Factors Influencing the Decision Making for Cruise Tourism in Thailand: A Case Study of Laem Chabang Port of Call

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The objective of this research is to analyse the confirmatory factors influencing the decision making for cruise tourism in Thailand, a case study: Laem Chabang Port of Call. The sample group used in this research consisted of 500 tourists who used the foreigner cruise to travel and stopped at Laem Chabang Port in Thailand as a port of call. The research instrument was a 5-scale rating questionnaire (highest, high, moderate, low and lowest) in 4 areas which are roles of the government, private sector service, tourist attractions and tourism activities. The statistics used for data analysis were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and index values used to determine the conformity of the model to the empirical data by analysing the confirmatory elements using LISREL program. The results of the research revealed that factors in the decision making for cruise tourism in Thailand, using Laem Chabang Port of Call as a case study consisted of 20 indicators covering 4 areas, namely, 4 indicators for roles of the government, 4 indicators for private sector service, 5 indicators for tourist attractions, and 7 indicators for tourism activities. The analysis of the data by the structural equation model analysis of the 2nd confirmatory factor, found that the model of the confirmatory factors influencing the decision making for cruise travelling in Thailand using Laem Chabang Port of Call as a case study is consistent with the empirical data (χ^2 = 189.29, df = 166, p= 0.104, χ^2/df = 1.1403, GFI = 0.96, AGFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.017, SRMR = 0.016). The descending order of importance is: roles of the government, private sector service, tourist attractions and tourism activities.

Keywords: Cruise Tourism, Port of Call, Tourist Attractions, Tourism Activities

1. Introduction

Cruise tourism is becoming more interesting. According to the Cruise Lines International Association's statistics, the trend of the global cruise industry in 2019 is expected to have an increase number of tourists to approximately 30 million tourists (CLIA: 2019). Asia is growing at an interesting rate due to its year-round favorable seasons with potential and beautiful attractions and value for money. In addition, Asian tourists are increasingly interested in cruise tourism. Many ASEAN countries push forward the cruise tourism as one of the important strategies because it is a new market segment for the ASEAN tourism sector with high growth potential and worth the investment on the infrastructure development to facilitate tourists.

Thailand has a high level of potential to support cruise tourism. It also has the advantage of its location which is situated between the Pacific and Indian Ocean, coupled with the optimum climate and there is a famous and well-known marine tourist attraction among tourists around the world, both the Andaman and the Gulf of Thailand. The variety of attractions, abundance of natural resources and the interest of culture and way of life makes Thailand is of interest to various cruise lines. In addition, the average growth rate of the cruise lines market in Thailand or CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) in the five years from 2014 to 2019 (Figure 1) in Asian was 14%. Focusing only South East Asia, the growth was 7%. The growth in Thailand specifically was 13% and the same total growth rate of 88%, which showed significant growth (CLIA, 2019).

This reflects that ASEAN region, in particular Thailand, is beginning to play an important role in the cruise business in the future. In addition, the 20-year National Strategy (2018 - 2037) defines the vision of Thailand as "Being a stable, prosperous, sustainable, developed country with the development of sufficiency economy philosophy." The National strategy in terms of building competitiveness aiming to create a variety of tourism, acting as a world-class tourism destination to increase the proportion of high-quality tourists, develop more high-value tourism businesses with identity and Thai culture as well as taking advantage of the information and local wisdom, create new attractions that are unique taking into account the potential of each area based on the people along with creating valuable innovations to produce manpower and distribute income to the people of all sectors thoroughly and fairly.

According to the 12tph National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017 - 2021), Strategy 3: strengthening the economy and competing sustainably, in the field of tourism, the cruise tourism is set as one of the target tourism formats to be developed. In order to elevate Thailand to be the regional tourism hub (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2017). In addition, the 2nd National Tourism Development Plan (2017-2021), the Cruise Promotion Strategy 2018-2027, has set a vision to make Thailand as the

quality cruise center of Southeast Asia with international standards and a distribution of income that creates stability, prosperity and sustainability to the community and the nation. (Ministry of Tourism and Sports. 2560)

However, Thailand still has limitations on tourism behavior and factors affecting the decision to travel in Thailand, especially the Laem Chabang Port of Call for by foreign cruise line tourists in both quantity and quality. In this regard, the researcher is interested in studying the factors influencing the Decision Making for Cruise Tourism in Thailand, A Case Study: Laem Chabang Port of Call.The information derived from the study is very useful for government agencies, private sector as well as educational institutions in using the data from this research as a guideline for the development of tourism service, tourism activities, tourist attractions and various fundamentals in being a cruise port in order to promote tourism and raise the quality of cruise tourism to meet international standards and distribution of income that will create stability, prosperity and sustainability to the community and the nation.

2. Research Objective

To analyse the confirmatory factors influencing the decision making for cruise tourism in Thailand, using Laem Chabang Port of Call as a case study.

3. Research Hypothesis

There are 4 factors influencing the decision making for cruise tourism in Thailand using Laem Chabang Port of Call as a case study, namely, government support, private sector service, tourist attractions and tourism activities. Every sub-factor is included in the same main factor.

4. Research Scope

4.1 Population and Sample

The population used in this research was 45,100 tourists of foreign cruise ships using Laem Chabang Port in Thailand as a port of call between July and December 2019 (Chonburi Regional Harbor Office, 2019).

The sample group used in this research was tourists of foreign cruise ships at Laem Chabang Port in Thailand as a port of call. The sample size was determined according to the Taro Yamane model at 95% confidence interval error. The criteria for sample size determination is considered according to Comrey & Lee (1992) as a very good and appropriate sample size for

the structural equation model analysis. The sample size was 500 people, which was obtained by accidental sampling and voluntary response to a research project questionnaire.

4.2 Research Variables

4.2.1 The structural variables consisted of 4 factors: roles of the government, private sector service, tourist attractions and tourism activities

4.2.2 Indicators consisted of 1) roles of the government consisting of 4 indicators, 2) private sector service consisteing of 4 indicators, 3) tourist attractions consisteing of 5 indicators, and 4) tourism activities consisteing of 7 indicators.

4.2.3 Research period: This research was conducted from 1 July 2019 to 29 December 2019.

4.2.4 Research area was Laem Chabang Port of Call, Chonburi Province, Thailand

5. Research Methodology

5.1 The research instrument was an opinion questionnaire on factors influencing the decision making for cruise tourism in Thailand, using Laem Chabang Port of Call as a case study. The researcher applied the conceptual integration principles by studying the 2nd Tourism Development Plan No. 2 (2017 – 2021), the Cruise Tourism Promotion Strategy (2018 – 2027) (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017), the concept of the fundamental factors of being a port for a cruise ship consisting of government cruise tourism policy, image of the harbour tourist attractions, and tourism activities, and by integrating and linking the guidelines to form elements and define indicators.

Sub-factors that are of the same or difference are combined in harmony and to be appropriate in the context of the Laem Chabang Port of Call to manage the cruise tourism for tourists.

The questionnaire was developed as a Linkert Scale with 5 levels: Highest, high, moderate, low and lowest. The criteria for interpretation was set as follows: mean of 4.51 - 5.00 was considered as "Highest", 3.51 - 4.50 was considered as "High", 2.51 - 3.50 was considered as "Moderate", 1.51 - 2.50 was considered as "Low" and 1.00 - 1.50 was considered as "Lowest" (Srisa-ard, 2002). The questionnaire was divided into 4 areas: roles of the government, private sector service, tourist attractions and tourism activities. The IOC was between 0.80 - 1.00, the discrimination was from 0.29 to 0.80, and the confidence of the entire questionnaire was 0.98.

5.2 Data collection

5.2.1 the researcher cooperated with travel agencies to collect data from the tourists at Laem Chabang Port by distributing 500 copies of questionnaire. All of them were responded and returned to the researchers, representing 100 percent.

5.2.2 The questionnaires obtained from the data collection process were used to verify the validity of the questionnaire responses and the results was saved in a computer program for research results analysis.

5.3 Data analysis

5.3.1 An analysis of the opinions of foreign tourists on factors influencing the decision making for cruise tourism in Thailand using Laem Chabang Port of Call as a case study, used basic statistics in terms of mean and standard deviation.

5.3.2 Confirmatory factor analysis by a model to analyse the confirmatory factors influencing the decision making for cruise tourism in Thailand using Laem Chabang Port of Call as a case study was used to determine the level of importance of dependent variables of each factor and to examine whether the four sub-factors are under the same main factor or not and what factors influenced the decision making for cruise tourism in Thailand using Laem Chabang Port of Call as a case study.

6. Data analysis results

6.1 The results of the study of general information and tourist information study of foreign tourists traveling on a cruise ship at Laem Chabang Port in Thailand are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number and percentage of general characteristics of the sample (N = 500)

General Characteristics of The Sample	Number	%
Gender: Male	162	32.00
Female	338	68.00
Age: 21 – 30 Years	61	12.00
31 - 40 Years	81	16.00
41 - 50 Years	177	35.00
51 - 60 Years	126	25.00
61 - 70 Years	56	11.00
Nationality		
Singaporean	101	20.00
Malays	20	4.00
Philippino	379	76.00
Tourism Purpose		
Business	61	12.00
Leisure / Travel	429	86.00
Visiting Friends / Relatives	10	2.00
Cruise Travel Frequency		
First time	369	74.00
2 - 3 times	81	16.00
4 - 5 times	20	4.00
More than 5 times	30	6.00
Education		
Below Bachelor's Degree	197	39.00
Bachelor's Degree	182	36.00
Postgraduate	121	24.00
Occupation		
Civil Servants / State Enterprise Employees	35	7.00
Business Owner / Trader	328	66.00
Retired Officer	25	5.00
Company Employee	91	18.00
Student	20	4.00
Travel Companion		
Family	162	32.00
Lover / Spouse	66	13.00
Organization / Company	258	52.00
Friend / Colleague	15	3.00
Total	**500**	**100.00**

From Table 1, it was found that the most of the tourists who used cruise tourism were female (68.00%), aged between 41-50 years (35.00%), education level lower than bachelor's degree (39.00%), Philippio nationality (76.00%), occupation as business owner/ trader (66.00%), tourism purpose of Leisure / Travel (86.00%), companion, organisation / company (52.00%), and travelled by cruise for the first time (74.00%).

6.2 The results of confirmatory factor analysis by a model to analyse the confirmatory factors influencing the decision making for cruise tourism in Thailand using Laem Chabang Port of Call as a case study to determine the level of importance of dependent variables of each factor and to examine whether the factor loading of four sub-factors, namely, the roles of the government, private sector service, tourist attractions and tourism activities are under the same main factor or not and which factors influence the decision making for cruise tourism in Thailand using Laem Chabang Port of Call as a case study more, are shown in Table 2 and Figure 1.

Table 2 Statistical value of the analysis of the influence of variables in a model of factors influencing the decision making for cruise tourism in Thailand, a case study: Laem Chabang Port of Call

Variables	Factor Loading				R^2
	b	B	SE	t	
Dependent Variables Tourist' decision making for cruise tourism of the tourists					
Independent Variables					
Roles of the government	1.00	1.00	0.04	23.55*	1.00
Private sector service	0.98	0.98	0.05	18.87*	0.96
Tourist attractions	0.98	0.98	0.07	13.97*	0.96
Tourism activities	0.98	0.98	0.04	22.10*	0.97
Roles of the government					
The government has a policy to continuously support tourism. (gov1)	0.62	0.85	0.01	13.94*	0.73
Cooperation in tourism with neighbouring countries (gov2)	0.55	0.74	0.02	19.87*	0.54
Recognition of the importance of cruise tourism (gov3)	0.62	0.85	0.02	24.87*	0.72
Suitable transportation system to reach tourist attractions (gov4)	0.61	0.84	0.02	24.32*	0.70
Private sector service					
The service is up to standard and value for money (pri1)	0.54	0.74	0.01	14.61*	0.55
Knowledge, competence, etiquette and ethics of tour guides (pri2)	0.58	0.80	0.03	18.64*	0.65
Image and reputation of a travel agency (pri3)	0.55	0.69	0.03	15.64*	0.47
The port area and tourist attractions are clean, hygienic	0.63	0.85	0.03	15.64*	0.72

and safe for life (pri4)					

Table 2   (Continue)

Variables	Factor Loading				R^2
	b	B	SE	t	
Tourist Attractions					
Manmade tourist attractions (att1)	0.43	0.59	0.02	15.32*	0.34
Historical tourist attractions (att2)	0.48	0.66	0.03	12.20*	0.44
Cultural tourist attractions (att3)	0.52	0.71	0.04	12.73*	0.50
Community tourist attractions (att4)	0.49	0.67	0.04	12.27*	0.45
Natural tourist attractions (att5)	0.62	0.86	0.04	14.40*	0.73
Tourism activities					
Nature tourism (act1)	0.60	0.83	0.01	14.82*	0.69
Adventure tourism (act2)	0.66	0.93	0.02	27.85*	0.86
Local culture tourism (act3)	0.62	0.85	0.02	24.10*	0.73
City tourism (act4)	0.65	0.92	0.02	27.46*	0.85
Culture and history tourism (act5)	0.66	0.89	0.02	25.66*	0.78
Water tourism (act6)	0.60	0.83	0.02	22.88*	0.68
Entertainment tourism (act7)	0.63	0.87	0.02	24.97*	0.76

*p = < .01, t = 1.946

From Table 2 and Figure 1, the results of the confirmation factor analysis by model to analyse the confirmatory factors influencing the decision making for cruise tourism in Thailand using Laem Chabang Port of Call as a case study, consisted of 4 factors: roles of the government, private sector service, tourist attractions and tourism activities, revealed that the model was consistent with the empirical data. The consideration of (χ^2 = 189.29, df = 166, p= 0.104, χ^2/df = 1.1403, GFI = 0.96, AGFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.017, SRMR = 0.016) showing that the research model is consistent with the empirical data. When considering the factor loading (b), it was found that they were all positive, ranging in size from 0.43 to 0.63 and significantly different from zero at every 0.01 level. When the standard factor weight (B) was considered individually, following results were found.

Roles of the government: The variables with the most loading were 'the government has a policy to continuously support tourism (gov1)" and "Recognition of the importance of cruise tourism (gov3)" with the same loading of 0.85 and covariation with the roles of the government of 0.73% and 0.72%, respectively. This was followed by "suitable transportation system to reach tourist attractions (gov4)" with the same standard factor loading of 0.84 and the covariation with the roles of the government of 0.70% and "Cooperation in tourism with neighbouring countries (gov2) with the same standard factor loading of 0.74 and the covariation roles of the government of 0.54%

Private sector service: The variable with the most loading was "The port area and tourist attractions are clean, hygienic and safe for life (pri4)" with standard factor loading of 0.85 and a covariation with private sector service of 72%, followed by "Knowledge, competence, etiquette and ethics of tour guides (pri2)" with standard factor loading of 0.80 and a covariation with private sector service of 0.65%, "the service is up to standard and value for money (pri1)" with a standard factor loading of 0.74 and a covariation with private sector service of 0.55% and "Image and reputation of a travel agency (pri3)" with a standard factor loading of 0.69 and a covariation with private sector service of 0.47%.

Tourist attractions: The variable with the most loading was "natural tourist attractions (att5)" with standard factor loading of 0.86 and a covariation with tourist attractions of 0.73%, followed by "cultural tourist attractions (att3)" with standard factor loading of 0.71 and a covariation with tourist attractions of 0.50%, "community tourist attractions (att4)" with standard factor loading of 0.67 and a covariation with tourist attractions of 0.45%, "adventure tourism (act2)" with standard factor loading of 0.66 and a covariation with tourist attractions of 0.44%, and "Manmade tourist attractions (att1)" with standard factor loading of 0.59 and a covariation with tourist attractions of 0.34%.

Tourism activities: The variable with the most loading was "Adventure tourism (act2)" with standard factor loading of 0.93 and a covariation with tourism activities of 0.86%, followed by "city tourism (act4)" with standard factor loading of 0.92 and a covariation with tourism activities of 0.85%, "culture and history tourism (act5)" with standard factor loading of 0.89 and a covariation with tourism activities of 0.78%, "entertainment tourism (act7)" with standard factor loading of 0.87 and a covariation with tourism activities of 0.76%, "local culture tourism (act3)" with standard factor loading of 0.85 and a covariation with tourism activities of 0.73%, "nature tourism (act1)" with standard factor loading of 0.83 and a covariation with tourism activities of 0.69%, and "water tourism (act6)" with standard factor loading of 0.83 and a covariation with tourism activities of 0.68%,

The hypothesis found that all four sub-factors were under the same main factor with the factor loading between 1.00 and 0.98. The descending factor loading are role of the government, private sector service, tourist attractions, and tourism activities with the factor loading of 1.00, 0.98, 0.98 and 0.98, respectively.

Chi-Square=189.29, df=166, P-value=0.10401, RMSEA=0.017
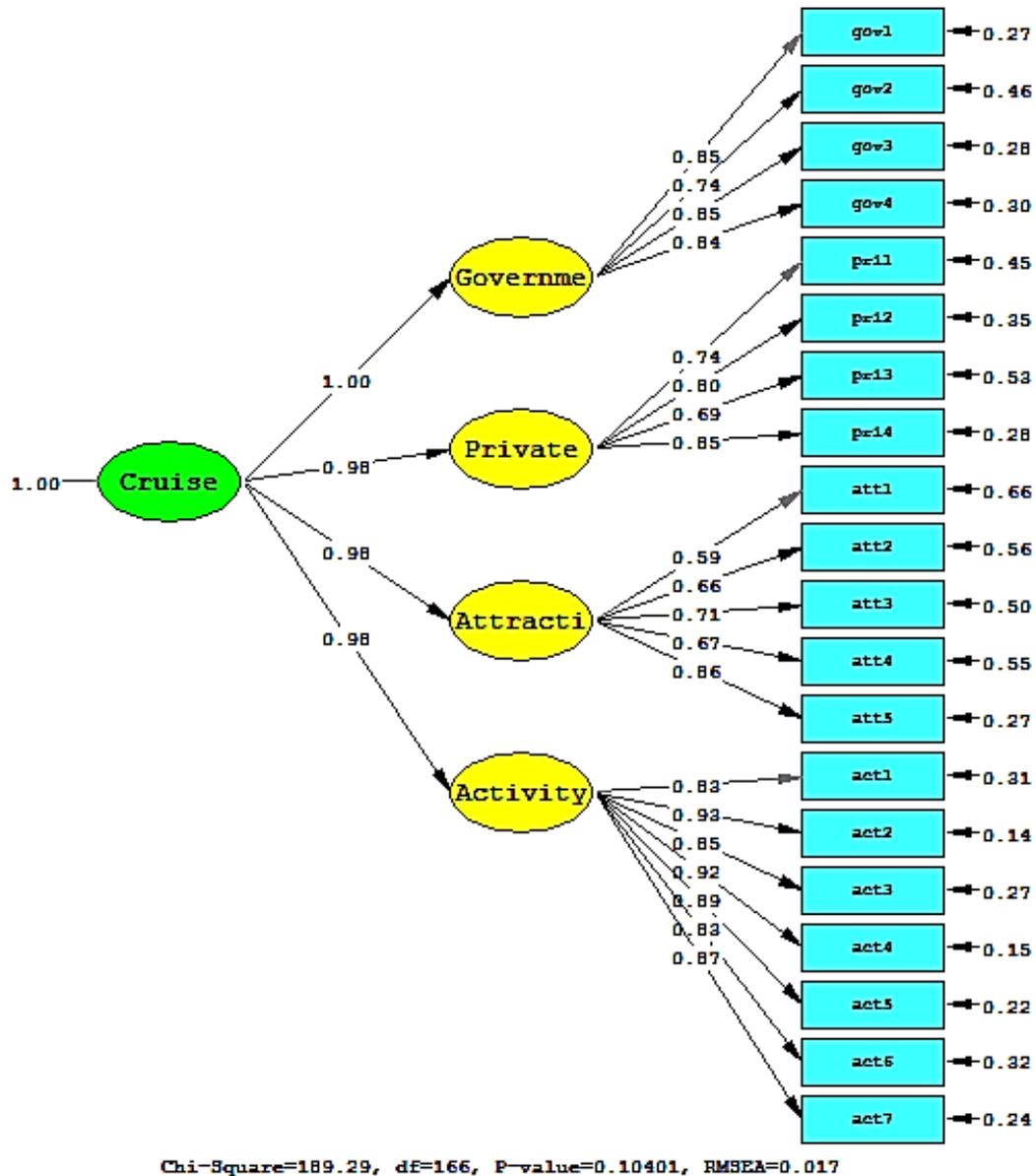
Figure 1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis on the Factors Influencing the Decision Making for Cruise Tourism In Thailand, A Case Study: Laem Chabang Port of Call

7. Discussion and Conclusion

The study of factors influencing the decision making for cruise tourism in Thailand using Laem Chabang Port of Call as a case study consisting of 20 indicators covering 4 factors, namely, role of the government with 4 indicators, private sector service with 4 indicators, tourist attractions with 5 indicators and tourism activities with 7 indicators can be concluded as follows.

Roles of the government consisted of 4 indicators, arranged by descending factor loadings as "the government has a policy to continuously support tourism (gov1)" and "recognition the importance of cruise tourism (gov3)", followed by "suitable transportation system to reach tourist attractions (gov4)" and "cooperation in tourism with neighbouring countries (gov2)". At the present, cruise tourism is growing continuously. Many countries realise the opportunity and therefore establish a cruise tourism policy in order to drive the cruise tourism in a good direction. Thailand has given great importance to cruise tourism. In terms of tourism, the 2nd National Tourism Development Plan (2017-2021) has designated cruise tourism as one of the target tourism formats to be developed in order to elevate Thailand as a regional tourism hub.

In addition, the Cruise Tourism Promotion Strategy 2018-2027 (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017) has set a vision to make Thailand as the quality cruise centre of Southeast Asia with international standards and a distribution of income that creates stability, prosperity and sustainability to the community and the nation, which is in line with Simpson et al., (2008) cited in Monpanthong (2017), suggesting that government agencies must lead the coordination with relevant agencies to plan and set, implement and examine the policies in order to get benefits in economic dimensions and control impacts that will occur to the society and the environment. Well-known and popular ports also have to establish policies that do not focus only on income, but are balanced in all dimensions. While new ports should exchange and learn from the prototype port. In addition, cruise tourists have limited time for sightseeing as Laem Chabang Port is a port of call. The convenient access to tourist attractions will help tourists have the opportunity to stay in the attractions longer, resulting in higher spending. Therefore, the transportation system from the port to the tourist attractions is of great importance (Port-Net, 2007; Gibson, 2012; Tongzon & Heng, 2013; Monpanthong, 2017).

Private sector service consisted of 4 indicators, arranged by descending factor loadings as "the port area and tourist attractions are clean, hygienic and safe for life (pri4)", followed by "knowledge, competence, etiquette and ethics of tour guides (pri2)", "the service is up to standard and value for money (pri1)" and "image and reputation of a travel agency (pri3)". Safety is a key factor when deciding to travel on a cruise ship because most of these are sea voyages which is in line with Monpanthong (2017), mentioning that safety is one of the most important factors in deciding to travel by cruise ship of the target group. Hygiene is extremely important to cruise tourism because it is a journey with a large group of people in a limited area, in particular, the epidemic prevention. This is consistent with Gibson (2012), mentioning the prevention to protect cruise ship travellers from getting infected with the gastrointestinal virus. If any cruise has passengers infected with more than 0.5 percent of total passengers, the responsible department will investigate hygiene issues in terms of cleanliness in areas such as the tourist attractions, port and surrounding areas. The importance of cleanliness in the perspective of tourists of cruise tourism was studied and it revealed that the cleanliness of

tourist attractions is important, in particular in the natural and environmental areas (Monpanthong, 2017; Dowling, 2006).

In terms of travel service providers, it is a business related to service and a service provider is a creator of things to meet the needs of tourists. Therefore, people are the ones who deliver quality service to tourists to create good experiences and impressions (Tongzong & Heng, 2005; Magala & Sammons, 2008; Monpanthong, 2017). To create a good impression comes from a positive attitude, friendliness (Tourism Queensland, 2006; Gibson, 2012; Cruise Gateway North Sea, 2012), experience and competence (Port-Net, 2007). Most of the service providers are tour guides, travel agencies, cruise tour agents, drivers, and government officials serving at tourist attractions. In terms of value for money, it is determined by what has been higher than expected, not just a low price. Therefore, the presentation of products and services must meet expectations in order to achieve satisfaction because that is considered as value for money. This is in line with the Busby & O'Neil study, (2013), where the important factors for port management were studied. This study revealed that value for money is an important factor for cruise tourists. This is to deliver value through tourism products and services to meet the needs of tourists to realise that the money paid is worth what they receive. Satisfaction for tourists is therefore important. (Monpanthong, 2017).

Tourist attractions consisted of 4 indicators, arranged by descending factor loadings as "natural tourist attractions (att5)", followed by "community tourist attractions (att4)", "historical tourist attractions (att2)" and "manmade tourist attractions (att1)". This is because tourist attractions are an important component in tourism management (WTO, 2010) and help attract cruise lines to select ports for designing the shipping routes. It is also an important factor that the target group of cruise tourism decides to purchase a cruise tour program of the cruise line (Brida et al., 2012; Busby & O'Neill, 2013; Monpanthong, 2017). When considering the attractions of a port, it is important to have a unique identity which is different than any other ports (Ontario Ministry of Tourisern, 2006; Tongzon & Heng, 2013; Port-Net, 2007; Gibson, 2012; Cruise Gateway North Sea, 2012), beauty and reputation (Mornpunthong, 2014), value (Busby & O'Neil, 2013) and suitability for the target customers of the cruise line. Therefore, in the selection of a port to design a cruising route, the main characteristic is that the tourist attractions must be interesting, unique and different from other ports, and diversified (Mornpunthong, 2017).

Tourism activities consisted of 7 indicators, arranged by descending factor loadings as "adventure tourism (act2)", "city tourism (act4)", "culture and history tourism (act5)", "entertainment tourism (act7)", "local culture tourism (act3)", "nature tourism (act1)", and "water tourism (act6)". Tourism activities are an important factor in the decision making of tourists to travel to various tourist attractions. If there are many interesting, varied and exotic tourism activities, it will affect the decision of tourists. This is in line with Tourism

Queensland (2006), the diversity of tourism activities can penetrate more tourist groups, resulting in a longer period of stay and increasing the income in relation to the tourist attractions. In addition, tourism activities are a very important factor that makes the cruise tourists spend their money during their stopover at the port of call due to the changing context by targeting a wider group (Ontario Ministry of Tourism, 2006). Therefore, the port's tourism activities must be diverse, unique and value for money (Cruise Gateway North Sea, 2012) to create an experience for tourists at the port.

8. Suggestions

8.1 General suggestions

8.1.1 Private government agencies should use factors and indicators which influence the decision making of the cruise tourists as a guideline for tourism attractions development and raise the quality of cruise tourism to meet international standards.

8.1.2 Utilising the factors and indicators of factors that influence the decision making of the cruise tourists obtained from this research, Private government agencies should consider the elements and indicators appropriate to the context of the port of the cruise tourism because each port has a different context of port and tourist attraction.

8.2 Suggestions for further research

The factors and indicators of the factors that influence the decision making for the cruise tourists should be used as a guideline for studying tourism behaviour and there should be a study on the factors influencing the decision making of cruise tourism in the main port or other port of call to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data in order to develop tourist attractions for cruise tourism to have quality and meet and international standards.

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