

## **Abstract**

Tourism is one of the largest and most dynamic industries in the world. Demand of tourism and recreation of college students have increased remarkably over the past years.

The objective of this study is to investigate factors affecting vacation destination choice decisions in the mind of college students at Assumption University in Thailand. It identifies pull factors and compares important factors among different demographic and travel characteristics groups of students.

There are two hypotheses, firstly, there are differences on pull factors when college students choose vacation destination among different demographic groups, in terms of age, gender, nationality, and education; secondly, there are differences on pull factors when college students choose vacation destination among different travel characteristics groups, in terms of main source of finance, frequency of travel, length of trip, and travel group size.

A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to students who are currently studying at Assumption University in Thailand which include Thai students and international students alike. Factor Analysis, Descriptive Statistics, Independent Sample T-test, and ANOVA are the data analysis techniques applied in this research.

The results suggest that college students are mostly concerned with the accessibility & safety, comfort & hospitality, hygiene & culture, personal & historical link, and nature link.

This study indicates that different students demographic groups have differences on pull factors, with the exception of gender. Students who are under 22 years of age are

more concerned about accessibility & safety, and students who over 22 years of age are mostly concerned about comfort & hospitality and nature link. Thai students were concerned about nature link, and graduate students were concerned about comfort & hospitality and nature link.

This research also points out that different travel characteristics groups have differences on pull factors, excluding main source of finance groups. Students who have taken one journey abroad or more than one journey are more concerned with comfort & hospitality and personal & historical link. Students who stayed at their end destination for 1-3 days are concerned with comfort & hospitality, and students who travel with groups of over five people preferred hygiene & culture and nature link.

Based on the findings, the researcher suggests that tour operators should pay more attention to the wants and needs of college students. In addition tourist programs and products should be more individually customized as to the characteristics of the target market. Destination promoters and developers should consider this criterion as they try to appeal to their future customers, as this is an important segment in the tourism industry.