GUIDED BICYCLE TOURS:
AN ALTERNATIVE WAY OF BANGKOK EXPLORATION

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ABSTRACT. Exploring destinations via bicycle is a significant field to be studied for future appliance, as it indicates an activity with low environmental impact, contributing to the sustainability of a destination and enhancing the visitors’ experience in educational and self-involving manner. The purpose of this study was to examine the push and pull factors, expectations, and satisfaction of tourists who participated in daytrips of guided bicycle tours to explore Bangkok. Furthermore, this study identified major opportunities and limitations of guided bicycle tours in Bangkok. For data collection, the exploratory mixed method was applied, consisting of qualitative and quantitative research tools, respectively. To begin with, in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and focus group interviews were conducted. Content and SWOT-analysis was employed to interpret qualitative data. Subsequently, items derived from qualitative research were rewritten into questionnaire items; the questionnaire survey tested the accuracy and detected the degree of significance of specific items. Quantitative data were analyzed by descriptive, frequency, and cross-tabulated statistics.

KEYWORDS. Bicycle tourism, push and pull factors, expectation, satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Considering that international tourist arrival is expected to reach 1.8 billion by 2030, and that especially emerging economies such as Asia and the Pacific, Middle East, and Africa, will account for an increase in global market share of international tourist arrivals of 30%, 8%, and 7% by 2030, respectively, up from 22%, 6%, and 5% in 2010, respectively (UNWTO, 2011), creates a dilemma for tourism planners, who need to improve access at a tourist destination, but at the same time consider and manage the demand for tourism transport in a way that decreases energy consumption and harmful environmental impacts (Lumsdon & Tolley, 2004). Tourism stakeholders must find ways to best protect the environment in the interest of sustaining the resources on which the tourism industry eminently relies on. Hence, travelling and exploring destinations by bicycle is a significant field to be studied for future appliance, as it indicates an activity with low negative
environmental impact, contributing to the sustainability of a destination and enhancing the
visitors’ experience in an educational and self-involving manner.

However, considering the nature of urban cities such as Bangkok, often implying
highly congested and narrow roads, air pollution, as well as very few separate thus secure
bicycle lanes, under these circumstances can bicycle tours be sustainable? How do tour
companies deal with limitations, which constrain this tourist activity? What are the
opportunities of guided bicycle tours? Why do tourists want to participate in guided bicycle
tours in Bangkok? What are their expectations, and are the participants satisfied with the
existing tourism product?

Consequently, the purpose of this study is to examine the push and pull factors of
tourists who choose a tour company providing daytrips of guided bicycle tours to explore the
tourist destination of Bangkok. In conjunction, it is significant to investigate the participants’
extections towards guided bicycle tours and to detect the participants’ level of satisfaction.
Lastly, this study aims to identify major opportunities and limitations of guided bicycle tours,
gained through discussions with significant stakeholders.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

*Push factors*

The approach of push and pull has become a popular and well-accepted theory, which
demonstrates that tourists’ ambition to travel and attitude can be analyzed in terms of forces
indicate internal forces, which aim to satisfy personal psychological needs, whereas pull
factors relate to attributes of a particular destination.

Findings of Yuan and McDonald (1990), Jamrozy and Uysal (1994), Jang and Cai
(2002), and Sangpikul (2008; 2008) showed that ‘novel experience’, ‘escape’, and
‘knowledge seeking’, accounted for significant push factors for leisure tourists. According to
Ross and Iso-Ahola (1991), dimensions of seeking and social interaction were discovered to
indicate significant push factors for tourists to participate in sightseeing activities.

To the best of the researchers’ knowledge, to date there exists no study that explores
the push factors of tourists who participated in guided bicycle tours offered by a tour
company in an urban setting. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to draw a comparison to
studies that examined push factors of independent bicycle tourists (Ritchie, 1998; Simonsen
According to findings of Ritchie (1998), who examined motivations of bicycle tourists in New Zealand, significant differences were found between cycling experience level, origin of respondents, and gender.

Furthermore, Simonsen and Jorgensen (1998) investigated motivations of independent cycle tourists in Denmark. This survey identified that crucial motives for selecting a cycling vacation were ‘to be outdoor’, ‘to exercise’, and ‘to have fun’. Interestingly, reasons such as ‘to get to know local inhabitants’, ‘to get away from tourist crowds’, ‘to have an environmentally friendly holiday’, and ‘to experience culture’ are the least significant reasons for choosing a cycling trip. This study shows that cycling tourists in Denmark constitute a heterogeneous market.

Moreover, Ritchie et al. (2010) conducted the most current research on the topic of motivations of bicycle tourists in Australia. The heterogeneity of the bicycle tourism market is demonstrated by five cluster segments derived from the appliance of the concept of enduring involvement combined with tourist motivational theory.

Additionally, Chang and Chang (2005) compared motivations between recreational cyclists in national scenic bikeways and local bike lanes in Taiwan. It was found that recreational cyclists using national scenic bikeways are motivated by sightseeing and seek for tourist attractions, on the other hand, recreational cyclists using local bike lanes are motivated by leisure and exercise and seek for high quality bicycle facilities.

**Pull factors**

Pull factors refer to destination features and attributes, such as climate, natural attractions, cultural resources, recreational activities, and special events or festivals (Kim & Lee, 2002; Kim, Lee, & Klenosky, 2003). Destinations often provide a variety of attributes and features, which intend to meet, hence respond to push factors of diverse travellers.

Simonsen and Jorgensen (1998) identified sights and cultural attractions to indicate pull factors for independent bicycle tourists to engage in cycling vacation in Denmark.

In addition, Chang and Chang (2005) who compared motivations between recreational cyclists in national scenic bikeways and local bike lanes in Taiwan, found that bicycle tourists who use national scenic bikeways regard “safety, tourism attraction, and challenging terrain” as most important. Cyclists utilizing local bicycle lanes stated “safety, low flow of traffic, and bicycle paths” to be most significant considerations. Yet both groups share a common concern with “safety, low flow of traffic, tourism attraction, signage and interpretation, rest place, and restrooms”. 

3
Besides this, Sangpikul (2008; 2008) examined travel motivations of Japanese and U.S. senior tourists to Thailand and identified ‘cultural and historical attractions’, ‘travel arrangements and facilities’, ‘shopping and leisure activities’, and ‘safety and cleanliness’, to indicate significant pull factors that attract respondents to visit Thailand.

It can be concluded that the level of importance that individuals attach to pull factors, differ amongst individuals. Although individuals obtain similar push factors, it occurs that attributes and features that attract them to a specific destination or a particular activity vary.

**Expectations and Satisfaction**

According to Rodríguez del Bosque, and San Martín (2008), expectations were found to significantly influence on satisfaction formation. Hence, this study encompassed the simultaneous elaboration of expectation and satisfaction. The field of tourists’ satisfaction has received considerable attention in consumer research since it indicates the core to business success and possibly reflects revisit intentions.

Gale and Beeftink (2005) emphasized on understanding the evaluation of tourist satisfaction and identified four factors that influence the direct tourism experience, namely: active involvement, group dynamic, role of the guide, and unexpected events.

Tourists are actively involved in making decisions and shaping the performance of their tourism experience (Gale & Beeftink, 2005), hence “the quality of the tour performance depends to a large extent on their motivation, initiative, ability, and effort” (Geva & Goldman, 1991, p. 179). Apart from this, Arsenault and Gale (2004) discovered that travellers increasingly demand to engage in participatory, interactive, and hands-on activities. Also, group dynamic was found to indicate a significant influence in the direct tourism experience. The relationship between participants of a small group can facilitate group dynamics due to friendship formations, which eventually leads to positive memories and satisfaction (Arsenault & Gale, 2004).

Also, Geva and Goldman (1991) elaborated the significance of the tour guide’s influence on customer satisfaction in guided tours. The tour guide “[participates] in the production of the actual tour and [shapes] its atmosphere” (p. 178), and he/she is “is in a good position to customize the tour product to the participants’ individual needs and preferences” (p. 178). The guide hence is attributable to a central role of the tour.

Also, unexpected events influence the direct tourism experience. According to Arsenault and Gale (2004), “[t]he beauty of surprise situations is that they create unique opportunities for human interaction, generate a special connection with the place, and build
a common bond between travelers” (p. 11). Further, “the key for turning unexpected and potentially negative events into positive outcomes was most often credited to the tour guide or director” (p. 12), which once again emphasizes the significant role of the guide and his or her skills and ability.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design**

The exploratory mixed method was applied to this research, consisting of qualitative and quantitative research tools, respectively. The objective was to investigate the push and pull factors of tourists, who participated in guided bicycle tours to explore Bangkok. Further, the aim was to examine the expectations of participants towards guided bicycle tours in Bangkok, and to determine their level of satisfaction. Lastly, opportunities and limitations affecting this tourist attraction were examined to reveal its future prospects.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

To begin with, seven participatory observations were undertaken of bicycle tours provided by six bicycle tour companies in Bangkok between September 2011 and January 2012. The Internet platform TripAdvisor® was utilized to detect tour companies, which are seemingly popular amongst tourists who participated in bicycle tours in Bangkok before. During participatory observation similarities and differences were noted and analyzed according to participants’ responses regarding push and pull factors, expectation, and satisfaction. Each participatory observation lasted between four to five hours.

In addition, four focus group interviews were conducted with tourist participants of guided bicycle tours. Notes derived from focus group interviews were compared in order to identify main themes and sub-themes and to discover variables related to push and pull factors, expectation, and satisfaction. Focus group interviews lasted an average of 30 to 40 minutes.

Furthermore, eight in-depth interviews were conducted with managers of tour companies and representatives of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), in order to obtain their opinion on cycling in Bangkok, guided cycling tours, push and pull factors of participants, and opportunities and
limitations affecting this tourist activity. In-depth interviews lasted an average of 40 to 60 minutes.

Content and SWOT-analysis was employed to interpret qualitative data. Subsequently, items derived from qualitative research were rewritten into questionnaire items to conduct surveys with tourist participants of guided bicycle tours in Bangkok. The questionnaire survey tested the accuracy and detected the degree of significance on items of push and pull, expectation, and satisfaction. Finally, 160 questionnaires were distributed to tourist participants and returned, of which 143 surveys were usable. Each survey lasted an average of five to ten minutes. Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the social sciences with descriptive, frequencies, and cross-tabulated statistics.

RESULTS

Demographics of Tourist Respondents

To begin with, findings showed that participants of guided bicycle tours in Bangkok come from very diverse countries of Europe, North America, South Africa, and Asia, yet respondents from the Netherlands (32.9%), Denmark (9.1%), Germany (7.0%), and USA (6.3%) dominated the survey. Only very few Asian tourists participated in bicycle tours (4.9% of all respondents). This might be because tourists from Asian countries prefer engaging in activities which take place indoors such as visiting department stores to escape the heat or to go shopping; or possibly bicycle tours in Bangkok are less known to this group of travellers. To continue, the distribution of male (45.7%) and female respondents (54.3%) was somewhat equal; slightly more female tourists participated in this survey (+8.6%). In addition, most respondents were in a relationship (40.6%), married (32.9%), or single (23.8%). Furthermore, respondents were between 25-34 (36.6%), 45-54 (21.1%), or 35-44 (19.7%) years of age. Moreover, respondents were fairly high educated having obtained their Bachelor’s Degree (40.6%) or a degree above Bachelor Degree (30.4%). In addition, most respondents were company employees (43.6%), business owners/self-employed (22.9%), or worked in the government sector (12.9%). Respondents’ annual income varied between $40,000 and $59,999 USD (29.5%), $20,000 and $39,999 (21.4%), lower than $20,000 (15.2%), and more than $100,000 (15.2%), respectively.
Characteristics of Tourist Respondents

The survey shows that the majority of respondents consider their cycling skill level as advanced (51.1%), followed by intermediate (41.8%) and beginner (7.1%) skill level indication. Additionally, 25.5% of respondents indicated to cycle everyday in their home country and 1-3 times a week (25.5%), followed by less than once a week (23.4%) and 4-6 times a week (10.6%). Further, it is noticeable that the majority of respondents are first time visitors to Thailand (57.1%), followed by second to third time visitors (25.7%), and fourth time or even more frequent visitors (17.1%). Despite this, respondents mostly stayed 3 days (30.1%), 2 days (15.4%), and 4 days (13.3%) in Bangkok. Moreover, the most mentioned source of information how respondents found out about bicycle tours were through recommendation (40.4%), the tour company’s website (14.9%), travel agents (14.2%), and travel guides (13.5%). To continue, the majority of respondents were first time participants of bicycle tours in Bangkok (85.1%). Besides this, of respondents who indicated to have participated in bicycle tours before, 66.7% further stated to always cycle with the same tour company, whereas 33.3% of repeat cyclists stated the contrary. This demonstrates that respondents were greatly satisfied with the bicycle tours of respective tour company hence consider returning anew.

Motivational Factors of Tourist Respondents

In this study, 18 variables were used to measure the push factors of tourist respondents, which include ‘to me the activity of cycling is important’, ‘to relax during cycling’, ‘to get away from tourist crowds’, ‘to explore Bangkok by driving on my own, not depending on cars/taxis for a change’, ‘to do something I have not done before’, ‘to do something different from the standard tourist experience’, ‘to see the other side of Bangkok’, ‘to see things I don’t normally see’, ‘to enhance my knowledge about Bangkok’, ‘to actually experience Thai culture’, ‘to see locals’ way of life’, ‘to have fun’, ‘to experience something exciting’, ‘to do sightseeing with a group of people’, ‘to meet new and different people’, ‘to exercise/do fitness’, ‘to be out in the open’, and ‘to participate in an environmentally friendly activity’.

Findings of quantitative research indicated that the dimension of novelty seeking is of great significance for tourists to participate in guided bicycle tours in Bangkok. Namely ‘to see the other side of Bangkok’, ‘to see things I don’t normally see’, ‘to see the locals’ way of life’, and ‘to do something different from the standard tourist experience’,
respectively, accounted for the most significant push factors. Besides this, ‘to have fun’ and ‘to get away from tourist crowds’, respectively, likewise demonstrated important push factors. On the other hand, the least significant reason for participating in guided bicycle tours in Bangkok were ‘to exercise/do fitness’, ‘to do sightseeing with a group of people’, ‘to meet new and different people’, ‘to relax during cycling’, and ‘to participate in an environmentally friendly activity’, respectively.


Respondents stated that ‘the unseen side of Bangkok’ and ‘the unexpected side of Bangkok’, and ‘the local way of life’, respectively, to indicate significant pull factors in the dimension of sightseeing. Following, it is noticeable that a ‘professional tour guide’ and ‘small group size’, respectively, were considered meaningful pull factors in the dimension of tour arrangements and facilities. In the dimension of cycling environment, ‘safety’ was stated to constitute the most significant pull factor for bicycle tours. However, ‘flat terrain’, ‘air quality’, ‘long tail boat ride’, ‘climate’, and ‘historical sites’, respectively, were regarded as least significant pull factors for guided bicycle tours in Bangkok.

**Expectation and Satisfaction of Tourist Respondents**

Further, 18 variables were used to assess expectations on the tour guide’s conduct, the tour guide’s expertise, and tangible elements of the bicycle tour.

Respondents’ expectations regarding the tour guide’s conduct were significantly high, namely ‘guide should be friendly’, ‘guide should be enthusiastic’, and ‘guide should be patient’, respectively. In addition, it seems self evident that respondents expect the tour guide to be attentive and monitor the condition of participants for safety reasons, and respondents strongly agreed that tour guides should provide interesting spots during the bicycle tour where pictures can be taken. Furthermore, it is noticeable that respondents strongly expect the tour guide to be able to speak good English, to explain things during the bicycle tour, and to provide cyclists with a safety orientation prior to the tour, respectively. Moreover, respondents stated that they expect bicycle equipment provided by
the tour company should be in good working condition, whereas least expectation was found on the aspect of time compliance.

The variables on satisfaction were based on the variables of expectation, to detect to which extent expectations were met. Respondents were highly satisfied with the tour guide’s friendliness, patience, helpfulness and concern, and enthusiasm, respectively. Additionally, respondents were highly satisfied with the frequency of stops to rest and provision of drinks and snacks. Besides this, regarding the tour guide’s expertise, respondents were very satisfied with the guide’s safety and signaling instruction prior to the tour, the guide’s explanation during the tour, the guide’s English language skills, and the guide’s provision of information about the bicycle route prior to the tour, respectively. Further, it is noticeable regarding the tangible elements of the tour that respondents were very satisfied with the quality of cycling equipment, the pace of the bicycle tours, and compliance of time, respectively.

Lastly, eight variables were chosen to determine the overall concluding evaluation on guided bicycle tours in Bangkok. Respondents strongly agreed that they enjoyed the cycling tour, that the tour was well organized, and that they will recommend bicycle tours to friends and colleagues, respectively. Especially the latter shows that participants must be somewhat satisfied with the provided product, as they would otherwise not recommend this activity to a third party. Less agreement was found on ‘I saw and experienced as much as I expected’, ‘I learned to appreciate Bangkok’, ‘I received good value for money’, and ‘the cycling tour was an important part of my trip to Bangkok’, respectively. Yet, the overall evaluation of bicycle tours was satisfying.

Opportunities and Limitations of Guided Bicycle Tours

To begin with, the absence of secure bicycle lanes and the chaotic traffic condition in Bangkok indicate an opportunity for guided bicycle tours, as people who are interested in exploring Bangkok via bicycle are more or less dependent on tour companies due to safety but also orientation reasons.

In addition, the rising demand of tourists to experience something different from the standard tourist experience and to gain novel experience implies an opportunity for guided bicycle tours in Bangkok.

Besides this, tourists appreciate the tropical climate. However, this statement was derived from a participant during November, one of the coolest months of the year.
To continue, lack of family activities in Bangkok creates an opportunity for guided bicycle tours. The offer for physically healthy activities, which are suitable and allow involvement of many family members simultaneously, is rather limited in Bangkok.

Additionally, there exist limited outdoor, fun, and sportive group activities in Bangkok, which provide cultural enhancement for tourists travelling in groups.

Also, the development opportunity for new bicycle routes seems countless, due to Bangkok’s large area and its numerous back streets and alleys. Further, Bangkok demonstrates a popular tourist destination and an important transfer hub for tourists travelling to neighboring countries, which creates opportunities for rising demand for guided bicycle tours. In addition, the demand for experience with locals, i.e. participation in an activity with locals, favors guided bicycle tours. It seems difficult for tourists to get in touch with local people of far away countries due to the enormous cultural differences and the language problem. Bicycle tours avoid this difficulty and make the contact possible.

Coming to limitations, it was mentioned by a tour company that due to rising demand for guided bicycle tours in Bangkok, it is possible that bicycle tours in the future loose its charm due to higher cycling density in popular cycling areas. If existing tour companies increasingly guide their groups on the same cycling routes, the trip will easily be perceived as inauthentic, no longer indicating a unique cycling tour.

Furthermore, improved Global Positioning Systems could encourage tourists to rent bicycles and drive around by themselves; hence this might indicate a limitation to guided bicycle tours in Bangkok.

In addition, tour companies mentioned that the flooding of November and December 2011 had affected bicycle tours in Bangkok. Due to flooding, fewer tourists visited Bangkok; many bicycle tours were cancelled. As well as, routes on which bicycle tours were conducted, especially along the river, were heavily flooded and therefore impassible. Hence, flooding can be regarded as a major threat to bicycle tours in Bangkok.

Another tour company mentioned political disturbances in Bangkok to have had an impact on customers cancelling their bookings due to national travel warnings to Bangkok.

Moreover, all tour companies share the common opinion that they do not regard the traffic in Bangkok as a threat to guided bicycle tours in Bangkok. This is because bicycle tours, to a great extent, are conducted on traffic free roads.
DISCUSSION

Demographics and Characteristics of Tourist Respondents

Cycling is a very typical activity for Dutch people. Hence it might be for that reason that they likewise choose to participate in the activity of cycling during their holiday. Besides this, some tour companies maintain close cooperation with Dutch travel agents; this might also contribute to the dominant presence of this travel market. In addition, the somewhat equal distribution of male and female participants showed that bicycle tours are suitable for and favored amongst both genders. Also considering that most respondents were either in a relationship or married, it can be assumed that bicycle tours indicate a preferred activity for couples, as they are able to spend time together cycling and at the same time see new things, gain knowledge about Bangkok, and interact. Furthermore, it is noticeable that all stated age groups were represented. Thus it can be concluded that bicycle tours signify an activity for people of any age. Age does not constitute a constraint to this activity. Additionally, due to that participants of guided bicycle tours receive a steady and fairly high income, it may be for this reason that they are less price sensitive, hence are willing to pay the relatively high cost of bicycle tours in order to receive enjoyment, meaningful experience and enrichment in return.

Further, considering that the majority of respondents stated to be advanced cyclists, tour companies should consider combining cyclists with similar cycling skills, as to facilitate consistent dynamics during the bicycle tour. It was mentioned by some cyclists that they would had liked to cycle in faster pace, however had to be considerate of cyclists behind. It can be assumed that this adaptation would benefit bicycle tours due to more consistent speed amongst cyclists. Moreover, considering that a great majority of respondents were first time visitors to Thailand shows that participation in guided bicycle tours is not dependent on familiarity with the destination. Despite this, it is noticeable that respondents spent a fairly short time in Bangkok during their visit. It seems, therefore, that bicycle tours are favored amongst temporary visitors to Bangkok, assumingly as daytrip bicycle tours allow tourists to experience and see a variety of things in a short period of time. Further, it seems that the reputation of bicycle tours highly depends on the recommendation by their customers. This also explains why TripAdvisor® was mostly mentioned as source of information, since it provides suggestions and reviews from diverse travellers. It is advisable that tour companies consider alternative channels of
communication to spread the availability of their activity to wider markets. In addition, most respondents were first time participants of bicycle tours in Bangkok and first time visitors to Thailand. This shows that bicycle tours indicate a popular activity to get an introduction to Bangkok.

Motivational Factors of Tourist Respondents

Tourists participated in bicycle tours in Bangkok because they wanted to see the other side of Bangkok, to see things they would normally not see, to see the locals’ way of life, to do something different from the standard tourist experience, to have fun, and to get away from tourist crowds, respectively. Considering this, guided bicycle tours can be regarded as a tour of alternative kind, which allows tourists to gain novel experience about Bangkok, yet unknown and unseen to them. Especially seeing locals’ way of life contributes to knowledge enrichment in terms of diversity. Besides this, bicycle tours can be regarded a tour off the beaten track, which allow tourists to get to know a different culture in an appreciative and non-destructive way.

Further, the assumption that tourists want to participate in bicycle tours because it constitutes an environmentally friendly activity or because of health reason was not confirmed, quite the contrary ‘to exercise/do fitness’, ‘to do sightseeing with a group of people’, ‘to meet new and different people’, ‘to relax during cycling’, and ‘to participate in an environmentally friendly activity’ were the least significant push factors. This can be explained through the high agreement of respondents that bicycle tours allow them to get away from tourist crowds and provide participants a different tourist experience, thus to do sightseeing with a group of people is considered irrelevant to participants. Bicycle tours might be regarded as a means to avoid tourist crowds, as cyclists are taken off the beaten track to experience a different side of Bangkok, which contributes to the uniqueness and accounts for the attractiveness of bicycle tours.

Coming to pull factors, in the dimension of sightseeing the unseen and unexpected side of Bangkok indicated the most significant pull factors for guided bicycle tours. Furthermore, the item of unseen side of Bangkok seems to respond to the push item of ‘to see the other side of Bangkok’, while the item of unexpected side of Bangkok seems to respond to the push item ‘to see things I don’t normally see’. Also, ‘local way of life’ was stated to indicate a significant pull factor for guided bicycle tours, which responds to the push item ‘to see locals’ way of life’. Considering this, it can be said that the diversity of
Bangkok not only contributes to the attractiveness of guided bicycle tours, but is also an essential determinant, due to its wide coverage of fulfillment of diverse needs of tourists.

Apart from this, in the dimension of tour arrangements and facilities, respondents considered a professional tour guide the most significant pull factor. Moreover, considering that more than half of the respondents considered themselves advanced cyclists, it is easily understandable that ‘flat terrain’ was regarded as least significant pull factor. Furthermore, respondents stated a small group size as significant for guided bicycle tours. Yet dissenting opinions were observed on the size of the bicycle group. Consequently, in order to minimize disappointment amongst cyclists, tour companies should consider adjusting to customers’ needs in a more flexible manner. For instance, tour companies could inquire customers – already at the time of tour booking – if they prefer cycling in a small group or if they do not mind cycling with a large group. This allows tour companies to match the product in a more accurate manner to the needs of the customer, which greatly contributes to customer satisfaction.

Additionally, safety of the cycling environment indicated a significant pull factor amongst respondents. Thus considering Bangkok’s traffic, it is easily understandable that tourists choose guided bicycle tours as it provides a ‘security blanket’ to cycle on Bangkok’s roads. Tour companies should continuously pay attention to issues of safety and minimize the threats that could affect bicycle tours. In this regard, it is recommendable for the tour guide to adjust to the confidence level of cyclists. Especially at traffic crossings, it may decrease anxiety of ‘weaker’ cyclists to push the bicycle rather than cycling along the foreman. Someone who is not confident with cycling on Bangkok’s roads would not step off and push the bicycle from own initiative, possibly to ensure that he or she can keep pace with the group in front. Thus tour guides should instruct all cyclists to push their bikes and cross heavily congested roads on foot.

**Expectation and Satisfaction of Tourist Respondents**

To begin with, respondents’ expectations were highest regarding the quality of the cycling equipment, as they feel that their safety is widely assured through the high quality of their cycling equipment.

Furthermore, respondents obtained noticeably high expectations regarding the tour guide’s friendliness, enthusiasm, patience, as well as helpfulness and concern. It seems explicit that participants of bicycle tours regard the person of the tour guide and his or her
conduct as significant components of the tour, as it greatly influences the quality and atmosphere of the tour. For tour companies this finding revealed that the guide’s positive attitude is crucial to the quality of the bicycle tour, thus tour companies need to emphasize on this aspect when recruiting new tour guides.

Additionally, expectation on the tour guide’s provision of interesting spots to take pictures was relatively high, due to that tourist desire to capture memorable experiences during their holiday and explicitly during the bicycle tour that takes them off the beaten track and allows them to see the other side of Bangkok.

Expectations on the tour guide’s English language skills and his or her explanation during the bicycle tour, respectively, were likewise considered significant. Considering that English is the universal language of people of diverse backgrounds to communicate with each other, it seems self-evident that participants of bicycle tours expect the tour guide to speak sufficient English. This also shows the interest of participants of bicycle tours to interact with the local tour guide.

On the other hand, expectations on the frequency of breaks to rest and the tour guide’s provision of drinks and snacks during the bicycle tour were relatively low, if compared to other items in the dimension of tour guide’s conduct. This could be due to the high amount of advanced cyclists, who were in healthy shape and hence did not require frequent stops and drinks for resting during the bicycle tour.

Moreover, because all respondents were leisure tourists, it is coherent that the aspect of time compliance of the bicycle tour indicated a rather inferior role. Leisure tourists want to relax during holiday and are not under time pressure.

Furthermore, expectations on the pace of the tour were rather diverse; this could be due to the dynamic discrepancy between advanced, intermediate, and beginner cyclists.

Also, expectations on the guide’s provision of information about the cycling itinerary prior to the tour were greatly diverse. One participant regarded the provision of information about cycling itinerary prior to the tour as meaningful, whereas others stated the contrary. In addition, expectations on the guide’s safety and signaling instructions prior to the tour were rather diverse. However, considering the importance of this aspect to ensure safety of cyclists, it is recommendable that tour companies find a compromising solution to this issue. The safety orientation prior to the bicycle tour should be given adequate importance.
In addition, it was observed that some participants obtained differing expectations on what was provided on the bicycle tour especially in terms of sightseeing. Therefore, it might be recommendable for tour companies to clearly state in their tour description what is included in their tour itinerary. This will clarify to potential cyclists what can be expected and thereby minimize the possibility of experiencing disappointment.

**Opportunities and Limitations of Guided Bicycle Tours**

Although, participants of bicycle tours in Bangkok mainly are tourists from Northern parts of Europe, the assumption that this would entail growing demand for environmentally friendly activities, was not confirmed. In other words, the aspect of environmental concern is not the main push factor for tourists to participate in bicycle tours in Bangkok.

Considering the lack of availability for outdoor family activities in Bangkok, it will stimulate the demand of family participants if tour companies develop bicycle tours exclusively for families. Tour companies could develop new bicycle routes, which include areas that to a greater extent avoid traffic roads to facilitate confidence amongst all cyclists and which include areas of interest to children, e.g. parks with animals. Bicycle tours tailor-made for families provide fun experience for participants of any age.

Even though tour companies make efforts to best avoid traffic roads in their bicycle tours, entirely traffic free bicycle routes within Bangkok are barely possible. Hence to some extent there exists a certain degree of danger especially regarding the driving behavior of motorcyclists, as cyclists need to share the same side of the road and narrow lanes and streets are accessible by both types of vehicles.

Additionally, even if improved Global Positioning Systems are available, nevertheless, tourists who independently cycle and explore Bangkok will likely not experience the variety of things, which are provided on a bicycle tour. Explanations of a local tour guide will likewise lack when tourists cycle and explore Bangkok independently.

Further, knowing that participants of bicycle tours seek to get away from tourist crowds, tour companies should make efforts to avoid that bicycle tours develop into an activity of mass tourism, so that the uniqueness of bicycle tours in Bangkok is maintained.

Apart from this, natural disasters do indicate a limitation to bicycle tours, yet due to Bangkok’s large area, bicycle route adaptation is feasible in a flexible manner. Therefore,
tour companies should prepare alternative bicycle routes, which avoid high-risk flooding zones in the case of future occurrences.

Lastly, cyclists in Bangkok are treated as pedestrians, which means that bicycles can be used to explore parks, temple complexes, and the more quiet residential areas of Bangkok, this could allow bicycle tours to be conducted in an area which is partially traffic free. For instance, temple areas and parks are not accessible for motorcycles, hence possibly decreasing the threat of inconsiderate driving behavior to a minimum level.

**CONCLUSION**

The findings show that ‘to see the other side of Bangkok’, ‘to see things I don’t normally see’, and ‘to see locals’ way of life’, respectively, indicated most significant push factors for tourists to participate in bicycle tours in Bangkok. Considering Bangkok’s numerous shopping and entertainment malls, as well as its highly praised historical attractions, possibly this all the more stimulates the demand for an activity which provides experience off the beaten track and which allows tourists to see the real Thai life. As a matter of fact, the diversity of Bangkok provides the most essential determinant, which significantly contributes to the attractiveness of bicycle tours. Therefore it seems not surprising that in the dimension of sightseeing ‘the unseen side of Bangkok’, ‘the unexpected side of Bangkok’, and ‘local way of life’, demonstrated the most significant pull factors of guided bicycle tours. Participating in guided bicycle tours ensures tourists to experience things yet unseen, and which are unexpected hence are likely to contribute to surprise occurrences, and to get to know the local way of life.

In conclusion, participants of guided bicycle tours derived most satisfaction from the tour guide’s performance. In addition, the high likelihood to recommend the tour showed that respondents were highly satisfied with the bicycle tour, hence would recommend this tour to friends and colleagues as a sign of appreciation and satisfaction.

Future research may include a comparative study of push and pull factors of tourists who participate in guided bicycle tours in urban tourist destinations other than Bangkok. Possibly comparison between urban tourist destinations in Asian and European countries could provide meaningful results. Moreover, comparison of push and pull factors of tourists who participate in daytrips of guided bicycle tours in other popular tourist destinations in Thailand, such as Chiang Mai, Phuket, and Pattaya will display interesting
findings. In addition, it will be interesting to investigate the push and pull factors of tourists who participate in multi-day bicycle tours outside Bangkok and compare these with motivational factors of daytrip participants.

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