

Factors Affecting Thai People's Satisfaction upon Thailand Being a Member of ASEAN Economics Community

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The objective of this research were to study important factors influencing the Thai people's satisfaction upon Thailand being a member of the ASEAN economic community. It focuses on three main groups of factors namely: the occupation-related factors; trade agreement factors; and tourism development and promotion factors, and the relationship between these factors concerning the satisfaction of Thai people upon being a part of ASEAN economics community. A quantitative research methodology was used in this study. The study was carried out for a period of 1 year between October 2014 and July 2015. The population of the study were Thai people who lived in four sub-districts of Aranyaprathet district, Sa Kaeo province, Thailand including (i) Pa-rai; (ii) Pansuk, (iii) Khlong Nam sai, and (iv) Thakam. These areas were selected because they have the borders shared with Cambodia which is also the member of the ASEAN economics community. The data were drawn from 400 individuals, obtained by multi-stage sampling. A questionnaire was used as a data collection method and the data were analyzed with multiple linear regression. The research results indicated that all the above-mentioned factors affected the satisfaction of Thai people- some had positive effect whereas some had negative effect. The important factors included: (i) the quality of tourism service; (ii) child labor problem; (iii) the cooperation between the member countries in the developing and creating transportation networks. Moreover, It was also found that these three groups of factors had relationships with each other, namely, trade agreement factors depended on work-related factors; and trade agreement factors and work-related factors together affect tourism development and promotion factors.

Keywords: Factors; Satisfaction; ASEAN economics community; Thai people

Field of research: Economics

1. Research Background and Significances

ASEAN Economic Community or AEC is an integration of a group of ten member countries including Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore AEC (2014). The objective of this integration is to increase the negotiation power with other trade partners for the member states. It also aims to increase the competitive advantages at a global scale, provide tax exemption for some kinds of goods for the member states, and promote prosperity for the region and well-being of citizens of the member states. AEC has a clear action plan with definite goals. It also creates a mutual market base and production base for all the member states. The transfer of goods, services, investment, and labors can be done freely among the member states. These attempts are expected to be occurred at a full scale by the end 2015.

The main goals of AEC consist of four aspects which are known as the four economic pillars. They are: (1) single market and production base which means that there

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will be liberalization and facilitation of free flow of products, services, capital, investment, and skilled labor; (2) competitive economic region which can be achieved by laying the foundation for completion policy, consumer, protection, intellectual, and property rights, the infrastructure development, and the development of energy and mineral cooperation; (3) equitable economic development which can be achieved by the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the implementation of initiative for ASEAN integration; and (4) integration into the global economy which can be achieved by the entry into force of free trade agreements ASEAN Economic Community (2014).

Although the economic integration of the countries in a form of ASEAN economic community is very beneficial for all the member states, a number of citizens in these member states still do not understand the real roles of their countries nor the benefits they will gain. Thorough understanding and satisfaction of the citizens of the member states are important factors leading to the success of the operation of ASEAN economic community. However, at present, the government and other related stakeholders do not have ideas on how Thai citizens think about Thailand being a member state of ASEAN economic community. With this reason, the researchers conducted this study with the aim to investigate the level of Thai people's satisfaction on Thailand being a part of ASEAN economic community and the factors influencing their satisfaction.

2. The Objectives of the Research

The objectives of this research are as follows:

2.1 To study the influence of the occupation-related factors (i.e. Free flows of certain kinds of occupations, child labor problem, and human trafficking) on the trade agreement factors (i.e. agreements on services, agreements on free trade, and agreements on facilities).

2.2 To examine the influence of the trade agreement factors, and occupation-related factors on the tourism development and promotion factors (i.e. cooperation in transportation, exclusion, and tourism development cooperation).

2.3 examine the influences of the occupation-related factors, the trade agreement factors, and the tourism development and promotion factors in the satisfaction of Thai people upon being a part of ASEAN economic community.

3. The Research Hypotheses

Based on the above-mentioned research objectives, the following research hypotheses were developed.

3.1 The occupation-related factors have an influence on the trade agreement factors.

3.2 The trade agreement factors and the occupation-related factors have an influence on the tourism development and promotion factors.

3.3 The three main factors including the trade agreement factors, the occupation-related factors, and the tourism development and promotion factors have an influence on the satisfaction of Thai people upon being a part of ASEAN economic community.

4. Expected Outcomes of the Research

The researchers expected that the findings of this research could provide the following outcomes:

4.1 To provide knowledge and understanding on the factors influencing the satisfaction of Thai people living in four sub-districts of Aranyaprathet district, Sa Kaeo province on being members of ASEAN economic community.

4.2 To serve as a starting point for future research on satisfaction of Thai people upon being members of ASEAN economic community. Future research can extend this study by examining other factors.

4.3 To provide a useful insight for the government and other related stakeholders for determining policies related to being a part of ASEAN economic community.

5. Review of Literature

5.1 Satisfaction

Satisfaction refers to individuals' mental state which is free from stress or anxiety. It is human nature that when an individual needs something, and his needs is fully or partly responded, stress or anxiety in the mind will be reduced, then satisfaction will occur. On the other hand, if his needs is not responded, stress and dissatisfaction will occur instead Morse (2015). According to Shelly (2015), satisfaction can be classified into two types which are positive feeling and negative feeling. When the positive feeling occurs, an individual will be happy, but when the negative feeling occur, he will be unhappy or anxious. Both kinds of feeling have complex relationship. Satisfaction is an important factors that can lead individuals or organizations to be successful. If an organization would like to set any new policies, they have to do it consistently with people's satisfaction (Somjai, 2017).

5.2 Trade agreement

Countries in ASEAN region has agreements in various forms such as political and security agreements, social and cultural agreements, and economic or trade agreement.

After the end of the cold war, countries in the ASEAN region changed their goal from focusing on the extension of their military power and their territories to emphasizing the economic status of their countries. In order to achieve the goal of enhancing countries' economic status, these countries are aware that they could not do it alone, but they have to work with neighboring countries. Many countries in the ASEAN region initiated the integration of countries and trade agreements for the purpose of economic so that they could enhance the efficient in the production of goods/services and enjoy better negotiating power with countries in other regions. The examples of such integration and trade agreement are ASEAN Free Trade Area or FTA, ASEAN Investment Area or AIA, ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services, ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) Singapore FTA Network (2015). The aspects of trade agreement that are of interest of this study include agreements on services, agreements on free trade, and agreements on facilities.

5.3 Occupation

Having an occupation is the source of revenue which will be spent for living expenses such as food, shelters, clothes, and medicine. In the past these four requisites were provided to member of the family by family leaders who normally made by themselves or got them from exchanging something with other families. However, as the ways of life of people in the society has been changed and people have higher education, they change the way to get these four requisites and other necessary things by using their knowledge or in other words by having an occupation. The necessities for people to have occupations include: (1) for the benefits of themselves (2) to the benefits of their family (3) for the benefits of the community and (4) for the benefits of the country. In having an

occupation, individuals should consider the following factors, namely: (1) capital; (2) knowledge and abilities; (3) management; and (5) marketing (Papoutsakis, 2015).

ASEAN economic community has a goal to have a mutual market and production base where the transfer of investment and skilled labor can be done freely. The occupations or the area of works that ASEAN economic community aim to provide free flow of skilled labor include: (1) engineers; (2) surveys; (3) architects; (4) doctors; (5) dentists (6) nurses; (7) accountants; and (8) tourism and services Tourism Knowledge Management Center (2015). The aspects of occupation-related factors that are of interest of this study include: free flows of certain kinds of occupations, child labor problem, and human trafficking.

5.4 Tourism

Tourism is considered to be one of the main industries of Thailand. It creates a large amount of foreign currency to the country. Many related organizations including tour operators, travel agencies, hotel, and airlines has been developing promotional campaign to promote tourism. Nowadays, modern technology has been utilized in the tourism business. For example, many companies used internet network and e-commerce to promote tourism Tourism Authority of Thailand (2015).

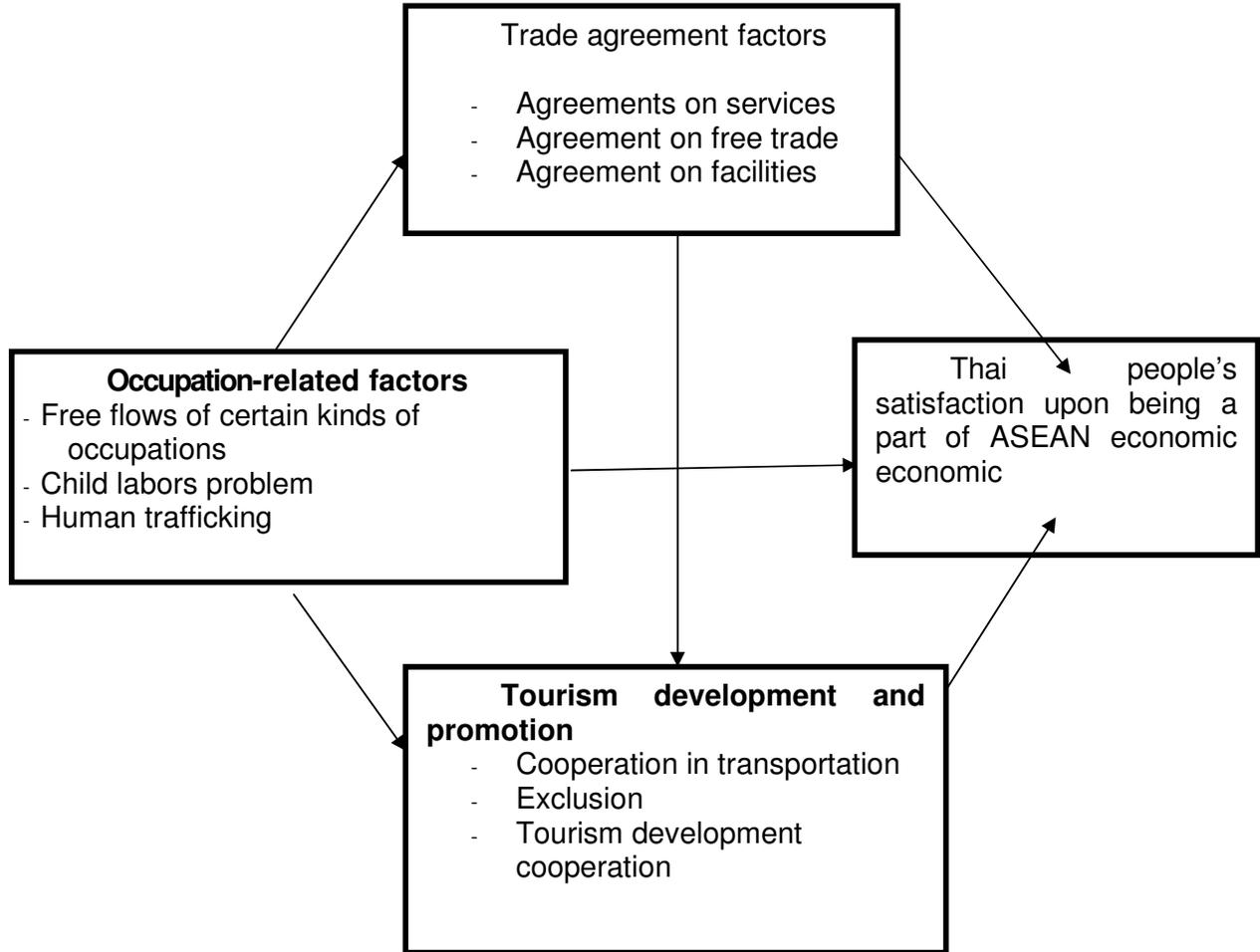
As tourism industry plays an important role in the economic system of many countries because it serves as a source of foreign currency and job creation. With this reason, many countries has developed certain forms of cooperation in tourism activities both in a regional level and on a global level. The examples of these cooperation include World Tourism Organization or WTO, EU, APEC, and ASEAN FTA Agreement (2015).

Although the cooperation and free trade agreement in tourism services among member states provide a lot of benefits, it may also cause some negative impacts, for example, entrepreneurs of small-or medium sized enterprises may have to end their business as a result of higher and more intense completion with foreign companies. With this reason, the member states have to establish a committee consisting of people who have proper knowledge and have to have proper laws and regulations. This study aimed to study the opinion of Thai people on the tourism development and promotion factors which include cooperation in transportation, exclusion, and tourism development cooperation.

6. Conceptual framework of the Research

Based on the review of related literature and research, a conceptual framework of this research was developed. It shows the relationship between the three main factors (occupation-related factors, trade agreement factors, and tourism development and promotion factors) and the satisfaction of Thai people upon being a part of the ASEAN economic community and the relationship among these three factors. The conceptual framework of the research is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework of the Research



7. Research Methodology

As this research aimed to investigate the casual relationship between more than two groups of variables, a quantitative research methodology is an approach that is enable the researcher to achieve that objective. The study was undertaken over a one-year period between October 2014 and July 2015.

The population of this research were the Thai people who lived in four sub-districts of Aranyaprathet district, Sa Kaeo province, Thailand including (i) Pa-rai; (ii) Pansuk, (iii) Khlong Nam sai, and (iv) Tha-kam. These areas were selected because they have the borders shared with Cambodia which is also the member of the ASEAN economics community.

The research sample was selected from the population by using multi-stage sampling. As a result, a total of 400 individuals were selected. A self-administered questionnaire was developed as a data collection method. The researchers designed a questionnaire by reviewing the literature and related research. The collected data were analyzed with multiple linear regression in order to examine the relationship among the trade agreement factors, occupation-related factors, and tourism development and promotion factors and the relationship between these three factors and the Thai people's satisfaction.

8. The Research Findings

8.1 Factors influencing the respondents' opinion on the trade agreement factors.

Details in Table 1 show the influence of the respondents' opinion on the occupation-related factors on their opinion on the trade agreement factors. The research findings revealed that the respondents' opinion on all of the trade agreement factors including free flow of the certain kinds of occupation, child labor problem, and human trafficking problem had an influence on their opinion on the trade agreement factors. Specifically, if the respondents' opinion on the free flow of certain kinds of occupation and the problem of human trafficking was high, their opinion on the trade agreement was likely to be high as well. On the other hand, if their opinion on these factors was low, their opinion on the trade agreement was also low. However, the respondents' opinion on the problem of child labor was different because if their opinion on the child labor was high, the opinion on the trade agreement was likely to be low.

Table 1: Factors influencing the respondents' opinion on the trade agreement factors (N= 400)

Independent variables	Beta	t	Sig.
Free flow of the certain kinds of occupation	.526	10.545	.000
Child labor problem	-.165	-3.190	.002
Human trafficking problem	.521	13.846	.000

$R^2 = .63$, SEE = .80, F = 223.51, Sig. Of F = .000

2. Factors influencing tourism development and promotion

Table 2 shows the data analysis of the relationship between the trade agreement factors and tourism development and promotion factors. The research findings revealed that all of the trade agreement factors including agreements on services, agreements on free trade, and agreements on facilities had an influence on tourism development and promotion. In other words, it means that if the respondents' opinion on all factors of trade agreement factors was high, their opinion on tourism development and promotion was also high. On the other hand, if the respondents' opinion on the trade agreement factors was low, their opinion on the tourism development and promotion was also low.

However, when adding the factors of occupation-related into consideration, it was found that two of the trade agreement factors which were agreement on services, and agreement on facilities, and three of the occupation-related factors including free flow of certain kinds of occupation, child labor problem, and human trafficking problem had an influence on tourism development and promotion. Specifically, if the respondents' opinion on these factors were high, their opinion on tourism development and promotion was also high. On the other hand, if the respondents' opinion on these five factors was low, their

opinion on tourism development and promotion was likely to be low as well. However, as for the factor of agreements on free trade, it was found that it had no influence on tourism development and promotion.

**Table 2: Factors influencing tourism development and promotion
 (N= 400)**

Independent variable	Standard regression co-efficiency	
	Model 1	Model 2
Agreements on service	.537***	.141***
Agreements on free trade	.171***	.059
Agreement on facilities	.184***	.102**
Free flows of certain kinds of occupation		.453***
Child labor problem		.212***
Human trafficking problem		.082*
	R	.75
	R ²	.57
	SEE	.1.10
	F	172.14
		.88
		.51
		.80
		222.74

Remark: * = p<.05, ** = p<.01, *** = p<.001

3. Factors influencing the satisfaction of Thai people upon being a part of ASEAN economic community

The results of the data analysis showed that among the three factors under the trade agreement factors, only agreements on service had an influence on Thai people's satisfaction upon being a part of ASEAN economic community, the other two factors which were agreements on free trade and agreements on facilities had no effect on their satisfaction. It was found that if the respondents' opinion on agreements on service was high, their satisfaction was likely to be high as well. On the other hand, if their opinion on agreements on service was low, their satisfaction was also low.

When adding the occupation-related factors into consideration, it was found that one factor under the trade agreement factors which was the agreement on service and two factors under the occupation-related factors including child labor problem and human trafficking problem had an influence on Thai people satisfaction. The relationship between them was in the same direction which means that if the respondents' opinion on agreement on services, child labor problem, and human trafficking problem was high, their satisfaction was likely to be high as well. However, for the agreement on free trade, agreement on facilities, and free flow of certain kinds of occupation, it was found that they had no influence on Thai people's satisfaction.

Finally, when taking the tourism development and promotion into consideration together with the other two group of factors, it was found that one factor under the trade agreement factors which was agreements on service, one factor under the occupation-related factors which was child labor problem, and two factors under the tourism development and promotion factors which were cooperation in transportation and exclusion had an influence on the respondents' satisfaction. In other words, the relationship between them was in the same direction. If the respondents' opinion on these factors was high, their satisfaction was also likely to be high. On the other hand, if the respondents' opinion on these factors was low, their satisfaction seemed to be low as well. However, other factors including agreements on free trade, agreements on facilities, free flow of certain kinds of occupation, human trafficking problem, and tourism development cooperation had no effect of Thai people's satisfaction.

Table 3 Factors influencing Thai people's satisfaction on being a part of ASEAN economic community (N= 400)

Independent variable	Standard regression co-efficiency			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	
Agreements on service	.658***	.300***	.277***	
Agreements on free trade	.081	.010	-.009	
Agreements on facilities	.078	.060	.047	
Free flow of certain kinds of occupation		.105	.056	
Child labor problem		.361***	-.305***	
Human trafficking problem		.092*	.030	
Cooperation in transportation			.107*	
Exclusion			.173**	
Tourism development cooperation			-.009	
	R	.74	.81	.82
	R ²	.55	.66	.68
	SEE	1.09	.95	.93
	F	159.02	128.30	89.92

Remark: * = p<.05, ** = p<.01, *** = p<.001

9. Discussion

The result of the research hypothesis testing showed that for the first hypothesis, it was found that Thai people's opinion on all of the occupation-related factors including free flow of certain kinds of occupation, child labor problem, and human trafficking problem, had an influence on their opinion on the trade agreement factors. Therefore, the assumption of the first hypothesis was confirmed.

For the second hypothesis which assumed that Thai people's opinion on the trade agreement factors and the occupation-related factors have an influence on the tourism development and promotion factors. The results showed that Thai people's opinion on only two factors under the trade agreement factors and all of the three factors under the occupation-related factors had an influence on their opinion on the tourism development

and promotion. Only a factor of agreements on free trade had no relationship with tourism development and promotion. This means that part of the assumption of the second hypothesis was confirmed.

For the last hypothesis which assumed that Thai people' opinion on all of the factors under the trade agreement factors, the occupation-related factors, and the tourism development and promotion factors had an influence on the satisfaction of Thai people upon being a part of ASEAN economic community. It was found that some of these factors had an influence on their satisfaction, except agreements on free trade, agreements on facilities, free flow of certain kinds of occupation, and tourism development cooperation. Therefore, it can be concluded that part of the assumption of the third hypothesis was confirmed.

10. Suggestions

This study offered suggestions that the Thai government should pay a special attention on the factors including child labor problem, cooperation in transportation, and exclusion. Because these factors have an effect on the satisfaction of Thai people on Thailand being a part of the ASEAN economic community. It also suggests that more research on other factors that may have an influence on Thai people satisfaction on this issue should be conducted.

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