

ABSTRACT

In tourism, the differences in culture can draw the attention of international tourists to visit a destination. Every year during their visits to Thailand, many international tourists become curious and fascinated by Thai ways of living because of Thailand's uniqueness and difference from others, while at the same time these international tourists may also feel surprised or even shocked. Hence, this research was conducted for the primary objectives; to understand the international tourists' perception of culture shock in Bangkok, Thailand. This research also investigates the culture shock perception in Thailand based on tourists' trip characteristics. The length of stay, frequency of travel to Thailand, type of tourists and type of travel arrangement were used to test hypotheses in this research.

A survey questionnaire along with non-probability convenience sampling was used as the research instrument and research technique in this study. The pilot study was conducted on 30-31 July, 2010 around streets of Bangkok city in order to find what surprised tourists on their visit to Thailand. A total of 384 international tourists filled the questionnaire to achieve the research objectives. The collection period of data was from 10-20 August, 2010. One-way ANOVA and t-test were used to analyze the data.

The results from the Hypotheses testing showed that there are significant differences in international tourists' perception on culture shock in Thailand with regard to length of stay, frequency of overseas travel, type of tourists and type of travel arrangement. The research found that the most of international tourists curious in Thai ways of living. The top-five foreign tourists' feeling of shock in Thailand in a order as (1) Bangkok ('Krung Thep' in Thai) has the longest name of the place in the world; (2) in Thailand, Coco Cola is poured into a plastic bag with a straw from a street vendor and just carry it; (3) even in a heavy traffic

jam, Thais do not get stressed as Westerners; (4) a woman forbidden to touch a monk; and (5) people do not concern much about your sexual orientation. The research findings established that tourists' perception and their trip characteristics toward the intensity of feeling shock will depend on adaptation, the tourists who frequently visited Thailand and tourists who stayed a longer duration can cope with new culture better than those who visited first time and visited for a short duration. The tourist's personality type does influence on perception of culture. The visitors who have characteristic to accept and assimilate easily to the hosts' culture, they will achieve to cope the new experience and cross over the stage of shock. This research suggests the way for international tourists to deal with culture shock in any situation when they visit Thailand, they should prepare information about Thai ways of living before they visited and they should know what they should do and should not do while visit Thailand.

Keyword: Culture shock, length of stay, frequency of overseas travel, type of tourists, type of travel arrangement

