

# the TOURISTS' Perception toward Boat Tours of Bangkok

---

Woranan Jantarangsee, Jutharat Paiboonsubsin, Sivlean San  
International Program in Service Industry Management, Siam University  
E-mail: Berry\_jan1209@hotmail.com,  
Jutharat.p@live.com,  
sl.dragon@yahoo.com

## Abstract

A boat tour can be a unique activity providing tourists with local Thai experience that contributes to total annual income earned in Thailand. The study aims 1) to evaluate tourist perceptions toward the boat tour (floating market, and visit of temple) as a tourist activity, 2) to assess any difference in the perception toward boat tours between first time and repeat visitors, as well as 3) to examine any difference in perception toward boat tours among tourists with different demographic profile. A total of 181 questionnaire surveys were given to selected international travelers at the Temple of Dawn, Si Phraya Crossing Pier and Artist's House located in Bangkok, Thailand. This research found that language barrier and sanitation were the main problems tourists faced during boat tours. This research will greatly benefit service providers, travel agencies, marketers, and tourism organization of Thailand to develop attractions which will provide excitement to attract as many tourists as possible which in return will promote destination arrivals.

**Keywords:** boat tour Bangkok, travel intention, Thailand, destination image



## Introduction

A boat tour is a short trip in a small boat for tourists to explore new areas. It is an important sector that significantly contributes to the economy of Bangkok, Thailand's tour boats can be classified into many types such as express boat, ferry boat and cruise boat. Boats originally were a form of transportation for locals. Aspects of authentic historical types of boats have been updated and developed for present day use. Thailand's tourism is a major business operation. Most foreigners who visit Bangkok are likely to travel to the temples such as the Temple of Dawn and the Temple of The Reclining Buddha. Tourists can use boats to transport from one tourist destination to another and they always feel safe and feel not lonely. They are not afraid of getting lost and enjoy their experience without having to worry about every detail of getting around effectively. In the present time, there are many boat companies such as Chao Phraya Express Boat, Chao Phraya Tourist Boat, and Chao Phraya Princess Cruise. Tourist can travel by themselves, as they can use boat tour services. It will be easier for them to get around the language barrier, plus not to get lost. There are nine major piers for boat tours, namely 1) Asiatique pier 2) Sathon pier 3) Oriental pier 4) SiPhraya pier 5) Ratchawong pier 6) Tha Tien pier 7) Maharaj pier 8) Wang Lang pier and 9) Phra Arthit pier.

There are two different types of boat tours in Thailand: temple boat tours and floating market boat tours. However, these tours are mostly seen as the same. This research aims to differentiate these two types of boat tours based on the perceptions of the tourists.

## Literature Review

### Destination Image

Destination image greatly affects the decision-making of tourists when choosing a destination. As El Khadi (2009) noted, "Destination marketers have the least influence on potential visitors, since mental images are built continuously, affected by daily news and other information sources, which do not necessarily have to be connected to tourism, but may still affect one's image of a tourist destination."

The meaning of destination image has been defined by a lot of researchers. As Pearce (2005, p. 93) summarized, "There is mounting agreement that the destination image represents a totality of beliefs, feelings and expectations and that is an accessible mental schema or information store." Lubbe (2004) stated, "A destination and an individual have a personal relationship, which stimulates the individual to create a particular picture of the destination and to assess whether the destination can fulfill his needs or expectations."

Being aware of the perception of tourists on the image of the destination can greatly benefit destination marketers in effectively marketing their destination. As noted by El Khadi (2009, p.38), "Understanding how people form their image of places, however, enables destinations to be more competitive by raising their attractiveness where required."

### Cultural Tourism

Nowadays, special interest tourism has been gaining popularity especially cultural tourism. According to Mckercher and Cros (2012, p.1). "Cultural tourism is arguably the oldest of the "new" tourism phenomena. Visiting historic sites,

cultural landmarks, attending special events and festivals, or visiting museums have always been a part of the total tourism experience. Indeed, all travel involves a cultural element. By its very nature, the art of traveling removes tourists from their home culture and places them temporarily in a different cultural milieu, whether in an adjacent city or in a village halfway around the world. But cultural tourism is seen as offering something more different both to the tourist and community that hosts the tourist.” Tighe (1986) noted, “Cultural tourism began to be recognized as a distinct product category in the late 1970s when tourism marketers and tourism researchers realized that some people traveled specifically to gain a deeper understanding of the culture or heritage of a destination.”

Cultural tourism mainly involves engaging in local culture of the destination. As cited in Mckercher and Cros (2012, p.4), “Cultural tourism involves experiencing or having contact with differing intensity with the unique social fabric, heritage, and special character of places.” In addition, Ivanovic (2008, p.14) stated, “Cultural identity is often associated with a place and can relate to locality, region or country depending on the context in which the cultural identity is expressed, the situation or the person being addressed.” She also added, “Only through tourist experiences (consumption) such as imbuing the atmosphere and experiencing the sense of a place can they be identified as cultural attractions: observing social, economic and leisure activities of a host community; learning about the lifestyle of a host community, and its customs, traditions and ideologies; experiencing the sense of a place.” (Ivanovic, 2008, p.116)

### Revisit Intention

It is crucial to have repeat visitors, both to retain them and increase the market. Repeat visitors show that the business is running toward being a cash cow. This also helps to reduce the cost of advertising, because word of mouth of happy tourists spreads fast among boat tour operators. But, customers do not always come back to the same destination as they would also like to travel and explore new places. First time travellers to any destination would like to explore new and historic sites, but repeat travellers might be interested in the social experiences, entertainment, shopping and dining. They have high demand for information and a safe level of awareness, and overall safety. A positive experience of any given destination influences the likelihood of a return visit. This indicates that destinations should not only focus on attracting new tourists but they should also improve their quality of service to ensure repeat travellers and a great word of mouth reputation. Most tourists select a destination because of the positive image of that destination and when tourists have generally positive perception or impressions of a destination they are more likely to select that destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993).

### Purposes

This study has three major purposes. The first is to evaluate tourist perception toward the boat tour as a tourist activity. The second is to assess any difference in the travel destination between first time and repeat visitors. The third is to examine any difference in travel among tourists with different demographic profile.



## Hypothesis (if any)

There is a difference between the tourists' perceptions on floating market boat tours and temple boat tours.

## Benefit of Research

This study will provide better understanding of boat tour operations. The tour boat industry is very diverse and has fierce of competition. Tourist perceptions of quality and satisfaction will either cause a boat tour to keep its customers or lose them a positive word of mouth and an overall knowledge of the tour operator is directly linked to tourist retention for a return visit. From the several companies that offer the same service, tourists will choose the one with the best image to get the best experience possible. All of The stiff competition raises the overall quality of all tour boat operations.

## Research Process

This study uses a self-complete questionnaire to measure the perception of tourists toward boat tours in Bangkok, Thailand. The authors went to the temple of dawn and Si Phaya Crossing pier from February 28 to March 30 to distribute questionnaires to 181 tourists. Since the questionnaire was written in English, only tourists who understand English participated in the questionnaire survey. A convenience sampling was used in this study.

## Population and Sample

The target population of this study was international tourists visiting in Thailand at the Temple of Dawn and Si Phaya Crossing Pier. A convenience sampling was used in this study. Out of approximate

200 tourists approached, 162 tourists participated in this survey representing an 81% response rate.

## Instruments

The instrument of this study is a questionnaire derived from Rittichainuwat (2015) including tourist perception toward the boat tour industry. This survey includes 19 questions about positive and negative attributes of the Floating Market and the Temple of Dawn boat tours, from a tourist perspective.

## Data Analysis

SPSS is used to analyze the questionnaire data which includes frequency distribution, descriptive statistics, independent sampling mean t-test, and ANOVA. First, frequency distribution is used to describe demographic profile of tourists and travel characteristics. Second, descriptive statistics are used to identify the destination image of the Floating Market and the Temple of Dawn from the high point to lowest point. Third, independent sampling mean t-test and ANOVA are run to identify any significant difference on the destination image of the Floating Market and the Temple of Dawn across visitor type (first timers and repeat visitors) as well as demographic profile (age, gender, marital status, continents, occupation, and education level). Significant differences are found on the destination image of the Floating Market and the Temple of Dawn.

## Result

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. Male respondents (52.2%) are slightly higher than female respondents (47.5%). More than half of the respondents are 18-29 years old,

whereas the others are aged 30 and above. Almost three-fourths of the tourists are single (73.5%). The respondents came from three major continents of the world, Asia (50.3%), Europe (32.6%) and others such as America, Australia and other countries (17.1%). 64.1% indicate their occupation as employed and 35.9% are unemployed. In terms of education level, the majority is highly educated, including college graduates (41.4%) and postgraduates (39.2%).

Table 2 shows travel behavior of tourists in this study. Based on the sample, More than three-fourths of the respondents are first timers (78.5%) and the remaining are repeat visitors (21.5%). Since the survey was conducted at the Temple of Dawn and Si Phraya Crossing Pier, the majority of tourists

were leisure tourists including vacationers (76.2%). Meanwhile, business tourists (14%) also participated in this study when they visited the major tourist attractions in Bangkok. More than half of the tourists (57%) would like to take boat tours again; some of them would like to shop during the field trips (45%), whereas some might shop during their trip (44%). The majority (94.5%) would recommend such a tour to their friends and relatives. This implies that most tourists in this study were satisfied with their visit to Thailand.

### Perceived image of boat tours

Table 3 shows the mean score of the perception attributes of boat tours in Bangkok, Thailand by tourists. As for the Floating Market, the top 5 perception items are Sightseeing

**Table 1 Demographic profile**

Item	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	95	52.5
	Female	86	47.5
	Total	181	100.0
Age	18-29 years old	103	56.9
	30-49 years old	55	30.4
	50 years old or above	23	12.7
	Total	181	100.0
Marital status	Single	133	73.5
	Married	48	26.5
	Total	181	100.0
Continents	Asian	91	50.3
	European	59	32.6
	Others	31	17.1
	Total	181	100.0
Occupation	Employed	116	64.1
	Unemployed (include housewife and student)	65	35.9
	Total	181	100.0
Education level	High school graduate or below	35	19.3
	College	75	41.4
	Graduate	71	39.2
	Total	181	100.0

opportunities (4.05), Friendliness of local people (4.03), Willingness of local residents to help tourist (3.91), a variety of cultural activities for me to do (3.90), and Willingness of local residents in participating in tourist activities (3.89). The lowest perception score is Local people's foreign language

skill (3.13). On the other hand, the top 5 perception scores rated by tourists at the Temple of Dawn are Friendliness of local people (4.30), Authenticity of cultural landmark (4.24), Safe from crime while walking to this place (4.18), Willingness of local residents to help tourists (4.16), and Overall safety/security for tourists (4.13).

**Table 2: Tourist behavior**

Item	Category	Frequency	Percent
No. of Visits	First time	142	78.5
	Repeat visitors	39	21.5
	Total	181	100.0
Purpose of Visit	Vacation and sightseeing	138	76.2
	Business	16	8.8
	Study tour	18	9.9
	Visiting friends and relatives	5	2.8
	En route to somewhere else	1	0.6
	Others	3	1.7
	Total	181	100.0
How likely would you visit this place(boat tour) again?	Very unlikely	8	4.4
	Unlikely	3	1.7
	Quite unlikely	8	4.4
	Unsure	20	11.0
	Quite likely	39	21.5
	Likely	63	34.8
	Very likely	40	21.1
	Total	181	100.0
How likely would you shopping during this field trip?	Very unlikely	8	4.4
	Unlikely	7	3.9
	Quite unlikely	12	6.6
	Unsure	23	12.7
	Quite likely	49	27.1
	Likely	50	27.6
	Very likely	32	17.7
	Total	181	100.0
Would you recommend this to your friends and relatives?	Very unlikely	3	1.7
	Unlikely	1	0.6
	Unsure	6	3.3
	Quite likely	36	19.9
	Likely	53	29.3
	Very likely	82	45.3
	Total	181	100.0

Table 4 shows significant differences concerning a variety of cultural activities between genders. There are significant differences in tourists perception of the Temple of Dawn toward ‘Willingness of local residents to help tourists’ between male (4.28) and female (4.03), as well as ‘A variety of cultural activities for me to do’ between male (3.87) and female (4.20).

Table 5 shows t-test results comparing single and married tourists. Results indicated that there is a perception difference of the Floating Market

toward ‘cleanliness of these places’ between the employed (3.52) and unemployed (2.96).

Table 6 shows t-test results comparing first time and repeat visitors. Results indicate that there is a difference in perception of the Temple of Dawn in terms of ‘Willingness of local residents to help tourists between’ first timers (4.22) and repeat tourists (3.9), ‘Standard of food safety of local vendors’ between first time (3.84), repeat tourists (3.47), ‘A variety of cultural activities for me to do’ first time (4.11) and repeat tourists( 3.73).

**Table 3 perceived image of boat tour**

Item	Floating market		Temple of Dawn	
	N	Mean	N	Mean
Cleanliness of these place (waste and garbage management)	88	3.36	152	3.98
Standard of sanitation and hygiene	88	3.26	152	3.76
Safe from crime while walking to this place	88	3.86	152	4.18
Overall safety/security for tourists	88	3.80	152	4.13
Easy to reach this place	88	3.43	152	4.00
Friendliness of local people (polite, attitude towards tourist)	88	4.03	152	4.30
Willingness of local residents to help tourist	88	3.91	152	4.16
Willingness of local residents in developing this place as a tourist destination	88	3.78	152	4.08
Willingness of local residents in participating in tourist activities	88	3.89	152	3.88
Local people’s foreign language skill (English proficiency)	88	3.13	152	3.52
Pricing of food and beverage	88	3.77	152	3.98
Standard of food safety of local vendors	88	3.56	152	3.77
Sightseeing opportunities	88	4.05	152	4.08
A variety of cultural activities for me to do	88	3.90	152	4.03
Authenticity of cultural landmark	88	3.76	152	4.24
Well preserved cultural heritage	88	3.70	152	4.11
Well preserved orchards, canals	88	3.67	152	3.91
Scenic beauty (orchards, canals)	88	3.75	152	4.00
Condition of canals	88	3.45	152	3.61

Perception scale 1=very poor (Not ready to be promoted as a tourist destination. Not to see) 2=poor (Only a few tourist activities exist) 3=fair 4=good (Several tourist activities) 5=excellent (A variety of things to see. Ready to be promoted as a tourist destination)

**Table 4 t-test Results Comparing Male and Female**

	Male		Female		t-value
	N	Mean	N	Mean	
TD Willingness of local residents to help tourist	78	4.28	74	4.03	1.988*
TD A variety of cultural activities for me to do	78	3.87	74	4.20	2.332*

\*Significant at p < 0.05



Table 7 shows t-test results comparing the employed and unemployed. Results indicate that there is a difference on the perception of the Floating Market toward 'Willingness of local residents in developing this place as a tourist destination' between employed (3.96), unemployed (3.55) and difference on the perception of the Temple of Dawn in terms of 'Willingness of local residents to help tourist' between employed (4.27), unemployed (3.89).

Table 8 shows ANOVA results comparing age groups concerning the perception toward boat tours of Bangkok. Results indicate that perception on the Temple of Dawn toward 'Willingness of local residents in developing this place as a tourist destination' between 30-49 years old (4.21) and 50 years or older (3.65), as well as 'Willingness of local residents to help tourists' between 18-29 years old (4.03) and 30-49 years old (4.41).

**Table 5 t-test Results Comparing Single and Married**

	Employed		Unemployed		t-value
	N	Mean	N	Mean	
FM Cleanliness of these place (waste and garbage management)	63	3.52	25	2.96	2.670*

\*Significant at  $p \leq 0.05$

**Table 6 t-test Results Comparing First time and Repeat visitors**

	First time		Repeat tourists		t-value
	N	Mean	N	Mean	
TD Willingness of local residents to help tourist	64	4.22	27	3.90	1.995*
TD Standard of food safety of local vendors	64	3.84	27	3.47	2.130*
TD A variety of cultural activities for me to do	64	4.11	27	3.73	2.087*

\*Significant at  $p \leq 0.05$

**Table 7 t-test Results Comparing Employed and Unemployed**

	Employed		Unemployed		t-value
	N	Mean	N	Mean	
FM Willingness of local residents in developing this place as a tourist destination	50	3.96	38	3.55	2.107*
TD Willingness of local residents to help tourist	50	4.27	38	3.89	2.753*

\*Significant at  $p \leq 0.05$

**Table 8 ANOVA Results Comparing Age with The Exception Toward Boat Tours Of Bangkok.**

Factor	Mean			F Ratio	F-Probability	Significant Difference Between Group
	Group1	Group2	Group3			
TD Willingness of local residents in developing this place as a tourist destination	4.11	4.21	3.65	3.839	0.024	Group 2 and 3
TD Willingness of local residents to help tourist	4.03	4.41	4.00	4.061	0.019	Group 1 and 2

Group1=18-29 years old, 30-49 years old, Group3=50 years old or older



**Table 9 ANOVA Results Comparing Education with The Exception Toward Boat Tours Of Bangkok.**

Factor	Mean			F Ratio	F-Probability	Significant Difference Between Group
	Group1	Group2	Group3			
FM Willingness of local residents in developing this place as a tourist destination	3.33	3.93	3.85	3.111	0.05	Group1 and 2

Group1=High school graduate or below, Group2=College, Group3=Graduate

**Table 10 ANOVA Results Comparing Region with The Exception Toward Boat Tours Of Bangkok.**

Factor	Mean			F Ratio	F-Probability	Significant Difference Between Group
	Group1	Group2	Group3			
TD Overall safety/security for tourists	4.19	3.86	4.48	3.348	0.040	Group1 and 3
TD Willingness of local residents to help tourist	4.08	4.10	4.48	3.183	0.044	Group2 and 3
TD Well preserved cultural heritage	3.99	4.06	4.56	4.641	0.011	Group2 and 3, Group1 and 3

Group1=Asian, Group2= European, Group3= Others

Table 9 shows ANOVA results comparing education levels concerning the exception toward boat tours of Bangkok. Results indicate that perception of the Floating Market toward ‘Willingness of local residents in developing this place as a tourist’s destination between high school graduate or below (3.33) and college graduates (3.93)

Table 10 shows ANOVA results comparing region concerning the perception toward boat tours of Bangkok. Results indicated that there is a significant difference on Temple of Dawn’s ‘Overall safety/security for tourists’ between Asians (M=4.1923) and Others (M=4.48), ‘Willingness of local residents to help tourists ‘between Europeans (4.10) and Others (M=4.48), and ‘Well preserved cultural heritage’ between Asians (3.9872), Europeans (4.0612) and Others (4.56).

## Conclusion

The authors have found that there are both satisfied tourists and unsatisfied tourists. The majority of the tourists who participated in this survey are male and they have a much more negative outlook of Thailand than female. However, the women tourists are less likely to travel alone. The authors think that safety is a major concern for all tourists. Furthermore, there are more Europeans who answered the survey than Asians. This might be why there is such a different outlook on Thailand in our study. In addition, tourists are mostly traveling by themselves in the study. People from tour groups are less likely to be affected by the crime element. Tour groups offer correct prices but if tourists are alone they usually have to pay more than the real price. Sometimes, tourists are not



aware of the possibility of traveling by boat to certain tourist attractions. In addition, most of the tourists complain about traffic jams. In order to address this problem, more information must be available about the boat and canal travel system. Moreover, most of the tourists were concerned with sanitation and maintenance of the canals, rivers and areas during boat tours.

## Recommendation

Traveling by boat is mostly unknown to tourists. Or they are taken advantage of by unfair fare prices. The majorities of the tourists travel by themselves, instead of with large tour companies with guides or on cruises. If they are involved a tour company they are happy customer with a strong likelihood of return visit to Thailand. The truth, of this industry is Thailand needs to put regulations on anything involved with tourists. At the floating market there are more unsatisfied tourists than at

the Temple of Dawn. Not many people know that travel by boat is possible, nor do they receive a fair rate. They are unsatisfied when they find out that they have been taken advantage of. Tourists that travel on boat tours to the Temple of Dawn are happier than those at the Floating Market. Moreover, sanitation and maintenance must be taken seriously in order to satisfy the boat tourists as Jennings (2007, p. 190) has stated that, “A boat tour as a way to relax and escape, with the environment as a pleasant backdrop.”

## Acknowledgements (if any)

The authors would like to thank director of the International Program in Service Industry Management, Siam University, Dr. Bongkosh Ngamsom Rittichainuwat, Professor Hanqin Zhang, Ms. Daisy Fan and Sanvicha Muttamara for their guidance in writing this paper.

## References

- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. R. (1993). **The Measurement of destination image: An empirical assessment.** *Journal of Travel Research*, 31(4), 3–13.
- El Khadi, W. (2009). **Literature Review I Destination Image. Cross-Cultural Destination Image Assessment: Cultural Segmentation Versus the Global Tourist: An Exploratory Study of Arab-Islamic and Protestant European Youths' Pre-visitation Image on Berlin.** (p. 40). Diplomica Verlag.
- Ivanovic, M. (2008). **Classification of Cultural Attractions.** *Cultural Tourism.* (p. 116) Juta and Company Ltd.
- Jennings, G. (2007). **One-Day Boating Tours.** *Water-Based Tourism, Sport, Leisure, and Recreation Experiences.* (p. 190). Routledge.
- Lubbe, B.A. (2004). **Applying an open systems public relations model to destination image development.** *Communicatio.* 30(1), 131 -150.
- .Mckercher, B., & Du Cros, H. (2012). **Introduction. Cultural Tourism: The Partnership Between Tourism and Cultural Heritage Management.** (p. 1). Haworth hospitality Press.
- Pearce, P. (2005). **Perceiving and Choosing the Destination.** *Tourist Behavior: Themes and Conceptual Schemes.* (2005). Channel View Publications.
- Tighe, A. (1986). **The arts/tourism partnership.** *Journal of Travel Research*, 24(1): 2–5.

