

## Perception Of Tourists Behavior In Second Tier Cities In Thailand

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### ABSTRACT:

The objective of this study was to study the perception of tourists' behavior in second-tier cities. The sample population was 400 tourists who had come to visit second-tier cities. This quantitative research used a closed-ended questionnaire and a five-rating scale questionnaire. The study found that the perception of tourist behavior in second-tier cities was the overall image of tourist attractions in 14 areas was at a high level. In terms of perception of the tourist destinations of the second-tier cities of the province, the cities were beautiful, remarkable, and unique ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.71, S.D. = 0.90). Most respondents agreed that the characteristics of the second-tier tourist attractions were historical in nature. The average percentage was 56.4. As for the tourism promotion activities and travel needs for second-tier cities, the respondents wanted to travel to Lampang the most, (Lampang is known as a "Slow Travel City"). Its average percentage was 20.75. As for the informational channels of tourist destinations in the second-tier cities, the overall information was perceived primarily through online media applications, with an average of 46.75%. Keywords: Tourists, Perception of Tourism Image, Second –Tier Cities' Tourists, Thailand

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of Thailand Tourism industry is to be a world-class tourist destination or a world-class tourist destination. The goal of the Thailand Tourism industry is to be a world-class tourist destination. promoting tourism through product and service development. Local knowledge, health and beauty practices, and Thai traditional medicine are utilized to raise the standards of health promotion services and beauty enhancement businesses to the high end market while linking the region to expand Thai tourism with other locations and destinations. Thailand tourism also focuses on local development and gives importance to tourism by creating and distributing income to local and communities, as well as encouraging both Thai and foreign visitors to travel from the main tourist cities to second-tier cities by developing second-tier city tourist attractions. Systematic access to areas and public relations efforts provide Thai and foreign tourists with knowledge about second-tier cities, which results in the distribution of income into local areas. In the first half of 2018, tourism in 55 second-tier cities expanded to generate revenue of

1.16 billion baht, increasing more than 9% to more than 38 million tourists, both Thai and foreign, who visited second-tier cities. (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2018) The increasing number of tourists was a result of: 1) creating added value with content, such as within the application "Amazing Thai Uniqueness," which included information on various aspects of Thailand, including society, religion, history, culture, and food, in order to convey the story to tourists, 2) Supporting second-tier cities identities by creating tourism routes that distribute travel from the main cities to the secondary cities according to the concept ABC. The ABC concept was structured as follows: A - Additional is the main city route connecting secondary cities, B stands for Brand New, potential secondary cities, and C indicates combined secondary city routes connecting secondary cities, and 3) domestic communication focusing on "the Amazing Thai" campaign that allows Thai people to see traveling in Thailand as a popular choice with deep and accessible travel by utilizing the potential of local people throughout the country. These locals were dubbed Local Heros as guardians of the inheritance and transmission of life, wisdom, and

culture traditions. (Tourism Authority of Thailand, Lampang Provincial Office, 2019)

The significance became clear in understanding the importance of studying the behavior of tourists traveling to the second-tier cities of Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, and Nan to fully realize the demand for tourism in the area. This information can aid in the development of strategies to promote second-tier cities across the country.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Perception of Tourists Behavior in Second Tier Cities

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### -Meaning and elements of perception

1.1 Perception is the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory input used for understanding information around us. Perception involves nerve signals and can be divided into two parts:

1. The interpretation of sensory information, which translates the raw data to higher-level data, such as drawing shapes from vision to recognize objects.

2. The interpretation of results, which links to a person's attitudes and knowledge and are influenced by the selection mechanism in the perceived issues.

Perception is a process that occurs after a stimuli is engaged and interpreted by the senses as meaningful through the use of a person's knowledge, experience, and understanding. (Bernstein. 1999: 72) Perception is learned, therefore when learning and experience are lacking, the result is only exposure, not perception.

#### 1.2 Elements of perception

Perceptual behavior is a process of responding to the environment continuously from the senses. It is a process of interpreting stimuli through consciousness. When the tools or sense organs react to stimuli, the conscious brain interprets or translates the meaning into awareness recognition. Perception consists of the following:

1. Touching
2. Type and nature of stimuli
3. Interpretation from touching
4. Using previous experiences to interpret

The selection of perception depends on two essential elements: the stimulus component and the individual component.

#### -Tourist Behavior Concept

Tourists are consumers who want goods and services that are different from consumption of essential goods and general industrial goods. The behavior of tourists is different from that of general consumers. In addition, tourists' behavior encompasses different factors than residents' behavior. Income, time, education, lifestyle, preference, etc., can be different for tourists than for residents. (Taweelab Ratanaraj, 2010, page 8)

A study by Lertporn Parasakul (n.d.) explained the basic or demographic characteristics of tourists. The differentiating factors were gender, age, occupation, income level, and residence status. (Lertporn Parasakul, 2016, page 32-45) It could be concluded that various aspects such as gender, age, income, area of residence including the environment, topography, and climatic condition were different in each locality. They were all influences on attitudes, behaviors, and individual preferences in tourism as well.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research entitled "Perception of Tourists Behavior in Second Tier Cities" aims to study the perception of tourism image behavior in second-tier cities. The researcher used the quantitative research method for inquiry of a five-level rating scale to obtain the most accurate and reliable data, as follows:

#### Population Sample

The population sample consisted of 400 tourists who visited second-tier cities. The sample size was obtained by calculating the Taro Yamane (1973). The data collected in each area was used to calculate the number of samples. According to the policy of promoting tourism in the second tier cities, 12 must-visit cities (plus Nan, Phrae, Lamphun, and Lampang) were selected from monthly visits to cities between January and November, 2019.

#### Research tools

A questionnaire using rating scale characteristics covered the perception of tourists behavior in second-tier cities. The respondents marked their scores from minimum to maximum, according to the opinions and perceptions of the respondents towards second-tier tourism.

#### Data collection

Researchers collected the data from a sample group of 400 people whose questionnaires were analyzed.

#### Data analysis

The data was analyzed using a quantitative analysis method to study the perception of tourist behavior in second-tier cities. The analyzed data was classified by grouping content analysis into quantitative data. The basic statistics measured the importance of various factors and the data were presented in tabular form.

Interpretation of the data from the analysis was performed using the maximum, the minimum, and the class interval to determine the range, as such: maximum (5), minimum (1), class interval (5). The range was 0.80, which can be used as a criterion for determining the perceived value of the sample, as follows:

Evaluation value criteria

1.00 - 1.80 The perception of tourism image is minimum level  
 1.81 - 2.60 The perception of tourism image is low level  
 2.61 - 3.40 The perception of tourism image is moderate level

3.41 - 4.20 The perception of tourism image is high level  
 4.21 - 5.00 The perception of tourism image is maximum level

**4. DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS**

**Table No1. General information of samples**

Information	Sum (n = 400)	
	Number	Percentage
<b>1. Sex</b>		
1.1 Male	200	50.00
1.2 Female	200	50.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>2. Age</b>		
1. Less than 20 years old	19	4.75
2. 21- 30 years old	114	28.50
3. 31- 40 years old	143	35.75
4. 41- 50 years old	52	13.00
5. 51- 60 years old	51	12.75
6. More than 61 years old	21	5.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>3. Education Level</b>		
3.1 Lower secondary	56	14.00
3.2 Diploma	40	10.00
3.3 Bachelor	278	69.50
3.4 Higher Bachelor	26	6.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>4. Marital status</b>		
4.1 Single	217	54.25
4.2 Married	176	44.00

Information	Sum (n = 400)	
	Number	Percentage
4.3 Divorced	7	1.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>5. Career</b>		
5.1 Private company employees	98	24.50
5.2 Housewife	30	7.50
5.3 Government Officer / State enterprise employee	48	12.00
5.4 Students	77	19.25
5.5 Business Owner / Private Business	101	25.25
5.6 Others.....	46	11.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>6. Monthly income</b>		
	Average monthly income ( $\bar{x}$ ) = 22,307 baht	
	Maximum income (Max) = 100,000 baht	
	Minimum income (Min) = 5,000 baht	

**From Table No.1** The overall sample size was equal between females and males, 50 percent for each gender. Most of the respondents were between 31-40 years old, or 35.75 percent. Most of the samples were at the bachelor degree level, or 69.50 percent. In addition, most of the respondents were single, or 54.25 percent. When considering the relationship between occupation

and income, the respondents with the highest income made 100,000 baht. They work in a private company and the owners or private businesses, at 24.50 percent and 25.50 percent, respectively. The lowest income was 5,000 baht for a housewife occupation, at 7.50 percent.

**2. Perception of Tourism Image of Second –Tier Cities**

**Table No. 2 Perception of Tourism Image of Second-Tier Cities overview**

Perception of tourists	Sum		
	Mean	S.D.	Interpret
1. You know the tourism promotion policy of the second-tier city of the province.	2.83	0.87	fair

Perception of tourists	Sum		
	Mean	S.D.	Interpret
2. You know the tourist information of the second-tier city of the province.	2.98	0.86	fair
3. The provincial second-tier tourist cities with outstanding points were different from the main tourist attractions.	3.55	0.84	good
4. The provincial second-tier tourist cities were beautiful, outstanding, and unique cities.	3.71	0.90	good
5. The provincial tourist destinations of the second-tier cities were known to the tourists.	3.66	0.84	good
6. Having public relations of tourism activities of the provincial second-tier cities.	3.03	0.80	fair
7. You know the tourism activities information of second-tier cities of the province.	3.04	0.87	fair
8. The provincial second-tier tourist attractions have transportation routes that can be conveniently and safely accessed.	3.44	0.77	good
9. The provincial second-tier tourist attractions have enough facilities to provide the service.	3.53	0.74	good
10. The provincial second-tier tourist attractions have financial services and various communication.	3.44	0.79	good
11. The provincial second-tier tourist attractions have a Tourist Information Center.	3.45	0.81	good
12. The provincial second-tier tourist attractions have facilities for the elderly and disabled.	3.54	0.81	good
13. The provincial second-tier tourist attractions have various distribution channels.	3.50	0.78	good
14. You can book tourist attractions in the secondary city of the province via online media and various applications.	3.49	0.88	good
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>0.82</b>	fair

**From Table 2** The perception analysis showed that the overall perception of tourists across 14 different aspects was at a good level. When considered individually, it was found that the top three rankings were the perception of tourists in the provincial second-tier tourist attractions was beautiful, outstanding, and unique ( $\bar{X} = 3.71$ , S.D. = 0.90), followed by the tourist destinations, whether the second-tier cities of the province were known for tourists ( $\bar{X} = 3.66$ , S.D. =

0.84), and if the second-tier cities of the province were known and had distinctive points of interest different from the main tourist attractions ( $\bar{X} = 3.55$ , S.D. = 0.84). This perception was at a fair level. When considering each item, it was found that the last two were the policy of promoting the tourism of the second-tier cities of the province ( $\bar{X} = 2.83$ , SD = 0.87), followed by the information of the second-tier cities of the provinces ( $\bar{X} = 2.98$ , SD = 0.86).

\* fair =  $\bar{X} = 2.61-3.40$

\*\*good =  $\bar{X} = 3.41-4.20$

**Table No.3 Perception of Tourism Image of the characteristics of the tourist attractions of the Second-Tier Cities (Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, Nan)**

Perception of Tourism Image of the characteristics of the tourist attractions of the Second-Tier Cities	Sum	
	Number	Percentage
Historical sites	141	56.40
Tourist attraction in art and culture	117	46.50
Architectural attractions	59	23.60
Natural attractions	36	14.40
Religious tourist sites	37	14.80
Folk crafts and Local Community's way of life	19	7.60
Others	1	4.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	

**From Table No.3** The perception of the data of the participants who travel to Muang (Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, Nan) found that most of the tourists agreed that it was historical tourist attractions, at 56.40 percent, followed by tourist attractions in arts and culture, at 46.50 percent, and 42.22 percent, respectively. In Lampang province, it was a cultural and artistic tourist destination at 36.67 percent. The above information was in line with the stature of the area in Thailand that had outstanding tourism resources in terms of history and unique culture.

**Table No.4 The perception of tourism activities promoting the second-tier cities and travel needs (Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, Nan)**

The perception of tourism activities promotion of the second-tier cities and travel needs	Sum	
	Number	Percentage
Lampang (Lampang Slow Travel) connecting Lamphun	83	20.75
Nan (Love Whisper to Stars) Connecting Phrae	78	19.50
Phetchabun (Mountain of Flowers and Fog) connecting Phitsanulok	30	7.50

Loei (the most cool ... happy at Loei) connecting Chaiyaphum	32	8.00
Buriram (City of Two Era Castles) connecting Surin	24	6.00
Ratchaburi (People Art Community) connecting Suphanburi	27	6.75
Samut Songkhram (City of Three Times River) connecting Nakhon Pathom	22	5.50
Chanthaburi (Garden of Fruit and Vegetables) connecting Sa Kaeo	33	8.25
Trat (City of Dreams) connecting Rayong	35	8.75
Chumphon (Longest Beautiful Beach) connecting Ranong	14	3.50
Trang (Land of Deliciousness) connecting Satun	14	3.50
Nakhon Si Thammarat (City of Two Dhamma) connecting Phatthalung	8	2.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**From Table No.4** In the second-tier tourism promoting activities and travel needs, the sample group wanted to travel to Lampang, connecting Lamphun, the most (Lampang Slow Travel). The average was 20.75 percent, with Nan (Love Whisper to Stars) connecting Phrae, at an average of 19.50 percent. As for the tourism promoting activities, the second-tier cities that the participants wanted to travel to the least were Nakhon Si Thammarat (City of Two Dhamma), connecting Phatthalung, with an average of 2.00%, followed by

Trang (Land of Deliciousness), connecting Satun and Chumphon (Longest Beautiful Beach), connecting Ranong. Both cities had equal averages at 3.50 percent. From the above data, it was clear that Lampang and Nan provinces were the areas where tourists most wanted to travel. When considering the linkage found in Lampang, there were routes that could connect to Nan province easily. This may be the reason why most tourists choose to travel to Lampang and Nan provinces.

**Table No. 5 The perception of second-tier tourist attractions (Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, Nan)**

The perception of second-tier tourist attractions	Sum	
	Number	Percentage
1. Information from hotels, restaurants	124	31.00
2. Information from travel providers (Tour company)	64	16.00
3. Information from online media, applications	187	46.75
4. Information from publications	25	6.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**From Table No.5** The perception of second-tier tourist attractions (Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, Nan) overall showed that the participants had the behavior of perceiving information from online media applications. This showed the highest average level, at 46.75 percent, whereas the information perception behavior from print

**3. Tourism behavior in second-tier cities of tourists**

media showed an average level of 6.25 percent. This demonstrates the importance of promoting public relations and travel advertisements through online media channels and applications.

**Table No.6 Travel behavior of tourists**

Travel behavior of tourists	Sum (n = 400)	
	Number	Percentage
1. Travel by yourself	67	16.75
2. Travel with family and close relatives	136	34.00
3. Travel with a group of friends	149	37.25
4. Travel with a lover	48	12.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table No.7 The number of days those tourists want to travel**

The number of days those tourists want to travel	Sum	
	Number	Percentage
1. Duration 1-3 days	273	68.25
2. Duration of more than 3 days	127	31.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table No.8 Days, times, and seasons that tourist want to travel and participate in tourist activities**

Information	Sum	
	Number	Percentage
<b>Days, times, and seasons that tourists wanted to Travel and participated in tourist activities</b>		
1. During a festival	100	25.00
2. Weekends	121	30.25
3. Annual holidays	48	12.00
4. Public holidays	55	13.75
5. Weekdays	76	19.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>Traveling by season</b>		
1. Summer	13	3.25
2. Rainy	2	0.50

3. Winter	113	28.25
4. Every season according to the occasion	272	68.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table No.9 Travel expenses and buying souvenirs behavior**

Information	Sum	
	Number	Percentage
<b>Behavior of Travel expenses</b>		
1. Less than 5,000 baht	165	41.25
2. 5,001 - 6,000 baht	53	13.25
3. 6,001 – 7,000 baht	50	12.50
4. 7,001 – 8,000 baht	57	14.25
5. More than 8,001 baht	75	18.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>Buying souvenirs behavior</b>		
1. Local products	210	52.50
2. Local food	73	18.25
3. Winter vegetables and fruits	54	13.50
4. Ceramic	21	5.25
5. Others	42	10.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table No. 10 Behavior of returning tourists**

Tourist behavior of returning tourists	Sum	
	Number	Percentage
<b>Wanted to come back repeatedly</b>		
1. Want to come back again	296	74.00
2. Don't want to come back	3	0.75
3. Not sure	101	25.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**From the table No.6, 7, 8, 9 and 10** Overall, most of the respondents traveled on weekends and in every season according to the occasion - an average of 30.25 percent and 68.00 percent, respectively. 68.25 percent spent an average length of time traveling of 1-3 days, and those who traveled with friends averaged 37.25 percent. As for total expenses, 41.25 percent spent an average of no more than 5000 baht. Most respondents wanted to return the location they visited, an average of 74.00 percent, in fact, while on average 52.50 percent purchased local products for souvenirs.

## 5. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

researcher would like to discuss the results, as follows: Regarding the overview of the perception of the tourism image of second-tier cities, it was found that it was at an overall high level for 14 aspects. When considering each aspect, it revealed that the top three rankings of the perception of the tourism image of provincial tourist attractions of the second-tier cities was outstanding and unique. The average was  $\bar{X} = 3.71$ , S.D. = 0.90, followed by the provincial tourist attractions of the second-tier cities were well-known by the tourists at an average of  $\bar{X} = 3.66$ , S.D. = 0.84. The provincial tourist attractions of the second-tier cities were different from the tourist attractions of the main cities. The average here was  $\bar{X} = 3.55$ , S.D. = 0.84. This result was in accordance with Vanit Soonthornnon (21 July 2009), that the tourist attractions should have their own uniqueness. They should be outstanding and irreplaceable.

With regard to the image perception of the characteristics of second-tier tourist attractions (Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, Nan), it was found that most of the tourists (an average at 56.4 percent), agreed that they were historical tourist attractions, followed by arts and cultural tourism at an average of 46.5 percent. Considering the characteristics of tourist attractions in each province, it was found that Phrae was the most highly regarded historic tourist destination, with a percentage of 45.0. The result corresponded to the travel information throughout Thailand by the sawadee.com website, which says that Phrae is an ancient city that has a legend telling of its prosperity over a long period of time, while also being the birthplace of the story of great love in Thai literature about Lilit Phra Lor that many people are familiar with. Phrae is an area full of historical traces to learn about and abundant natural resources. Lampang was also a tourist attraction in arts and culture, averaging 36.67 percent. The study was consistent with tourist information throughout Thailand by the sawadee.com website. It says that Lampang is another province in the north that is an interesting source of Lanna Thai civilization. Both traditions and customs have been passed down since ancient times. There are temples and local architecture, a famous and unique chariot, and the rooster, which is a symbol of

Lampang. Going back over 1,000 years, Lampang Province has a long history of settlement in the Wang River basin. This area is rich in archeological evidence and reflects the ancient civilizations of Hariphunchai, Lanna, and Burma. Lampang is a city that has its own unique identity. There is pottery made from famous clay with the chicken brand logo that is sold throughout the province.

Regarding the perception of the image of the second-tier tourism promotion activities and the need to travel (Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, Nan), the sample group wanted to travel to Lampang the most (a city of Slow Travel). The result was in line with the Lampang Tourist Center ([www.lampang.go.th/](http://www.lampang.go.th/)). It said that Lampang is a province located in the upper northern region. The terrain contains a mountain range stretching from north to south. The middle of the province is a lowland river basin for the Wang River. It was the location of Wiang Lek and Wiang Noi, overlapping more than 1,300 years ago, and began during the time of Hariphunchai, now known as Lamphun Province. In modern times, the topography of the province, together with being an ancient city for 1,300 years, has made Lampang a province with many tourist attractions. Attractions are available for tourists who want to come to study or relax. There are natural attractions and ancient archaeological sites, such as Chae Son National Park and Doi Khun Tan National Park. There are abundant and important sources of water preserving the ecology and nourishing the lives of the people of Lampang. There are caves, waterfalls, hot springs, and mountains that stand waiting for tourists to visit and study. In terms of archaeological sites, Lampang Province has many places that tell the history and well-being of Lampang through each era and each period, as well as the ways of life, traditions, art, and culture that have been passed down through the ages, including Wat Phra That Lampang Luang, Wat Lai Hin Temple, and a variety of temples that are a mixture of Lanna art and Myanmar architecture. Lampang is known as the land of temples and dwellings in the Burmese architectural style in Thailand.

The image perception channels that obtain information on tourist destinations (Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, Nan) through online media applications average 46.75 percent (the highest level), while those that collect information perception behavior from print media average only 6.25 percent (the lowest level). This was in line with research from Wiranchanachom (2017). The results showed that Thai tourists traveling in Thailand were aware of tourism news from online social media at a high level by perceiving the attractiveness of tourist attractions, management, facilities at tourist destinations, preparation for tourist information, benefits of online media, how to use online media for tourism, media types, diversity, and the perception of the methods of accessing tourist destinations via online

media, in descending order. It was consistent with the research of Sathaporn Singha (2013), who studied media exposure utilization and satisfaction with travel decisions made by Thai tourists. The behavior of exposure, utilization, and satisfaction from the internet and most personal media, in terms of data usage, satisfied the accuracy, attractiveness, reliability, and modernity from the media to make travel decisions.

#### **Tourism behavior in second-tier cities**

An average of 30.25 percent of the participants in the sample groups traveled on weekends, and 68.00 percent on average traveled to tourist destinations in every season, according to the occasion. An average of 68.25 percent of the participants spent 1-3 days traveling, while 37.25 percent on average traveled with friends, and an average of 41.25 percent incurred total expenses of not over 5000 baht. An average of 74.00 percent expressed a desire to return to the cities they visited, with an average of 52.50 percent showing a purchasing behavior in buying local products as souvenirs. Research by Phuwadon Komonrattanasathien (2018), showed that Matrix Brand Research, which surveyed Thais traveling behavior in 2018, revealed that most Thais made decisions on traveling on their own and often sought information for tourists prior to traveling. The most searched for information involved accommodation, tourist attractions, and food and drinks, and was found by mainly searching online, via social media and websites. In addition, tourists paid closer attention to public relations information from the Tourism Authority of Thailand. The average travel cost of an overnight stay was 5,977 baht per person, per trip, with most tourists traveling on weekends and long holidays.

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