

## **ABSTRACT**

The primary objectives of this study are: to describe travel benefits of Japanese tourists who travel for pleasure; to identify and profile benefits segments of Japanese tourists; to examine the significant differences in demographic variables and trip-related characteristics among the segments based on benefits sought; and to provide recommendations for public and private travel/tourism organizations interested in the Japanese tourist market.

This study focused on the benefits sought by Japanese tourists who traveled for pleasure and to identify distinct segments of Japanese tourists. Data were collected from 409 Japanese tourists aged 20 years and older. A questionnaire of 30 benefits sought items, demographic variables, and trip-related characteristics was used.

Factor analysis was used to reduce the data into benefits factors. Based on an outcome of six benefits factors, cluster analysis was employed to identify similar types of respondents. Respondents were successfully divided into three groups based on benefits sought from their travel to Thailand. The Safety/Family seekers, Entertainment seekers, and Explorer/Cultural seekers represented 22%, 38%, and 40% of the respondents, respectively. The three benefits segments had significant differences in age, marital status, income, education, occupation, and travel companion.

Safety/Family seekers consisted of middle-aged tourists who were married with high annual income. They attached a great deal of importance to a peaceful vacation. They enjoyed being together with family and doing outdoor activities.

Entertainment seekers appreciated to enjoy their leisure time with entertaining activities. These tourists were generally young and single with an average income.

Explorer/Cultural seekers placed high value on the history and culture of the destination. In addition, they enjoyed seeing, experiencing, and learning new things. They were older and married with less annual income.

Based on the results, researcher recommends that image of security must be strongly pursued, as it was the most important benefits sought by Japanese tourists. In addition, the positioning message that caters to the benefits each market segment seeks should be properly designed to attract them. The source of information or media used to reach each segment effectively should also be in considered. The future research should study the tourists from other cultural backgrounds such as Western tourist market.

