

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to understand the influence of political situation on the perceptions of Thailand as a tourism destination. The study is conducted from the perspective of Chinese tourists. The research is based on the responses provided to 400 questionnaires for Chinese tourists at Survannabumi International airport during December, 2010-January, 2011. The data were analyzed using Pearson's Correlations and Independent T-test.

The findings indicate that the perception of Thailand as a destination attract more Chinese tourists to visit. When Chinese tourists travel, perceptions of risk, safety and travel experience influences their travel decision. The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that there is a relationship both in the image of Thailand as a destination as well as Chinese tourists perception of Thai people and the intention to revisit Thailand within next two years. Thus, a positive view of Chinese tourists toward Thailand as an amazing tourist destination positively reinforces their future plans visits to Thailand. Although political situation affected Thailand's tourism, yet that did not dampen the Chinese tourists' enthusiasm to travel to Thailand. On the other hand, political situation in Thailand was not found to be related to both views towards Thai people as well as Thailand as a tourist destination.

Based on the findings it is recommended that Tourism Authority of Thailand should aggressively promote safe attractions such as nightlife entertainment, variety

of accommodation, variety of cultural and historical sight and excellent beaches in Thailand to Chinese tourists. It was found that for first time visit to Thailand, Chinese tourists related Thailand lower, even though positive, as compared to repeat Chinese tourists. The Thai government should increase numbers of guards, beach guards and trained volunteers deployed at recreational business district areas and beach destination along with more frequent patrols, especially along secluded destination (such as national parks) popular with Chinese tourists. TAT should vigorously sponsor the Chinese film and cinema production projects in Thailand to let Chinese people know Thailand as a very friendly country with beautiful scenery. This will help offset some of the political turmoil described in the media and lessen of impact negative, amongst Chinese in selecting Thailand as a tourist destination.

Keywords: Information media, Political, Perception of Thailand, Tourism, Chinese tourist