An Importance-performance Analysis of Chinese Tourists' Perceived Risk in Thailand
การวิเคราะห์การรับรู้ของนักท่องเที่ยวชาวจีนต่อความเสี่ยงทางการท่องเที่ยวในประเทศไทย
ด้วยวิธีการวิเคราะห์ Importance-Performance Analysis

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE INFO

This research paper examined Chinese tourists' perceived importance and performance risk in Thailand using an Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA). The factor analysis classified 24 risk attributes into 5 dimensions of risk: Social risk, Satisfaction risk, Service/performance risk, Physical risk, and Political/financial risk. The IPA grids illustrated that the Satisfaction risk fell into the Concentrate Here quadrant; Physical and Service/performance risks in the Keep Up the Good Work quadrant; Social risk in the Low Priority quadrant; and Political/financial risk in the Possible Overkill quadrant. Implications for tourism management, tourism planners and industry were discussed.

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยเรื่องนี้ใช้การวิเคราะห์ Importance-Performance หรือ IPA เพื่อศึกษาประเภทของความเสี่ยงต่าง ๆ ตามการ
รับรู้ของนักท่องเที่ยวชาวจีน ซึ่งนักท่องเที่ยวให้ความสำคัญต่อการตัดสินใจในการเดินทางมาท่องเที่ยวประเทศไทย
และศึกษาระดับความพึงพอใจของนักท่องเที่ยว ต่อความปลอดภัยจากความเสี่ยงเหล่านั้น ผลการวิเคราะห์ปัจจัยตัวแปร
ความเสี่ยง 24 ตัวแปร สามารถจำแนกความเสี่ยงออกได้เป็น 5 มิติได้แก่ ความเสี่ยงทางสังคม ความเสี่ยงด้านความพึงพอใจ
ความเสี่ยงด้านการบริการหรือการดำเนินการ ความเสี่ยงทางด้านร่างกาย และความเสี่ยงทางด้านการเมืองและการเงิน
ผลการวิเคราะห์ IPA พบว่า ความเสี่ยงทางด้านความพึงพอใจเป็นประเด็นที่ฝ่ายบริหารจัดการการท่องเที่ยวจะต้องให้ความ
สนใจเป็นพิเศษ จากนั้นเป็นการอภิปรายเกี่ยวกับมิติของความเสี่ยงอื่น ๆ ที่ฝ่ายวางแผนและจัดการการท่องเที่ยวรวมไปถึง
ภาคอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวจะต้องให้ความสนใจ

Introduction

Tourism and risk are inextricably intertwined. There is no tourism without risk. Tourism products are service in nature. Since service is intangible, one cannot expect a uniform or standardized outcome of tourism experience. Even though tourism destinations always project a positive image of their product, no tourism marketers can guarantee that the consumer of experience, or the tourist, will obtain the experience identical to the previously projected image. Tourists may have preconceptions of a peaceful tropical island, lush green jungle, and friendly locals with smiling faces. But upon arrival, they may experience unexpected rainstorms, commercial shop houses and local hosts who seek to take advantages of them. The tourist experience does not always align with expectations. Many studies related to tourism and risk have received substantial attention from tourism researchers since the 9/11 incident in New York in 2001 (Kovari and Zimanyi, 2011; Shin, 2005). After the tsunami disaster of late 2004, a number of studies on the effect of the tsunamis on tourism were conducted. Thailand tourism, like elsewhere, is not free from risk. Not to mention the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, which dissolved both domestic and international tourism all over the world. Thailand tourism was also affected by the SARS outbreak in 2003, and the spread of bird flu in 2005 (TMB ANALYTICS, 2015). These incidences are just a few examples of health risks that may worry tourists. Other types of risk that affect Thailand' s tourism image are related to crime. Incidents where tourists were attacked or even murdered have been reported in the media from time to time. Other cases involved petty-crimes, where tourists were cheated by local hosts like merchants or taxi-drivers. The physical risks that affect tourists include accidents and violent acts. A bomb blast in August 2015 in a business area of Bangkok terrified tourists. A water tragedy took place in Phuket in 2018 when two tourist boats capsized, causing a number of Chinese tourists to lose their lives (Tuohy, 2018). Another notorious example of risk involves the problem of zero-dollar tours, in which forced purchases result in tourists' loss of money, and even their abandonment (Kariyapol, 2019). One more type of risk that has happened and has persisted for many years has been that of political crisis (Zhang, 2016). The above-mentioned incidences exemplify actual risks faced by tourists visiting Thailand. Previous studies have shown that tourists are concerned with many types of risk. Apart from diseases and hygiene risks, tourists may experience other travel-related risks such as incidents related to cultural and language barriers, natural disasters, transportation difficulties, and uncertainty regarding laws and regulations at a destination (Maser & Weiermair, 1998).

Thailand is one of the most popular destinations amongst tourists in South-East Asia. In 2019, Thailand received almost 40 million international visitors. The largest international market for Thailand is the Chinese market. The number of Chinese tourist arrivals increased continuously from about 8 million in 2015 to almost 11 million in 2019. The number of Chinese

arrivals in 2019 outnumbered those from other Asian and European countries (thaiwebsites, 2021. This phenomenon indicates the importance of the Chinese market to Thailand's economy. Since the Chinese market is very sensitive to adverse events, they are likely to avoid a destination they feel unsafe to visit. Besides, a loss in the number of Chinese tourists means the loss of substantial revenue. Therefore, tourism managers and marketers should try their best to maintain this market as much as they can.

A review of literature indicated that studies on tourist satisfaction tended to focus on assessing the performance of the marketing-mix or destination's attributes. Rarely has attention been paid to the issue of tourism risk management, although tourists tend to avoid a risky destinations and perceived risk affects tourist satisfaction and their intention to revisit. None of the previous studies focused on the dimensions of risk that the Chinese tourists consider important when planning their destination, and how they perceive performance to manage and reduce those risk dimensions. This study was designed to fill in this research gap. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to identify risk dimensions of travel in Thailand according to their importance from the perspective of Chinese tourists and to examine the level of satisfaction towards each dimension using the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) model. The risk dimensions that are important to the tourists' decisions to visit Thailand, but upon which the management or relevant parties do not perform well, will be classified into the 'concentrate here' quadrant. The concerned parties need to focus on improving performance on these attributes.

The research results will contribute to the understanding of the perception of risk considered to be significant to Chinese tourists when they make a destination choice. Another theoretical contribution is that the concept of satisfaction towards a destination can be assessed from the aspect of perceived risk, which has not been done before. Last but not least, the final contribution is the use of the IPA technique, which can be used to identify the existing management problems and to follow up on management performance. This aspect of the research findings will shed light on areas needing improvement to develop appropriate strategies to solve existing problems.

Review of literature
Risk and destination choice

In the holiday purchasing process, or when an individual is deciding where to go for a holiday, the purchaser has to consider several factors before making a decision. An assessment of the objective and subjective risks and uncertainty within travel is one of the factors that the individual planning to take a holiday has to take into consideration (Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Schmoll, 1977). This is because safety needs are among the most basic of all human beings (Maslow, 1943). Safety refers to freedom from fear and anxiety. In other words, security for tourists is a pre-requisite. How individuals perceive risk will affect their travel decision. International tourists' intention to travel is determined by travel anxiety and perceived safety (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005; Yüksel, A. & Yüksel, F. 2007). Although there are some tourists, who seek novelty or adventurous activities, most tourists are generally risk averse. Tourists avoid risky destinations (Batra, 2008; Dickson & Dolnicar, 2004; Fuchs, Uriely, & Reichel, 2013; Law, 2006; She, Tian, Lu, Eimontaite, Xie, & Sun, 2019; Sönmez, Apostolopoulos, & Tarlow, 1999). Holiday purchasers, as service consumers, tend to perceive more risk than goods consumers since the tourism experience is an intangible product (Mitchell & Greatorex, 1993b; Murray & Schlacter, 1990). The tourism experience is consumed at the same time it is produced. The tourism experience is consumed while tourists are travelling, or while they are on a holiday. Therefore, it is more likely that their experience at a destination does not align with their pre-travel expectations. Previous studies showed the relationship between perceived risk and satisfaction. The lower tourists perceive risk, the higher is their satisfaction with the

holiday experience (Beneke, Flynn, Greig, & Mukaiwa, 2013; Bennett, Härtel, & McColl-Kennedy, 2005; Jin, Line, & Merkebu, 2016; Johnson, Gabarino, & Sivadas, 2006; Li & Murphy, 2013; Meng & Elliott, 2008; Tam, 2012; Wirtz & Mattila, 2001). Another study showed the relationship between perceived risk and revisit intention (Xu, 2019).

The concept of perceived risk

Risk studies in tourism involve perceived risk rather than actual risk. It is almost impossible to study actual risk since statistical records of real or actual risk are not available, and most of the tourists who are victims of crime or violence at their destination do not know who to report to (Bentley, Page, Meyer, Chalmers & Laird, 2001). Perceived risk refers to risk that an individual can perceive. The perceived risk can come from tourists' own experience, or internal sources. Even though the individuals have not been exposed to the actual risk at any destination themselves, they may perceive whether such a place is risky or not from external sources, such as from word-of-mouth, media or destination images (Heung, Qu & Chu, 2001).

Risk perception incorporates both cognitive and affective concepts (Yang & Nair, 2014). Individuals in the process of destination selection may perceive a certain destination to be risky, and at the same time they may be worried about accessibility to tourist attractions, communication with locals, food and health safety, and so on. Perceived risk is therefore more than a perception of a place to be risky or not. However, it incorporates other negative feelings towards such a place or destination. Other negative affective concepts of risk also include being exposed to criminal acts, crime, physical danger, and political turmoil. In conclusion, the concept of perceived risk involves anxiety and worry about uncertainty at a tourism destination on the part of decision-makers and the tourist.

Dimensions of risk

As mentioned earlier, tourism products are the same as service products in nature. The tourist consumes the experience at a destination or while the consumer is on a holiday. The provision of service is immediately consumed by the tourist at the destination. The tourists cannot test the experience before they arrive at the destination. Therefore, it is likely that the experience gained does not align with the expectation they had beforehand. Perceived risk at a destination is a multidimensional concept. This means tourism products are exposed to many negative factors, such as crime, theft, robbery, political turmoil, disease, unfriendly hosts, irregular transportation, inedible food, communication problems, and so on (Hasan, Ismail & Islam, 2017). These negative factors can affect tourists' risk perception both at the destination choice stage and at the tourism consumption stage (Fuchs & Reichel, 2006, 2011; Pizam & Mansfeld, 1996; Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992; Sonmez & Graefe, 1998; Tsaur, Tzeng & Wang, 1997; Witt & Moutinho, 1995). Therefore, negative impacts or consequences which may occur during travel are considered to be a perceived risk. As tourist locales are non-static and in-flux un-uniformed lists of perceived risk have been proposed by tourism scholars (Yang, Sharif, & Khoo-Lattimore, 2015). However, dimensions of risk can be summarized as follows.

Crime or criminal risk refers to tourists' concern or their fear about being robbed or attacked or becoming crime victims. Culture, or cultural risk, including communication risk is tourists' concern about not being able to adjust to local ways of life and culture, or not being able to communicate with locals. Financial risk refers to tourists' concern about not receiving value for their money, or not receiving the experience worth the money paid. Health risk and food safety risk includes anxiety about becoming sick due to food, drinks, diseases, or injury. Performance risk, including functional risk, transportation risk and quality of service risk, refers to tourists' concern about low quality travel products or services, the malfunction of service products, and not receiving holiday benefits as expected. Physical risk, including personal risk and accident risk, is related to tourists' concern about physical injury, accidents,

and danger that is detrimental to their health. Satisfaction risk refers to concern about not receiving a favorable experience, or about a self-actualization need not being fulfilled. Social risk is tourists' concern about losing face or lowering their social status for visiting a place not approved of by their peers, families or associates. Time risk refers to tourists' concern about wasting or losing time at a destination (Chew & Jahari, 2014; Cui, Liu, Chang, Duan, & Li, 2016; Moutinho, 1987; Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992; Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005; Xu, Xu & Wang, 2013).

Satisfaction

Tourist's satisfaction is the ultimate outcome of tourism service. The feelings a tourist as a tourism consumer, and the experiences after the purchase of a holiday are considered to be the post-purchase behaviour. The individual will evaluate the overall experience during and after travel. The results of the evaluation will influence future travel decisions (Mathieson & Wall, 1982). The benefits of tourist satisfaction will be favourable word-of-mouth and repeat purchases or revisit intention, or in other words, tourist loyalty (Fornell, 1992; Hasan, Ismail, & Islam, 2017; Lai, Hitchcock, Lu & Liu, 2018). Three satisfaction models that are frequently used are the expectation-perception paradigm (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985), the expectancy-disconfirmation model (Oliver, 1980), and the performance-only model (Grönroos, 1984). According to Grönroos (1984), an individual can only evaluate the tourism experience once the tourism product is consumed, without having expectations before-hand. Therefore, in the performance-only model, each attribute of satisfaction is assessed without comparing it with expectations. However, many studies including this one, accept the disconfirmation paradigm as the effective method to explain tourist satisfaction. According to the expectancy-disconfirmation model, if the perceived performance exceeds expectations, or is positively disconfirmed, tourists will be satisfied. On the other hand, if the perceived performance is less than expected or is negatively disconfirmed, tourists will be dissatisfied (Heung, 2000).

Importance-Performance Analysis

Importance-performance analysis was introduced by Martilla and James (1977). Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) is a technique in line with the expectations-performance approach and the method has been adopted in many marketing studies (Ennew, Reed, & Binks, 1993; Matzler, Sauerwein, & Heischmidt, 2003; Slack, 1994). The concept of expectation in relation to importance can be explained as follows. When a customer places importance on an attribute, the customer expects to obtain a benefit from that attribute of his product choice (MacKenzie,1986). IPA is considered to be a reliable and useful technique for developing remedial strategic actions (Sethna, 1982). Many researchers employed the IPA technique in their hotel and tourism studies. Chu & Choi (2000) compared the importance and performance of 26 hotel attributes as perceived by business and leisure travellers in Hong Kong. De Nisco, Riviezzo, & Napolitano. (2015) used IPA to analyze the satisfaction of tourists visiting the Campania region in Italy. Parasakul (2019a, 2019b) applied the IPA scheme to examine the satisfaction of international tourists and Chinese tourists with their shopping activities in Bangkok.

The fundamental assumption of the IPA technique is that tourists' level of satisfaction with the attributes is mainly derived from their expectations and judgement of the performance of tourism service providers. The interpretation of the IPA is presented on a grid that is divided into four quadrants. The Y-axis represents the tourists' perceived importance of selected attributes, and the X-axis depicts the service performance in relation to these attributes. Fig. 1 illustrates the IPA grid.
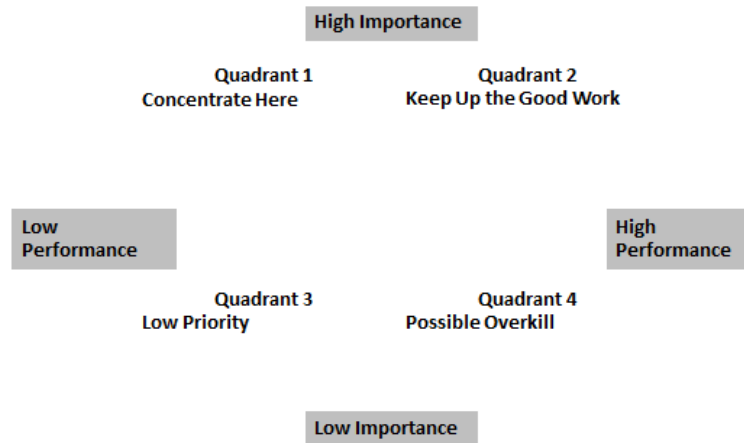
Figure 1 Importance-Performance Analysis grid

The four quadrants are labeled as follows: Concentrate Here, Keep Up the Good Work, Low Priority and Possible Overkill. In the 'Concentrate Here' quadrant, respondents described attributes as very important. However, they perceive the performance to be rather low. This means that improvement efforts should be concentrated here. The 'Keep Up the Good Work' quadrant contains the attributes which are considered to be very important, but the organization has performed quite well in relation to these activities. The 'Low Priority' quadrant contains attributes that have both low importance and low performance. Despite low performance levels in this quadrant, managers need not be too concerned as the attributes in this cell are not considered to be very important. In the 'Possible Overkill' quadrant attributes are of low importance, but the management has performed well. Respondents do not place importance on these attributes, however, they are satisfied with the performance (Chu & Choi, 2000). In this study, the author examines attributes of tourism risk considered to be important by the Chinese tourists both before and while travelling. In other words, these attributes concern risk that they are worried about, or risk that may cause them anxiety. At the same time, the author will examine how the tourists perceive the state of risk which they consider important while they are travelling in Thailand. The risk dimensions that fall in the 'Concentrate Here' quadrant will send the message to those parties responsible for tourism management that such risk is detrimental to Thailand's tourism atmosphere, and remedial efforts should be implemented.

Studies related to risk in tourism

Wen, Lockyer, & Zhang. (2018) conducted 17 in-depth interviews with Chinese outbound tourists who had previously visited Ukraine in order to understand the destination image and perceived risk of travelling to Ukraine. Most of the respondents were concerned about the potential for war in Ukraine. However, some respondents regarded visiting Ukraine as an adventure. The language barrier was perceived as another risk as most Ukrainians speak neither English nor Chinese. In conclusion, the Chinese tourists visiting Ukraine experience two types of risk: political instability and the language barrier. Despite these risks, Chinese men visit Ukraine due to their motivation to socialize with Ukrainian girls.

Ma, Ooi, & Hardy (2018) analysed dimensions of anxiety by interviewing 24 Chinese tourists visiting Tasmania, Australia. The researchers adopted a purposive sampling approach to interview only the Chinese tourists who had already visited the Port Arthur Historic Site. The researchers concluded that Chinese travellers demonstrate a diverse range of behaviors and practices. The results of the study demonstrate the diverse causes of anxiety ranging from cultural risk (e.g. misfortunes resulting from visiting prisons and tombs). The study shows that anxiety is an important aspect of Chinese travel to Port Arthur. Their study revealed other

attributes of cultural risk, such as lack of local knowledge and inedible local food. Other dimensions of risk included time risk, financial risk, and communication risk. They added the necessity of mediators to lessen tourist anxiety, but they did not explain how it can be done and who the mediators are.

She, Tian, Lu, Eimontaite, Xie, & Sun (2019), compared hiking risk perception between experienced hikers and less experienced students. The research tool was a questionnaire comprising 18 items. The findings identified two dimensions of perceived risks of hiking: physical risk and psychological risk. The student group identified the physical risk dimension to consist of the personal safety risk and the environmental safety risk. Both the hiker group and the student group considered public security problems, traffic accidents, outdoor medical assistance, poor communication, and sudden bad weather as top risks. Regarding the milder types of risk, the two groups considered feeling uncomfortable under unfamiliar surroundings, getting lost during hiking, having a terrible team leader, poor organization and management, physical exhaustion, and fever, or acute disease as the least risky.

These three recent studies on the dimensions of risk perceived by the Chinese tourist exemplified the location-specific risk perception. Not all types of risk are perceived at one specific destination. Different individuals perceive risk differently. A risky activity may be thrilling for and sought after by some people.

Lai, Hitchcock, Lu, & Liu (2018) examined the impacts of the tourist-resident relationship and safety perception on the relationship between service quality, trip satisfaction, and word-of-mouth recommendation. The result of the analysis indicated that safety perception of Chinese tourists visiting Macau has significant effects on both trip satisfaction and word-of-mouth recommendation. The authors concluded that a tourist who had positive perception of safety exhibits a higher level of satisfaction and those who had a positive perception of personal safety in an urban destination would be more willing to provide a positive word-of-mouth recommendation.

Nazir, Yasin, & Tat (2021) investigated the effect of perceived risk, perceived constraints, and destination image on behavioural intention of international tourists to visit Pakistan. The authors found a significant relationship between perceived risks, perceived constraints, and destination image. They reported that international tourists may not intend to revisit the riskier destination if they perceive constraints and risks.

Method

This quantitative research was conducted by distributing self-administered questionnaires in Chinese to the tourist population in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Pattaya, and Samutsongkram. The first three cities were chosen since they were well-established and popular tourism destinations amongst Chinese tourists, while Samutsongkram represented a newly developed and unseen destination, where a large number of Chinese tourists could be found in Amphawa district and at the Meklong railway station.

Respondents

A purposive sampling method was employed to target at the Chinese tourist group. The tourist sample was conveniently selected at various tourism sites in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Pattaya, and Samutsongkram. The survey was conducted during the three months of September to November 2018. Once the travelers were identified as Chinese and they offered their consent to participate, a copy of self-administered questionnaire would then be provided. To ensure the level of confidence at 96%, about 600 copies of questionnaires were distributed to the target population. However, at the end of the data collection process, 502 completed copies were selected for data analysis.

Instruments

The questionnaire was first drafted in English, and then was translated into Chinese by a native speaker, who was a university lecturer. The questionnaire consisted of four parts. Part 1 contained questions on tourist profile. Part 2 contained attributes of risk considered to be important by tourists. Part 3 were statements of perceptions of the actual risk attributes in Thailand in relation to their importance. Part 4 consisted of two questions on loyalty. However, the findings related to the aspect of loyalty will not be discussed in this article as it is not among the objectives of this research paper. The part investigating perception of tourists related to importance of risk consisted of 24 attributes of risk, for which tourists were asked to indicate the importance of the attributes when they decide to travel to and while they are travelling in Thailand. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the level of importance of the 24 items, ranging from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important). Another part was constructed to measure risk-reduction performance towards the 24 attributes. The respondents were instructed to indicate how much they agreed with the statements that Thailand is free from the 24 risk attributes on the five-point Likert scale, as well, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The 24 attributes of risk were identified based on a review of relevant literature. A pilot survey was conducted in Bangkok by distributing the questionnaires to 25 Chinese tourists to test the scale reliability and the readability of the questionnaire in Chinese.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics, which included frequencies and mean ratings were used to compute on the demographic profile, the travel behavior profile of the respondents, as well as on the 24 importance risk attributes. Exploratory factor analysis with VARIMAX rotation was executed on the data about the 24 perceived risk importance. A rotation method minimizes the number of factors which are needed to explain each variable. This method simplifies the interpretation of the observed variables, which makes the structure simpler to interpret. The VARIMAX rotation simplifies the loadings of items by removing the middle ground and more specifically identifying the factor upon which data load. The fundamental objectives of using exploratory factor analysis with VARIMAX rotation in this research were to create correlated variable composites from the original 24 importance risk attributes to reduce them into a smaller set of risk dimensions, or risk factors that explained most of the variances among the attributes; and to apply the factors obtained to be plotted on the IPA grid.

Factor means of the perceived importance of each risk dimension or risk factor, and its performance were calculated and plotted into a grid. Cross-hairs, referring to the vertical and the horizontal lines, were determined by the mean values of the Importance and Performance risk dimensions to separate the derived risk dimensions into four quadrants. Each risk dimension was plotted according to its perceived importance and performance. The grid depicted the importance dimensions on the vertical (Y) axis from low (bottom) to high (top) and the performance dimensions on the horizontal (X) axis from low (left) to high (right).

Findings and Discussion

Demographic and travel profiles of respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic and the travel profiles of the Chinese tourists and their travel behaviour. The sample consisted of 502 respondents who came from various provinces in China, with the largest percentage (15.5%) from Guangdong. Others were from large metropolitan areas like Beijing (6.4%), Hong Kong (6.4%), and Shanghai (5.8%). The respondents from Taiwan were intentionally included owing to the sizable number, (5.8%). The percentages of the Chinese sample were in line with the study of Guo et al. (2007), who reported that Guangdong province exported most of the outbound Chinese tourists. The percentage of female is slightly larger than male, 58.1% to 41.9%. Most of the respondents

were young Chinese in the age group of 20-29 (56.8%), followed by the age group of 30-39 (31.7%). Most of them were well-educated. 65.7% received a bachelor's degree. Most of them were white collar workers (32.3%), and higher or lower professionals (18.2%). Students accounted for 14.2%. Most of the respondents, or 62.4% made their own travel arrangement, while 37.6 % joined a tour group. Slightly more than half (54.3%) were first-time visitors, and 45.7% were repeat visitors. 54.9% were traveling with friends.

Table 1. Demographic and travel profiles of the Chinese tourists

Region in China	Frequency	%	Age group	Frequency	%
Anhui	12	2.4	Under 20	9	1.8
Beijing	32	6.4	20-29	285	56.8
Chongqing	15	3.0	30-39	159	31.7
Fujian	13	2.6	40-49	31	6.2
Gansu	11	2.2	50-59	9	1.8
Guangdong	78	15.5	60 and over	9	1.8
Guangxi	17	3.4	Total	502	100.0
Guizhou	9	1.8	Education	Frequency	%
Hainan	9	1.8	high school	106	21.2
Hebei	3	0.6	Bachelor degree	329	65.7
Heilongjiang	6	1.2	Master degree or higher	66	13.2
Henan	18	3.6	Total	501	100.0
HongKong	32	6.4	Occupation	Frequency	%
Hubei	8	1.6	Student	71	14.2
Hunan	15	3.0	Skilled /semi-skilled workers	24	4.8
Jiangsu	24	4.8	Farmer, farm owner	7	1.4
Jiangxi	10	2.0	White collar worker	162	32.3
Jilin	5	1.0	Manager and entrepreneur	32	6.4
Liaoning	16	3.2	Higher or lower professionals	91	18.2
Macau	4	0.8	Housewife/not working/retired	19	3.8
Neimongol	1	0.2	other occupation	95	19.0
Shaanxi	2	0.4	Total	501	100.0
Shandong	13	2.6	Travel arrangement	Frequency	%
Shanghai	29	5.8	travel with a tour group	188	37.6
Shanxi	6	1.2	travel independently/FIT	312	62.4
Sichuan	26	5.2	Total	500	100.0
Tianjin	3	0.6	Number of visit	Frequency	%

Table 1. (Cont.)

Region in China	Frequency	%	Age group	Frequency	%
Xinjiang	1	0.2	first visit	272	54.3
Yunnan	18	3.6	second trip or more	229	45.7
Zhejiang	22	4.4	Total	501	100.0
Taiwan	29	5.8	Travel companion	Frequency	%
Not specified	15	3.0	alone/solo traveler	58	11.6
Total	502	100.0	with family with/without children	119	23.8
Gender	Frequency	%	with friends	275	54.9
male	210	41.9	with relatives	49	9.8
female	291	58.1	Total	501	100.0
Total	501	100.0			

Dimensions of perceived risk considered to be important to Chinese tourists

The 24 risk attributes related to their importance on decision-making were factor analyzed. Five risk dimensions or risk factors were extracted, and they explained 55.45 per cent of the variance. Almost all factor loadings are larger than 0.50. The result of the factor analysis is valid for the following reasons: the overall significance of the correlation matrix was 0.000 with a Bartlett's Test of Sphericity value of 4268.790, which meant that the data matrix had sufficient correlation to factor analysis, and it was appropriate to apply factor analysis. Another reason is that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) overall measure of sampling adequacy was 0.891, which was highly acceptable. According to Kaiser (1974) if the KMO value is above 0.80, it means the variables are interrelated and they share common factors.

Table 2. Factor analysis results with varimax rotation of perceived risk considered to be important to the Chinese tourists

Perceived risk attribute	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	% of variance	Mean
Factor 1: Social risk (alpha 0.874)		6.897	28.738	3.00
Friends will admire me for choosing Thailand	0.847			
Satisfactory shopping opportunity	0.793			
I won't lose face for choosing Thailand	0.709			
Being a popular country for everyone	0.703			
Friends know and recommend me to visit.	0.622			
Hosts are understanding.	0.610			
Choosing a reliable tour company	0.542			
Thailand having no strict cultural rules	0.446			
Factor 2: Satisfaction risk (alpha 0.753)		2.609	10.869	3.81
Feeling that I made the right country choice	0.735			
Honesty of sale staff and service providers	0.700			
Ease of getting around	0.683			
Being able to see things I planned to see	0.662			
Not being notorious for crimes	0.539			
Factor 3: Performance risk (alpha 0.689)		1.676	6.984	4.03
Health safety	0.648			
Good standard accommodation	0.647			
Friendliness of hosts and local people	0.645			
Reliable services	0.602			
Factor 4: Physical risk (alpha 0.614)		1.106	4.607	4.29
Safety from travel accidents	0.719			
Safety from terrorism	0.689			
Safety from thieves, robbers, scams	0.632			
Safety from natural disaster	0.541			
Factor 5: Political/financial risk (alpha 0.637)		1.023	4.261	3.36
Not too far from my country	0.669			
Being free from political problems	0.667			
Not too expensive to travel around	0.611			

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy 0.891 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity 4268.790 Sig. 0.000

Table 2 shows the results of the factor analysis, which includes the names of the factor or names of the risk dimension. Within each factor, the retained attribute items are shown together with the factor loadings, the eigenvalues, the percentages of variance explained, and the Cronbach's Alpha reliability. The five dimensions of perceived risk considered to be important to the Chinese tourists when they make a decision to visit Bangkok were labelled as follows: Social risk (Factor 1); Satisfaction risk (Factor 2); Performance risk (Factor 3); Physical risk (Factor 4); and Political/financial risk (Factor 5).

Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) grid

Table 3 shows the mean scores of the five dimensions of risk and their retaining risk attributes in relation to their importance for the Chinese tourists when they made a decision to choose Thailand as a tourism destination and the perceived performance of the service providers and related parties at the destination, which is Thailand in this case. The data was then plotted on the IPA grid presentation (Figure 2).

Table 3. Mean ratings of importance and performance of risk perceived by the Chinese tourists

Perceived risk dimensions and attributes	Importance		Performance	
	Mean[a]	*S.D*	Mean[aa]	*S.D*
Factor 1: Social risk	3.00	0.91	3.85	0.57
Friends will admire me for choosing Thailand	2.65	1.31	3.48	1.04
Satisfactory shopping opportunity	2.78	1.31	3.82	0.90
I won't lose face for choosing Thailand	3.06	1.34	3.91	0.97
Being a popular country for everyone	2.70	1.24	4.29	0.70
Friends know and recommend me to visit.	3.01	1.23	3.85	0.84
Hosts are understanding.	3.14	1.23	3.81	0.88
Choosing a reliable tour company	3.34	1.23	3.75	0.99
Thailand having no strict cultural rules	3.30	1.13	3.88	0.83
Factor 2: Satisfaction risk	3.81	0.65	3.96	0.60
Feeling that I made the right country choice	3.80	0.92	4.03	0.80
Honesty of sale staff and service providers	3.85	0.93	3.83	0.90
Ease of getting around	3.86	0.85	3.90	0.89
Being able to see things I planned to see	3.65	0.95	3.98	0.83
Not being in country notorious for crimes	3.91	0.92	4.06	0.78
Factor 3: Performance risk	4.03	0.60	4.07	0.55
Health safety	4.26	0.76	4.00	0.83
Good standard accommodation	3.72	0.94	3.98	0.82
Friendliness of hosts and local people	4.14	0.80	4.25	0.74
Reliable services	3.98	0.80	4.06	0.77
Factor 4: Physical risk	4.29	0.54	4.06	0.60
Safety from travel accidents	4.13	0.87	3.91	0.90
Safety from terrorism	4.57	0.66	4.18	0.74
Safety from thieves, robbers, scams	4.35	0.73	4.09	0.78
Safety from natural disaster	4.12	0.91	4.07	87
Factor 5: Political risk and financial risk	3.36	0.83	4.09	0.62
Not too far from my country	3.05	1.12	4.15	0.75
Being free from political problems	3.86	1.06	4.05	0.78
Not too expensive to travel around	3.16	1.07	4.09	0.78

Mean[a] 1 = least important to 5 = most important; Mean[aa] 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

In Figure 2, the X-axis represents the perceived Performance scores relating the degree of tourists' agreement with the state of freedom from the five dimensions of risk. The Y-axis represents the relative weights of the five Importance items relating to the tourists' decision to choose to come to Thailand. The four quadrants are drawn based on the mean scores of the Importance and Performance ratings (Blešić, Popov-Raljić, Uravić, Stankov, Đeri, Pantelić, & Armenski, 2014; Chu & Choi, 2000; De-Nisco et al, 2015; Parasakul, 2019b). The mean Importance rating of the 5 dimensions was 3.64 and the mean Performance rating was 3.97. The mean Importance and Performance ratings derived from the data were used to provide the grid cross-hairs presentation on which the four quadrants were identified. Figure 2 illustrates the results of the Importance-Performance grids.

According to Figure 2, one risk factor, Satisfaction risk, was identified in Quadrant 1, the 'Concentrate Here' quadrant. Two risk dimensions were identified in Quadrant 2, the 'Keep Up the Good Work' quadrant, which includes Physical risk and Performance risk. In Quadrant

3, the 'Low Priority' quadrant, the dimension 'Social risk', was identified. One factor was identified in the 'Possible Overkill' quadrant, Political/financial risk.
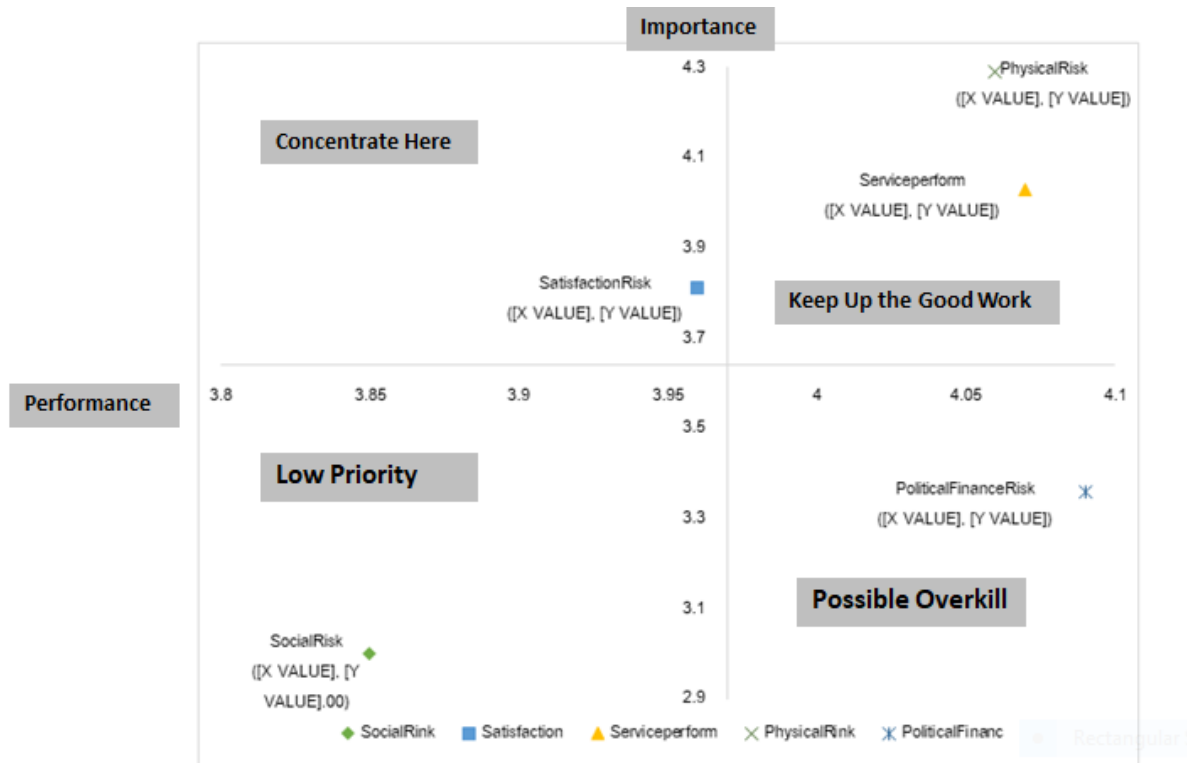
Figure 2 Importance-Performance Analysis grid

In Quadrant 1, the 'Concentrate Here' quadrant, only the Satisfaction risk dimension was identified. According to the factor analysis, 5 risk attributes were included in this dimension. They were satisfaction derived from one's own choice to visit Thailand, honesty of sales staff and service providers, ease of getting around, being able to see things one planned to see, and not being in a country notorious for crime. The risk attributes captured in this quadrant are the factors considered to be important to the Chinese tourists in making a destination choice. However, they perceived them not to be satisfactory. The results shown above suggest that special attention should be directed to the dimension of Satisfaction risk.

The results indicate that the Chinese tourists were not satisfied with their own choice to visit Thailand. This could result from the problem of dishonest sales staff and service providers. It is about time all the relevant parties closely examine the issue of dishonest service providers. To name a few, there is the issue of illegal or low-quality tour operators, unlicensed Chinese tour guides, selling over-priced optional tours, forced shopping, and so on. These issues specific to Chinese tourists could have been the actual, or real risk that previous Chinese tourists had experienced, so they became the perceived risk of the Chinese tourists in this study. The concern of the Chinese tourists towards the Satisfaction risk should send the message to the government that policies to crack down on unethical and illegal tour operations is the right thing to do.

Another issue that has to be addressed is related to the problem of tourist accessibility to tourism sites. The problems of inconvenience in getting around and being unable to see things they planned to see are related. Such a problem could result from the lack of enough signs in Chinese that will enable them to reach the place they want to visit conveniently and in proper time. Therefore, the authorities should consider providing more signs in Chinese, or at least in English to assist the Chinese tourists. This finding is in line with previous research that

Chinese tourists asked for more signs in Chinese, and that they faced the problem of getting around in Bangkok (Parasakul, 2019a).

As illustrated in Figure 2, Physical risk and Performance risk fell in Quadrant 2, the 'Keep Up the Good Work' quadrant. These two dimensions were considered to be very important to the tourists and they were perceived to have been performed satisfactorily in meeting the expectations of the Chinese tourists. The finding is in line with previous research in that Chinese tourists placed importance on physical risk, which includes personal safety (Guo, Kim, & Timothy, 2007; Henkel, R., Henkel, P., Agrusa, W., Agrusa., J. & Tanner, 2006; Pearce & Wu, 2016). Physical risk was the most important factor when the Chinese made a decision to travel, as shown in the Importance mean of 4.29. The top criterion to determine the destination choice for Chinese tourists is Physical risk. The Chinese tourists place highest importance on physical safety, including safety from terrorism, accidents, crime, and natural disasters. Health safety, which belongs to the Performance risk dimension, is considered to be very important as well. Although the research findings have indicated that the tourism service providers have done well in these two aspects of risk, they have to keep on maintaining the standard of safety measures in the tourist ghettos, tourism sites, and accommodation establishments to ensure physical safety and healthy stays for Chinese and other tourists.

Regarding the aspect of Performance risk, where the tourists considered it important and the service provider side has performed satisfactorily, maintaining the standard has to be kept going. Regular training for hotel staff and other service providers is required to ensure that the services provided to tourists are of high quality. Although the Thai hosts are friendly and hospitable by nature, management needs to boost their morale by allocating suitable resources so that they will perform efficiently in the stressful working environment.

In Quadrant 3, the 'Low Priority' quadrant illustrates the dimension where the country performs fairly or just adequately, but it is considered to be less important. The Chinese tourists do not place much importance on the aspect of social risk, in other words they are indifferent about it. This reflects another characteristic of the new generation of Chinese, who are more confident in their own decisions and do not worry much about losing face or gaining admiration from friends. The perception of Thailand's performance in this aspect falls below the actual mean, which means low level of satisfaction. Even though the result indicates that the risk dimension that falls in this quadrant is of low priority, and does not need immediate attention, it does not mean that we should not take immediate action on any aspect of these risk attributes. Of the eight attributes in social risk, two attributes that receive the lowest level of satisfaction are 'Choosing a reliable tour company' (mean=3.75) and 'Hosts are understanding'. Since the attribute relating to choosing a reliable tour company is included in the dimension of Social risk, it could be interpreted that choosing a reliable tour company reflects making the right tourism product. Experienced Chinese tourists might have been aware of the risk of purchasing a zero-dollar tour, and the undesirable consequences of such purchase, like physical harm and financial loss. Therefore, they consider choosing a reliable tour company to travel with an indicator of prestige. On the contrary, choosing to travel with cheap, unreliable tour company can reflect poorly on one's self-image and cause one to lose face. The findings should send the message to those in the tourism industry that service quality is an important issue. Although the social risk is considered to be least important, in the competitive tourism business, we have to offer extra services or service beyond the consumer's expectation.

In Quadrant 4, the 'Possible Overkill' quadrant identifies the risk dimension that is low in importance, but high in performance. The Political/financial risk falls in this quadrant. It can be inferred that the Chinese tourists did not consider political problems as an obstacle to travel to Thailand. In fact, in 2019, when the research was conducted, Thailand was free from political turmoil. Therefore, it was unlikely that the tourists would perceive traces of political risk. Owing to the proximity between the two countries, resulting in the short to medium haul travel,

Thailand is conveniently accessible to travellers from China. With the service of low-cost airlines and strong competition, the cost of travel is much reduced. All of these factors contributed to high satisfaction among the tourists. The removal of financial risk, therefore, enhances the satisfaction level of the Chinese tourists, especially amongst those who are becoming free independent travelers (FITs).

Conclusion

This study has categorized the 24 attributes of risk perceived as important to the Chinese tourists into five dimensions: Social risk, Satisfaction risk, Service/performance risk, Physical risk, and Political/financial risk. The Chinese tourists place highest importance on Physical risk when they make a decision to travel. They are least concerned about social risk. Using IPA, this study has compared the importance and performance of the five dimensions of risk as perceived by the Chinese tourists. The IPA grids have illustrated that the Satisfaction risk fell into the Concentrate Here quadrant. Physical risk and Service/performance risk fell in the Keep Up the Good Work quadrant; and Social risk in the Low Priority quadrant. Political/financial risk fell into the Possible Overkill quadrant.

The use of IPA has been shown to be practical and useful for the tourism industry, tourism management authorities and scholars. The IPA analysis is easy to apply. As this article showed, both the research results and management suggestions can be presented at the same time. The IPA technique can be further used to compare the perception of risk for Chinese tourists and other Western tourists. Also, it can be applied to analyze perceptions of performance in other segments of the tourism industry. It will be useful for tourism planners, policy makers, and marketers to develop management strategies and corrective measures to solve the problems identified in the 'Concentrate Here' quadrant.

For managerial application, the IPA technique applied in this study has divided the risk dimensions or risk factors into four quadrants, so tourism management and planners are able to understand how Chinese tourists perceive the risk dimensions. Using the results provided by IPA, tourism planners, managers, marketers, and related parties can design management strategies according to the importance and perceived performance shown in each quadrant, from the perspective of tourists. This is a useful and effective way for tourism management to identify what problems need immediate attention and what has been done satisfactorily.

This study has pointed out that the satisfaction risk problem needs corrective measures. The Chinese tourists consider satisfaction risk an important aspect when they make a decision to travel. However, Thailand is still unable to meet their expectations. Their dissatisfaction is reflected in their opinions that they may not have made the right country choice, and not had not been able to see things they planned to see, which could have resulted from difficulty in getting around in Bangkok on their own.

Tourism management and planners must understand the changing travel behaviour of Chinese tourists. As shown from the tourist profile, most of the Chinese tourists are now independent travellers, who make their own travel arrangement. More and more Chinese tourists prefer to travel independently, without being escorted by a tour leader or tourist guides. In order to get access to places of their interest, they need clear direction and signs that direct them to those places. Street signs and direction signs in English, Chinese, or both languages should be provided at least in the tourist areas. In conclusion, we have to make big cities like Bangkok and elsewhere more tourist-friendly.

Another problem for the Chinese tourists affecting their satisfaction is their concern about honesty of sales staff and service providers. The research did not allow them to specify the exact nature of this specific problem. However, it is assumed that it could be related to the actual risk of malpractice of unqualified tourist guides or illegal tour operators. Therefore, the government's measure to eradicate illegal tour operators must be continued. It is the right time

for both the government and private sector to look into the issues of the standards of tour operators, their self-regulation, their ethics in tourism operation, human resource management and sustainable tourism management. The perception of the Chinese tourists reflected in this study has shed new light into another area of tourism management, with plenty of room for further investigation.

As the host community, we have done satisfactorily in the aspects of physical risk and service/performance risk. The tourists are assured that they will be safe from accidents, terrorism, crime, and natural disasters. They are already satisfied with health safety. They are satisfied with the standard of accommodations and the reliability of services. They are satisfied with the friendliness of the Thai hosts. This signals that we have to maintain the standard of service and performance.

The last merit of this study is the finding which indicates that social risk is not important. The finding reveals that the Chinese tourists do not care much about gaining face by visiting Thailand, and shopping in Thailand. They do not care much whether they will be admired by their friends back home. They do not care much about shopping in Thailand. They do not care much that they are visiting a popular country. Even though their level of satisfaction towards these aspects is low, it does not affect the country's image. This aspect of the findings exemplifies a new type of Chinese tourist, who does not travel for social status, but to satisfy their needs to see what they expect to see. This can be interpreted that they would rather seek to satisfy their self-actualization need when they travel.

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