CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR OF SHOPPING AT THAILAND-LAO CROSS-BORDER

พฤติกรรมของผู้บริโภคในการเลือกซื้อสินค้าบริเวณด่านพรมแดนประเทศไทย-ลาว

Ratthakarn Buasri

Faculty of Business Administration, Khon Kaen University

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the inter-relationship that exists among economic reasons, leisure-oriented activities, country-of-origin, outshopping enjoyment, and outshopping frequency in regard to of cross-border tourism between Thailand and Lao. Survey questionnaires were used as the tools to collect the data from 184 students (Gen Y) who were studying in a diploma program in Vientiane, Lao and who had crossed the border to go shopping in Thailand. The data was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results revealed that leisure-oriented activities had a direct influence on outshopping enjoyment and on outshopping frequency. In addition, there are direct influences that the country-of-origin has on outshopping enjoyment. The results supported the three hypotheses of the study and showed that 80% had explained outshopping enjoyment and that 17% had frequently participated in outshopping.

Keywords: Economic Reasons, Leisure-Oriented Activities, Country-of-Origin, Outshopping Enjoyment, Outshopping Frequency

Corresponding Author

E-mail: din54@yahoo.co.th

บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาหาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างปัจจัยทางเศรษฐกิจ กิจกรรมสันทนาการ ประเทศแหล่งกำเนิดสินค้า ความเพลิดเพลินในการเลือกซื้อสินค้า และความถี่ในการซื้อสินค้าในกรณีของการท่องเที่ยวในเขตชายแดนประเทศไทยและลาว งานวิจัยนี้สำรวจด้วยแบบสอบถาม โดยเก็บข้อมูลจากนักเรียนระดับชั้นอนุปริญญาในเมืองเวียงจันทน์ (เจเนอเรชั่นวาย) ประเทศลาวที่เคยข้ามชายแดนมาซื้อสินค้าในประเทศไทย จำนวน 184 คน วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้โมเดลสมการโครงสร้าง (Structural Equation Modeling: SEM) ผลการวิจัยพบว่า กิจกรรมสันทนาการมีความสัมพันธ์ทางตรงกับความเพลิดเพลินในการเลือกซื้อสินค้า และความถี่ในการซื้อสินค้า และประเทศแหล่งกำเนิดสินค้ามีความสัมพันธ์ทางตรงกับความเพลิดเพลินในการเลือกซื้อสินค้า งานวิจัยยอมรับ 3 สมมติฐาน โดยโมเดลสามารถอธิบายความเพลิดเพลินในการเลือกซื้อสินค้า ได้ร้อยละ 80 และอธิบายความสัมพันธ์กับความถี่ในการซื้อสินค้าได้ร้อยละ 17

คำสำคัญ: ปัจจัยทางเศรษฐกิจ กิจกรรมสันทนาการ ประเทศแหล่งกำเนิดสินค้า ความเพลิดเพลินในการเลือกซื้อสินค้า ความถี่ในการซื้อสินค้า

Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest developing industries in the world (Tomori, 2010; Shrestha & Thanabordeekij, 2017). Likewise, shopping is one of the most pervasive leisure activities engaged in by tourists (Yuksel, 2007). Shopping and travelling are interconnected in many ways and the relationship between them is widely-known all over the world. In addition, the traditional notion of shopping as an economic necessity has become a leisure activity for a growing number of people (Tomori, 2010).

Tourism and shopping are inseparable. In fact, shopping is viewed as being one of the main purposes that tourists have when they are conducting their travel activities. It can be stated that touring without engaging in shopping is not a complete travel experience. For millions of travelers each year, the "Act of Shopping" is an important factor and is the primary reason for taking a trip (Tomori, 2010). With respect

to tourism shopping, some fruitful research studies have been carried out thus far in various areas as follows: 1) the synergistic effects of shopping and the leisure experiences of tourists, and 2) cross-border shopping behaviors, etc. (Hsieh & Chang, 2006). Moreover, shopping frequency has received continuous attention from marketing scholars and practitioners because it is closely related to consumer segmentation and to household expenditures (Ma et al., 2011).

Moreover, shopping has been referred to as a "fun, pleasurable activity" that leads to feelings of joy. In addition, the positive image of the shopping place has been shown to create higher levels of pleasurable feelings in customers and reflects their enjoyment of spending time in the area. It can be assumed that at good shopping places, the intention of these particular businesses is to foster feelings of enjoyment among their customers. Being

successful at fostering these feelings plays an important role in creating repeat business (re-patronage). Therefore, creating shopping motivation for the area and fostering the associated enjoyment have been key areas of research in consumer shopping behaviors over the past few decades (Kotze et al., 2012), because consumers who enjoy shopping will engage in making more non-planned purchases, in spending more time per shopping trip, and in continuing to shop after making a purchase (Kim & Kim, 2008).

World Travel and Tourism Council (2017) reveals the value of international tourism industry has outpaced world merchandise trade as the abroad travel and tourism made direct contribution of US$ 2.3 trillion in 2016. According to the World Trade Organization (2014) exports of manufactured goods has continually increased, which implies that in general, consumers are buying more foreign products. In the particular case of foreign products, one clue may be the image of the country-of-origin in which the product was produced. Consequently, firms should consider how the image of the country-of-origin can be expected to influence the attitudes of the consumers towards their products and should make the appropriate adaptations to their marketing mix (Shun & Yunjie, 2006; Costa, Carneiro & Goldszmidt, 2016). It may be assumed that the image of a shopping center may also have an impact on the customers' decisions of whether or not to shop there.

Since consumers especially have many different choices of shopping locations, the image of the regional shopping centers plays a key role in the future of the modern economy (Hart et al., 2007).

This paper reveals the phenomenon of consumption across borders from the perspective of tourism. Tourism appears in many forms. However, this paper concentrates on a special sub-field of tourism, called shopping tourism. Therefore, this research study has aimed to examine the factors associated with outshopping behaviors. These include the economic reasons, leisure-oriented activities, and the country-of-origin, all of which may relate to the shopping enjoyment and frequency in the case of the Gen Y shoppers who had been crossing the Thai-Lao border in Nong Khai Province, where there is a special economic zone for trade and tourism on the border, which is continuously growing in Thailand (Thansettakij, 2015). Members of Gen Y have multicultural families, have obvious lifestyles, and accept all cultural differences in shopping places. Their opinions will reveal more advantages for this up-to-date study in order to make improvements to the shopping industry by following this important target market (Brown et al., 2010). Thus, it plays an important role in the following: 1) predicting the customer's choices and their intentions in regard to making future purchases, 2) increasing market share and profitability, and 3) achieving a competitive advantage.

Literature Review and Hypothesis

1. Economic Reasons

Outshoppers literally go outshopping to find better quality, to discover a better assortment of merchandise, to discover more pleasant shopping atmospheres, and to find more competitive prices (Guo & Wang, 2009). These can be the called the "economic reasons" that tourists have for engaging in shopping. Therefore, there are many economic reasons that influence outshopping enjoyment, which include low prices, discounts, and reasonable deals. These are the factors which surround the economic reasons and which can be measured. Moreover, there are more reasons for shoppers to go shopping in particular place: 1) good product quality, 2) the availability of products, 3) service-minded employees, 4) a good shopping environment, 5) convenient shopping hours, 6) opportunities to find bargain prices, 7) favorable exchange rates, 8) convenient cross-border procedures, and 9) businesses that follow the current trends (Dmitrovic & Vida, 2007).

According to the literature review, Kotze et al. (2012) revealed that "bargain hunting" may be the most pervasive source of shopping enjoyment. Bargain hunting refers to shopping for sales, looking for discounts, and hunting for good deals. Shoppers can find joy in looking for the lowest price. This is consistent with Aguiar & Hurst (2007) who found that price sensitivity is also considered to be closely related to shopping frequency. Moreover, studies by Santini et al. (2015) and Moslehi & Haeri (2016) stated that the economic reasons in terms

of discounts or price promotions are directly associated with the positive emotions of the customer and his/her intentions to repurchase. It can be concluded that economic reasons are the first purpose for shopping enjoyment, and that these reasons support the customers' willingness to return to shop again. This research study has a first and second hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Economic reasons will have a positive relationship to shopping enjoyment.

Hypothesis 2: Economic reasons will have a positive relationship to shopping frequency.

2. Leisure-Oriented Activities

Leisure can be viewed as activities that people engage during their free time, such as painting, participating in sports, and even go out for shopping (Hurd & Anderson, 2011). Many people view shopping as a way to fulfill a part of their need for leisure and tourism. It is clear that for many people, this type of activity is a form of recreation that provides enjoyment and even relaxation. Therefore, shopping has become a major leisure activity, as malls and other shopping centers continue to add amenities for customers such as food outlets, fitness studios, skating rinks, cinemas, and swimming pools (Sinha, 2003; Hansen & Jensen, 2009).

As mentioned above, leisure is the key to actualizing lifestyles for visitors or tourists. In terms of tourists attractions and leisure time activities, urban parks, entertainment & nightlife, and recreational shopping places are all orientated towards fun-seeking tourists.

Moreover, the shoppers, who find enjoyment and who are satisfied with the retailers that provide them with interesting leisure activities, would like to spend more time and to visit more frequently (Argan, 2016). Thus, the following hypothesis can be made:

Hypothesis 3: Leisure-oriented activities will have a positive relationship to shopping enjoyment.

Hypothesis 4: Leisure-oriented activities will have a positive relationship to shopping frequency.

3. The Image of Country-of-origin

Country-of-origin is one of the most important factors that significantly influences the purchasing decisions of consumers. In contrast, there is a different definition – the image of a country can be considered as the overall perception that consumers form about products from a particular country. This is based on their prior perceptions of the country's production and marketing strengths and weaknesses. In contrast, some other researchers view country image as the general perception that the consumers have about the quality of products made in a particular country (Saydan, 2013).

In addition, Costa, Carneiro & Goldszmidt (2016) found that the geographic conditions (e.g., climate, and landscape, etc.) had tended to affect the perceived quality of the nature-based products, whereas the skills of the workforce would have an impact on the feelings and emotions of the customers. This is consistent with Hart et al. (2007) who noted that a strong image of shopping location would result in the following: 1) a competitive advantage, 2) a greater willingness to purchase goods,

3) a longer period of shopping time spent by the customer, and 4) a higher sales turnover. In fact, all of the above would more positively affect the behaviors of the patrons. In line with this reasoning, it can be hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 5: The Country-of-origin will have a positive relationship to shopping enjoyment.

Hypothesis 6: The Country-of-origin will have a positive relationship to shopping frequency.

4. Outshopping Enjoyment

Shopping enjoyment can be described as the satisfaction that customers derive from the shopping activity itself. Similarly, shopping enjoyment is defined as the personality traits of consumers who find shopping more enjoyable and who experience greater shopping pleasure than other consumers (Kim & Kim, 2008). In addition, customers can find enjoyment by one type of shopping–outshopping, which can be defined as the purchase of goods by consumers outside of their local shopping areas (Jarratt, 2000). Outshopping is a well-known way to get satisfaction from making purchases.

Hart et al. (2007) noted that customers are likely to shop outside of their home country more frequently when they are met with a sense of enjoyment during the shopping experience. Furthermore, there was an empirical study, which was conducted by Kim & Kim (2008). Its findings revealed that enjoying a retail experience results in more time being spent in the shopping experience and in repeat business.

5. Outshopping Frequency

Outshopping frequency, which is defined as making at least one out-of-town purchase

every six months, is receiving continuous attention from marketing scholars and practitioners. Shopping frequency is also considered to be closely related to price sensitivity. Likewise, a greater frequency of out-shoppers indicates that there is a limited selection of merchandise available locally, particularly in relation to goods with elements of fashion. Therefore, this is an important motivator to customers to out-shop (Zinser & Brunswick, 2014).

From the review of the literature, there are many factors that we can assume are related to outshopping frequency, such as economic reasons, leisure-oriented activities, and even the country-of-origin. Consequently, these have become the conceptual framework and hypotheses of this study as mentioned above.

Methodology

This study utilized questionnaires as a means to collect the data. Questionnaires were given to a sample group of 184 students who are studying to receive diplomas in Laos, used the Judgment Sampling (Hair et al., 2010). The questionnaire was divided into the 5 following parts: 1) the screening questions, 2) general information, 3) the economic reasons, 4) leisure-oriented activities, 5) country-of-origin, 6) outshopping enjoyment, and 7) outshopping frequency.

The tool used in the study was developed from reviews of the related literature. The economic reasons were adapted from Dmitrovic & Vida (2007), and this portion was composed of 10 questions. The Leisure-oriented activities were adapted from Hsieh & Chang (2006), and Snepenger et al. (2007) and this portion was composed of 6 questions. Country-of-origin was adapted from Norjaya, Mohd & Osman (2012) and was composed of 7 questions. Outshopping enjoyment was adapted from Donthu & Gilliland (1996) and consisted of 3 questions. In regard to outshopping frequency, it was adapted from Donthu & Gilliland (1996) and was composed of 3 questions. A 5-point Likert scale was used for the measurements. The data was analyzed by using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which consists of the measurements and the structural model (Kline, 2010).

Results

The Preliminary Data Analysis

Most of the 184 student respondents in Vientiane, Lao had made visits to Thailand (88.0%). Of the 184, 62.5% were female, 59.2% were between 19-21 years old, and 82.1% of them were single. In addition, 69.0% were students, studying to receive a degree in Accounting, and 72.3% were in a Finance program. Moreover, 65.2% of them had no monthly income.

In terms of shopping behaviors, most of the respondents had received information from their friends or relatives (45.1%) and were staying in Thailand for just 1 day (53.3%). It was found that 71.2% of them had been accompanied by family members and that 68.5% had always bought consumer products from Thailand.

To analyze the problem of common method bias, Harman's single-factor test was employed (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Using exploratory factor analysis, it was found that the variance of the first factor had been at 26.48%, which signified that there had been no bias in the data (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The mean values of the questionnaire items had been between 2.54 and 3.56, while the values of the standard deviations had ranged between 0.717 and 0.998. The values of skewness of the data had been between -0.175 to -0.128, while the values of kurtosis had ranged between 0.274 and 0.627. Moreover, both values had been between -2 and 2, which translated into a normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The Correlation Matrix results had been between 0.255 and 0.655. The values of the variance inflation factor (VIF) had been between 1.198 and 2.019, and the values of tolerance had ranged between 0.495 and 0.835. From these findings, it can be seen that there had been no multicollinearity problem (Stevens, 2009).

Measurement Model Analysis

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the factor needed to reduce the items to fit the model of the research by considering the Modification Indices. Therefore, the results showed that the economic reasons had consisted of 4 questions, while the leisure-oriented activities had been gathered from 3 questions. Furthermore, the results pertaining to the Country-of-origin had been gathered from 5 questions, while outshopping enjoyment had had been gathered from 2 questions, and outshopping frequency from 3 questions. The values were determined as follows: Chi-Square/df = 1.682, GFI = 0.900, CFI = 0.945, RMSEA = 0.061, and SRMR = 0.056.

The reliability and validity analysis revealed that the values of Cronbach's Alpha were between 0.760 and 0.828, which was higher than 0.70. The values of standardized factor loading were between 0.570 and 0.925, which was higher than 0.50. Thus, the measurements, used in this study, are within the acceptable level, which supports the reliability and validity of the constructs (Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2010). Table 1 below shows the results of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient and factor loading of the constructs.

Structural Model Analysis

In terms of the investigation of the relationship between the economic reasons, the leisure-oriented activities, the country-of-origin, outshopping enjoyment, and the outshopping frequency, the results of structural equation modelin analysis revealed coherence with empirical data as follows: Chi-Square/df = 1.682, GFI = 0.900, CFI = 0.945, RMSEA = 0.061 and SRMR = 0.056. (Byrne, 2010; Kline, 2010), as seen in Figure 1, and the research hypotheses, as seen in Table 2.

Table 1 Mean, S.D., Cronbach's Alpha, and Factor Loading Analysis

| Constructs	No. of Items	Mean	S.D.	Cronbach's Alpha	Factor Loading
Economic Reason	4			.773	
1. Good quality		3.42	.757		.669
2. Availability		3.35	.855		.570
3. Good service manner		3.49	.717		.798
4. Good shopping environment		3.56	.814		.697
Leisure-Oriented Activities	3			.760	
1. Eating out overwhelmingly dominate		3.05	.928		.637
2. Novelty seeking		3.27	.844		.925
3. Experiencing local culture and custom		3.18	.897		.585
Country-of-Origin	5			.821	
1. The country from which brand X originates is a country that is good in designing.		3.41	.726		.709
2. The country from which brand X originates is a country that is creative in its workmanship.		3.42	.772		.706
3. The country from which brand X originates is a country that has high quality in its workmanship.		3.33	.804		.720
4. The country from which brand X originates is a country that is prestigious.		3.17	.718		.634
5. X originates from a country that has an image of advanced country.		3.40	.869		.697
Outshopping Enjoyment	2			.821	
1. I shop in the US because buying things in the US makes me happy.		3.17	.934		.790
2. Shopping in the US is fun.		3.36	.824		.893
Outshopping Frequency	3			.828	
1. I shop in the US very frequently.		2.54	.940		.743
2. I go to the US for shopping as often as I can.		2.73	.825		.807
3. I always go to the US for a shopping trip.		2.64	.998		.817
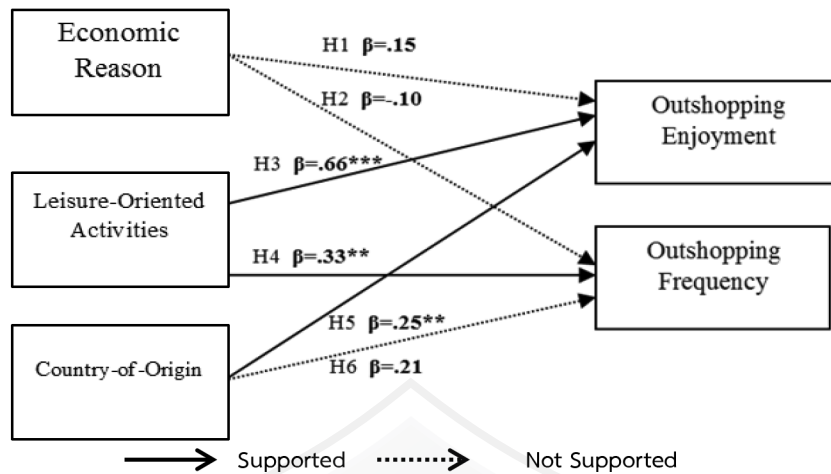
Figure 1 The SEM Results of the Outshopping Behavior Model

Table 2 A Summary of the Findings from the Study

No.	Hypothesis	β	t-value	Result
H_1	Economic reasons will have a positive relationship to outshopping enjoyment.	.152	1.779	Not Supported
H_2	Economic reasons will have a positive relationship to outshopping frequency.	-.098	-.716	Not Supported
H_3	Leisure-oriented activities will have a positive relationship to outshopping enjoyment.	.662	7.767***	Supported
H_4	Leisure-oriented activities will have a positive relationship to outshopping frequency.	.331	3.101**	Supported
H_5	Country-of-origin will have a positive relationship to outshopping enjoyment.	.252	2.917**	Supported
H_6	Country-of-origin will have a positive relationship to outshopping frequency.	.214	1.605	Not Supported

$R^2_{SEN} = 0.80$, $R^2_{FRQ} = 0.17$ *$P < .05$, **$P < .01$, ***$P < .001$

From Table 2, it can be seen that hypotheses H3, H4, and H5 had been supported. The standardized estimates for these hypotheses are all statistically significant ($β = 66$, $P < .001$; $β = .33$, $P < .01$; and $β = .25$, $P < .01$). The results supported these three hypotheses of the study, given that the coefficient of determination (R-Squared: R^2) of the SEM model showed 80% with outshopping enjoyment, and 17% with outshopping frequency.

Discussions & Conclusions

1. Thus far, there are research studies which have been conducted in various areas as follows: 1) the synergistic effects of the shopping and leisure experiences of tourists and 2) cross-border shopping behaviors, etc. However, there is a lack of studies that have investigated the special Economy Zone at the Thailand border. This study provides one of the pioneering attempts to shed light on the influence of economic reasons, leisure-oriented activities, country-of-origin, outshopping enjoyment, and outshopping frequency in regard to the cross-border tourism between Thailand and Lao. The results revealed that leisure-oriented activities had had a positive relationship to outshopping enjoyment and outshopping frequency. Furthermore, country-of-origin had had a positive relationship with outshopping enjoyment. The results showed that 80% had expressed outshopping enjoyment, and 17% had experienced outshopping frequency. The findings of the study will help to increase the collective knowledge and will provide insights which can be added to the tourism literature.

2. From the results, it was found that economic reasons had not been the important factor in creating shopping enjoyment and frequency. This may have been caused by the fact that most members of the sample group in the study had been students (Gen Y) and had no monthly incomes. Therefore, they had preferred to travel rather than to shop.

3. Leisure-oriented activities had shown a relationship to both outshopping enjoyment and outshopping frequency. This is consistent with findings from Hansen & Jensen (2009) who found that: 1) shopping orientation has an impact on consumers' patronage behaviors and 2) the shoppers need to shop to relax and to seek fun (Sinha, 2003). Moreover, Country-of-origin is also one of the important factors. A country's image can create a shopping destination which is attractive to potential customers. Having a positive image has been shown to increase higher levels of pleasurable feelings among customers (Hart et al., 2007). Therefore, it can be suggested that tourism organizations and other related organizations, as well as tourism programs and tourism services should pay greater attention to improving the activities at all the destinations that travelers want to visit. These attractions should be orientated to accommodate the leisure travel of tourists. Such attractions should include villas, shopping areas, tea gardens, restaurants, markets, and museums. In addition, there should even be shopping places that are centered around entertainment and nightlife venues, so that the customers' wants and desires can be fulfilled. Creating a positive image for the country, such as providing excellence in design, creating products of high quality, and fostering creativity of workmanship, can further enhance consumer's perceptions of the country and thereby, expand the country's status allowing it to be seen as an "advanced" country.

4. Since this study represents a pioneering effort to investigate the outshopping behaviors in one part of Thailand, future research should cover a wider geographical area, such as cross-

border trade with other countries or trade within other special economic zones on the borders. Comparing the results will lead to enhancing the fulfillment of the tourism industry.

In conclusion, early work has been done on the effects that the country-of-origin can have on the level of economic development and on the perceptions of the quality of products from that country (Kim, Cho & Jung, 2013; Maheswaran, Chen & He, 2013). Many countries have heavily invested in initiatives designed to promote a positive country-of-origin effect (Suh, Hur & Davies, 2016). Moreover, the firms need to improve the tourism industry in order to portray a good product image. In fact, this even includes shopping places. From the results of this study, customers nowadays look for the out-shopping places so that they can relax and fulfill their needs. They would like to get satisfaction from their leisure activities and from their shopping. Consumers would like to be entertained, to have new experiences while they are purchasing their items, and to be offered special prices and products. In this way, customers who are satisfied may pay attention and go out-shopping again. In addition, the tourism organizations and other related organizations should attract Gen Y customers by making further improvements to travel destinations. Finally, they will then buy souvenirs in interesting places and will consequently feel the enjoyment of shopping.

This study has helped to better understand the roles of the economic reasons, the effects of the country-of-origin, and the shopping orientation of consumers. It has provided a better understanding of how businesses can improve their marketing strategies for the tourism industry in order that they may attract more attention, and may better develop the economies of their countries.

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Name and Surname: Rathakarn Buasri

Highest Education: DBA Management, Khon Kaen University

University or Agency: Khon Kaen University, Nongkhai Campus

Field of Expertise: Marketing

Address: 112 Khon Kaen University, Nongkhai Campus, NongKomko, Nongkhai 43000