millennials Chinese traveler to Bangkok for independent travel. Based on the push-pull theory, the researcher selected three push (Escape, Get experiences & Knowledge, Socialization) and three pull factors (Nature, Culture, Activity). The researcher add if gender is a factor that influences people's decision to travel independently. In this study, 394 millennials Chinese who traveled independently in Bangkok are surveyed through questionnaires. The researcher use quota sampling and analyze 394 valid data. Independent samples t-test, correlation analysis, and multiple linear analysis methods are utilized to do hypothesis testing. Critical suggestions to improve Chinese independent traveler's decisions are followed accordingly.*

Keywords: *Millennials Chinese, Independent travel, Push-Pull theory, Thailand*

Introduction

According to the Global Cross-border Tourism Analysis Outlook Report released by IPK International Travel Consulting in 2019, global cross-border tourism is developing strongly, and tourism is one of the main drivers of the world economy. Independence travel for millennials has become an increasingly important part of the global travel market, where millennials travel longer than others and have a higher willingness to travel. As millennials' people's incomes increase and the new tourism market opens up, millennials' people's independent travel has important growth potential (G Richards & Wilson, 2003). About one-fifth of all travel trips around the world are millennials (Greg Richards, 2008). In terms of numbers and consumption, China is already the largest

outbound tourism market in the world. In 2015, the number of domestic tourists in China reached 4 billion, and the number of outbound tourists was 117 million. In 2019 alone, the number of outbound tourists in China exceeded 148 million, and single travel expenses were the highest in the world (Dichter A et al., 2018).

From 1988 to the present, Thailand has always been a favorite destination for Chinese tourists. At present, Thailand ranks first in China's destination countries for outbound travel. With the development of tourism and film propaganda, many Chinese millennials choose to travel to Bangkok on their own, rather than through travel agencies. Kasikorn Research Center expects that the number of Chinese tourist arrivals to Thailand may reach approximately 10.80-10.99 million in 2019, growing 2.5-4.3 percent YoY (AEC+, 2019). Moreover, Thailand attracts 9.1% of Chinese tourists, which indicates that in 2018 about 5.69 million Chinese tourists could choose to travel independently in Thailand (Xiang, 2013). As the number of Chinese tourists continues to increase, more research reports on Chinese tourists should be added to

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provide more effective information for tourists, governments, and businesses.

Travel is an activity that points out that it leaves its habitual environment for leisure, business or other purposes. The purpose of tourism includes six categories: leisure, entertainment, vacation, visiting relatives, business, professional visits, health care, and others (UNWTO, 2008). The reasons people like to travel are diverse and very personal. Many studies give meaning to travel for people: some people want to challenge themselves, do a lot of impossible things, or need to learn new knowledge (Silva & Pereira, 2018), meet more friends to expand their social circle (Chiang & G., 2006), some people think that they need to choose to travel to escape their living conditions (Silva & Pereira, 2018).

Literature Review

Push-Pull Theory

The Push-Pull theory refers to those factors which either forcefully push people into migration or attract them. A push factor is a flaw or distress that drives a person away from a certain place. A pull factor is something that attracts people to a certain place (Uysal et al., 2008). In the previous study, Lewin's (1935) expectation value theory emphasizes that the expectation of achieving goals determines behavior. Tolman (1959) combines drive theory with expectation value theory, arguing that motivation includes drive-based emotions (push factors) and external perceptions (pull factors). This is a general understanding of the tourism research theory. Based on Tolman's work, Dann (1977) proposed the concept of pushing and pulling tourists' motivation in tourism research.

The research of Kim (2003) used the Korean National Park as an example to study the influence of push-pull theory on tourists'

travel behavior; and, as Mohsin and Alsawafi (2011) studied the motivations of Oman student vacation travel; Baniya and Paudel (2016) studied the motivations of domestic tourists in Nepal based on the push-pull theory; Al-Haj Mohammad and Mat Som (2010) studied the travel motivations of foreign tourists to Jordan. According to earlier research (Uysal & Jurowski, 1994), they emphasized that the push factors are related to the traveler's inner desires, such as escape, risk-taking, rest, relaxation. While pull factors are about the attractiveness and obvious characteristics of a destination, such as activities, unique natural landscapes, recreational facilities, cultural and historical resources. Kanagaraj and Bindu (2013) found that the push factor is to promote the formation of people's tourism needs, and the pull factor explains people's choice of destination. Different authors may have different research. Jang and Wu (2006) found that different push and pull factors may be applicable in different settings including nationalities, destinations, and events. The push factors include improvements in relatives, novelty, escape, and relaxation, while pull factors include travel convenience, culture and history, facilities and others (Yuan & McDonald, 1990).

Independent Travel

Independent travel refers to the travel method that does not depend on the travel agency package. It is the traveler who arranges transportation, accommodation, dining, and attractions that people want to visit (Hyde, 2008). In recent decades, independent travel has increased dramatically, especially among millennials in some developing countries. Up to 80% of people are willing to travel at least once independently (Planet, 2016). Most of the previous studies on independent travelers

were conducted in rural or remote areas, while surveys in major urban areas were easily overlooked. This also proves the exploratory significance of Saeid's (2019) research in Sweden. Osman, Brown and Phung's (2019) research found that the motivations that most influence women's independent travel is: self-empowerment. In Bangkok, there are other research reports on independent travelers, but the survey targets are limited to European and American travelers and few studies on Chinese tourists (Sanitmatcharo, 2006; Zhang, 2012).

Escape

Escape refers to leaving the daily affairs to getting away from pressures and responsibilities (Chiang & Jogaratnam, 2006) or to leave somewhere to gain freedom (K. Kim et al., 2006). People's travel has been driven by many reasons and multiple motives. In Baniya and Paudel's (2016) research, the most intrinsic factor driving travel motivation is to escape from daily life. Escape is more than just escaping the daily life of a repeating day. There are other reasons, such as escaping busy work. Many study believe that work gives them a lot of pressure and responsibility. They need to travel to make life easier (Battour et al., 2017). Also, some researchers believe that many people evade life because they want to gain physical or emotional freedom (K. Kim et al., 2006). In the tourism research literature based on push-pull theory, escape is an important factor affecting people's independent travel choices (Chiang & Jogaratnam, 2006; Silva & Pereira, 2018).

Get Experiences & Knowledge

Get experience & knowledge refers to all the things that the traveler encounters and the knowledge, skills, and opinions that are generated by dialogue with others. It is

the experience gained after personal experience or observation (Hyde & Lawson, 2003). In the study of Yousefi and Marzuki (2015), for novelty and knowledge-seeking were among important motives that trigger the need to travel. This evidence is consistent with Sangpikul's (2008) argument that a reason to travel abroad is to seek different experiences or lifestyles that people cannot obtain in their usual environment. The result of this study also supports the finding of previous studies about the importance of getting experience and knowledge as motivational factors. Pearce and Lee (2005) found that getting experience and knowledge was the most important and core motivation factor.

Socialization

Socialization refers to the process by which independent travelers learn the knowledge, skills, language, and values to adapt to the environment in different social and cultural environments (Chiang & Jogaratnam, 2006). Smelser and Baltes (2001) believe that socialization is a process in which society influences people, and push choose travel decision. Through this process, the individual's self and personality are shaped. Wilson and Harris' (2006) research found that independent travel involves women seeking enhanced self-awareness and rethinking their views on life, society, and relationships with others. The results show that the process of independent travel is that the traveler integrates into different environments and enhances social interaction. Chiang and Jogaratnam (2006) have argued that socialization is a factor influencing travelers' decisions, among the respondents.

Nature

Nature refers to that independent travelers enjoy the beautiful scenery on the way, including sunshine, mountains, sea, and beaches (M. Jensen & Hjalager, 2018). Jensen's research shows that the three most important motivational factors for backpacking are stimulation, host-involvement, and nature (M. Jensen & Hjalager, 2018). This conclusion is in line with Kim's (2006) findings, which proves nature is an important motivation for people to choose to travel independently. Yuan and McDonald's (1990) found that nature is an important factor affecting people's decision making. Kruger and Saayman (2010) found that the natural experience is the travel motivation of tourists visiting the Tsitsikamma National Park in the Indian Ocean of South Africa.

Culture

Culture refers to independent travelers participating in local traditional festivals, learning different languages and techniques from their own culture, and visiting local historic buildings (Baniya & Paudel, 2016). Culture is an important factor affecting independent travelers, and it largely determines how travelers choose their destination and way of travel (Holden, 1999). Studies have shown that people have a strong interest in visiting famous historical and cultural monuments and experiencing different lifestyles, which also shows that independent travelers are curious about new things. Huang (2009) measured the motivation for travel, the study found that seeking culture is the pull motivation factor.

Culture is the most important pull factor for travelers to choose independent travel. Mohammad, Mohammad, Som, and Puad (2010) found that tourist motivation is closely associated with the destination's culture; and, for Nepalese travelers, the attractiveness of their travel is attributed to the exploration and exploration of diversity and history and culture (Deraniyagala, 2005).

Activity

Activities refer to a variety of relaxation (yoga, massage) and exploratory sports (climbing, surfing) that travelers are involved in (Tsai & Sakulsinlapakorn, 2016). Mohammad, Mohammad, Som, and Puad (2010) found that activities are an important pull factor affecting tourists' choice of destination. The study found that different visitors will choose different activities when they arrive at the destination. Some tourists will choose to explore and stimulate activities. More tourists will choose to relax and spend the holidays. Based on Tsai's (2016) experience of getting different activities in the study is an important factor for tourists to choose their destination.

Conceptual Framework

The researcher developed the conceptual framework based on the push-pull theory. The push factors are: Escape, Get experiences & Knowledge, Socialization, and the pull factors are: Nature, Culture, Activity, and according to previous survey respondents, females were more likely to travel independently (Pereira & Silva, 2018). Thus, this study added gender as another factor.

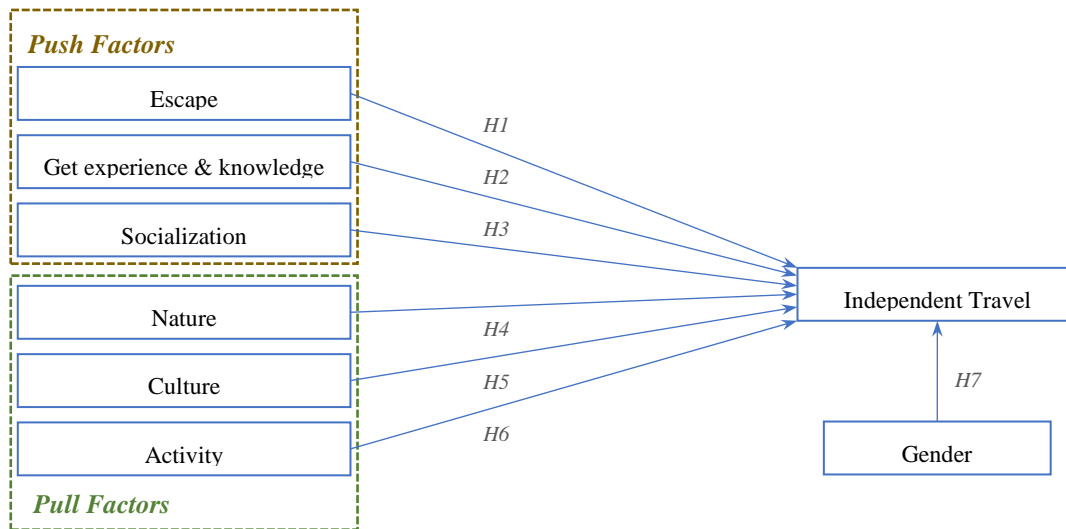


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Center

H₁: The escape influences the independent travel decision of millennials Chinese.

H₂: The get experience & Knowledge influences the independent travel decision of millennials Chinese.

H₃: The socialization influences the independent travel decision of millennials Chinese.

H₄: The nature influences the independent travel of decision millennials Chinese.

H₅: The culture influences the independent travel decision of millennials Chinese.

H₆: The activity influences the independent travel decision of millennials Chinese.

H₇: There is a significant difference between the gender of millennials Chinese on the independent travel decision.

Methodology

Based on the research objective, the researcher selected millennial Chinese who traveled independently in Bangkok as the target population. The sample was collected

by quota sampling (197 males and 197 females) via off-line. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used: correlation, independent t-test, multiple linear regression.

Reliability Test

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient should be greater than 0.6 to be accepted. The result showed that all 6 variables have Cronbach's Alpha more than 0.6. Therefore, it is reliable to run the full survey with these factors (Hundleby & Nunnally, 1968).

Table 1: Pre-testing Result (N=30)

| Variable | Cronbach's Alpha | Number of Items |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Independent Travel | .765 | 3 |
| Escape | .746 | 4 |
| Get experiences & Knowledge | .705 | 4 |
| Socialization | .888 | 3 |
| Nature | .622 | 4 |
| Culture | .784 | 4 |
| Activity | .789 | 4 |

Data Analysis And Results

Demographic Profiles

Respondents in this study were 394 Millennials Chinese, which is 197 men and 197 women. The researcher distributed survey questionnaires surveyed at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok and the Metropolitan Area of Siam and Mega Bangna. All respondents have experience of independent travel. Table 2 shows demographic information.

Table 2: Demographic Profiles (N=394)

| Characteristics | Frequency | % |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------|
| <i>Gender</i> | | |
| Male | 197 | 50 |
| Female | 197 | 50 |
| <i>Age</i> | | |
| 20–22 | 32 | 8.12 |
| 23–25 | 166 | 42.13 |
| 26–28 | 103 | 26.14 |
| 29–30 | 93 | 23.60 |
| <i>Monthly Income \$</i> | | |
| <570 | 81 | 20.56 |
| 570-1,000 | 140 | 35.53 |
| 1,001-1,430 | 75 | 19.04 |
| 1,431-1,858 | 73 | 19.04 |
| >1,858 | 25 | 6.35 |
| <i>Education</i> | | |
| High School | 35 | 8.38 |
| College | 98 | 24.87 |
| Bachelor | 216 | 54.82 |
| Master & Ph.D. | 47 | 11.93 |
| Others | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Spent on trip \$</i> | | |
| <570 | 148 | 37.56 |
| 571-860 | 175 | 44.42 |

| | | |
|------|----|-------|
| >860 | 71 | 18.02 |
|------|----|-------|

In Table 2, the number of male and female respondents is the same. The largest number of respondents were between 23-25 years old, with 166 people, accounting for 42.13%. 140 peoples' monthly income is 570-1,000 USD, accounting for 35.53%. More than half of the respondents were bachelor, with 216 individuals, accounting for 54.82%. Finally, 175 people spent 571-860 USD, accounting for 44.42%.

Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Variables

| Variables | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----------------------------|-----|------|----------------|
| Independent Travel | 394 | 3.89 | .93 |
| Escape | 394 | 3.33 | 1.08 |
| Get experiences & knowledge | 394 | 4.04 | .87 |
| Socialization | 394 | 3.99 | .91 |
| Nature | 394 | 3.98 | .86 |
| Culture | 394 | 3.99 | .87 |
| Activity | 394 | 3.90 | .92 |

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics of independent variables and dependent variable for 394 valid respondents.

Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation coefficient, r , has a range of values from +1 to -1. If the value equals to 0, it means that there is no association between the two variables. The correlation relationship into 5 levels based on the level of Correlation, 0 to 0.19 (0.2) indicating very weak relationship, 0.2 to 0.39 (0.4) indicating weak relationship, 0.4 to 0.59 (0.6) indicating moderate relationship and 0.6 to 0.79 (0.8) indicating strong relationship while 0.8 to 1.00 indicating very strong relationship (Walker & Almond, 2010).

Table 4: Correlation Relationship Between Variables

| Factors | Significant Value at 0.01 level (2-tailed) | Level of Correlation | Correlation Coefficient |
|-----------------------------|--|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Escape | .000 | .428 | Positive moderate relationship |
| Get experiences & Knowledge | .000 | .722 | Positive strong relationship |
| Socialization | .000 | .740 | Positive strong relationship |
| Nature | .000 | .760 | Positive strong relationship |
| Culture | .000 | .734 | Positive strong relationship |
| Activity | .000 | .757 | Positive strong relationship |
| Note: Sig.-value < 0.01 | | | |

As shown in Table 4, there is a positive strong relationship between Get Experiences & Knowledge, Socialization, Nature, Culture, Activity with independent travel. Escape has a moderate relationship with independent travel.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

From Table 5, the R Square value was 0.671 which means that 67.1% of the variance in traveler's decision to travel independently could be predicted from these six independent variables (Escape, Get experiences & Knowledge, Socialization, Nature, Culture, Activity). It also means that is still room left for another 32.9% of the variance in traveler's decision to travel independently to be explained by other independent variables.

Table 5: Model Summary

| R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | R Sig. |
|---|----------|-------------------|-------------------|
| .819 ^a | .671 | .666 | .000 ^b |
| Predictors (Constant), Activity, Escape, Socialization, Get experience & Knowledge, Culture, Nature | | | |

In Table 6, Socialization (H₃), Nature (H₄), and Activity (H₆) have statistically significant effects on traveler's decision to

travel independently which is the significant value is less than 0.05, while Escape (H₁), Get experiences & Knowledge (H₂), and Culture (H₅) has no significant impact. Therefore, with those who have statistical influence, researcher can interpret the unstandardized B as every 1 unit increase in Activity (H₆), the traveler's decision to travel independently will increase by 30.1%, followed by Nature (H₄) and Socialization (H₃) which is 24%, 23.3% respectively.

Table 6: Multiple Linear Regression Result

| Hypothesis | Sig.-value | Unstandardized B | VIF |
|---|------------|------------------|-------|
| H1 | .996 | .000 | 1.422 |
| H2 | .134 | .095 | 4.083 |
| H3 | .000 | .233 | 3.407 |
| H4 | .001 | .240 | 4.794 |
| H5 | .308 | .068 | 4.516 |
| H6 | .000 | .301 | 3.416 |
| Note: R ² = .671, Sig.-value < 0.05, Dependent variable = Independent Travel | | | |

Variance inflation factor is a statistical method that tests multicollinearity. The VIF should not be greater than 5 (Walker & Almond, 2010). When VIF is higher than 5, it would mean that the independent variables have a high co-relationship with one another. From this current study, all VIF scores of independent variables are below 5 which means that there are not closely related

and hence there are low chances of these independent variables to have a multicollinearity problem.

Independent Samples T-Test

Under the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances and Equal variances assumed test, the significance level coefficient is

Table 7: Independent Samples Test

| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|-------------|----------|-----------|------------------------|
| Independent Travel | Equal variances assumed | .136 | .713 | .306 | .392 | .760 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | .306 | 391.958 | .760 |

Hypothesis Testing Results

The independent sample t-test (data showed in Table 7) showed that there was no significant difference between male and female groups.

Table 8: Hypothesis Testing Results

| Hypothesis | Sig.-value | (β) | Result |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------------|---------------|
| H1 | .996 | .000 | Not Support |
| H2 | .134 | .088 | Not Support |
| H3 | .000 | .227 | Support |
| H4 | .001 | .222 | Support |
| H5 | .308 | .063 | Not Support |
| H6 | .000 | .296 | Support |
| H7 | .713 | .136 | Not Support |
| Note: Sig.-value < 0.05 | | | |

In Table 8, the multiple linear regression for testing the hypotheses has been shown that Socialization (H₃), Nature (H₄), and Activity (H₆) have statistical influence on traveler's decision to travel independently. However, the Escape (H₁), Get experience & Knowledge (H₂), and Culture (H₅) have no significant influence on traveler's decision to travel independently. According to the standardized coefficient, activity is the most influencing factor on the traveler's decision to travel independently, followed by socialization and nature.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to identify factors that influence a traveler's

0.713, greater than 0.05, indicating that the variance of the two samples is homogeneous, from the first row of Table 7, the level of significance coefficient is 0.760, greater than 0.05. There is no statistical mean difference between male and female groups by Independent Samples t-test.

decision to travel independently. The theory of Push-Pull has been applied to determine the significant factors in this research. As seen in Table 8, there was Socialization (H₃), Nature (H₄), and Activity (H₆) had a significant influence on the traveler's decision to travel independently. However, Escape (H₁), Get experience & Knowledge (H₂), Culture (H₅) and Gender (H₇) showed no statistically significant influence on traveler's decision to travel independently.

Recommendations

The major findings of this study provided useful information to Thai governments, businesses, travel agencies, hotels, airlines. According to the research results, socialization, nature, and activity have a positive impact on Chinese millennials people's decision to travel independently to Bangkok. Therefore, it is important for the Thai government and businesses to concentrate and emphasize on these variables to attract people to travel to Thailand.

First, activity is the strongest factor affecting the Chinese Millennial's' decision to travel independently to Bangkok. Thus, the government may focus on this point. Many tourists are interested in entertainment activities. Businesses can hold more concerts, sports events. Second, Socialization is a push factor that influences the Chinese Millennials to travel

independently to Bangkok. The government can use online media effectively to promote Thailand's multicultural and multi-valued to make the independent traveler hang out easily. It will let travelers meet different people with the same interests and hobbies for socialization. Third, Nature affecting Chinese millennial's decision to travel independently to Bangkok. The Thai government pays more attention to protecting these natural landscapes and adopting a sustainable development strategy.

Limitations

This study uses a non-random sample thus the result may not represent the trend of the millennials Chinese intention to independent travel in Bangkok. And another limitation is the area in which data is collected. Using only Bangkok to collect data may not represent the type of independent visitors in other regions.

Further Studies

The current study focuses on the Chinese Millennials who traveled independently to Bangkok. It cannot represent tourists from other countries and groups ages. Therefore, in further research, it is possible to consider different nationalities besides Chinese and diverse age groups such as baby boomers, X-generation. Further researchers can use random sampling methods to the external validity of the results. Based on the R-squared, the data is 0.671, which means that there are other factors that influence the travel options of the visitor. Further research may consider adding other influencing factors, such as self-empowerment, exploration, and host-site involvement.

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