

Malaysia vs Thailand Millennial Travellers: Understanding the Behaviour and Pattern of Young Tourists

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ABSTRACT

In line with the Visit Malaysia 2020 initiative, it is imperative for anybody in relation to the tourism sector to comprehend the predilections of tourists to help in cultivating the services provided by the industry. It is projected that there will be about 36 million arrivals to Malaysia by the year 2020. Hence, this study aims to provide the understanding of the behaviour and patterns of young tourist in forecasting their predilections. This will help to attain information on what stimulate them in selecting their next destination. Three elements were analysed in this study: expenditure, transportation and social media. All three elements showed significant relationship towards travel predilections. Nonetheless there were numerous variances between the significant factors for Malaysian and Thai respondents.

Keywords: Tourism, Travel Behaviour, Travel Preferences, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Many believe that the grass is always greener on the other side. Such view led to high tourism activities around the world. People travel for various reasons. Some do it to satisfy their basic needs, some do it to improve social relationship while some travel just for the fun of it (Mohammad & Mat Som, 2010). In the past spans, tourism industry has shown remarkable growth adding to the development of a country as well as being a major income contributor overtaking oil exports, food products or automobiles (Baguisi, Htoo, Thwe, Kaung, & Shwe, 2015). The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) forecasted international tourism arrivals to reach 1.8 billion by the year 2030 (UNWTO, 2018).

In Malaysia, 25.8 million arrivals were seen in 2018 amounting to RM84.1 billion receipts (Malaysia, 2019a). As part of Malaysia's aim of becoming a high-income nation under Vision 2020, tourism industry was acknowledged as one of the National Key Economic Areas with a target of 36 million arrivals and RM168 billion receipts (BERNAMA, 2017). Tourism has been expressively contributing to the economic development of Malaysia with about 11.2% growth rate annually since 2006 (BERNAMA, 2018). The foremost part of tourism receipts was from shopping followed by accommodation and transportation (BERNAMA, 2018).

Table 1.0 below shows Malaysia international tourists arrivals from neighbouring countries: Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia from 2016 to 2018 amongst which only arrivals from

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Thailand showed a consistent increase of about 3% annually while Singaporean tourists have dropped 6% in 2017 and 14% in 2018 (Malaysia, 2019b).

Table 1: International Tourist Arrivals (Million) to Malaysia

Country	2016	2017	2018
Singapore	13.27	12.44	10.62
Indonesia	3.05	2.8	3.28
Thailand	1.78	1.84	1.91

Source: Tourism Malaysia with the cooperation of Immigration Department

This raised questions on the contributing factors that have attracted Thai visitors to Malaysia leading to the key objective of this study: to recognise the factors that influences the travel behaviour and patterns of tourists. This study could assist the tourism industry of Malaysia in understanding how visitors make decision in deciding their travelling activities.

This study focuses on three elements which are travel expenditure, transportation and social media and how these factors affect the travel preferences of Malaysian and Thai tourists. Prior to this study, few researchers focus to the niche respondents of university students and their unique behaviour especially in Southeast Asian countries. Despite having low disposable income and purchasing power, with numerous low cost options available today, students are travelling as much as adults and contributing to a significant amount of tourists annually.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A common theory studied for decades is the push and pull factor. In relation to the tourism industry, push factors are individual preferences influencing their travel behaviour while pull factors are attractions offered by the destinations (Dann, 1977). Various push and pull factors exist alongside threats hindering travelling activities which may include difficulty of taking a break from work, threats while travelling abroad as well as economic recession (Gilbert & Terrata, 2001). It is important to understand the push and pull factors as it has a strong correspondence between them in helping with tourism marketing and management (Lim, Cham, & Sia, 2018; Reihanian, Hin, Kahrom, Mahmood, & Porshokouh, 2015). On top of that, the destination also plays an important factor to call upon visitors (Cham, Lim, & Aik, 2015; Deeparechigi, Ridzuan, & Cham, 2018). In line with helping Malaysia achieves Vision 2020 as well as contributing to the Visit Malaysia 2020 campaign, it is important to understand what attracts local and foreign visitors to Malaysia.

In addition, Gilbert and Terrata (2001) further stated that younger people are more likely to prefer travelling abroad as they see it as a luxurious activity. These generation, often labelled as 'millennial' are people born between 1981 to 1997 who are 22 to 38 years of age (Frey, 2018). Part of this group are those who are still studying in university ranging from age 22 to 25. They possess unique behaviours and are perceived as self-confident, optimistic as well as being more open-minded (Tanner, 2010). Frey (2018) further reports that millennial are often seen as tech-savvy generation growing up in an advanced technological era. This affect them both in a positive light as well as negatively. Being open to a global platform for information, this generation are more inclined to share their experiences to the public leading them to

make more promiscuous purchases as well as travelling to more places with higher social status perception (Woo, 2018).

Travel behaviour is a set of human attitudes and decisions in doing activities involving getting from one place to another which includes choosing the mode of transportation as well as the distance of travel (Bartosiewicz & Pielesiak, 2019). Such patterns are often influenced by various limitations which includes time, scheduling as well as income and costs to travel (Recker, McNally, & Root, 1986). Previous studies have looked into the different behaviour of men and women whilst travelling showing slight differences where women tend to be more complex and changeable base on the selected destinations (Ng & Acker, 2018). However, behaviour or preferences show significant differences amongst generation where older generations such as baby boomers are more attracted to historical destinations as well as health concerns when travelling (Mohamed, Omar, & Kai, 2016).

Similarly, travel preferences of tourist around the world are influenced by several factors. Unlike behaviour which are limited by several restraints, travel preferences symbolises where people would like to travel. As such, preferences may not be mainly bounded by income constraints but more on how they would choose to spend their money (Kattiyapornpong & Miller, 2007). Anyone involve in the tourism industry should understand the travel preferences of tourists in understanding how to ensure visitors are attracted to select them as their next travel destination.

Travel expenditure is an important component of total tourism demand. However, to some people, tourism is seen as a luxury spending involving high expenditure especially travelling abroad. Only those with high disposable income are said to be able to experience travelling to other destinations around the world (Wang, 2014). Thus, economic crisis has a significant effect towards travel preferences especially among university students as they live with limited financial resources (Dorobanțu, 2011). Several factors influence the spending when one travels. Business related travels as well as food and beverages normally results in higher spending as compared to beach or event-related trips. Higher spending of tourists are mostly in relation to hotel accommodation while group travels normally result in lower spending (Laesser & Crouch, 2006).

Transportation in general is the means of moving someone from one location to the other. For travellers, the choice begins with the mode of transportation to reach their destination. It is always said that there exists a interdependent relationship between transportation and tourism through the satisfaction of the journey experienced by travellers (Page & Ge, 2009). Despite the air accidents and the controversial issues surrounding airline companies, air travel still remains as the main choice of travel for tourists while by cars are preferred for shorter trips (Mammadov, 2012). Mammadov further stated that with the advancement of technology, serious improvements are needed for trains to increase tourist satisfaction. Many features of transportation influences choices and decisions of users which includes safety, time as well as total costs (Maduwanthi, Marasinghe, Rajapakse, Dharmawansa, & Nomura, 2015).

Social media is a form of interactive participation through digital platform either mobile or stationery which includes communication through email as well as social networking sites (Cham, Lim, Aik, & Tay, 2016; Cheah, Ting, Cham, & Memon, 2019; Manning, 2014). Globally, the use of internet have been increasing from year to year alongside the use of social media which has shown to be substantial around the world especially in developed nations (Poushter, Bishop, & Chwe, 2018). As reported by the Malaysian Communications

and Multimedia Commission, in Malaysia alone there are about 87.4% internet users while 93.1% of users are streaming through smartphones with text message platform, Whatsapp together with Facebook being the most prevalent. The none-users are majority from the age group of 60 years and above. On average, 39.2% of users spend about 1 to 4 hours on the internet daily followed by 23.9% spending 5 to 8 hours daily. The internet alongside social media comes with several usage, the highest being text communication (96.5%) trailed by visiting social media platform (85.6%) and getting information (85.5%). Online shopping and booking which are related to the tourism industry showed substantial usage of about 53.3% of users (MCMC, 2018).

Many prior studies have found that usage of social media influences travel pattern. Users are inspired to travel from pictures of friends, celebrities or any other social media users attracting them to visit other places especially countries portraying positive and attractive images (Cheah et al., 2019; Chu & Luckanavanich, 2018). It is a common practice these days to post travelling activities through your personal social media accounts as part of keeping memories for the future. This nonetheless, indirectly influences followers to make holiday plans to experience similar excitement and fun (Fotis, Buhalis, & Rossides, 2012). On the other hand, social media as well as internet platforms are essential for companies operating in the tourism industry as a marketing tool to communicate information to their customers, provide advertisement as well as to obtain feedback as for them to improve in the future (Ráthonyi, 2016). Looking into the aforementioned factors, three hypotheses were developed for this study.

Hypothesis Development

The Relationship between Travel Expenditure and Travel Preferences

Many studies have shown that for every tourist despite of age, costs or expenses are important in deciding the next tourist destination. From airplane tickets to hotel rooms and food as well as entrance fees to various attraction, expenditure for travelling can be seen as a luxury to some travellers. Thus, there might be:

H1: There is a significant relationship between travel expenditure and travel preference.

The Relationship between Travel Transportation and Travel Preferences

Several factors influences the relation between transportation and travel preferences which may include location, accessibility of public transportation and distance (Bartosiewicz & Pielesiak, 2019). Satisfaction on transportation has also proven to be essential in affecting attitudes and choices of tourist (DeVos, 2019). These studies have previously shown how transportation may become a significant influence of travel preferences of travellers. Hence, it is believed that:

H2: There is a significant relationship between travel transportation and travel preferences.

The Relationship between Social Media and Travel Preference

With millennial, social media is considered to be a basic necessity as about 67.4% of users in their 20s share information online (MCMC, 2018). Furthermore, about half of tourists are believe to be downloading travel applications to ease their trip every time they visit another country (Cham et al., 2016; Živković, Gajić, & Brdar, 2014). Moreover, social media is also useful for businesses to extend their promotional strategy to tourists. Therefore, it is said that:

H3: There is a significant relationship between social media and travel preference.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study acquired primary data through survey analysis via 320 self-administered questionnaires disseminated evenly amongst Malaysian and Thai millennial. The target respondents range from various demographic profile. All target respondents are currently university students studying in both public and private institutions in Malaysia and Thailand. University students whom are millennials are selected as they will contribute to the tourism industry once they obtain more spending power after obtaining jobs in the future. Questionnaires are distributed to respondents to understand their preferences while travelling to domestic as well as international destination.

Each questionnaire contains 43 questions distributed through: Section A for demographic profile of respondents including nationality, gender, age, religion, location and type of university, programme of study and average income level and sources; Section B for travel experiences to obtain travel frequency, destinations travelled in 2018, duration of trip and accommodation (Liu, Siguaw, & Enz, 2008); and Section C for travel preferences looking to how many trip(s), destination and accommodation they wishes to travel (Lim, Ramli, Yusof, & Cheah, 2015); Section D for travel expenditure including travel budget and spending activities (Baguisi et al., 2015); Section E for transportation obtaining information of choice of transportation (Shoham, Schrage, & van Eeden, 2004) and lastly Section F for social media looking into how social media might influence their travel behaviour and pattern (Bay, 2018).

RESULTS

There were a total of the 308 respondents consisting of 158 from Malaysia and 150 from Thailand with 71.4% female and 28.6% male respondents. Majority of the respondents (74.4%) are of the age of 22 to 25 years old which makes them fall under the millennial group and 85% of them are practicing Buddhism. 40.6% are students of public university while 59.4% are from private universities with a majority of 93.5% bachelor students. Majority of respondents (55.8% for Malaysia and 65% for Thailand) receives sources of money and allowance from their family. 79.70% of Malaysian respondents have visited Thailand while 88.7% of Thai respondents have travelled to Malaysia.

Based on the ANOVA test conducted, overall regression model statistic significantly predicts the outcome variable. The ANOVA test for both Malaysia and Thailand respondents both showed a P-value of less than 0.05, 0.013 and 0.000 respectively. Hence, the 3 independent variables used in this study are capable to foresee the travel preferences. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to verify the relationship of travel expenditure, travel transportation and social media in influencing travel preferences leading to travel behaviour and pattern. From Table 2 below, for Malaysian respondents, the R square is 0.068 indicating 6.8% variance of Malaysia respondents had been clarified by the independent variables while Table 3, for Thai respondents, R square is 0.307 showing 30.7% variance of Thailand respondents clarified by the independent variables.

Table 2: Malaysia Multiple Linear Regression

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std Error of the estimate
1	.260 ^a	.068	.050	8.25823

a. Predictors: (Constant) Social media, Transportation, Travel Expenditure

Table 3: Thailand Multiple Linear Regression

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std Error of the estimate
1	.554 ^a	.307	.293	7.06997

a. Predictors: (Constant) Social media, Transportation, Travel Expenditure

Based on their past travelling activities, 84% of Malaysian respondents and 95.6% of Thai respondents have travelled to international destination at least once in the year 2018. 97.5% of Malaysian tourist have experienced travelling at least once for domestic trips in the year 2018 while all respondents from Thailand have travelled at least once to domestic destination in 2018.

Majority of Malaysians, 46.8% and 57.60% preferred to be travelling about 1 to 2 times per year for both domestic and international trips respectively. Thai on the other hand, for domestic trips, 48% of respondents preferred to have about 3 to 4 trips annually while 66% of respondents preferred to have at least 1 to 2 international trips per year.

A majority of Malaysians respondents (42.4%) have an average income of RM1,501 to RM2,000 with of about 55.8% of Malaysians obtain sources of income from their family followed by 26.40% from part time jobs. Similarly, Thai respondents also has a majority of being supported by their family (65%) and part-time job (20.40%). Thai respondents' average income on the other hand has a majority of 40.70% with an average of 5,010 to 10,000 Baht which is equivalent to RM501 to RM1,000.

In relation to travel expenditure, for international trips, most of the Malaysian respondents (38.6%) spends around RM2,001 to RM3,000 lesser compared to Thai respondents (38.7%) who spends around 23,707 to 31,600 Baht equivalent to RM3,001 to RM4,000. For domestic trips, a significant number of both Malaysian and Thai respondents, 61.4% and 85.3% respectively spends less than RM1,000 or 7,900 Baht. Based on spending priorities, both Malaysian and Thai respondents had similar ranking with food and beverage as the most important choice followed by shopping and leisure, ticket and entrance fees, accommodation and transportation.

For travel transportation, both Malaysian and Thai respondents, 77.20% and 84.70% respectively choose airplane as the main mode of transportation to reach the destination of choice. Both countries agree that public transportation provides convenient services and rarely uses rental vehicle whilst travelling. Similarly, both also selected driving as mode of transportation for domestic travels. On the other hand, Malaysian respondents selected cost as the most important factor contributing to the selection of transportation while Thai respondents selected safety.

In relative to social media influences, 65.20% Malaysian and 67.30% Thai spends on average about 4 to 8 hours on social media daily. Both Malaysian and Thai respondents, 30.4% and 34.7% respectively chose social media as the second choice for source of information of

travelling, a close second to suggestions from friends and information from the internet being in third place. Overall, more Thai respondents compared to Malaysian respondents agreed that information were mostly obtained through means of the internet either through friends, social media or directly from the internet. Both also agree that the least choice of sources is from government tourism department. 39.30% Thai respondents selected Agoda as the main website used for arranging their travelling needs while 24.70% of Malaysian respondents selected TripAdvisor.

Additionally, both Malaysian and Thai agrees that currency fluctuation (82.90% and 80% respectively) and inflation (81.60% and 78% respectively) would have a significant impact on their travel preferences. The three hypotheses of this study were tested using the coefficient of independent variable to obtain the significance of travel expenditure, travel transportation and social media in influencing travel preferences. Results are as shown in Table 4 and Table 5 below.

Table 4: Coefficient of Independent Variable (Malaysia)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	T	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	28.410	20.012		1.420	.158
	Travel expenditure	.403	.200	.197	2.017	.045
	Travel transportation	.383	.230	.143	1.668	.097
	Social Media	-.182	.124	-.132	-1.462	.146

a. Dependent Variable: Travel preferences

From Table 4 above, only travel expenditure has a P-value of 0.045, which is less than 0.05 indicating a significant unique contribution to the influencing travel preferences. On the other hand, transportation and social media both have P-value of 0.097 and 0.146 respectively. Thus, these are not significant factors in influencing travel preferences for Malaysian.

Consequently, for Malaysian respondents, only H1 is accepted where there is a significant relationship between travel expenditure and travel preferences while H2 and H3 are both rejected as there is no significant relationship between transportation and social media and travel preferences.

Table 5: Coefficient of Independent Variable (Thailand)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	T	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	149.756	17.474		8.570	.000
	Travel expenditure	.236	.147	.112	1.613	.109
	Travel transportation	-1.358	.189	-.524	-7.196	.000
	Social Media	.815	.148	.396	5.492	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Travel preferences

In contrast to the Malaysian respondents, as shown in Table 5, transportation and social media have P-value less than 0.05 (0.000 each) indicating a significant unique contribution to

the travel preferences while travel expenditure with P-value of 0.109 are not significant to influencing travel preferences in Thailand.

Hence, for Thai respondents, H1 is rejected while H2 and H3 are both accepted indicating a significant relationship between transportation and social media and travel preferences.

DISCUSSIONS

The outcome of the study reflected that there is a significant relationship between travel expenditure and travel preferences for Malaysian millennial. This indicates that for Malaysians, expenses for travelling influences their travel preferences and decision making for their trips. The results concurred with previous studies conducted where it was found that young tourists are normally more concern with the spending they make while on a trip (Slabbert, Saayman, & Van Der Merwe, 2012). Most millennial tend to be focusing more on expenditure for food and beverage and will implement cost saving measures in ensuring the spend within their allocated budget (Lim et al., 2015). Similarly, as mentioned above, it is seen that 46.8% Malaysians ranked food and beverages as the highest importance putting it as their main priority when setting up a budget.

Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between transportation and travel preferences for Thai millennial. This shows that Thai has concerns about the mode of transformation to the destination as well as throughout the trip which contributes to their travel preferences and behaviour. Comparing between Malaysia and Thailand respondents, Thai are more concerned with the safety while Malaysians are concerned with cost when selecting mode of transportation. This is concurrent with the abovementioned where Malaysians preferences are influenced by expenditure. Driven by conditions in Thailand with the military overtaking the government, it has been imperative to Thai tourist to ensure their safety during any trips they engage in (Baguisi et al., 2015). Additionally, both countries agree that driving is the best choice of transportation for local destinations as supported by Bartosiewicz and Pielesiak (2019) indicating that car is the prevailing means of travelling.

In alignment with a study made by Chu and Luckanavanich (2018) it said that social media provides major influences to travel motivation for the people of Thailand which coincide with this study as there is a significant relationship between social media and travel preferences amongst the Thai respondents. Majority of the respondents selected Agoda and TripAdvisor as their preferred agencies which is also confirmed by prior studies reporting that search engines and social media provides an important platform to users by redirecting them to the travel agencies to help provide information to users (Tran, Phan, Nguyen, & Do, 2017).

MARKETING AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study was initiated to analyse the behaviour and preferences of millennial or young traveller in Malaysia and Thailand in understanding what influences them in selecting tourist destinations. It is important for businesses in tourism industry together with the Government to look into the preferences of future tourists planning to visit their country. Despite not having a substantial amount of disposable income, millennial are considered to be an important customers to businesses as they are both easily influenced and influential at the same time. Through activities of social media for example, many of university students are

now travelling around the world to explore places they see through their social media accounts. Holiday planning and trips are also done through the internet. Hence, companies should make use of the opportunities through these platforms in utilising them for their marketing tools and strategies.

A vital element of travel planning is transportation. Different mode of transportation provides different satisfaction to the tourists. Many tourist rely on public transportation when visiting a foreign company. It is essential for the government to ensure continuous improvements are made to the services and quality of transportation offered in their country as this may ease the trip and influence tourist to revisit the country in the future.

As seen through this study, these two elements are motivating Thai tourist hence it would be helpful for businesses in Malaysia to ensure that they are able to satisfy expectation of tourists especially from Thailand as they are one of the neighbouring countries around Malaysia as well as being one of the top contributors to Malaysia international tourist arrival. Social media platforms should be utilised alongside providing convenient and safe public transportation to attract tourist from Thailand and ultimately from other countries around the world.

Another factor to consider is the travel expenditure of tourists, especially young travellers as they are going on trips with limited resources. Special bundle packages should be provided by travel agencies to help tourist maximise their activities despite being on a budget. As it is an important factor for Malaysian travellers, business or facilities providers should ensure special prices given to local citizens when travelling for domestic trips. As seen from the results above, 100% of Thai respondents have travelled around their countries, however they are Malaysian university students (2.5%) who have not travelled at all to any local destination in Malaysia. Government and tourism business must look into the pricing strategy of their packages and attractions to ensure that Malaysians are interested in domestic travelling. This would then attract more Malaysians to not only travel overseas but also around Malaysia in support of Visit Malaysia 2020.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATION

The result of this study has verified that there is significant relationship between expenditure, transportation and social media and travel preferences amongst young travellers. This study hopes to help businesses engaging in tourism industry together with the Government to improve the industry as a whole and to continue in promoting their respective countries in ensuring a sustainable economic growth through tourism.

Future researchers are recommended to make studies that directly compare the behaviour and patterns amongst millennial and the older generation such as baby boomers and Gen X. Studies can also extend to other samples to help to understand the patterns and preferences of tourist of different regions or continents around the world.

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