

An Empirical Investigation of Iso-Ahola's Model of Motivation: Factors
influencing Chinese Tourists Visit Intention in Thailand
การศึกษาเชิงประจักษ์ของปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อนักท่องเที่ยวจีนในประเทศไทย
โดยใช้โมเดลแรงจูงใจ Iso-Ahola

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to (1) perform a confirmatory factor analysis of Iso-Ahola's motivational theoretical construct by following the work of Snepenger et al (2006) in Thailand tourism context; (2) identify the influential motivation constructs for Chinese tourists visit intention in Thailand.

Design/Methodology/Approach – The methodology involved the compilation of a literature review and conduction quantitative approach. The scale items on four dimensions of the Iso-Ahola's motivational developed by Snepenger et al (2006) have been employed and validated through confirmatory factor analysis by using a data of 345 Chinese tourists visited Thailand. Data was collected using self-administered questionnaires survey. Also, the key motivational factors have been specified as a second-order factor that is determined by first-order dimensions.

Findings – A 12-item scale covering four dimensions of the Iso-Ahola's model has been employed. The second-order model suggests that Chinese tourists visit intention is most influenced by the "Personal Escape" dimension, followed by "Personal Seeking", "Interpersonal Escape", and "Interpersonal Seeking" dimension, respectively. The results from both convergent and discriminant validity indicate the construct validity of this study model is supported. A second-order measurement model showed a good model fits with the following values: $\chi^2/df = 2.042$, GFI = 0.933, AGFI = 0.896, CFI = 0.952, NFI = 0.911, RMR = 0.049, and RMSEA = 0.063. The result of this study would enable service providers to identify motivation dimensions influencing Chinese tourists' behavior which led to their revisit intention.

Keywords: Iso-Ahola's motivation theory, confirmatory factor analysis, tourism Analysis

บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ – การศึกษาวิจัยในครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อการวิเคราะห์ปัจจัยยืนยันในการสร้างทฤษฎีเชิงสร้างแรงงูใจของ Iso-Ahola โดยปฏิบัติตามงานของ Snepenger และคณะ รวมถึงการศึกษามิติด้านแรงงูใจที่มีอิทธิพลต่อนักท่องเที่ยวชาวจีนในบริบทการท่องเที่ยวของประเทศไทย

วิธีการวิจัย– วิธีการศึกษาในครั้งนี้ใช้วิธีการทบทวนวรรณกรรม และการวิจัยเชิงปริมาณเพื่อวิเคราะห์ปัจจัยที่ด้านตามทฤษฎีเชิงสร้างแรงงูใจของ Iso-Ahola ด้วยเทคนิคการวิเคราะห์องค์ประกอบเชิงยืนยันจากนักท่องเที่ยวชาวจีนจำนวน 345 คน โดยการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากแบบสอบถาม นอกจากนี้ปัจจัยที่สำคัญในการสร้างแรงงูใจของ Iso-Ahola ทั้ง 4 ด้าน ถูกนำมาทดสอบต่อ ด้วยการวิเคราะห์องค์ประกอบในอันดับที่สอง

ผลการศึกษา จากการวิเคราะห์ตัวแปร 12 ตัว ซึ่งครอบคลุมปัจจัย 4 ด้าน เกี่ยวกับการสร้างแรงงูใจของนักท่องเที่ยวจีนพบว่า ปัจจัยสำคัญที่สุดที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการมาท่องเที่ยวในประเทศไทย ได้แก่ การหลีกเลี่ยงสิ่งแวดล้อมส่วนบุคคล การแสวงหารางวัลส่วนบุคคลด้าน การหลีกเลี่ยงสิ่งแวดล้อมระหว่างบุคคล และการแสวงหารางวัลระหว่างบุคคล ตามลำดับ ผลการศึกษาจากการทดสอบความเที่ยงตรงเชิงเหมือนและความเที่ยงตรงเชิงจำแนกของตัวแปรพบว่า สนับสนุนความเที่ยงตรงเชิงโครงสร้าง นอกจากนี้จากการวิเคราะห์องค์ประกอบในอันดับที่สองพบว่า มีความเหมาะสม ตามค่าทางสถิติที่ได้ดังต่อไปนี้ $\chi^2/df = 2.042$ $GFI = 0.933$ $AGFI = 0.896$ $CFI = 0.952$ $NFI = 0.911$ $RMR = 0.049$ $RMSEA = 0.063$. ผลลัพธ์ที่ได้จากการวิจัยนี้จะเป็นประโยชน์ต่อผู้ให้บริการไทยในการเข้าใจถึงแรงงูใจที่มีอิทธิพลต่อพฤติกรรมของนักท่องเที่ยวชาวจีนเพื่อนำไปใช้ในการพัฒนารัฐกิจซึ่งนำไปสู่ความกลับมาเที่ยวซ้ำ

คำสำคัญ: ทฤษฎีแรงงูใจของ Iso-Ahola, การวิเคราะห์องค์ประกอบเชิงยืนยัน, การท่องเที่ยว

Introduction

With the aim of becoming a tourism center in Southeast Asia in 2006 and integrated this goal into national development plans, Thailand tourism industry has been continuously developed. According to the Ministry of tourism and sports of Thailand, there was a total of 32.6 million foreign tourists traveled to Thailand and brought economic income of 1.65 trillion baht in 2016, which has increased 9% in term of number of tourists and 14.58% in term of economic income compared with 2015 (department of tourist, 2017). Therefore, tourism industry has become an important industry to drive growth in Thai economy.

Over the past decade from 2002 to 2016, the number of Chinese tourists traveling to Thailand had significantly increased, especially in 2013, when Thailand had officially announced the exemption of visa fees for Chinese tourists with the intention of attract Chinese tourism. As of 2016, Thailand had become top 10 of Chinese outbound tourism destination (Travel China Guide, 2017). Moreover, Chinese outbound tourists become major provider for the growth of tourism industry and consumption growth in East Asia region.

In Thailand, the revenue in tourism industry had gone up by 24%, 338 billion Baht in 2015 to 445 billion Baht in 2016; Chinese

tourists were the largest contributors (Thairath, 2017). Ministry of tourism and sports reported that the top five international tourist arrivals to Thailand in 2016 by nationality; were namely in order of; China, Malaysia, South Korea, Laos, and Japan. The tourist authority of Thailand expects the number of Chinese tourists will increase from 8.7 million, 2016, to 9 million in 2017. With the rapid development of Chinese tourism, understanding the motivation factors which influence visit intention is essential. It is extremely vital to retain their loyalty to visit Thailand as the definite destination.

Thus, it is important to analyze the underlying factors of travel motivation which is the direct causal of tourism behavior. This study will be helpful for service providers to understand tourist behavior of travel motivation and know how to improve effective tourism marketing and management strategies. It can strengthen the travel motivation to attract tourists.

Literature review

Numbers of scholars have been studies on travel motivation since 1970s. Early studies of tourist motivations done by Dann (1977), Crompton (1979), and Iso-Ahola (1980, 1982) have become the foundation theories or models on tourism motivations. Tourist motivation has been considered as the crucial

driver of tourists' behavior (Fodness, 1994). Dann (1977) focused on push dimension of motivation in his sociological study of travel motivation. He stated that there were two factors in a decision making of traveling; which he called; Anomie (desire to get away from mundane life) and Ego-enhancement (needs for recognition) which was gained by the status conferred by travel. Crompton (1979) identified seven socio-psychological (push) and two cultural (pull) motives for pleasure vacation through in-depth interviews. Seven socio-psychological were: escape from a perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships, and facilitation of social interaction. Two cultural motives were novelty and education. Further studies by Iso-Ahola (1980), he proposed a motivation theory which applicable to leisure, recreation, and tourism. Then in 1982, he proposed a theory of leisure motivation which based on a social psychological, known as Iso-Ahola's escaping-seeking dichotomy.

Iso Ahola's motivation theory suggests that travel motivation is triggered by two factors; seeking (intrinsic rewards) and escaping (from routine/familiar environments). Both factors can be divided further into personal and interpersonal aspect (Iso-Ahola, 1984; Dunn Rose and Iso-Ahola, 1991). These

factors were considered as a push factor that drive tourists' behavior. The model included four motivational categories: Seeking Personal Rewards (SPR), Seeking Interpersonal Rewards (SIR), Escaping Personal Environments (EPE), and Escaping Interpersonal Environments (EIE) as in Figure 1.

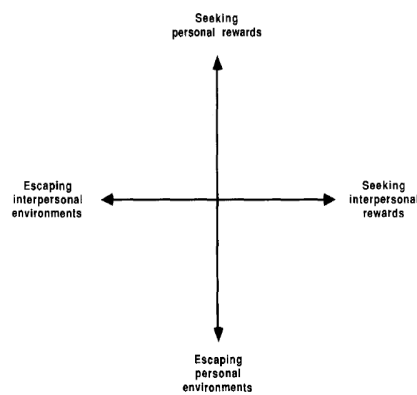


Figure 1 Iso-Ahola Social Psychological Model of Tourism Motivation

Source: Iso-Ahola 1984:111

A recent study on the travel motivation of Indian Travellers by Siri, Kennon, Josiam, and Spears (2012) found the travellers' motivations of escaping routine work, stress reduction, and doing something exciting. Moreover, Sangpikul (2008) found that 'novelty and knowledge seeking' was the most important travel motivation of Japanese senior travelers.

However, the development of Iso-Ahola's motivational construct and testing the model is quite restrained. Snepenger, King, Marshall, and Uysal (2006) was employed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) technique to empirically test Iso-Ahola's theory for tourism and recreation in USA context. Biswas (2008) followed the footstep of Snepenger et al (2006) to the Indian context. There is a relative lack of study in Iso-Ahola's motivational theoretical in Thailand context. This research is meant to fill the gap in understanding Chinese tourist behavior of travel motivation, which the deciding factors for choosing destination. Previous researches have shown results of positive relationship between travel motivation and behavioral intention (Hsu and Huang, 2008; Lee, 2009; Regan, Carlson, and Rosenberger III, 2012). It is helpful for service providers to understand tourist behaviors of travel motivation in order to know which attributions would meet behaviors to provide services accordingly

Research objectives

- To perform a confirmatory factor analysis of Iso-Ahola's motivational theoretical construct by following the work of Snepenger et al. (2006) in Thailand tourism context
- To identify the influential motivation constructs for Chinese tourists visit intention in Thailand.

Methodology

Quantitative approach was used in this study. The survey was conducted at the Don Mueang International Airport (DMK), Thailand. The target populations of this study were the Chinese passengers from mainland China who arrive or depart from DMK during May 1st to 9th, 2017. The sample size was chosen based on general guidelines for sample size that depends on the number of variables involved in the study. As the instrument used in this study aim has 12 items (statements) adopted from Snepenger et al (2006), the required sample size should be 20 times of total number of items (Kline, 2015). Therefore, the minimum requirement of sample size should be 240 samples. Four hundred questionnaires were distributed among Chinese tourists waiting in departure lounges at the DMK. Convenience sampling method was employed. Data was collected from Chinese tourists using self-administered questionnaires survey in the presence of a researcher who provided explanations and information if necessary. Each respondent took about 5-10 minutes to complete the survey. After removing questionnaire with missing or incomplete data, a total of 345 samples were corrected which matched the predetermined criterion of at least 240 samples.

The questionnaire for the main study contains two parts, which were demographic information section and research framework section. In research framework part, a total of 12 scale items adopted from Snepenger et al (2006) were used to measure the four motivational dimensions proposed by Iso-Ahola (1982): Seeking Personal Rewards

(SPR), Seeking Interpersonal Rewards (SIR), Escaping Personal Environments (EPE), and Escaping Interpersonal Environments (EIE), as presented in Table 1. The measuring scale was five-point Likert response scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Finally, there were five items in the demographic information section.

Table 1 The scale items

Escaping	Seeking
Personal environment (EPE)	Personal rewards (SPR)
EPE1 To get away from normal environment	SPR1 To tell others about my experiences
EPE2 To have a change from everyday life	SPR2 To feel good about myself
EPE3 To overcome a bad mood	SPR3 To experience new things by myself
Interpersonal environment (EIE)	Interpersonal rewards (SIR)
EIE1 To avoid people who annoy me	SIR1 To be with people of similar interests
EIE2 To get away from stressful environment	SIR2 To bring friends
EIE3 To avoid interactions with others	SIR3 To meet new people

Original item from Snepenger et al (2006)

Data Analysis

Cronbach's alpha values for all variable were as follow: EPE = 0.825, EIE = 0.868, SPR = 0.853, and SIR = 0.796. Many previous studies suggest that Cronbach's

alpha values must be above 0.7 and could prove the scales have internal consistency (DeVellis, 2012; Hair et. al, 2009). Thus, all constructs of this study were accepted for internal consistency.

Results of the Study

The demographic profile comprises of gender, age, education, and average monthly income. The collected sample consists of 56.8% males and 43.2% females, which considered as equally distributed in gender. There were totally five age groups: under 21, 21 - 30; 31 – 40; 41- 50; and Over 50 years old. Majority of respondents, 37.4%, were between 31 and 40 years old, 33.0% were in range of 21 to 30 years old, 16.50% were in range of 41 to 50 years old, and 10.4% were over 50 years old. For monthly income, 8.4% of the respondents earned less than 3,000 RMB, 24.6% of respondents earned 3,001 to 5,000 RMB, 30.7% of respondents earned 5001 to 8000 RMB, and 36.2% of respondents earned more than 8,000 RMB.

Testing the first-order measurement model

The 12-item scale developed by Snepenger et al. (2006) was adopted to test

the measurement model with its four factors (i.e. EPE, EIE, SPR, and SIR). The Confirmation Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed using maximum likelihood estimate method to verify how well these tested items represent the latent variables in the current study. The results of CFA model were evaluated using multiple indices such as Chi-square value (χ^2), degree of freedom (df), goodness of fit index (GFI), adjust goodness of fit index (AGFI), normal fit index (NFI), comparative fit index (CFI), root mean square residual (RMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Hair et al., 1998).

The first-order measurement model indicated an acceptable model fit. All fit indices were below the threshold; $\chi^2/df = 2.632$, GFI = 0.945, AGFI = 0.910, CFI = 0.965, NFI = 0.944, RMR = 0.030, RMSEA = 0.069 (Table 2).

Table 2 The CFA fit summary

Fit indices	Acceptable Threshold	First-order CFA	Second-order CFA	Pass
	Levels			
χ^2/df	< 3	2.632	2.797	
GFI	≥ 0.9	0.945	0.938	
AGFI	≥ 0.8	0.910	0.903	
CFI	≥ 0.9	0.965	0.959	
NFI	≥ 0.8	0.944	0.938	
RMR	< 0.08	0.030	0.034	
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.069	0.072	

* References: Hair, 2011; Hair et al., 1998; Holye, 1995; Hu and Bentler, 1999; Steiger, 1990

Note: Key to abbreviation – Degree of Freedom (df), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Normal Fit Index (NFI), Root Mean Residual (RMR) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)

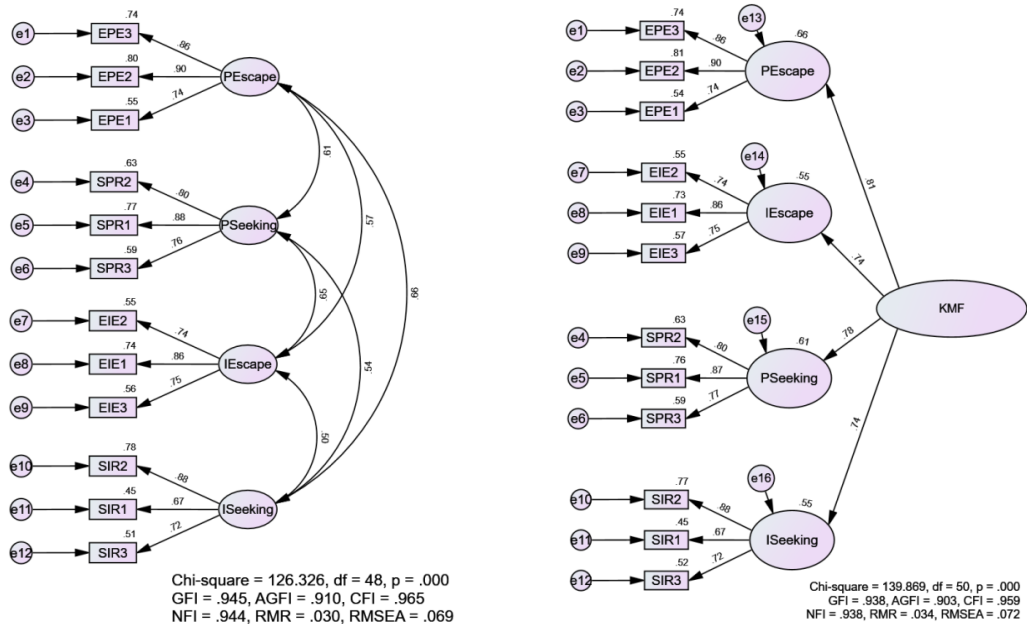


Figure 1 First-order and Second-order CFA

Psychometric properties of the first-order model

As for the construct validity defined by Hair et al. (2009), the convergent and discriminant validity were determined in order to establish the construct validity. The acceptable threshold level for convergent validity, as suggested by Hair et al. (2009), should be where CR is greater than AVE (CR>AVE), and AVE above 0.5. Table 3 specifies that CR values of each construct was larger than AVE values, and AVE values were

above the minimum threshold level. Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested that in order to assess the discriminant validity the AVE of each construct should be greater than maximum shared square variance (MSV). Table 3 displays that the AVE values of each the construct was larger than MSV values, which confirm the discriminant validity. Thus, the results from both convergent and discriminant validity indicate the construct validity of this study model is supported.

Table 3 Validity-based psychometric properties

Construct	CR	AVE	MSV
EPE	0.873	0.697	0.438
SPR	0.854	0.662	0.427
EIE	0.828	0.617	0.427
SIR	0.803	0.580	0.438

Source: James Gaskin MS-Excel Stats Tools Package (3/5/2016)

Note: Key to abbreviation – Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Maximum Shared Square Variance (MSV)

Testing the second-order measurement model

The second-order measurement implies a causal flow from the main construct, Key Motivation Factor (KMF), to the first-order factors. This also helps in estimating the structural relationship between the construct and the underlying sub-constructs (Hair et al., 2009). The second-order model generated a ratio ($\chi^2/df = 2.797$) that was below the threshold of 3.0. The value of GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI, RMR, and RMSEA were 0.938, 0.903,

0.959, 0.938, 0.034, and 0.072, respectively (Table 2).

Thus, analysis of the overall fits statistics demonstrated that the fit of second-order model was good, and it provided a reasonable level of overall fit with the real world data. The factor loading for four first-order factors were well loaded (Figure 1). The results confirm the existence of the second-order model of the key motivation factor.

Table 4 Loading of the second-order confirmatory factor analysis

Factor	Standard second-order loading ^a	
EPE	0.811 ^b	
SPR	0.783	(10.054)
EIE	0.742	(9.320)
SIR	0.744	(10.239)

Notes: ^a Standard second-order loading is the standard regression weight of the individual variables' loading on to the overall key motivation factors construct. Figures in parentheses are critical ratios from the unstandardized solutions;

^b The critical ration is not available, because the regression weight of the first component factor (i.e. key motivation factors Personal Escape) is fixed at 1.

Discussion

The objective of this study was using Iso-Ahola's theory of motivation to identify the influential factors of motivation in Chinese tourists traveling to Thailand. Results of the study shows that 'escaping personal

environment' (EPE) dimension as the most significant ($\gamma = 0.811$); follow by 'seeking personal rewards' (EPE) ($\gamma = 0.783$); 'escaping interpersonal environment' (EIE) ($\gamma = 0.744$) and 'seeking interpersonal rewards' (SIR) ($\gamma = 0.742$). The findings reveals 'escaping

personal environment' as the most influential factor of motivation in Chinese tourists traveling to Thailand which means that escape from mundane daily routine life is most important when it comes traveling for Chinese travelers.

Thailand is one of the popular choices for the place for them to escape from their routine life. Where one of the respondents has mentioned that "This is my third trips to Thailand in the past two years. I love to have vacation here. There are lot of beautiful places. One of my favorite place is floating market. It is very unique in that way I never experienced before". Furthermore, tourists believe in rewarding themselves from hard work by having vacation in Thailand. One of the respondent mentioned that "I spent my whole year working, took care my children as well as kept my house in order. It is such a best gift for myself to have vacation here. Food is great, Thai people are welcoming, beautiful nature, as well as great shopping places."

Lastly, the findings also show that travelers want to get away from their stressful life as well as enhancing relationship with friends and families. One of the respondent mentioned that "This is my first time in Thailand. I heard all good things about this country. Thus, I want to experience this myself. Very impressed!! Travelling is the most preferred way to re-energize myself for my stressful work

place. Now, Thailand become must come on the travel list for me".

Implication

Package tours should be set to suit the needs of Chinese travels, where they can have the choices of long haul and short haul trips to various destinations of Thailand. For travel mode, tour packages should be offer in Group tours (with family or friends) since from observations; Chinese tourists like to travel in groups. Yet there should be also be some offerings for individualist or backpacker travelers as well. For travel time, package tours should be offered during festive events like Songkarn or Chinese New Year. Planning for tour package during long holidays should be offered during the 'gold week' that's when the Chinese have week-long holidays to get away from their mundane life. Tour packages should also be offered during short breaks for those who can afford a limited time off from work to escape from their everyday environment.

Many Chinese tourists come to Thailand to experience the Buddhism culture and heritage of Thailand. To welcome Chinese tourists Thailand should provide seasonal package tours to temples and well known sights. Since in the past there has been a problem about Chinese tourists using the facilities at many attraction sites in Thailand causing them to be banned from visiting

several places. By offering season tour packages where Chinese tourists can visit these places without causing disturbances to other tourists in the way they use public facilities such as toilets. In this way they can have specified days in which Chinese tourists could be welcome to enjoy the sightseeing of these cultural heritage places.

Apart from cultural and heritage tours, Thailand should also promote Health and Wellness tour packages. Many of those who seek to escape their everyday mundane life hope to find a place where they can be with themselves at peace. Tours which promotes the ritual way of healthy life styles, such as meditation could be on that provides relaxation for those wanted to escape their busy life at work. Healthy eating lifestyle could also be included, where they have a chance to explore the refrigerator of mother-nature. Vegetarian Thai cooking classes could also be provided to give them a taste of Thailand's exotic dishes while keep fit. Tours like this could provide tourists to find an inner peace with nature while enjoying their stay in Thailand.

Lastly, as the young generator is becoming the dominating population, tours that provide new challenges and thrills should be provided. Thailand offers many beautiful nature sceneries for outdoors sports such as rock climbing and adventurous water sports. Tour packages that offer a variety of these activities could be a highlight for those seeking to escape their mundane life to find a new thrill. Overall, if Thailand could provide these implications, it could become a potential pull factor for Chinese tourists visiting Thailand in the future. The study uses Iso-Ahola's model to indicate the influential factors of motivation in Chinese tourists traveling to Thailand to provide recommendation of the pull factors.

Research Limitations

The present research does not separate respondents by age groups and types of traveler i.e. free independent travelers and tour group travels. Future studies could be focus on these sample groups to determine their travel motivation.

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