Choice of overseas destinations of Thai tourists: Scale development and validation

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Key Words:

1.Overseas,
2.Destination Thai
3.Tourists

Abstract

This paper develops and validates the scale of choice of overseas destinations of Thai tourists using confirmatory factor analysis. The scale consists of eight factors namely, product natural, product man made, infrastructure at destination, other facilities at destination, opportunities for knowledge enhancement, food available at destination, beverages available at destination and motivation to travel. The scale would be useful for determining the attractiveness of a destination, comparing the attractiveness of different destinations and also finding the changes that may take place in the attractiveness of destinations over time

INTRODUCTION

International tourism has grown over the years. Table 1 shows the growth in the international tourists over time. It is expected that international tourist arrivals worldwide will reach 1.8 billion in the year 2030. The market share of emerging economies increased from 30% in 1980 to 47% in 2012, and is expected to reach 57% by 2030. The growth in the number of overseas destinations has also occurred alongside the growth in the number of international arrivals suggesting that there would be competition amongst destinations. Asia and the Pacific recorded the fastest growth across all UNWTO regions, with a 7% increase in international arrivals indicating an absolute increase of 16 million international arrivals (UNWTO, 2013). About 6.65 million foreign tourists arrived in India in the year 2012 resulting in an estimated foreign exchange earnings of about USD 17,000. However the change in the number of foreign tourist arrivals (FTA) in India has been very volatile over the last fifteen years. For the year 2013, the increase in FTAs was 2.6% over the previous year. Thus the number of FTA in India has not kept pace with the Asia and Pacific regions (Ministry of Tourism, 2013). This is a cause of concern for the Indian hospitality industry. It would be interesting to study how the destinations compete with each other for the share of international tourist arrivals. An understanding of how tourists choose their overseas destinations would be fundamental to the international

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destination marketers. A tool to understand this would be a scale of choice of overseas destinations. The review of extant literature reveals that a scale of choice of overseas destination does not exist. Neighboring countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka appear in the list of top ten countries of FTA but Thailand does not appear in the list (Ministry of Tourism, 2013). Since the first author comes from Thailand, it was decided that a scale of choice of overseas destinations of Thai tourists would be developed and validated. Validation suggests that the scale accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure (Babbie, 2004). In the current study, it would accurately reflect the choice of overseas destination of Thai tourists.

The paper is arranged as follows: The first part contains a brief literature review. The second part contains the research method and the third part contains the findings, conclusion and limitations.

Literature Review

(Crompton and Ankomah, 1993) in their paper 'choice set propositions in destination decisions' believe that choice is the central component of destination selection. The potential tourists develop a list of possible destination and on later consideration reduce then to probable alternatives to finally select one set that fully meets his set requirement. There are three stages to the formulation of choice. The choice is generally made on the basis of existing knowledge, guidance from tourist's literature and derivation. (Kozak and Rimmington, 1999) believed that choice destination have two dimensions- the primary dimension includes nature, culture, technology and

environment and second dimension has specific feature like hotels, transport, entertainment etc. When the two dimensions combine they create attributes that make a destination attractive. This idea has been countered by (Laws, 1995) who believed that tourists compare direct or indirect attributes like service quality attractions and then make choices based upon value. (Hong-bumm, 1998; Murphy et al, 2000; Pike, 2009) came to the conclusion that nature beauty, culture, and reasonable costs are as important as political stability, good service and good entertainment, all these attributes work together to make a spot, a tourist destination. During 30 years, many significant studies were done, to analyses the dimensions of tourist's destination choices as per tourist's perception. It was learnt that it is necessary to understand the motive of the tourists which may be to relax, enjoy good weather, to get entertainment, to forget routine problem, to be active or sportive etc. Studies were done to gauge expectations of the respondents, to examine choice of destination according to personal criteria and motive. A tourist destination has attributes of natural resources, infrastructures, superstructures, etc. A tourist destination is a tourism product which must be analysed on the basis of term like a).attraction b).facilities and d).accessibility. (Mclntosh and Goeldner, 1990;Jha, 1995) the fist term "attraction"- helps the flow of tourist to a place but the second term "facilities" is also important though it may not motivate a tourist but its existence is very important for tourism. The absence of facilities may deter a tourist from traveling there. The last attribute is the most important for without proper mode of transport a tourist will face difficulties to reach the chosen destination. There is also the time and costs factor. They also believed that personal and economic aspects are important in the choices of a place and talked of "Integration of Services". They said that tourism change within a destination help understand the process of change that tourists undergo. So tourists value change look at provision of service, perception of service, geographical factor and also impression and memories of the destination. They spoke of value change that have element of private initiative, public action and local population.

 (Uysal and Jurowski, 1994) and (You, et. al., 2000) looked at age, education level, gender, household size and income. The travel motivation has factors like rest and recuperation, family get together role obligation, discovery new place, study, conference, seminar, etc. The independent variables were set down: trip expenditure, length of stay, size of the travel party, mode of travel for respondent, age group of the respondent, education of the respondent, gender of respondent, household income of respondent, household

size of respondent, discovery of new place, get away from daily routine, meeting different people, time with family and friends, rest and recuperation and distance of travel. The researcher found that socio-demographic variable except age, played an important role in decision making, education household income were also significant factor in the decision to travel. The education showed more wanderlust than the others. The most interesting aspect of the study showed that trip characteristic and socio-demographic were important elements of choice of destination but the distance did not play the role of a motivation factor nor was it a de-motivating factor. So the study concluded that choice of destination is made by consumer after due consideration of expenditure, size of the party, and length of study. This study says that more light should be shed on the factor of trip characteristic socio-demographic and travel motivation by future researcher. (Bajs, 2011) looks at quality of accommodation, food, entertainment, infrastructure, transportation, hospitality, attraction and emotional appeal worked to give a strong impact on tourist's perception but other attributes like social values, reputation, and quality of shopping, destination did not create strong impact of perception. (Kaushik, 2010; Sharma, 2007 and Rani and Lodha, 2008) identified communication, objectivity, basic facilities, attraction, support service, distinctive local feature and psychological and physical environment. (Mechinda et. al., 2010) discussed natural resources, Heritage and Culture, Tourism infrastructure, Activities, Entertainment, Shopping, Quality, Hospitality, Destination Management and Environment, Location, Safety, Fair price, destination, Awareness and image. Thus many researchers have studied the various attributes that influence the choice of destination of tourists, but no study is seen on development of a scale of choice of overseas destination. Further, no work on the choice of Thai tourists is found in the extant literature. Thus a clear research gap exists and this paper tries to close this gap.

RSEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was limited in scope from two perspectives: product under study and geographical coverage. The product was overseas destination of Thai tourists and the geographical coverage was restricted to tourists from Thailand. The study happened to be an empirical one as the data was generated from primary sources; the data was analysed using quantitative methods. To develop a scale of choice of overseas destinations of Thai tourists, a pool of attributes that influence the choice of overseas destinations was created (Phadtare, 2008). The extant literature provided the attributes and these were compiled. This pool was then shown to two academicians from the area of

hospitality management for their inputs. A focus group discussion was also conducted in Thailand to add to the pool. Five Thai aspirant tourists and three Thai tourists discussed the attributes for about 45 minutes. Thus by the method of triangulation, the pool of attributes was finalized. The same are shown in table 2. A questionnaire was developed from this pool of attributes to serve as instrument for primary data collection (De Vellis, 2003). It was an undisguised, structured and closed ended. The questionnaire was divided into three parts: The first part contained the demographic details of the respondents, the second part contained the tourist behaviour and the third part contained the attributes compiled above. The attributes were to be rated by the respondents on a Likert scale of 1 – 7 with 1 denoting the lowest and 7 denoting the highest performance. The questionnaire used words from common usage and questions moved from one theme to the other in an orderly fashion. This questionnaire was pilot tested with 10 respondents for ease of understanding, completeness, length of questionnaire, time required to fill the questionnaire, repetition of questions etc. Only a few minor changes were required and the same was done. This questionnaire was then translated into Thai language with the help of two translators as the same was to be administered in Thailand and most Thai nationals do not understand English. The questionnaire in Thai language was re-translated into English with the help of another pair of translators to make sure the Thai translation was done correctly. The Thai translation was found correct. The scale of choice of overseas destinations of Thai tourists was hypothesized as shown in table 2. All attributes as identified by the method of triangulation were included in the hypothesized scale and thus the scale is likely to be strong and complete.

It was further hypothesized that there will be no cross-loading of attributes under different factors. Questionnaire was then administered personally to the Thai respondents who consisted of people who have already visited some overseas destination and those who desired to do so shortly. These were selected by the method of snowballing as the frame of reference could not be prepared (Trochim, 2003). A sample size of 300 is just acceptable and 500 is good (Comrey, 1973). We could not collect data from 500

Table 1. Attributes compiled from extant literature, academics and focus group discussion

SI. No.	Scale	Authors
1.	Monuments & Cultural Places	Ana, Cristinel and Nicoleta, 2010
		Brey; Klenosky;Morrrison, 2008
		Bartoluci, 2010
		Hyubers, 2003
		Kamenidou,Mamalis,andPriporas,2009
		Jonsson and Devonish, 2010
		Lo´pez-Toroa, D´az-Mun˜oza and Pe´rez-Morenob,2010
2.	Religious Places	Brey; Klenosky;Morrrison, 2008
	Adventure	Brey; Klenosky;Morrrison, 200
		Crompton 1979
		Crysat Ip and Law,2010
		Park, Tussyadiah, Mazanec and Fesenmaier, 2010
3.	Safety	Brey; Klenosky;Morrrison, 2008
	Fun	Brey; Klenosky;Morrrison, 2008
		Bajs, 2011
		Gross, Brien and Brown, 2007
4.	Adventure sports	Park, Tussyadiah, Mazanec and Fesenmaier, 2010
		Witchu & Kullada,2008

5.	Ease of payment procedures	Bajs, 2011 Das, Mohapatra, Sharma and Sarkar,2007 Lo´pez-Toroa, Ɖ´az-Mun~oza and Pe´rez-Morenob,2010
6.	Easy currency exchange	Bajs, 2011 Das, Mohapatra, Sharma and Sarkar,2007 Mechinda, Serirat, Popaijit,Lertwannawit and Anuwichanont,2010
7.	Easy visa procedures	Bajs, 2011
8.	Easy communication service	Bajs, 2011 Das, Mohapatra, Sharma and Sarkar,2007 Mechinda, Serirat, Popaijit,Lertwannawit and Anuwichanont,2010
9.	Exploring a new place	Bajs, 2011 Yoopetch, 2011
10.	Meeting interesting people	Yoopetch, 2011
11.	Cost	Bajs, 2011 Mechinda, Serirat, Popaijit,Lertwannawit and Anuwichanont,2010
12.	Taste	Bajs, 2011 Mechinda, Serirat, Popaijit,Lertwannawit and Anuwichanont,2010
13.	Salty	Bajs, 2011 Das, Mohapatra, Sharma and Sarkar,2007 Lo´pez-Toroa, Ɖ´az-Mun~oza and Pe´rez-Morenob,2010 Mechinda, Serirat, Popaijit,Lertwannawit and Anuwichanont,2010
14.	Alcoholic	Bajs, 2011 Gross, Brien and Brown, 2007 Lo´pez-Toroa, Ɖ´az-Mun~oza and Pe´rez-Morenob,2010
15.	Non-Alcoholic	Bajs, 2011 Gross, Brien and Brown, 2007 Lo´pez-Toroa, Ɖ´az-Mun~oza and Pe´rez-Morenob,2010
16.	Education	Crompton 1979 Witchu & Kullada,2008
17.	Business	Witchu & Kullada,2008
18.	Visit relatives	Witchu & Kullada,2008 LaModia,Snell and Bhat,2009
19.	Sport activities	Ana, Cristinel and Nicoleta, 2010 Bajs, 2011 Hyubers, 2003 Louviere and Timmermans, 1992 Lo´pez-Toroa, Ɖ´az-Mun~oza and Pe´rez-Morenob,2010 Witchu & Kullada,2008

Table 2. Hypothesized scale of choice of overseas destinations of Thai tourists

Sr No.	Factor	Attributes that will converge under the factor
1	Product natural	Beauty, nature & beaches, monuments & mpots of cultural importance, religious place, weather, historical monuments and adventure spots.
2	Product manmade	Power availability, reasonable cost of food & beverages, safety, novelty, excitement, clean toilets facilities, fun, good accommodation, roads, travel package, outdoor facilities, sports activities, entertainment, casino, clubs, night life, leisure activities & shopping facilities.
3	Price of destination	Air fares road transport fares rail fares living cost, food cost, drink cost, local commuting fare, entry tax, cost of souvenirs, cost of tourist facilities, cost of merchandise, entertainment.
4	Infrastructure of destination	Easy communication service, easy net-connectivity, easy visa procedures, easy currency exchange, availability of hotels / stay, law and order, availability of private and public transport, easy of payment, availability of different modes of transport, frequency of transport, cost of transport, connectivity of places of travel.
5	Other facilities at destination	Shopping facilities, centre of information, accommodation facilities, guide facilities, exchange of currency, electronic communication.
6	Opportunities for knowledge enhancement	Increasing knowledge, discovering new culture and lifestyle, enriching self intellectually, exploring a new place, meeting interesting people.
7	Availability of food at destination	Variety, hygiene, cost, taste, spicy, salty, sweet.
8	Availability of beverages at destination	Alcoholic, non-alcoholic, hygiene, cost, taste.
9	Motivation to visit the destination	Education, business, visit relatives, rest, shopping, curiosity of festivals.

respondents in Thailand due to paucity of time and difficulty in approaching them. We could collect data from 400 respondents. These respondents represented eight demographic attributes namely: gender, age, marital status, profession, income, education, location and number of overseas trips made by the respondents. The data was put through the KMO test and Bartlett's test of Sphericity. SPSS 15 package was used for the purpose. The data passed both the tests. Thereafter confirmatory factor analysis was used to develop and validate the scale (Dowlatshahi and Cao, 2006). AMOS 7 package was used for the purpose. The scale was then put to reliability and validity checks. The scale passed the reliability test as well as the convergent and discriminant validity tests. Composite reliability and average variance explained were obtained to see if the scale passes the convergent reliability. Discriminant validity was tested using the difference in the Chi square values with constraint and Chi square free values.

Findings

.KMO and Bartlett's test of Sphericity

Table 3 shows the results of KMO and Bartlett's test of Sphericity. Since KMO figures exceed 0.5, and significance value equals 0, data is adequate and suitable for analysis of factors. Although the price of destination was deleted as a result of pilot testing, cost as an attribute was included in three factors namely infrastructure, food and beverages. Ultimately, cost was retained under only one factor namely food. This may be due to following reasons. Thai tourists may be very touchy to talk on the issue of cost and would not like to be identified as cost-sensitive tourists. Secondly, for tourists who have not visited overseas destination, international travel is an aspiration and in such case cost does not become very important. In case of tourists who have travelled to overseas destination earlier, may perceive India as a low cost destination as compared to other destinations. However these possibilities need to be further investigated.

Scale for choice of overseas destination of Thai tourists

Scale consisting of eight factors namely emerged. These factors were product natural, product man made, infrastructure at destination, other facilities at destination, opportunities for knowledge enhancement, food available at destination, beverages available at destination and motivation to travel. Each factor shows good reliability and convergent and discrininant validity. Monument & cultural, religious places and adventure converged under product natural factor. Safety, fun and sport activities converged

under product man made factor. Ease of payment, easy currency, easy visa, ease of communication converged under infrastructure at destination factor. Guide facilities and accommodation converged under other facilities at destination factor. Exploring a new place and meeting interesting people converged under knowledge enhancement opportunities at destination factor. Cost, taste and salty attributes converged under food available at destination factor. Alcoholic and non-alcoholic converged under beverages available at destination. Business, visit relatives and education converged under motivation provided by destination.

Reliability

The factor is considered reliable if the Cronbach alpha exceeds 0.7. As the same is found to exceed 0.7 in each of the eight factors, the same pass the reliability test. Table 4 shows the Cronbach alpha value for eight factors. The scale that passed the reliability and validity tests is shown in figure 1.

Convergent and discriminant validity

The factors were put to convergent and discriminant validity tests. Variance explained in case of seven factors was found to be more than 0.7. In case of Infrastructure at Destination factor, the same was found to be 0.4. However this factor is retained as Cronbach alpha and component reliability were found to be more than 0.7. The variance explained and component reliability in case of each factor exceeded 0.7. Hence the factors demonstrated convergent validity (Kholoud 2009; Yusoff, 2011). Table 5 shows the detailed figures. Discriminant validity can be ascertained by the difference between the Chi square with constraint value and Chi square free value. If this figure is greater than zero, discriminant validity is established (Zait and Bertea, 2011). Table 6 shows the discriminant validity.

Model fit

Factors demonstrated model fit as CMIN /df was less than 5 in case of each factor. The figures are shown in Table 7.

Conclusions and direction for future research

This study contributes to the theory of choice of destinations by providing a scale of choice of overseas destinations of Thai tourists. Scale of choice of overseas destinations of Thai tourists consists of eight factors. These factors were product natural, product man made, infrastructure at destination, other facilities at destination, opportunities for knowledge enhancement, food available at destination, beverages available at destination and motivation to travel. This scale would be useful for determining the attractiveness of a destination, comparing

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity

Sl No	Factors	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity			Total Variance Explained
			Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig	Cumulative %
1	Product Natural	0.591	380.196	3	0	66.753
2	Product Manmade	0.609	1367.914	3	0	78.869
3	Infrastructure of Destination	0.741	288.609	6	0	53.964
4	Other Facilities at Destination	0.5	157.57	1	0	78.603
5	Knowledge Enhancement Opportunities of Destination	0.5	145.295	1	0	77.666
6	Food Available at Destination	0.671	698.809	3	0	78.818
7	Beverages Available at Destination	0.5	179.338	1	0	80.129
8	Motivation of Tourist	0.697	373.839	3	0	71.076

Table 4. Cronbach alpha values of factors

Factors	Cronbach alpha
Product natural	0.738
Product manmade	0.854
Infrastructure at destination	0.711
Other facilities at destination	0.726
Knowledge enhancement opportunities	0.711
Food available at destination	0.837
Beverages available at destination	0.75
Motivation of travel of tourist	0.796

the attractiveness of different destinations and also finding the changes that may take place in the attractiveness of destination over time. Future study may take place in the area of development of a generic scale on the choice of overseas destination using a more rigorous methodology consisting of both exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis.

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Table 5. Convergent validity

	ProN	ProM	Infra	Otfac	Knen	Food	Bev	Mot
Pro3	0.426							
Pro1	0.755							
Pro12	0.971							
Pro13		0.521						
Pro9		0.999						
Pro19		0.978						
Infa7			0.706					
Infa4			0.618					
Infa3			0.646					
Infa1			0.516					
Otfac4				0.595				
Otfac3				0.962				
Knen5					1.042			
Knen4					0.531			
Food3						0.883		
Food6						0.96		
Food7						0.645		
Bev1							0.577	
Bev 2							1.044	
Mot 5								0.661
Mot 3								0.806
Mot 2								0.792
VE	0.565	0.742	0.4	0.64	0.684	0.706	0.711	0.571
α	0.738	0.804	0.711	R= 0.572	R= 0.553	0.842	R= 0.603	0.796
CR	0.801	0.872	0.72	0.771	0.796	0.856	0.82	0.804

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Table 6. Discriminant validity

Sl No.				Chi square with constraint			Chi square free			Difference
				χ^2	Df	p	χ^2	df	p	
1	ProN	⇦>	ProM	882.305	9	0	804.539	8	0	77.766
2	ProN	⇦>	Infra	663.412	14	0	601.389	13	0	62.023
3	ProN	<-->	Otfac	41.029	6	0	25.74	5	0	15.289
4	ProN	<-->	Knen	39.134	6	0	28.43	5	0	10.704
5	ProN	<-->	Food	635.983	9	0	104.931	8	0	531.052
6	ProN	<-->	Bev	51.68	6	0	32.952	5	0	18.728
7	ProN	<-->	Mot	11.498	9	0.243	11.198	8	0.191	0.3
8	ProM	<-->	Infra	2780.099	14	0	738.047	13	0	2042.052
9	ProM	<-->	Otfac	23.147	6	0.001	17.635	5	0.003	5.512
10	ProM	<-->	Knen	67.688	6	0	48.268	5	0	19.42
11	ProM	<-->	Food	221.952	9	0	166.064	8	0	55.888
12	ProM	<-->	Bev	86.919	6	0	51.102	5	0	35.817
13	ProM	<-->	Mot	17.14	9	0.047	16.048	8	0.042	1.092
14	Infra	<-->	Otfac	91.756	10	0	73.706	9	0	18.05
15	Infra	<-->	Knen	604.104	10	0	377.523	9	0	226.581
16	Infra	<-->	Food	150.787	14	0	112.384	13	0	38.403
17	Infra	<-->	Bev	893.281	10	0	406.829	9	0	486.452
18	Infra	<-->	Mot	14.782	14	0.393	14.331	13	0.351	0.451
19	Otfac	<-->	Knen	37.212	4	0	16.734	3	0.001	20.478
20	Otfac	<-->	Food	59.628	6	0	52.507	5	0	7.121
21	Otfac	<-->	Bev	41.759	4	0	18.023	3	0	23.736
22	Otfac	<-->	Mot	3.593	6	0.732	3.515	5	0.621	0.078
23	Knen	<-->	Food	32.212	6	0	27.526	5	0	4.686
24	Knen	<-->	Bev	893.468	4	0	398.553	3	0	494.915
25	Knen	<-->	Mot	12.377	6	0.054	11.27	5	0.046	1.107
26	Food	<-->	Bev	60.786	6	0	54.807	5	0	5.979
27	Food	<-->	Mot	19.069	9	0.025	18.734	8	0.016	0.335
28	Bev	<-->	Mot	6.891	6	0.331	6.518	5	0.259	0.373

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Figure 1.

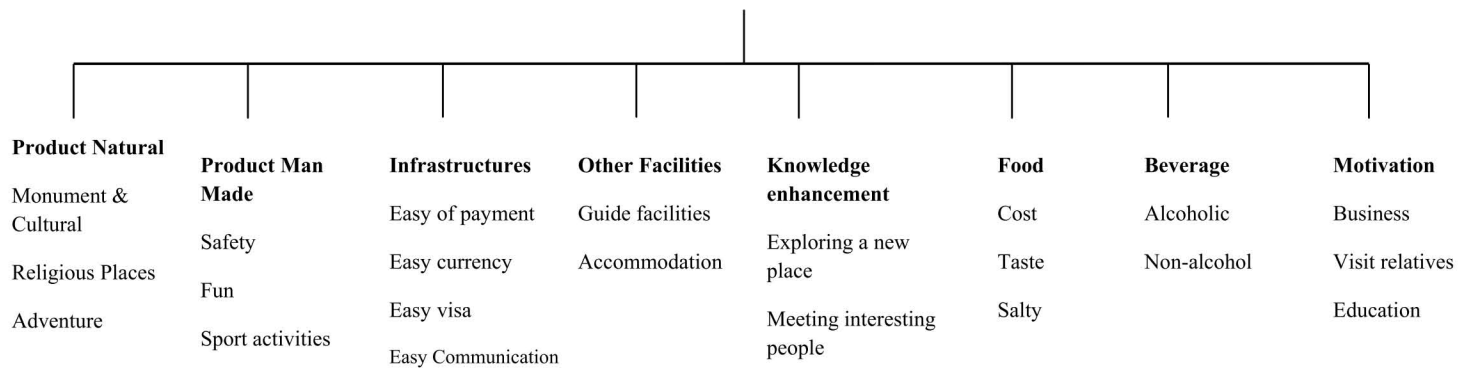**Scale of choice of overseas destination of Thai tourist**

Product Natural	Product Man Made	Infrastructures	Other Facilities	Knowledge enhancement	Food	Beverage	Motivation
Monument & Cultural	Safety	Easy of payment	Guide facilities	Exploring a new place	Cost	Alcoholic	Business
Religious Places	Fun	Easy currency	Accommodation	Meeting interesting people	Taste	Non-alcohol	Visit relatives
Adventure	Sport activities	Easy visa			Salty		Education
		Easy Communication					

Table 7. Model fit values

Factor	CMIN/Df < 5.0 is acceptable	Model fit	CFI
Product Natural	0	Fit	1.0
Product Manmade	0	Fit	1.0
Infrastructure available at destination	2.276	Fit	0.991
Other facilities available at destination	0	Fit	1.0
Knowledge enhancement opportunities at destination	0	Fit	1.0
Food available at destination	0	Fit	1.0
Beverages available at destination	0	Fit	1.0
Motivation provided by destination	0.01	Fit	1.0

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