This research aims to study Tourist Consumer Behavior, Tourism Market Segmentation, and Tourism Product Positioning in Chainat Province, Thailand. The results show that attitude toward destination, behavioral intention, and destination equity have strong influences on tourist consumer behavior. In addition, Chainat province is strong in religious and historical tourism as well as man-made attractions, when compared to 4 neighboring provinces.

INTRODUCTION

Chainat province is one of 76 provinces in Thailand and is located in the central region, 194 kilometers (120 miles) from Bangkok. This province has a long and interesting history, highlighted by a number of temples built in the Ayudhaya era. The area has 3 main rivers which support abundant agricultural products. The total revenue the province received from domestic tourists increased from THB182 million (USD5.4 million) in 2005 to THB195 million (USD5.7 million) in 2006. Revenue from foreign tourists is only a small proportion of the total when compared to domestic tourists: only THB1 million in 2005, a figure which decreased to THB.88 million in 2006. As indicated above, this work aims to study, through quantitative analysis techniques, tourist consumer behavior, behavioral intention, attitude toward destination, needs/interest toward destination, destination equity, and perception of marketing communication in Chainat province. Tourism marketing segmentation is also included in this study. Furthermore, qualitative analysis has been employed by using focus-group techniques to study tourism product positioning and by comparing Chainat with 4 neighboring provinces.

The research objectives are

1. To study the impact of independent variables (attitude toward destination, needs/interest toward destination, perception of marketing communication, destination equity, and behavioral intention) on the dependent variable (tourist consumer behavior).

2. To identify Chainat tourism market segmentation through quantitative analysis.

3. To identify Chainat tourism product positioning is found by using qualitative analysis techniques.
LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

McColl et al. (1994, p.116) define consumer behavior as ‘the actions a person takes towards purchasing and using products and services, including the decision-making process that precedes and determines the actions’. From this statement, it is possible to say that actions carried out by tourists are very important for development of the tourism industry. Poon (1994) concludes that tourists are the products of changing population demographics and are more experienced, flexible, and independent-minded. Tourists have changed values and lifestyles, which affect tourist demand. Asian people are now looking for value-added holidays and prefer an urban experience, while American tourists look for cultural and educational values (Swarbrooke and Horner, 1999). Kotler (1999) states that globalization has changed tourist consumer behavior as it has the capacity to create impacts on 1) cultural criteria (culture, subculture, social class), 2) social criteria (reference groups, family, roles, and status), 3) personal criteria (age and life cycle stage, occupation, economic circumstances, lifestyle, personality and self-concept), and 4) psychological criteria (motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitudes). Ajzen and Fishbein (1991) stated that a person’s behavior is determined by his/her intention to perform the behavior. This intention is a function of his/her attitude toward the behavior and his/her subjective norm. The best predictor of behavior is intention. Intention is the cognitive representation of a person’s readiness to perform a given behavior, and it is considered to be the immediate antecedent of behavior. According to the above statement, attitudes toward tourism, behavioral intention, perception on marketing communication, and destination equity are the important factors driving tourist consumer behavior.

Conceptual Framework

This section provides the set of hypotheses for testing the determination of tourist consumer behavior as follows:

H1. There is a positive relationship between attitude toward destination and tourist consumer behavior.
H2. There is a positive relationship between needs/interest toward destination and tourist consumer behavior.
H3. There is a positive relationship between destination equity and tourist consumer behavior.
H4. There is a positive relationship between perception of marketing communication and tourist consumer behavior.
H5. There is a positive relationship between behavioral intention and tourist consumer behavior.

METHODODOLOGY

Sample and data collection
This study does not include international tourists because the number of international tourists is less than 1 percent of total tourists (984 of 242,131 tourists, www.tat.or.th). The total sample size is 400 domestic tourists. The sampling method is purposive in 5
attractions in Chainat province. These include the Chai Nat Bird Park, the Chao Phraya dam, the harbor, the Wat Pak Klong Makham Thao, and Thammamun Worawihan Temple. Quota sampling was employed for each attraction; therefore, 80 tourists were interviewed at each site. Convenience sampling was applied in selecting the sample size of each attraction.

Qualitative analysis, 30 stakeholders were selected from entrepreneurs, government officers, community leaders, and tourists. The focus-group technique was employed in this study. The unstructured interview was also applied in this analysis.

**Measurement and data analysis**
All measurement items of each construct and its Cronbach alpha level are summarized in Table 1. All measures achieved Cronbach alpha level beyond the recommend level of 0.60 passing the minimum requirement.

**FINDINGS**

**Hypotheses Testing**
Multiple regression analysis is employed for the quantitative analysis. The result indicates that attitude toward destination, destination equity, and behavioral intention have a strong impact on tourist consumer behavior, which supports H1, H2, and H3. The equation is:

\[
\text{Tourist consumer behavior} = .277^{**} \text{behavioral intention} + .149^{**} \text{attitude toward destination} + .113^{**} \text{destination equity}
\]

\[
\text{Adjusted } R^2 = .319, \text{** indicates statistical significance at .01 level.}
\]

**Chainat Tourism Market Segmentation**
This study employs two-step cluster analysis by using rational motivation, emotional motivation, and destination equity of all three dimension factors to determine the targeted group and the subordinate group for travel to Chainat province. The result divides tourists into three groups. The first group is called Chainat lovers (130 tourists), due to the highest mean score compared to other groups. The second group is called Chainat pending (210 tourists) and it received the lowest mean score. The last group is called Chainat fond (60 tourists) of which the mean score is on a moderate level compared to the other groups.

Based on one-way ANOVA with LSD test, tourism market segmentation can be divided into two groups: (1) Chainat lover and (2) Chainat pending. The Chainat lover group includes the first and third groups because the mean score is quite high in both groups. Additionally, the mean differences of both groups are inconsequential at any statistical significance level except on the awareness dimension. The result shows that the mean scores between the Chainat lover group and the Chainat pending group are different at a statistical significance of 0.01 levels for all variables.

**Chainat Tourism Product Positioning**
Qualitative analysis is the appropriate method to apply when analyzing tourism product positioning. Thirty stakeholders were interviewed using the focus-group
technique. The stakeholders included entrepreneurs, government officers, community leaders, and tourists. All respondents had to know all attractions in five provinces to give the rank order for all five provinces, which included Chainat, Suphan Buri, Nakhon Sawan, Uthai Thani, and Sing Buri. There were eight categories of tourism in this study: religious tourism, historical tourism, man-made attractions, nature tourism, local customs and travel activities, agro-tourism, tourism culture and way of life, and eco-tourism. The total percentage for all types of tourism is 100 percent and all respondents had to consider each category for the total score (100 percent).

The stakeholders have given the first rank on religious tourism to Chainat and Sing Buri provinces. The second rank order in the tourism category for Chainat province is man-made attractions, followed by historical tourism, nature tourism, local customs and travel activities, agro-tourism, tourism culture and way of life, and eco-tourism, respectively. In conclusion, Chainat province is strong in the religious tourism and man-made attractions categories as compared to four other provinces. In contrast, Chainat province should improve in historical tourism and use Suphan Buri province as a benchmark.

REFERENCES

Table 2. Reliability of Measures used in the Current Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scales Items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude toward Destination, 4 dimensions with 43-item scale on a five-point rating scale.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- attitude toward each destination</td>
<td>.932</td>
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<tr>
<td>- attitude toward sustainable tourism</td>
<td>.733</td>
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<tr>
<td>- attitude toward history/community/lifestyle</td>
<td>.897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- overall attitude toward destination in Chainat province</td>
<td>.895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Needs/Interest Toward Destination, 13-item scale on a five-point Rating Scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Perception of Marketing Communication, 5-item scale with five-point Rating Scale.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Destination Equity, 3 dimensions with 18-item scale on a five-point Likert Rating Scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- awareness</td>
<td>.880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- value for money</td>
<td>.936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- overall quality of attractions</td>
<td>.922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioral Intention, 4-item scale on a five-point Semantic Differential Scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tourist Consumer Behavior, 6-item scale on a five-point Rating Scale</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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Figure 1 Conceptual Framework