

## Travel Motivations and Tourist Behaviors of Korean Travelers to Thailand

แรงจูงใจในการเดินทางและพฤติกรรมนักท่องเที่ยวชาวเกาหลี  
ที่เดินทางมาประเทศไทย

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### Abstract

The Korean travel market is one of the important international markets for many Southeast Asian destinations. With the well-established economy and emergence of affluent middle class, millions of Koreans travel abroad each year for their leisure and holiday purposes. However, Thai researchers are yet to pay attention to investigate this important segment. In order to increase the number of Korean travelers to Thailand, it is important for tourism marketers to learn and understand their travel related behaviors for developing appropriate marketing strategies for the target market. This study, therefore, aims to examine travel motivations and tourist behaviors of Korean travelers by using the theory of push and pull motivations as a conceptual framework.

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A self-administered questionnaire survey was used to collect data from 400 Korean travelers who were visiting Thailand. The results of factor analysis identified three push and two pull factor dimensions. The three push factors (travel motives) were 'fun & relaxation', 'novel experience', and 'socialization', while the two pull factors (destination attractions) included 'attraction variety & costs' and 'safety & cleanliness'. Among them, 'fun & relaxation' and 'attraction variety & costs' were regarded the most important push and pull factors, respectively. The study also reveals interesting findings of Koreans' travel behaviors and provides practical implications that can be useful for both policy makers and industry practitioners to develop appropriate marketing strategies and tourism products for the target market.

## บทคัดย่อ

นักท่องเที่ยวชาวเกาหลีใต้เป็นกลุ่มนักท่องเที่ยวที่สำคัญกลุ่มนี้สำหรับหลายประเทศในเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ ทั้งนี้เนื่องจากภาวะเศรษฐกิจของประเทศที่มั่นคงและการขยายตัวของกลุ่มประชากรที่มีรายได้ปานกลาง ส่งผลให้ประชาชนกลุ่มนี้นิยมเดินทางไปท่องเที่ยวต่างประเทศ อย่างไรก็ตามที่ผ่านมานักวิจัยไทยยังได้ไม่มีการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับนักท่องเที่ยวชาวเกาหลีเท่าที่ควร หากหน่วยงานที่เกี่ยวข้องต้องการส่งเสริมจำนวนนักท่องเที่ยวชาวเกาหลีให้มากขึ้น การศึกษาเรื่องพฤติกรรมที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการเดินทางของนักท่องเที่ยวกลุ่มนี้จึงเป็นสิ่งที่จำเป็นสำหรับการวางแผนการตลาดให้เหมาะสมกับความต้องการของนักท่องเที่ยวกลุ่มเป้าหมาย ดังนั้น งานวิจัยในครั้งนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาแรงจูงใจในการเดินทางและพฤติกรรมนักท่องเที่ยวชาวเกาหลีโดยใช้ทฤษฎีแรงจูงใจผลักดันและดึงดูดเป็นกรอบแนวคิดในการวิจัย

งานวิจัยในครั้งนี้ใช้แบบสอบถามในการเก็บข้อมูลกลุ่มตัวอย่างนักท่องเที่ยวชาวเกาหลีจำนวน 400 คน โดยผลการวิจัยระบุว่าแรงจูงใจผลักดันที่ทำให้กลุ่มตัวอย่างต้องการเดินทางท่องเที่ยวได้แก่ "ความชอบสนุกสนานและการพักผ่อน" "การชอบค้นหาประสบการณ์ใหม่ๆ" และ "การชอบเข้าสังคมพบปะผู้คน" ส่วนปัจจัยดึงดูดให้กลุ่มตัวอย่างเดินทางท่องเที่ยวมายังประเทศไทยได้แก่ "ความหลากหลายของทรัพยากรการท่องเที่ยวและปัจจัยด้านราคา" และ "ความปลอดภัยและความสะอาด" แต่อย่างไรก็ตามหากวิเคราะห์ในเชิงสถิติพบว่า แรงจูงใจหลักที่แท้จริงในการเดินทางท่องเที่ยว คือ "ความชอบสนุกสนานและการพักผ่อน" ส่วนปัจจัยดึงดูดที่สำคัญของประเทศไทยสำหรับกลุ่มตัวอย่าง คือ "ความหลากหลายของทรัพยากรการท่องเที่ยว และปัจจัยด้านราคา" งานวิจัยในครั้งนี้ได้ค้นพบประเด็นที่น่าสนใจหลายประการที่เกี่ยวกับนักท่องเที่ยวชาวเกาหลี ทั้งนี้คาดว่าผลการวิจัยจะมีประโยชน์ต่อหน่วยงานที่เกี่ยวข้องโดยสามารถนำผลการวิจัยและข้อเสนอแนะไปพัฒนาและปรับแผนกลยุทธ์การตลาดและสินค้าให้เหมาะสมกับกลุ่มตลาดเป้าหมาย

**Keywords:** Travel motivations, Tourist behaviors, Korean travelers, Thailand

**Remark :** The content of this article contains only some parts of the research project.

**หมายเหตุ :** บทความนี้เป็นเพียงการนำเสนอส่วนหนึ่งของผลการวิจัยเท่านั้น

## 1. Introduction

Tourism industry is one of the largest and most important sectors for Thailand's economy. During the past decade, the tourism industry has significantly expanded and contributed to the overall economic growth of Thailand. Each year millions of international visitors come to Thailand to experience Thai culture and the beauty of the natural attractions in Thailand. Major overseas tourists visiting Thailand come from different parts of the world. One of the important segments is the Korean travel market (i.e. South Korea). South Korea has achieved dramatic economic growth over the past decades, which has been associated with the emergence of affluent middle class (Kim, 1997). With a strengthened economy, the demand for outbound travel will also increase significantly (Kim & Prideaux, 1998). Today, South Korea is one of the major tourist generating countries in the Asia Pacific region, and most Korean tourists take trips to neighboring countries such as China, Japan and Southeast Asia (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2008). Growth in the South Korea's outbound market has been so fast that many destinations, including Thailand, have not well prepared to adjust their

range of tourism products and services to specially cater for this segment. During the past decade, Thailand has benefited from an increasing of the Korean outbound tourism. According to the statistical reports by the Tourism Authority of Thailand or TAT (2008), the number of Korean tourists visiting Thailand has been increasing over the past 10 years, from 411,087 tourists in 1997 to 1,075,516 tourists in 2007 (TAT, 2008). Today, South Korea becomes Thailand's the third largest inbound market (after Malaysia and Japan). In spite of its significance, when considering the recent number of Korean inbound tourists to Thailand such as the year 2006 or 2007, there were approximately 1,000,000 travelers a year. Though this figure seems to be large for Thailand's tourism, however, it represents only 8% of the overall Korean outbound market. During the past few years approximately 12-13 million Koreans traveled abroad each year (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2008). This figure evidently shows that the number of Korean arrivals to Thailand is still small when compared to the overall outbound market. In other words, it could say that there are opportunities for Thailand to actively increase market shares of the Korean

outbound market. With the competitive global and regional tourism, increasing the number of Korean travelers to Thailand seems be the challenges for Thailand's tourism industry, and this is the focus of the research issue identified in this study.

Due to the increasing importance of the Korean travel market to the Asia Pacific region, it is essential for Thai tourism marketers to develop effective marketing strategies to attract and increase the number of Korean travelers to Thailand. According to the literature, in order to be successful in tourism, destination marketers should understand the basic wants and needs as well as the behaviors of the target tourists (Crompton, 1979; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Jang & Wu, 2006). One of the most useful approaches to examine tourist behavior is understanding 'travel motivations' (Crompton, 1979; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Jang & Wu, 2006). Understanding tourist motivations is the starting point for the success of any tourism marketing program (Jang & Wu, 2006). This is because travel motivation helps explain why people travel (Dann, 1977, Compton, 1979). Knowledge of tourist motivations would enable tourism marketers to better satisfy travelers' needs and wants, and

then develop appropriate marketing programs for the targets (Jang & Cai, 2001; Jang & Wu, 2006).

One of the basic and useful approaches to examine tourist motivations is based on the theory of push and pull motivations (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). A review of literature indicates that examining tourist motivations based on the theory of push and pull motivations has been widely accepted (Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983; Yuan & McDonald, 1990). The theory of push and pull motivations can provide a useful framework for examining different forces that influence a person to consider taking a vacation and the factors that attract that person to choose a particular destination (Klenosky, 2002). **Thus, this study has the objectives to examine travel motivations of Korean travelers by using push and pull factors as well as to examine their travel behaviors and tourist satisfaction.** It is hoped that the findings of the study will provide a better understanding of travel motivations of Korean travelers by assisting both policy makers and industry practitioners in formulating appropriate travel related polices and strategies to effectively target this important market.

## 2. Literature Review

### Concept of the Theory of Push and Pull Motivations

The theory of push and pull motivations, developed by Dann (1977), is one of the useful theories widely used to examine tourist motivations (Crompton, 1979; Yuan & McDonald 1990; Jang & Wu, 2006). Dann (1977) made a significant contribution in suggesting two factors motivating people to travel and to go to a particular destination. The two factors are called push and pull motivational factors. The concept of push and pull motivations theory describes that people are pushed by internal motives (called push factors) and pulled by destination attributes/attractions (called pull factors) when making their travel decisions (Lam & Hsu, 2004). This concept is classified into two forces/factors (push and pull factors), which indicate that people travel because they are pushed and pulled to do so by some forces or factors. Push factors (internal motives) are mainly considered to be socio-psychological motives that predispose people to travel, while pull factors (destination attributes) are those that attract people to choose a particular destination (Lam & Hsu, 2004).

The push and pull motivations theory seems to be widely discussed and recognized by tourism researchers as a useful and appropriate approach to examine tourist motivations (Klenosky, 2002; Lam & Hsu, 2004; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This is because the push and pull motivations theory provides a simple and intuitive method for explaining tourists' motivations and their travel-related behaviors as well as helps explain why people travel (Dann, 1977; Klenosky, 2002; Jang & Wu, 2006). Thus, the application of the push and pull motivations theory to examine travel motivations of Korean travelers should provide a useful approach to understand a wide variety of different needs and wants that influence their motivations in visiting Thailand. Moreover, it appears that there is no empirical study employing the push and pull motivations theory to investigate travel motivations of Korean travelers to Thailand. Therefore, the push and pull motivations theory is considered to be appropriate and relevant to the purpose of this study.

### Tourist Behaviors

Tourist behavior has been a major topic for decades for hospitality and tourism practitioners. Contributions have

been made from various aspects to understand tourist behaviors such as destination choice, mode of transportation, travel expense, accommodation, and leisure activities. In tourism studies, tourist behavior is a fundamental but critical subject affecting the development of marketing strategies and product development (Chen & Hsu, 2000). Today, many scholars have investigated tourist behaviors and trip characteristics in order to satisfy customers' travel needs and meet their expectations.

In relation to Thai context, there are several studies examining tourist behavior of international travelers visiting Thailand. For example, Laksanakan (2003) investigated travel behaviors and trip characteristics of international visitors to Phuket and found that most respondents were male travelers aged between 25 – 34 years old. Many of them were Asian travelers with college degree. Their average annual income was approximately US\$ 5,000. Most of them were first-time travelers and visited Phuket for relaxing purpose. Many of these travelers were couples and spent approximately 4-7 days in Phuket. However, European travelers seemed to stay longer (e.g. 8-14 days). Major

spending was based on accommodation (Baht 3,501 – 4,500) while other spending (e.g. food, shopping) was approximately Baht 1,001 – 2,000 per person per day. The study found that tourists with different backgrounds (e.g. nationality, education, occupations, income) would have different travel characteristics. Investigating Thai and international tourists' behaviors visiting Chiang Mai, Yenkuntauch and Lougepanitpitak (2004) revealed travel behavior differences between Thai and foreign tourists in many aspects including type of food, souvenirs, accommodation, destination choice, spending, and travel preferences. However, the study found that most of them received travel information about Chiang Mai from their friends and relatives. Sansartji (2005) examined travel behavior of foreign tourists after the Tsunami disaster in the southern Thailand and found that most of the samples were repeat visitors traveling for holiday and leisure purposes. They chose to visit Thailand due to low cost of living and beautiful natural attractions (e.g. islands and beaches). Most of them spend approximately more than one week in Thailand with primary spending on shopping, accommodation and food/beverage. A recent study by Taworn

(2007) found some differences of travel behaviors between Thai and international tourists. The study revealed that most of them visited Chiang Mai because of natural attractions. Thai tourists came here with their friends while many international tourists traveled alone. Both groups preferred city hotels. Thai tourists received travel and accommodation information from their friends and relatives while foreign tourist mostly relied on Internet information. In relation to accommodation selection, the study indicated that both groups had different perspectives in terms of prices, location, quality and services. Based on the literature, different aspects of international tourists' behaviors were investigated, and tourists with different culture and/or demographic characteristics seem to have different travel behaviors and travel preferences. Hence, Korean travelers may have different travel behaviors and trip characteristics from other travelers, and this seems to be worth for further investigation.

### 3. Research Methodologies

The population in this study were Korean travelers visiting Thailand for holiday and leisure purposes both group

and individual travelers who were 20 years old and above. Since the population or Korean tourists visiting Thailand each month is unknown (in term of exact numbers) and the elements in the population have no probabilities for being equally selected as the samples, non-probability sampling by convenience sampling was deemed to be appropriate for this study (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001). According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand, (2008), there are approximately 83,000 Korean arrivals to Thailand per month. Based on the statistical estimation (Cavana et al., 2001), the samples of 400 tourists seem to be appropriate for the population of Korean tourists to Thailand. The research instrument (questionnaire) for investigating travel motivations and behaviors of Korean travelers was developed from a comprehensive review of relevant literature focused on travel motivations and tourist behaviors (i.e. You & O'Leary, 1999; Heung & Cheng, 2000; Huh & Uysal, 2003; Jang & Wu, 2006). The questionnaire was originally designed in English and translated into Korean language by academic scholars specializing in Korean and English languages. The questionnaire consisted of 4 sections, i.e. 1)

demographic characteristics 2) travel behaviors/trip characteristics and 3) travel motivations (push and pull factors) and 4) tourist satisfaction with Thailand's destination attributes. Sample questions for measuring travel motivations were, for instance, "One of main reasons why I travel abroad is to travel to a destination I have never been to" (push factor) or "Do you think Thai culture is an important factor attracting you to Thailand" (pull factor). Then, the respondents were presented with a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). To survey tourist behaviors, the respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their travel behaviors and trip characteristics (close-ended questions with choices). For measuring tourist satisfaction, the respondents were asked to indicate the level of their satisfaction toward Thailand's destination attributes (based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=very dissatisfied to 5= very satisfied).

The questionnaire was pre-tested with 30 Korean travelers in Bangkok to obtain feedback on the clarity and appropriateness of questions. Data were collected from Korean travelers who were

visiting Thailand for leisure and holiday purposes during June and July 2008. If the respondents traveled independently, and they could speak some English, the research team would ask them if they were interested to participate in the survey. In case of group travelers, the respondents were approached and informed about the purpose of the research by the assistance of tour guides (local guides) who accompanied the groups. Respondents were asked if they would be interested to participate in the survey. Once they agreed, questionnaires were distributed on site and collected by research team. All respondents received small souvenirs for their participation. The survey was undertaken in major tourist cities such as Bangkok, Ayutthaya and Pattaya. A total of 400 questions were collected and used for data analysis. Data were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Descriptive statistics (e.g. frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (e.g. factor analysis, t-tests and ANOVA) were used to analyze the data. It should be noted only some results were presented in this article.

#### 4. Research Findings

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

| Travel behaviors/trip characteristics |                            | Number (n=400) | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                         | Male                       | 216            | 54.0%          |
|                                       | Female                     | 184            | 46.0%          |
| <b>Age</b>                            | 20 – 30 years              | 104            | 26.0%          |
|                                       | 31 – 50 years              | 264            | 66.0%          |
|                                       | 51 years or older          | 24             | 8.0 %          |
| <b>Marital status</b>                 | Single                     | 168            | 42.0%          |
|                                       | Married                    | 192            | 48.0%          |
|                                       | Divorced/Separated/Widowed | 40             | 10.0%          |
| <b>Education</b>                      | High school or lower       | 80             | 20.0%          |
|                                       | Bachelor degree            | 220            | 55.0%          |
|                                       | Master degree or higher    | 100            | 25.0%          |
| <b>Occupation</b>                     | Company employee           | 152            | 38.0%          |
|                                       | Government officer         | 64             | 16.0%          |
|                                       | Business owner             | 44             | 11.0%          |
|                                       | Student                    | 40             | 10.0%          |
|                                       | Independent/self-employed  | 28             | 7.0%           |
|                                       | Unemployment               | 24             | 6.0%           |
|                                       | Housewife                  | 24             | 6.0%           |
|                                       | Retired                    | 20             | 5.0%           |
|                                       | Others                     | 4              | 1.0%           |
| <b>Monthly Income</b>                 | US\$ 2,500 or lower        | 124            | 31.0%          |
|                                       | US\$ 2,501 – 4,000         | 180            | 45.0%          |
|                                       | US\$ 4,001 – or higher     | 96             | 24.0%          |

From table 1, the proportion of male respondents (54%) was slightly higher than females (46%). Most of the respondents were in the age group of 31 – 50 years (66.0%). Almost half of them were married (48.0%), and approximately 55% had education at the college level. The respondents come from different occupations, for example, 38.0% were

company employees, 16% were government officers, 11.0% were business owners and 10.0% were students. Approximately 31.0% of the respondents had monthly income in the range of US\$ 2,500 or lower while 45.0% earned between US\$ 2,501 – 4,000, and 24.0% earned US\$ 4,001 or more, respectively.

**Table 2: Travel behaviors and trip characteristics of respondents**

| Travel behaviors/trip characteristics   | Number (n=400) | Percentage (%) |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Number of overseas travel (within 1 year)</b>                                  |                |                |
| 1 times   | 132            | 33.0%          |
| 2-3 times   | 108            | 27.0%          |
| 4 times or more   | 44             | 11.0%          |
| Not sure, depending on opportunity  | 116            | 29.0%          |
| <b>Trip arrangement to Thailand</b>   |                |                |
| Buy package tours (e.g. air ticket, accommodation)                                | 120            | 30.0%          |
| Travel with a tour company  | 220            | 55.0%          |
| Travel independently  | 60             | 15.0%          |
| <b>Number of visits to Thailand</b>   |                |                |
| 1 times   | 240            | 60.0%          |
| 2-3 times   | 140            | 35.0%          |
| 4 times   | 20             | 5.0%           |
| <b>Length of stay in Thailand</b>   |                |                |
| 5 days or less  | 112            | 28.0%          |
| 6-8 days  | 236            | 59.0%          |
| 9 days or more  | 52             | 13.0%          |
| <b>Person influencing the decisions to visit Thailand</b>                         |                |                |
| Own decision  | 108            | 27.0%          |
| My friends  | 100            | 25.0%          |
| My couple (husband/wife)  | 84             | 21.0%          |
| My boy or girl friend   | 68             | 17.0%          |
| My relatives  | 16             | 8.0%           |
| Others  | 4              | 2.0%           |
| <b>Person accompanying the trip to Thailand</b>                                   |                |                |
| Friends or relatives  | 140            | 35.0%          |
| Husband or wife   | 120            | 30.0%          |
| Family members  | 80             | 20.0%          |
| Traveling alone   | 60             | 15.0%          |
| <b>Preferred destination/region, except Bangkok (can be more than one answer)</b> |                |                |
| East (e.g. Pattaya)   | 172            | 43.0%          |
| South (e.g. Phuket, Samui)  | 160            | 40.0%          |
| North (e.g. Chiang Mai)   | 140            | 35.0%          |
| Central (e.g. Ayuthaya, Kanchanaburi)   | 40             | 10.0%          |
| Northeast (e.g. Nakornratchasrima, Khon Kaen)                                     | 32             | 8.0%           |

**Preferred leisure activities (can be more than one answer)**

|                                    |     |       |
|------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Sightseeing                        | 152 | 38.0% |
| Visiting beaches/islands           | 80  | 20.0% |
| Visiting cultural/historical sites | 72  | 18.0% |
| Visiting natural-based areas       | 68  | 17.0% |
| Shopping                           | 60  | 15.0% |
| Urban traveling                    | 48  | 12.0% |
| Visiting rural areas               | 8   | 2.0%  |
| Others                             | 20  | 5.0%  |

**Average daily accommodation expense**

|                    |     |       |
|--------------------|-----|-------|
| Baht 1,000 or less | 88  | 22.0% |
| Baht 1,001 – 3,000 | 172 | 43.0% |
| Baht 3,001 or more | 140 | 35.0% |

**Preferred accommodation**

|                                       |     |       |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Luxury hotel (e.g. 5-star hotel)      | 60  | 15.0% |
| First class hotel (e.g. 4-star hotel) | 160 | 40.0% |
| Budget hotel (e.g. 3-star-hotel)      | 100 | 25.0% |
| Guest house                           | 64  | 16.0% |
| Friend/relative's house/others        | 12  | 3.0%  |

**Average daily food and beverage expenses**

|                  |     |       |
|------------------|-----|-------|
| Baht 300 or less | 68  | 17.0% |
| Baht 301 – 700   | 276 | 69.0% |
| Baht 701 or more | 56  | 14.0% |

**Average daily shopping expenses**

|                    |     |       |
|--------------------|-----|-------|
| Baht 1,000 or less | 140 | 35.0% |
| Baht 1,001 – 2,000 | 152 | 38.0% |
| Baht 2,001 or more | 108 | 27.0% |

**Source of travel information motivating to visit Thailand (can be more than one answer)**

|  |     |       |
|--|-----|-------|
| Media (e.g. TV, magazines, brochures, newspaper) | 120 | 30.0% |
| Internet   | 260 | 65.0% |
| Friends/relatives                                | 68  | 17.0% |
| Travel agents/tour companies                     | 52  | 13.0% |
| Travel books                                     | 20  | 5.0%  |
| Thailand's tourism office                        | 60  | 15.0% |
| Others   | 28  | 7.0%  |

**What would be recommended to family/friends/relatives about Thailand (can be more than one answer)**

|                     |     |       |
|---------------------|-----|-------|
| Thai culture        | 132 | 33.0% |
| Thai food           | 116 | 29.0% |
| Beaches             | 92  | 23.0% |
| Tourism attractions | 84  | 21.0% |
| Thai people         | 72  | 18.0% |
| Natural areas       | 24  | 6.0%  |
| Others              | 12  | 3.0%  |

**Chance to revisit Thailand in next 1-5 years**

|          |     |       |
|----------|-----|-------|
| Yes      | 248 | 62.0% |
| No       | 92  | 23.0% |
| Not sure | 60  | 15.0% |

**What would motivate revisit to Thailand (based on yes-answer and can be more than one answer)**

|   |     |       |
|---|-----|-------|
| Thai culture                                    | 204 | 51.0% |
| A variety of tourism attractions                | 152 | 38.0% |
| Low cost of goods & services                    | 120 | 30.0% |
| A variety of leisure activities & entertainment | 108 | 27.0% |
| Friendly & nice people                          | 36  | 9.0%  |
| Nature & beautiful environment                  | 32  | 8.0%  |

With regard to travel behaviors and trip characteristics (table 2), the findings show that approximately one-third of the respondents (33.0%) traveled abroad once a year while 27.0% traveled 2-3 times a year and 11% traveled 4 times or more. More than half of them (55.0%) traveled to Thailand with tour companies (e.g. inclusive tours) while 30% traveled on the basis of package tours (e.g. hotel and air tickets), and 15% were independent travelers (own arrangement). Most of the respondents (66.0%) were first-time

travelers to Thailand, whereas 40.0% were repeat visitors. Most of them (59.0%) stayed in Thailand approximately 6-8 days, followed by the trip of 5 days or less (28.0%), and the trip of 9 days or more (13.0%), respectively. In addition to visiting Bangkok, many respondents chose to visit the eastern region such as Pattaya (43.0%) and the southern region such as Phuket or Samui (40.0%). While 35.0% chose to visit the northern region such as Chiang Mai (35.0%). Major leisure activities may include sightseeing (38.0%),

visiting beaches/islands (20.0%), visiting cultural/historical sites (18%), visiting natural-based areas (17.0%) and shopping (15.0%), respectively. The study also found that almost half of them (43.0%) spent around Baht 1,000 – 3,000 for their accommodation and they seemed to prefer first class hotels (40.0%) and budget hotels (25.0%), respectively. Approximately 69.0% spent around Baht 301 – 700 for their daily food and beverage while shopping expenditures could vary from Baht 1,001 – 2000 (38.0%), Baht 1,000

or less (35.0%) and Baht 2,001 or more (27.0%). In terms of source of travel information motivating the respondents to Thailand, the study found that most of them were motivated by Internet (65.0%), followed by media such TV, magazines, and brochures (30.0%). It is also interesting to note that Thai culture, Thai food, beaches and tourism attractions were regarded as the major things that the respondents would recommend to their families, friends and relatives about Thailand.

**Table 3: Factor analysis of push factors**

| Push factor dimensions                                       | Factor loading | Eigenvalue | Variance explained | Factor mean |
|--|----------------|------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Factor 1: Fun & relaxation (alpha = 0.86)                    |                | 6.39       | 49.15              | 2.79        |
| I want to seek fun and adventure.                            | 0.77           |            |                    |             |
| I want to rest and relax.                                    | 0.75           |            |                    |             |
| I want to see something new and exciting.                    | 0.65           |            |                    |             |
| I want to escape from routine or ordinary environment.       | 0.64           |            |                    |             |
| I want to escape from busy job or stressful work.            | 0.66           |            |                    |             |
| I want to improve my health and well-being.                  | 0.55           |            |                    |             |
| Factor 2: Novel experience (alpha = 0.80)                    |                | 1.08       | 8.29               | 2.74        |
| I want to travel to a country I have not visited before.     | 0.81           |            |                    |             |
| I want to experience culture that is different from mine.    | 0.80           |            |                    |             |
| I want to learn new things from a foreign country.           | 0.75           |            |                    |             |
| I want to fulfill my dream of visiting a new country.        | 0.53           |            |                    |             |
| Factor 3: Socialization (alpha = 0.77)                       |                | 1.01       | 7.79               | 2.49        |
| I want to see and meet different groups of people.           | 0.77           |            |                    |             |
| I want to spend time with my family members while traveling. | 0.74           |            |                    |             |
| I can talk to everybody about my trips when I get home.      | 0.55           |            |                    |             |
| Total variance explained                                     | 65.23%         |            |                    |             |

As shown in table 3, three factor dimensions were categorized into three push factors: (1) 'fun & relaxation', (2) 'novel experience', and (3) 'socialization'. Each factor dimension was named based on the common characteristics of the variables it included. Among them, 'fun & relaxation' and 'novel experience' emerged as the major push factors motivating the respondents to travel abroad with mean scores of 2.79 and 2.74 respectively.

The present finding is somewhat similar to previous studies. For example, Hanqin and Lam (1999) found that 'relaxation' emerged as one of the push factors among Chinese travelers visiting

Hong Kong. While Lee (2000) revealed that 'novelty' was regarded as one of the major push factors among international tourists visiting South Korea. Though the results of the present study seem to correspond to previous literature, it should be noted that push factors (motives to travel) could be different from one group of sample to another (Kozak, 2002). This is because people travel for many reasons, and people with different cultural backgrounds or nationalities may have different travel motives (Kozak, 2002). In this study, it was found that many Koreans traveled abroad due to the motives of 'fun & relaxation' and 'novel experience'.

**Table 4: Factor analysis of pull factors**

| Push factor dimensions                             | Factor loading | Eigenvalue | Variance explained | Factor mean |
|--|----------------|------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Factor 1: attraction variety & costs (alpha =0.89) |                |            |                    |             |
| Natural attractions                                | 0.81           |            |                    |             |
| Beach/seaside                                      | 0.78           |            |                    |             |
| Thai culture                                       | 0.75           |            |                    |             |
| Low cost of living                                 | 0.73           |            |                    |             |
| Travel cost to Thailand                            | 0.70           |            |                    |             |
| Thai food  | 0.65           |            |                    |             |
| Cultural and historical places                     | 0.64           |            |                    |             |
| A variety of tourism attractions                   | 0.60           |            |                    |             |
| A variety of shopping place                        | 0.57           |            |                    |             |
| A variety of leisure activities and entertainment  | 0.55           |            |                    |             |
| An availability of travel information              | 0.51           |            |                    |             |
| Factor 2: Safety & cleanliness (alpha =0.70)       |                | 1.47       | 11.33              | 2.61        |
| Safety and security                                | 0.68           |            |                    |             |
| Hygiene and cleanliness                            | 0.65           |            |                    |             |
| Total variance explained                           | 54.85%         |            |                    |             |

With regard to pull factors (table 4), two factor dimensions were named as: (1) 'attraction variety & costs' and (2) 'safety & cleanliness'. Based on the result, 'attraction variety & costs' was considered as the most important pull factors attracting the respondents to Thailand with the mean score of 2.86.

The above result seems to be similar to Hanqin and Lam (1999) who found that mainland Chinese travelers perceived sightseeing variety (including historical/cultural attractions and beautiful scenery) as the major destination attraction drawing them to Kong Hong. Likewise, Sirakaya and McLellan (1997) discovered that trip costs, recreation activities, and cultural/

historical attractions were major pull factors among international college students. Based on these studies, it suggests that a variety of destination attractions and travel costs could be the common pull factors among international travelers when traveling abroad. Thus, Korean travelers chose to visit Thailand could be due to a variety of Thailand's destination attractions such as natural attractions, Thai culture, historical sites, and beautiful beaches. However, it should be noted the result of pull factors (destination attractions) could be different from country to country depending on the image and perception of travelers toward a particular destination (Kozak, 2002).

**Table 5: Level of tourist satisfaction with Thailand's destination attributes**

| Push factor dimensions                             | Factor loading | Eigenvalue | Variance explained | Factor mean |
|--|----------------|------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Factor 1: attraction variety & costs (alpha =0.89) |                | 5.66       | 43.51              | 2.86        |
| Natural attractions                                | 0.81           |            |                    |             |
| Beach/seaside                                      | 0.78           |            |                    |             |
| Thai culture                                       | 0.75           |            |                    |             |
| Low cost of living                                 | 0.73           |            |                    |             |
| Travel cost to Thailand                            | 0.70           |            |                    |             |
| Thai food  | 0.65           |            |                    |             |
| Cultural and historical places                     | 0.64           |            |                    |             |
| A variety of tourism attractions                   | 0.60           |            |                    |             |
| A variety of shopping place                        | 0.57           |            |                    |             |
| A variety of leisure activities and entertainment  | 0.55           |            |                    |             |
| An availability of travel information              | 0.51           |            |                    |             |
| Factor 2: Safety & cleanliness (alpha =0.70)       |                | 1.47       | 11.33              | 2.61        |
| Safety and security                                | 0.68           |            |                    |             |
| Hygiene and cleanliness                            | 0.65           |            |                    |             |
| Total variance explained                           | 54.85%         |            |                    |             |

Table 5 shows the mean ranking of tourist satisfaction with Thailand's destination attributes. Based on the result, taste of Thai food ( $M=3.05$ ), a variety of tourism attractions & activities ( $M=3.03$ ), and prices of goods & services ( $M=3.01$ ) received higher scores than other attributes; suggesting that the respondents might be more satisfied with these attributes than other items. While the least satisfied attributes included cleanliness of tourism attractions ( $M=2.49$ ), tourist safety ( $M=2.47$ ), and public transportation ( $M=2.42$ ). It should be noted that these three attributes received score below 2.50 on the 5-point scale; suggesting poor performance in respondents' opinions.

The present result seems to be partially similar to previous studies. For instance, Danaher and Arweiler (1996) found that tourists visiting New Zealand had different satisfaction levels with New Zealand's destination attributes such as public transportation, accommodation, outdoor activities and tourism attractions. Some of these attributes received different levels of satisfaction, and some could be more satisfied or less satisfied than the others, depending on its performance and tourists' expectation. Similarly, Master and Prideaux (2000)

revealed that Taiwanese tourists had different levels of satisfaction toward Southeast Queensland's destination attributes such as the attractiveness of local culture, accommodation, quality of services, transportation, local tour services and shopping facilities. Based on the present study, many Korean travelers seemed to be satisfied with Thai food, a variety of tourism attractions and low costs of goods/services than other attributes. These three attributes could be widely argued that they are the highlights (strengths) of Thailand's tourism industry (TAT, 2003). Thai food is claimed to be one of the world's popular cuisine in many countries (Cummings, 2000). When international tourists come to Thailand, they will have a chance to experience traditional and original Thai cuisine. With a variety of ingredients, good taste/favors, and different styles of cooking, many Korean may appreciate Thai food and its taste while they were in Thailand. Furthermore, Thailand also has a variety of tourism attractions including cultural/historical attractions, natural and scenery attractions, shopping facilities, and a lot of leisure activities and entertainment. With these attractive destination attributes, Thailand is regarded as one

of the most popular destinations in the Asia Pacific region (Sangpikul, 2007). More importantly, one of the major factors attracting international tourists to Thailand is the low costs of living and goods and services (TAT, 2003; Sangpikul, 2007). Some studies revealed that many international tourists come to Thailand because of competitive travel costs, costs of living and beautiful natural attractions (Laksanakan, 2003; Sansartji, 2005). Furthermore, it is often argued that Thailand has been regularly voted as the best value destination (best value for money) in the region (TAT, 2003; Traveler Counsellors, 2007). With the above reasons, it could be possible that Korean travelers might be satisfied with these attributes of Thailand (i.e. Thai food, a variety of tourism attractions, prices of goods) than other items/attributes, and help justify the result.

### 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has identified three push and two pull factor dimensions associating with Koreans' travel motivations. The three push factors were labeled as: (1) 'fun & relaxation', (2) 'novel experience', and (3) 'socialization', while the two pull factors included: (1) 'attraction variety & costs' and (2) 'safety

& cleanliness'. Among them, 'fun & relaxation' and 'attraction variety & costs' were viewed as the most important push and pull factors, respectively. The study has revealed some interesting results of travel behaviors and trip characteristics of Korean travelers. For example, many Korean travelers traveled abroad several times a year. Most of them traveled to Thailand with tour companies and package tours while only some traveled independently. Most of them were first-time visitors to Thailand, however, many were repeat visitors. They mainly stayed approximately 6–8 days in Thailand. They came to Thailand with their friends, relatives, and couples. In addition to Bangkok, their preferred destinations included the eastern part (e.g. Pattaya), the southern part (e.g. Phuket), and the northern part (e.g. Chiang Mai). Major leisure activities were, for instance, sightseeing, visiting seashores/beaches, visiting cultural/historical sites and shopping. Many of them preferred first class hotels (Baht 1,001–3,000 a night), spent approximately at Baht 301–700 for food and beverage and at Baht 1,001–2,000 for shopping. Furthermore, the findings also indicated that many of them were satisfied with the taste of Thai food, a variety of tourism attractions & activities,

and prices of goods & services. However, the least satisfied attributes included cleanliness of tourism attractions, tourist safety, and public transportation.

To develop marketing programs attracting Korean travelers to Thailand, tourism marketers should realize the importance of push factor 'fun & relaxation' and the motives incorporated in the factor (e.g. the need to see something new, exciting as well as a chance to relax from stressful environment), which are perceived as driving forces for Koreans to travel abroad. At the same time, they should realize that tourist's perception towards a destination is a measure of that destination's ability to pull or attract tourists. In this study, pull factor 'attraction variety & costs' is perceived as an indication of the 'destination attractiveness', drawing Korean travelers to visit Thailand to satisfy their needs of 'fun & relaxation'. According to You, O'Leary, Morrison, and Hong (2000), tourism marketers need to tie the motivational drives with the activities that the destination can offer and then package them to better satisfy the target's needs. This suggestion may be suitable for the case of Korean travelers to Thailand who were motivated by 'fun &

relaxation' and/or 'novel experience' and attracted by 'attraction variety & costs'. To better satisfy customers' needs, tourism marketers should develop the products focusing on a variety of Thailand's attractions including Thai culture, historical sites, natural attractions (e.g. beaches/islands), and a variety of leisure activities and entertainment by designing different tour programs (tour choices) that provide travelers with these experiences while traveling in Thailand. They should also design effective marketing communications/messages (e.g. advertising) to stimulate the needs of fun, relaxation, and/or novel experience (push factors) to be linked/related with what Thailand can offer or pull factors (i.e. a variety of tourism attractions and competitive costs). In relation to travel costs (pull factor), destination marketers should convey the messages promoting Thailand as the best value destination for overseas holiday among Korean travelers (e.g. competitive travel costs compared to other destinations). It is hoped that these suggestions would be useful for developing effective marketing strategies for the Korean travel market.

For the results of Koreans' travel behaviors, some observations have been

made and this would be useful for tourism marketers to develop appropriate marketing strategies. For example, many Korean people travel abroad quite often each year. This should provide marketing opportunities for tourism marketers to develop appropriate marketing programs to attract Koreans to visit Thailand by using the results of push and pull factors as the marketing theme or guideline. It is also interesting to note that there were many Korean travelers who were repeat visitors. This suggests that Thailand is one of the popular destinations for Korean travelers. Destination marketers may design different marketing strategies and tourism products for repeat visitors. In addition to offering main products like cultural tourism, natural-based tourism (e.g. mountains and beaches) could be another attractive program for the targets. Despite Bangkok is the major destination, many Korean travelers prefer to travel to different parts of Thailand. In particular, the east such as Pattaya and the south such as Phuekt seem to be a preferred place for many Korean travelers. This suggests that Pattaya and Phuekt may be added or included in the tour program, especially longer-stay program. Based on the results of travel

expenses (e.g. accommodation costs, food & beverage, shopping), these findings should provide useful information for designing appropriate travel costs for the Korean market. The programs could include both middle class and higher class tour programs. One interesting observation is the source of travel motivation motivating Korean travelers to Thailand which is primarily based on the Internet. This suggests that the Internet should be used as the major channel to promote tourism in Thailand. Travel business targeting at Korean travelers may provide Korean language on their websites. They should also develop interesting and attractive tourism products through the Internet and should use it as the main media to reach the targets.

According to the travel satisfaction result, it seems that the respondents were more likely to be satisfied with taste of Thai food, variety of tourism attractions and costs of goods and services than other destination attributes. However, when considering the overall satisfaction, the average score was not so high. Many items scored below 3.0; suggesting fair performance. All of the destination attributes examined here are important to the holiday experience and satisfaction

of international tourists in Thailand. As noted, tourist satisfaction is important to successful destination marketing because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of goods and services, repeat visits, and word-of-mouth publicity. In order for Thailand to stay competitive in global tourism, it suggests that government agencies involving in tourism development and industry practitioners need to develop and improve the quality, standard or services of these destination attributes. In particular, some issues such as cleanliness of tourism attractions, tourist safety, and public transportation (convenience and service) seem to be least satisfied and need serious attention from concerned parties. Some of these

destination attributes could be established or developed industry standard such as accommodation, restaurants, quality and cleanliness of food, cleanliness of tourism attractions. Industry standard can be the mechanisms to ensure the integrity of the products and services provided to the tourists as well as to meet the minimum requirement of the industry (Patterson, 2002). It is hoped that the findings of tourist satisfaction reflecting from Korean travelers could be useful for national tourism organizations and destination planners in improving those destination attributes to increase the competitiveness of Thailand's tourism industry, the level of tourist satisfaction, and promoting repeat visit to Thailand.

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