# ABSTRACT


The objective of this study is to examine the residents' attitude towards tourism in Thailand. The resident attitude is studied in terms of the perception of the economic, social and environment impacts of tourism industry, and its correlation with the socio-demographic factors of the residents.

The research framework consists of two parts: the social & demographic backgrounds of the residents and the perceived impacts of tourism. The **perceived impacts** are measured in terms of **overall impact** (in terms of a comparison of overall benefit and cost in the region and the country), **economic impact** (including investment and spending, standard of living, increase in price, benefit to the people in the region and job opportunities), **social impact** (including value experience, recreation facilities, traditional culture and life style and quality of life), and **environment impact** (including heritage preservation & resource conservation, public facilities, harmony of nature, crowdedness and pollution). The **socio-demographic factors** are measured in terms of age, gender, education, household income, frequency of contact, participation in tourism policy making, occupation status, birthplace, length of residence and economic dependence on tourism industry.

The data were collected by 400 questionaires in 4 regions which are most involed in tourism in Thailand: Bangkok (200), Chiang Mai (100), Hua-Hin (50) and Pattaya (50). The non-propbabilty sampling method is used. The points for data collection include Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), TAT fair at MuangThong Thani, Bangkok International Airport, Central Ratchada Praram 3 department store, Assumption University in **Bangkok**; Wat Prathad Doi Suthep, Puping Palace, Night Bazaar , Chaing Mai International Airport and Chiang Mai University in **Chiang Mai**, Hua-Hin beach, tourist police station, bank and Chatchai market in **Hua-Hin**, and Jomthien beach, bank, post-office and Big C department Store in **Pattaya**.

The perceived impacts are measured with the 5 point **Likert scale** (with 1 means strongly agree to 5 means strongly disagree) in the questionnaire. The respondent would give their opinions on the statements in the questionnaire which describe the impacts of tourism positively. Hence the lower average score indicates more positive attitude.

The **one-sample t-test** is used to gauge if the residents have a positive attitude toward tourism development in terms of economic, social, environment and overall impacts. **Pearson product moment correlation** is used to test the correlation between the attitude and the socio-demographic factors. Moreover, the **independent sample t-test** is used to compare the attitudes of residents who are or are not dependent on tourism industry, while the **one-way ANOVA** is used to compare the attitudes of residents with different occupation status

The one sample t-test shows that Thai residents have significant positive attitude towards tourism, (mean = 2.32 in terms of impacts on the region and mean = 2.24 in terms of impacts on the nation). Breaking down into economic, social and environment impacts, Thai residents have most positive attitude towards economic impact (mean = 2.084), which is followed by environmental impact (mean = 2.29) and social impact (mean = 2.752). There is no significant difference among the 4 regions.

The independent sample t-test shows no significant difference between residents who work in tourism-related industry and those who do not, except one variable: the value experience. The first group seems enjoy more from the experience of meeting the tourist from all over the world. The same test also shows no significant difference between residents who

have a member in the family working in tourism-related industry and those who do not, except one variable: the price effect. The group without a family member working in the tourism related industry is more likely to blame tourism for increasing price.

The ANOVA test shows a significant difference among occupation groups in two variables: "benefit to the people in the region" and " recreation facilities". For example, the business owners have a more positive attitude towards tourism in perceiving that tourism increase recreation facilities.

The correlation shows finds significant correlation between the eight socio-demographic factors and the perceptions on certain impact variables. In terms of **place of birth,** the residents who were born in the same place appreciate more for the increasing "recreation facilities" brought with by tourism. In term of the **length of residence,** the longer a respondent has lived in a community, the more negative perception he would have on the impacts of tourism on "quality of life"

The correlation between **gender, age,** and perceived impacts is, however, more complicated. The younger people are more critical on tourism in its impacts on "the benefit to the people in the region", "recreation facilities ", "traditional culture", but more sympathetic to tourism its role on "heritage preservation & resource conservation" . The male respondent are more positive on tourism in areas like "investment and spending "and "recreation facilities", but are more negative in areas " job opportunities ", "benefit to the people", "lives style "and "unpleasant crowdedness ".

In terms of **education background,** people with higher qualification are more critical to tourism on their contribution towards the "standard of living "and "public facilities", possibly due to there higher expectation .In term of **household income**, people with higher household income are also more critical on tourism in its impacts on "job opportunities", "investment and spending ", "life style" ,"quality of live", "heritage preservation & resource conservation" and "public facilities" with an only exception on recreation facilities .

The last two socio-demographic variables measure the respondent's involvement in tourism: the **participation of policy making** and **frequency of contact** with foreign tourist the result show that people with more participation would have a more positive attitude in terms of "investment and spending", "stand of living", "job opportunities "and "public facilities", while people with more frequent contact would have a more positive attitude in term of "job opportunities" and "recreation facilities".

To conclude, Thai residents show an overall more positive attitude toward tourism as compared with those of other countries reported in the literature. This might be explained by the nature of hospitality an tolerance of Thai people as well as the direct and indirect economic benefit tourism brought with especially to the low income groups . It is interesting to note a more critical attitude among the better educated and higher income groups, which may have a higher expectation, be more sensitive towards the negative impacts of tourism and less dependent economically on tourist. However, as reported above, the government nurture a more tourism friendly attitude by increasing the local participation in tourism policy making as well as the direct contacts with foreign tourists .