

# Motivations Between Island Tourists

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**Executive Briefing:** The island tourism market is a major growth segment worldwide in international tourism. Penghu, Taiwan, and Phuket, Thailand, have become major tourism destinations for Taiwanese tourists. This paper will explore the difference between Taiwanese tourists who choose between Penghu and Phuket as their travel destinations.



Island tourism has played a significant role in the overall economic structure of many Pacific islands, in some cases accounting for well over 50% of export earnings. For some islands, international tourism contributes the largest percentage to the gross national product of all-island states. In addition to the economic impact on local communities, islands provide a wide variety of natural resources and activities for tourists.

Phuket is an island that is well-known around the world. The tourism income in Phuket accounts for 33% of Thailand's total tourism revenue. Approximately 5 million international tourists visited Phuket in 2006 (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2006). An estimated 400,000 Taiwanese tourists visited Phuket in 2006, making Phuket one of the most popular foreign island destinations among Taiwanese. On the other hand, the largest island in Taiwan, Penghu, has long been a favorite domestic island and brings in approximately 430,000 Taiwanese tourists every year (Taiwan Tourism Bureau Ministry, 2006).

Tourism in Phuket accounts for one-third of Thailand's total tourism revenue.

Islands dependent on tourism economies vary in their size, land area, location, resource bases, levels of economic development, and the extent to which they rely on tourism and consistent inflow of direct foreign investment for economic growth. Therefore, understanding tourist motivations and travel behaviors are key elements for planning and destination marketing. The lack of knowledge about visitor motivations, and consequent weaknesses in planning and marketing, is evident in many small island destinations. This may seriously impede future development of the tourism industry on these islands.

## Travel Motivations

There are multiple motivations behind tourists' decisions to travel. In addition, tourists might have different reasons for choosing domestic or international vacations. The importance of both push and pull factors in shaping tourist motivations and their choice of vacation destinations has been emphasized. Push factors are

origin-related and refer to the intangible, intrinsic desires of the individual traveler (e.g., the desire for escape, rest and relaxation, adventure, health, or prestige). Pull factors are mainly related to the attractiveness of a given destination and its tangible characteristics, such as beaches, accommodation and recreational facilities, and cultural and historical resources.

Taiwanese tourists interested in visiting domestic and foreign island destinations emerge as a significant segment based on a certain percentage of the tourist market, but that segment has not drawn strong attention from tourism researchers. Thus, this study investigates the motivations and travel behaviors of Taiwanese tourists related to their choices to travel either to Penghu or Phuket as a travel destination.

## Study Methods and Findings

This study adopted convenience sampling and targeted travel groups organized by travel agents. The data was respectively collected from Taiwanese travel groups visiting Penghu, Taiwan, and Phuket, Thailand during summer 2007. A total of 383 tourists responded the survey on-site at a response rate of 54.7%. The socio-demographic profile of respondents revealed that Penghu tourists were younger and more often single, and had lower incomes, than those in Phuket. Moreover, Friends and Family were the two most often reported groups of traveling companions for visitors to both Penghu and Phuket. With regard to the number of traveling companions, the respondents of Penghu and Phuket traveled with 5–10 people. The majority of the Penghu tourists took a trip for 3 days, whereas more than half of the Phuket tourists traveled for 5 days. The respondents of Penghu and Phuket mainly acquired travel information from family, friends, magazines, newspapers, and the Internet.

The socio-demographic profile of respondents revealed that Penghu tourists were younger and more often single than those in Phuket.

Taiwanese tourists had stronger motivations to visit Phuket than Penghu based on push factors of reducing stress and getting away from daily life, learning something new or increasing knowledge, finding thrills

and excitement, and rediscovering themselves. Taiwanese tourists also were more strongly motivated to visit Phuket than Penghu based on pull motives of good air quality and undersea views, spacious beaches and clean environment, good service quality, safety and security of facilities, and recommendations from media and travel agencies. Overall, Taiwanese tourists had stronger push and pull motivations to visit Phuket as a tourist destination compared to Penghu. The greatest differences were for the push motive to learn something new or increase knowledge, and the pull motive of the island's exotic features.

## Summary

Identifying motivational factors is a key component of international tourist behavior studies. It is necessary to understand the motivational and behavioral differences that create tourists' satisfaction and repeat visits. A comparison of tourist motivations and behaviors across different destinations can help policy makers, planners, and marketers of island destinations establish their own marketing strategies to attract visitors.

This study indicates that Taiwanese tourists are more attracted by Phuket as an island destination than Penghu with the comparison of travel motivations. Planners and marketers need to differentiate Penghu from other islands and concentrate their efforts on utilizing their unique resources to shape its own niche in the competitive island tourism market. On the other hand, Phuket should

emphasize its strong attractiveness of an exotic environment and natural resources to attract more Taiwanese tourists and make them stay longer.

Effective positioning and proper marketing strategies based on these findings will facilitate both Penghu and Phuket to increase their market share. ♦ [gBR Article 02-08](#), Copyright © 2008.

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