

Factors Influencing Tourist Loyalty of International Graduate Students: A Study on Tourist Destination in Pattaya, Thailand

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Abstract: Tourism industry has become very important and is considered as one of the largest businesses in the world. Loyalty is an important issue for the sustainability of business of the companies. Relationships with the customers should be built well in order to achieve their satisfaction and consequently loyalty. First this study aims to find out how tourists evaluate the quality of image of destination, perceived value, service quality and satisfaction of Pattaya how satisfied they are with Pattaya, loyalty intention to revisit and willingness to recommend others to Pattaya. The second purpose is to investigate what image, perceived value, service quality and satisfaction are most important to explain satisfaction with Pattaya. The last purpose is to investigate how image, perceived value, service quality and satisfaction influence to tourist loyalty and willingness to recommend others to Pattaya. The conceptual framework was adapted from previous studies found in the literature review. The questionnaire data was collected from 172 tourists of international graduate students in Siam University. The analysis of quantitative data was used descriptive and inferential statistics to test different between destination image, perceived value, service quality, satisfaction and tourist loyalty.

Keywords: Destination Image, Perceived Value, Service Quality, Satisfaction and Tourist Loyalty.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the tourism industry is growing rapidly; Tourism has become one of the most important sectors of the global economy (Srikram, 2015; Lopes, 2011). Although Thailand is a small country, it is one of the world's leading tourist destinations. Tourism is becoming the pillar industry in Thailand and plays an important role in the Thai economic structure even in the whole society, and it has a profound effect on Thai economy. In 2015, the World Tourism Organization listed Thailand in the top 10 of global tourism destinations by arrivals in 2012 and in 2013, with international arrivals of 22.4 million and 26.5 million, respectively. The country ranked seventh in tourism destinations by revenue, hitting US\$33.8 billion and \$42 billion in 2012 and 2013, respectively. The industry generates hundreds of billion baht in revenue. Since development of the tourism industry brings a lot of positive impacts to the economic development of the country (N.H.M, et al, 2014), A lack of understanding of customer preference leads to problems in both product and service design so that destination managers have to plan and strategize the marketing aspect of destination management. For this reason tourist loyalty is essential to survival of any tourist destination. Loyalty is the way to build and develop relationship between the customer and the company. Customer loyalty is another way to gain the best possible customer, repeat customers. Importantly, loyal customers are less likely to switch to a competitor solely because of price, and they even make more purchases than non-loyal customers. Also they are often the people who tend to provide the best word of mouth advertising possible. Loyal customers are considered to be the most important assets of a company. Therefore, understanding how consumers form their destination and brand loyalty, and the factors could affect their loyalty formation is important for the success and survival of any business.

2. OBJECTIVES

This study attempts to find out the factors which may be importance as a guideline for tourist destination manager in Pattaya towards tourist loyalty which related to destination image, perceived value, service quality and satisfaction. In this respect, the research objectives that emanated from the review of the literature are to:

1. Identify if destination Image influences Tourist Loyalty.
2. Identify if Perceived Value influence on Tourist Loyalty
3. Identify if Service Quality has a positive influence on Tourist Loyalty.
4. Identify if Satisfaction has a positive influence on loyalty.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Destination image is an essential factor for tourist places and better image of the destination bring more tourist towards destination (Haque& Khan, 2013). Destination image has influenced tourists' behaviors because Tourists make their choices of where to travel based on the destination images. Banyai (2010) defines destination image as; the sum of beliefs and impressions people holds about place. Images represent a simplification of a larger number of associations and pieces of information connected to a place. They are a product of the mind trying to process and pick out essential information from huge amounts of data about a place.

Perceived value is common and very essential issue of marketing area and is an important element in relationship marketing. Perceived value is defined with comparison of the benefits or output with the prices of products or services and is related with customer satisfaction (Haque& khan, 2013). In tourism context, the traveler evaluates both monetary and nonmonetary factors such as the time, energy and effort that have been spent for the trip (Alizadeh, 2014). Mechinda (2010) one of the most cited definitions of perceived value is presented by Zeithaml that he has defined perceived value as the consumers overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given.

Service quality is a way to manage business processes in order to ensure total satisfaction to the customer on all levels (internal and external) (Grzinic, 2010). Siddiqi (2011) define service quality as "a global judgment or attitude relating to a particular service; the customer's overall impression of the relative inferiority or superiority of the organization and its services. Ebrahimpour (2010) defined Service quality as a gap between the customer's expectations of a service and the customer's perceptions of the service received.

Tourists' satisfaction is significant to achieve high visitors' intention in revisiting the same destination. Satisfying customers can encourage customer's loyalty and foster word-of-mouth advertising (Xiaoli&Chirapanda, 2013). According to puh (2014) defined satisfaction as pleasurable fulfillment. That means that the consumer senses that consumption fulfils some need or desire and that this fulfillment is pleasurable. In the case of tourism destination, tourists value the degree of pleasurable fulfillment of their needs and wishes on a full range of services, products, image etc offered in a destination so satisfaction depends on the experience they have with using those services.

Consumer loyalty has been considered a significant asset to an organization. In a normal situation each company wants to have loyal customers. Loyal customers have a high repeat purchase behavior and a positive attitude towards a company (Van Es, 2012). Many previous loyalty studies indicated that higher customer loyalty often results in higher profitability and more stable customer basis. Loyal customers not only represent a stable source of revenue, but also act as free word-of-mouth advertising channels that informally link networks of friends, relatives and other potential consumers to a product/service (Taylor & Francis, 2015).

4. METHOD

This study is a descriptive research using questionnaires as the tools for collecting data at Pattaya, Thailand. The survey questionnaires were distributed to international graduatstudents from the Universities of Thailanddue to time and budget restrictions. A survey was administered from sample population. The term survey is commonly applied to a research methodology designed to collect data from sample population, or a sample from that population, and typically utilizes a questionnaire or as the survey instrument in this study.

In this study, a quantitative method by using questionnaires will be adopted as the method by which the survey was completed and it designed with a set of questions that are mainly created from the literature. Selection of the sampling method to use in a study depends on a number of related theoretical and practical issues. These include considering the nature of the study, the objectives of the study and the time and budget available. The sample of this study will be selected through a non-probability convenience sample for the survey in this research. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and accessibility to the researcher. Under convenience sampling, the sample collection depends on the researcher's personal judgment.

The sampling technique in this study used population of totally 300 international graduate students who registered in Siam University, Thailand in the year of 2015 according to office record. The researcher has considered this number as the population.

By using the following formulation of Yamane 1993, number of sample size equals number of population divided by one plus number of population and multiply with 5 percent of precision or $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$ where, n is number of sample size, N is number of population, and e is 5 percent of the level of precision. Therefore, the sample size was 172 international graduate students.

Formulation of Yamane 1993, $n = N / (1 + (N * e^2))$

Where, n = Sample size

N = Population size (300 internal graduated students)

e = the level of precision (5%)

Therefore, $n = 300 / (1 + (300 * 0.05)^2)$

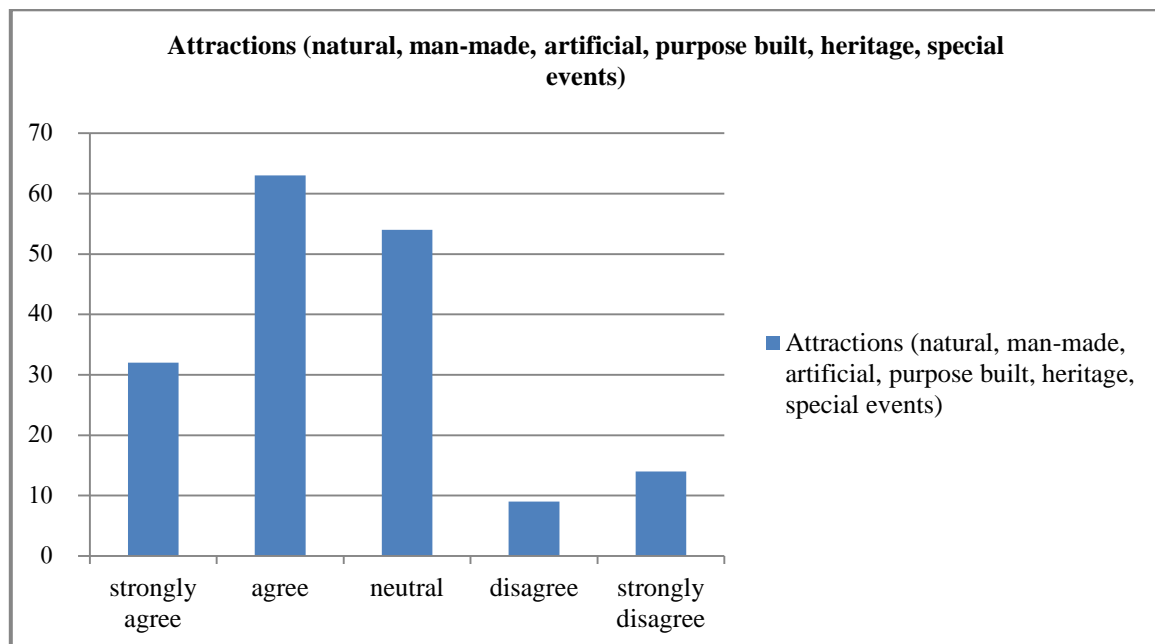
n = 172 samples

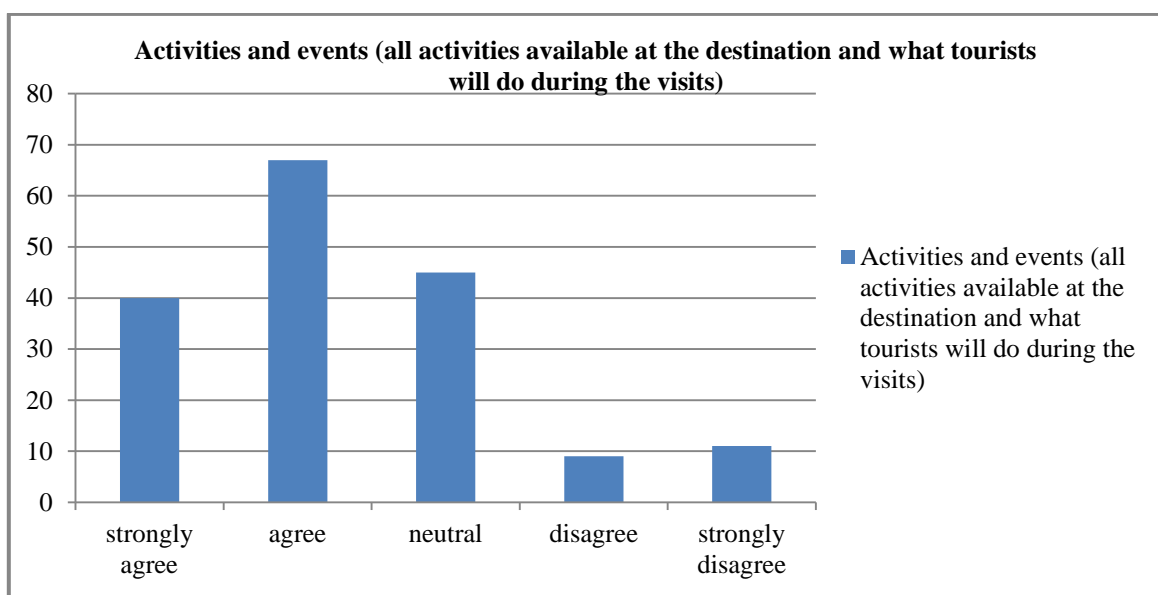
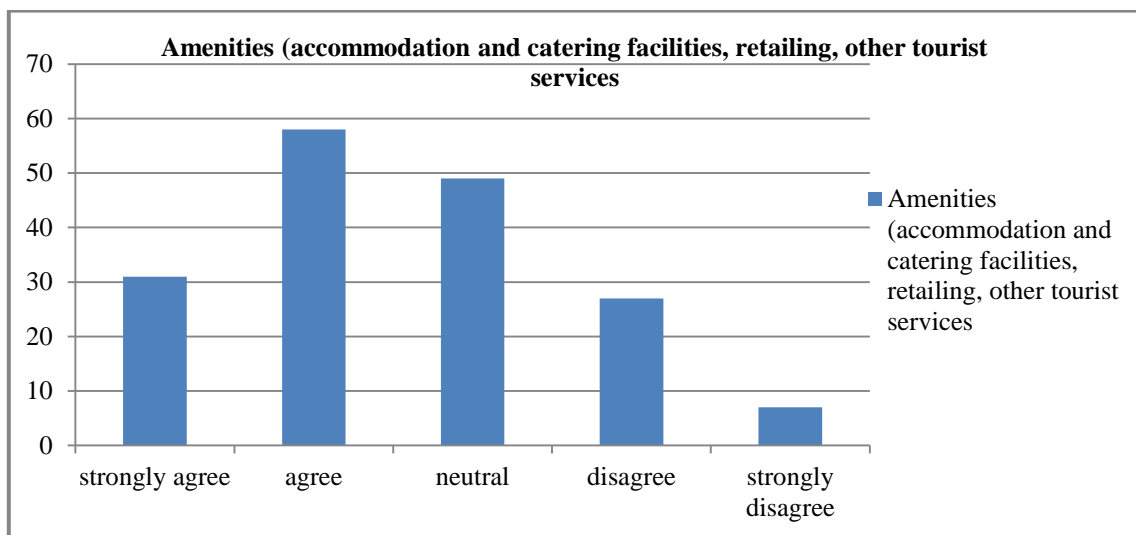
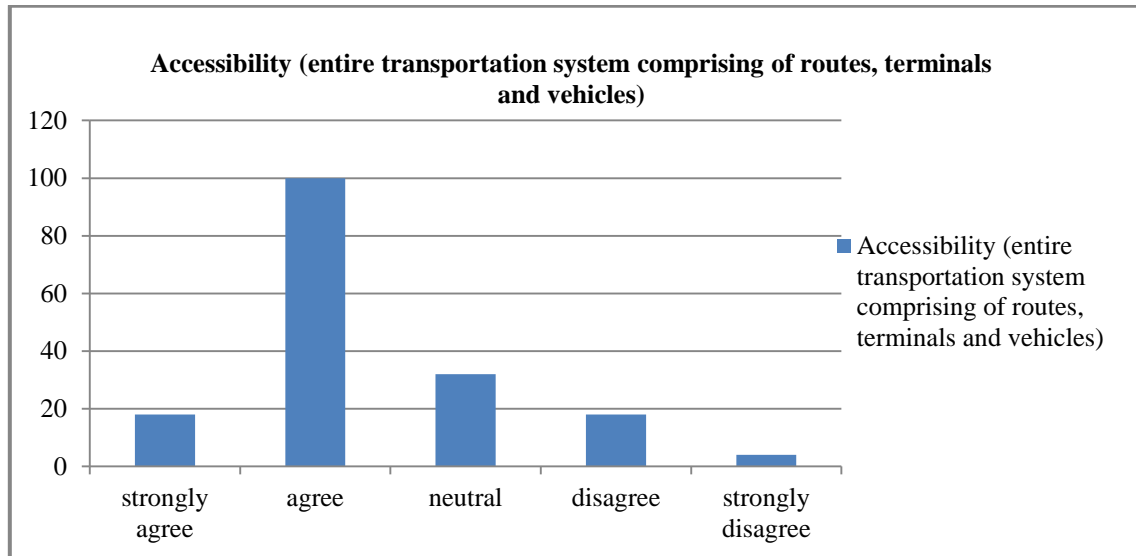
The sample size is about 172 international graduate students.

5. RESULTS

The result are divided into many parts; the part is related demographic such as gender, age, marital status, residence of country and so forth; the second part is related to their answers to the destination image, perceived value, service quality, satisfaction and tourist loyalty.

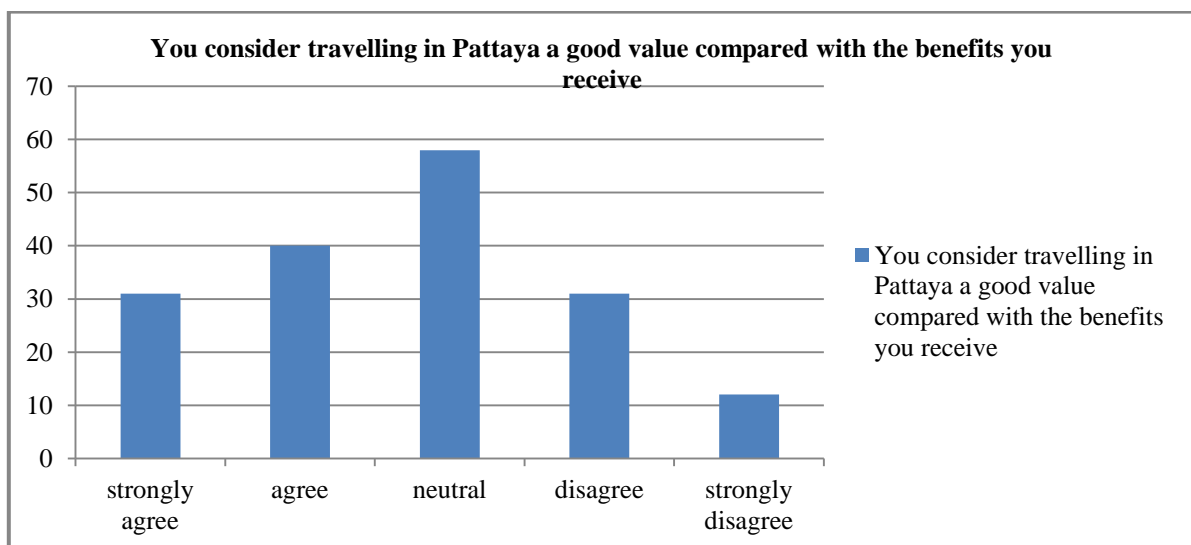
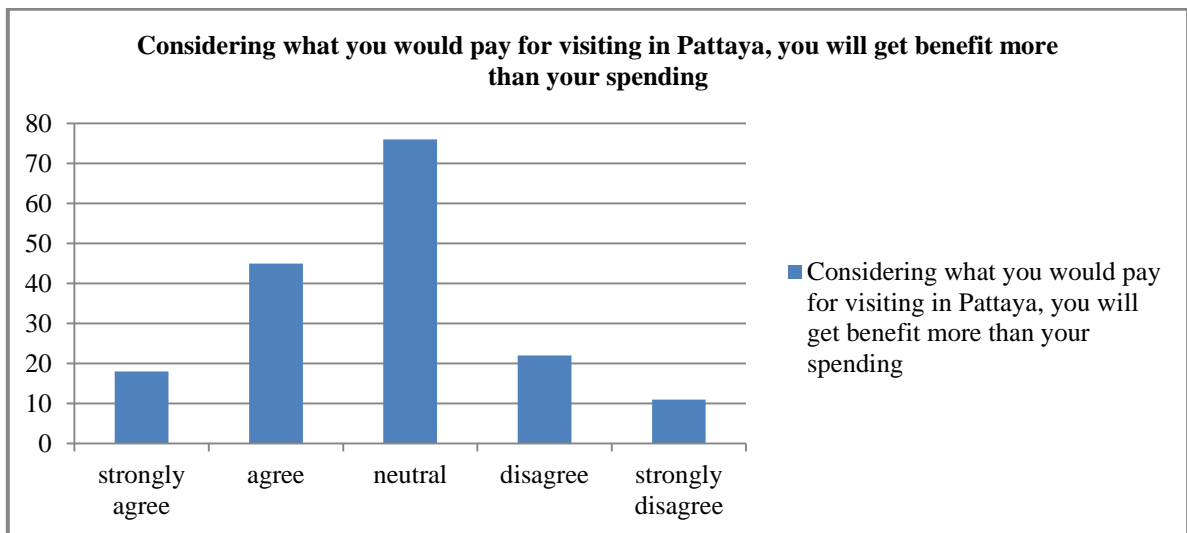
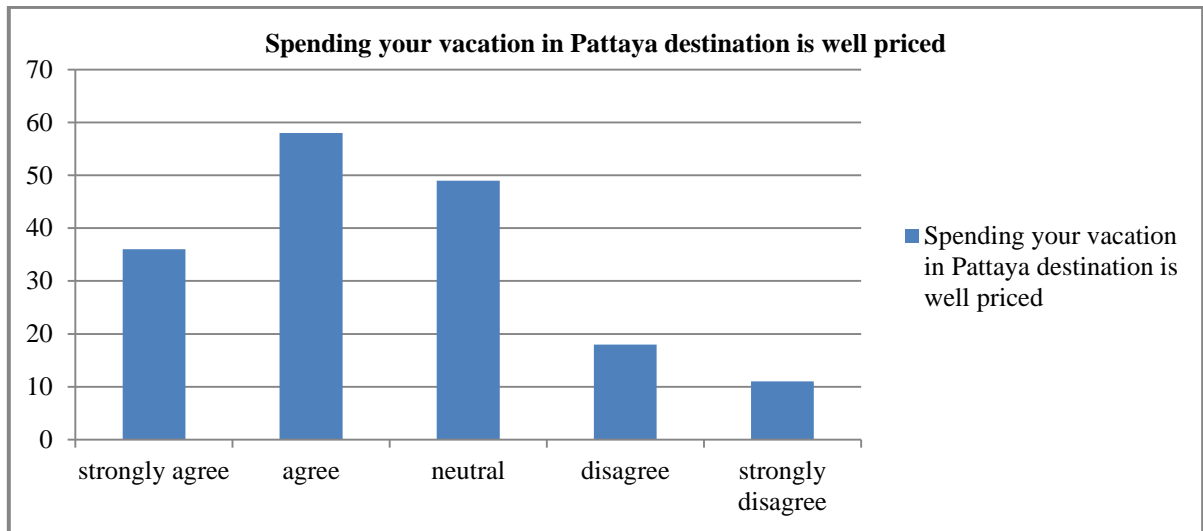
– Destination Image:





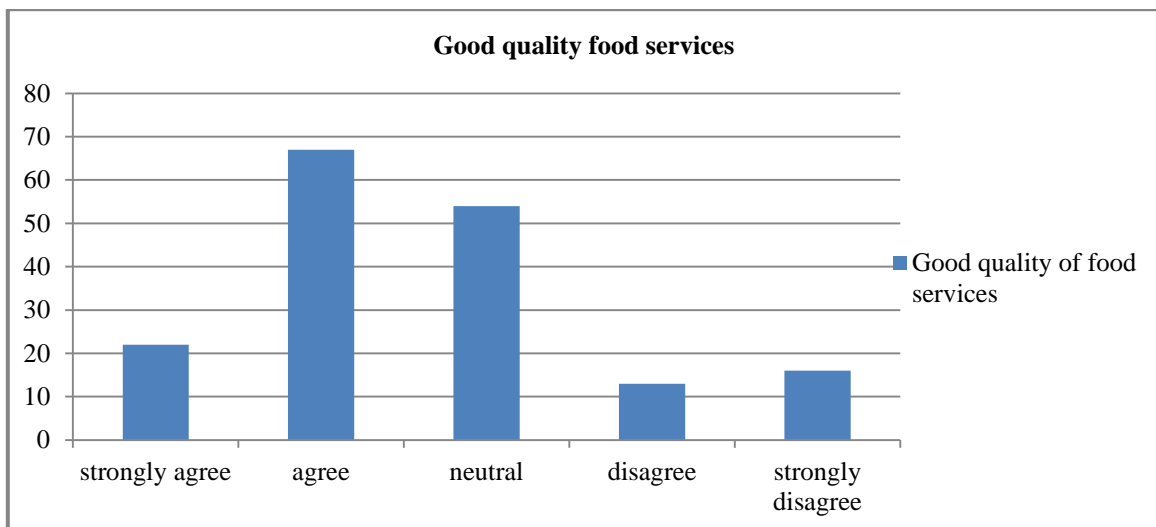
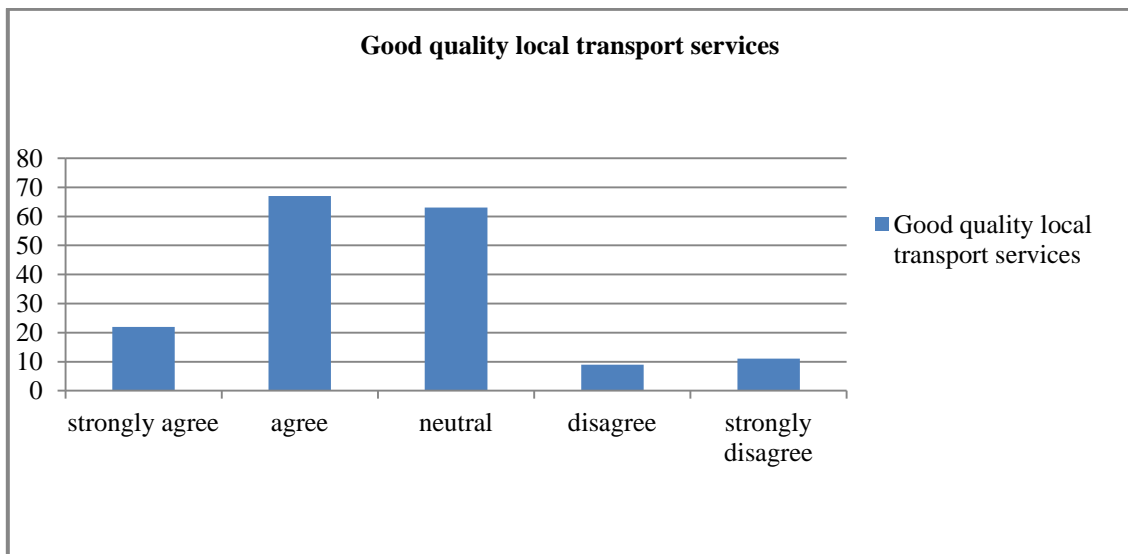
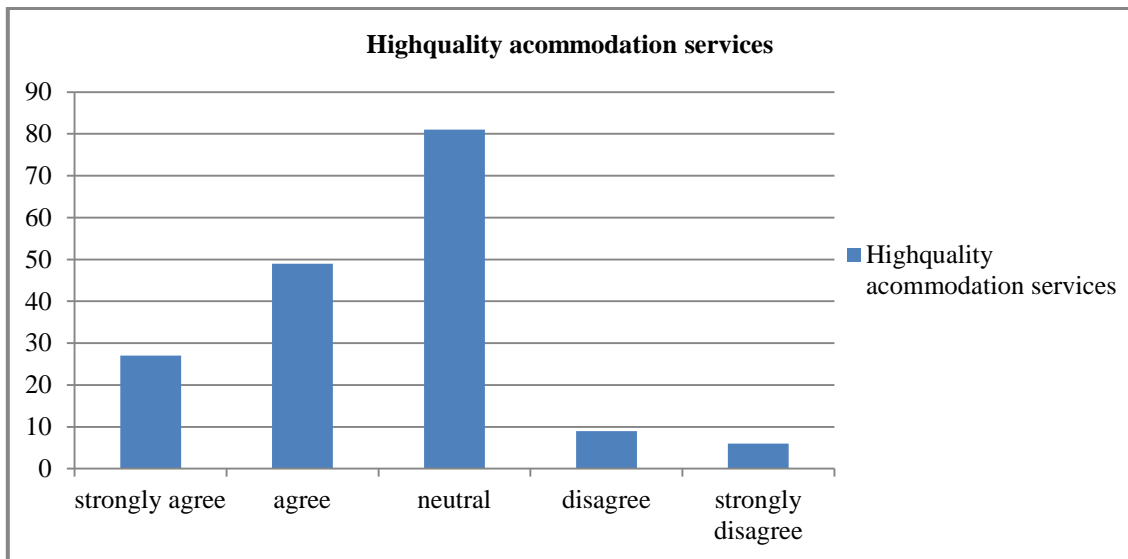
This dimension includes four items. Based on above the tables, all of destination images such as Attractions, Accessibilities, Amenities and Activities were considered as Agree level.

– Perceived Value:



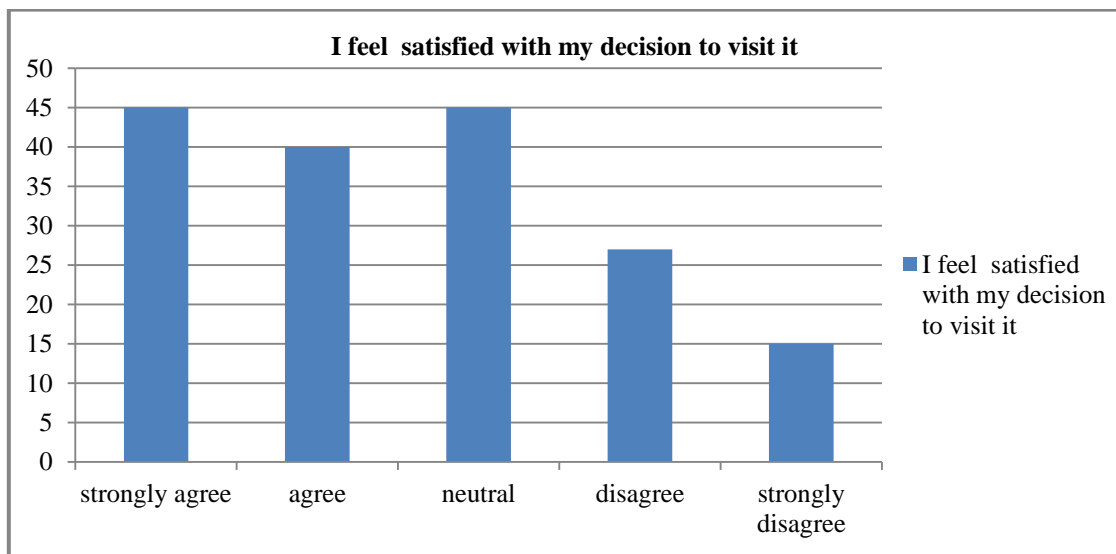
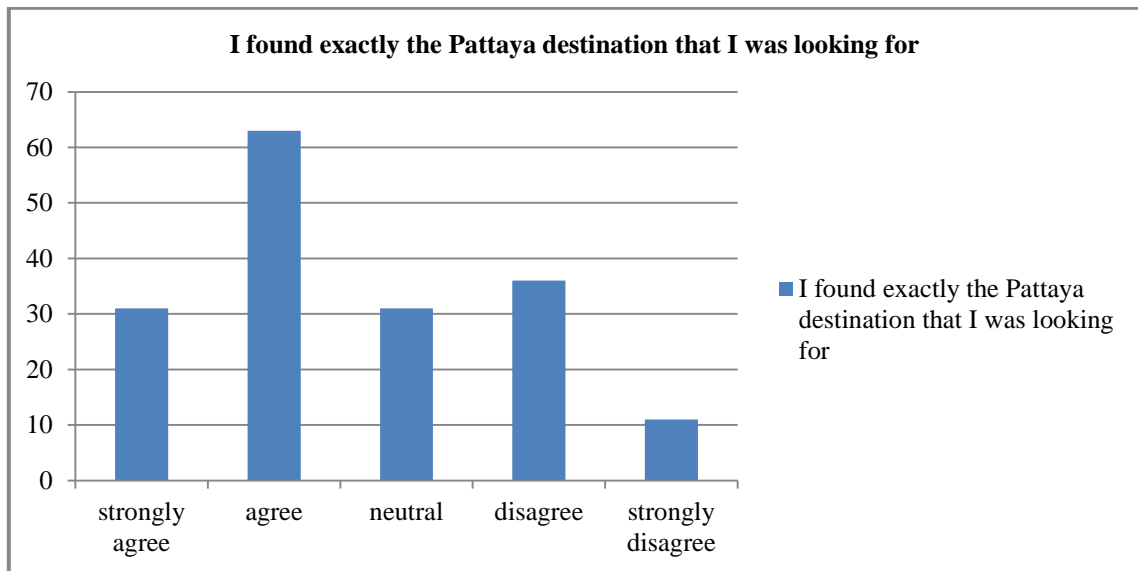
This dimension includes three items (1) Spending your vacation in Pattaya destination is well priced showing agree level whereas (2) Considering what you would pay for visiting in Pattaya, you will get benefit more than your spending and (3) You consider traveling in Pattaya a good value compared with the benefits you receive showing as neutral level.

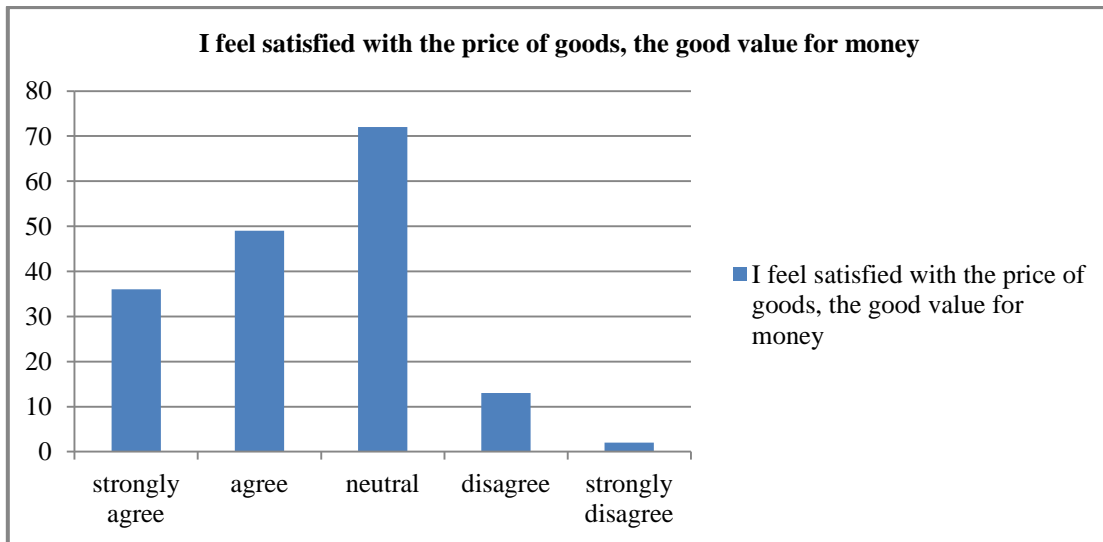
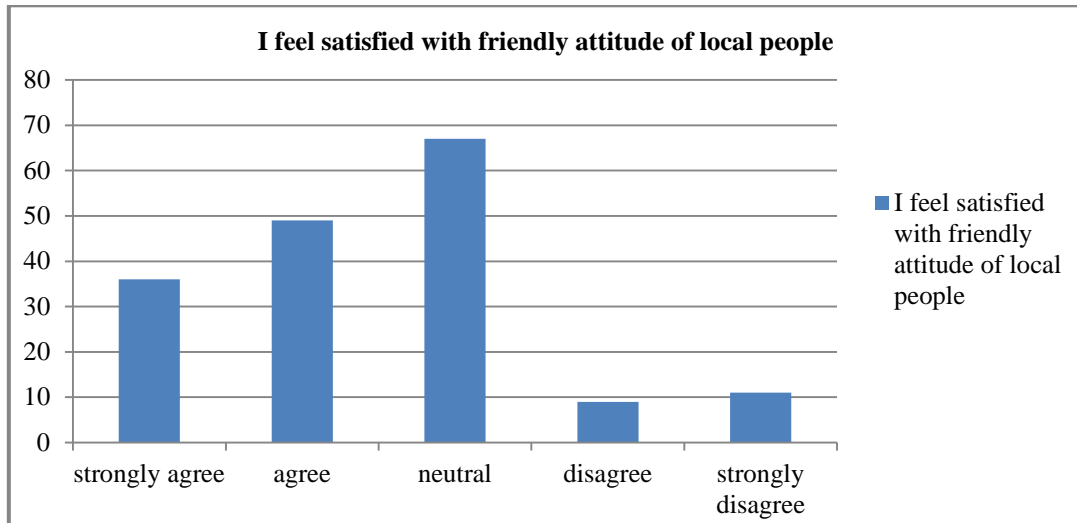
SERVICE QUALITY



This dimension includes three items (1) High quality accommodation services shows neutral level whereas (2) Good quality local transport services and (3) Good quality food services show that service quality was considered as agree level.

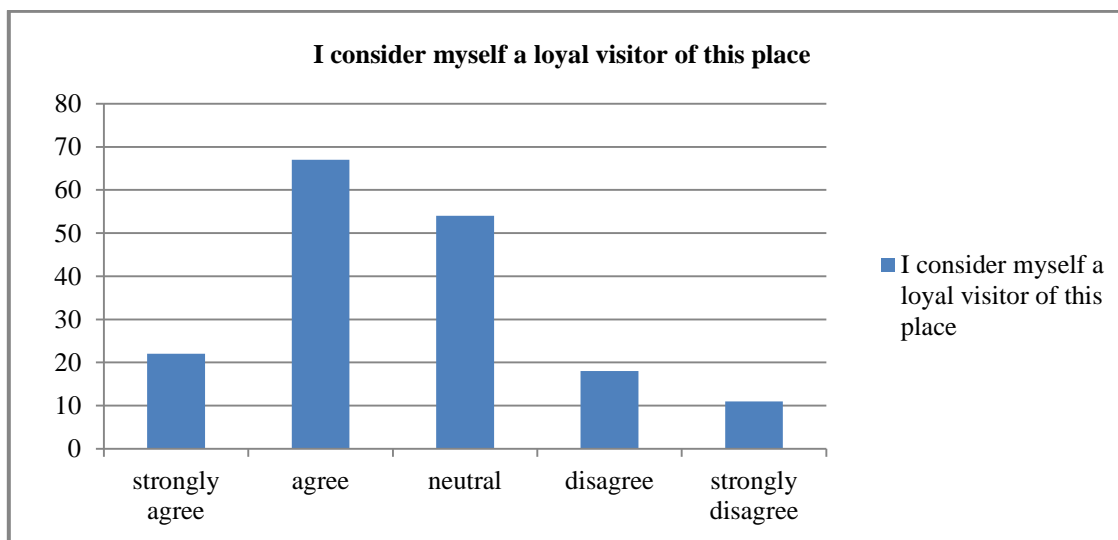
– Tourist Satisfaction:

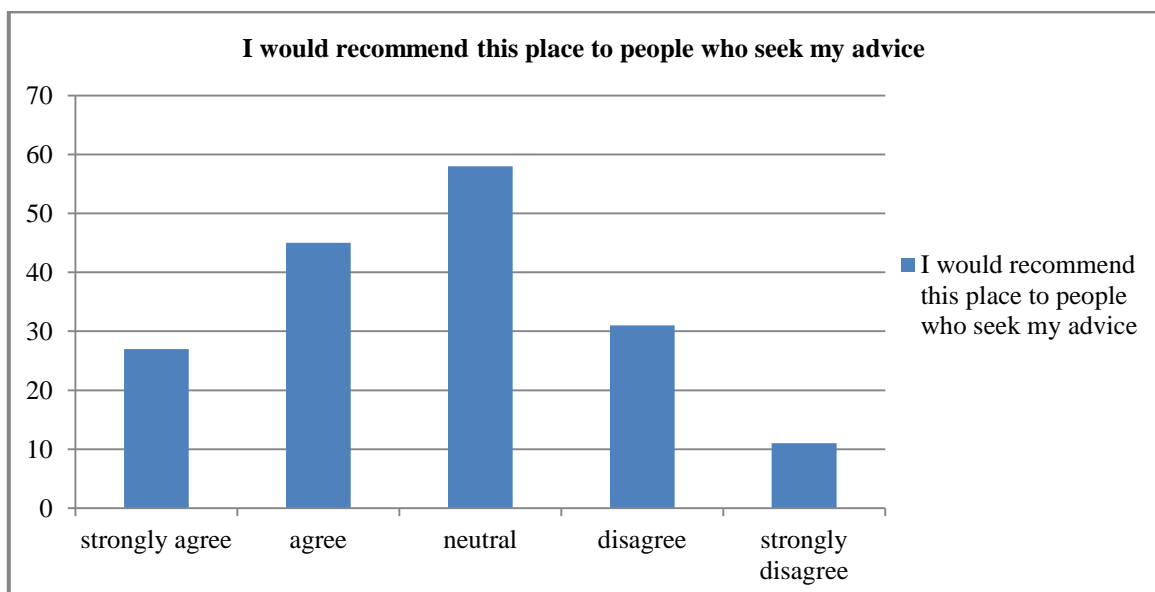
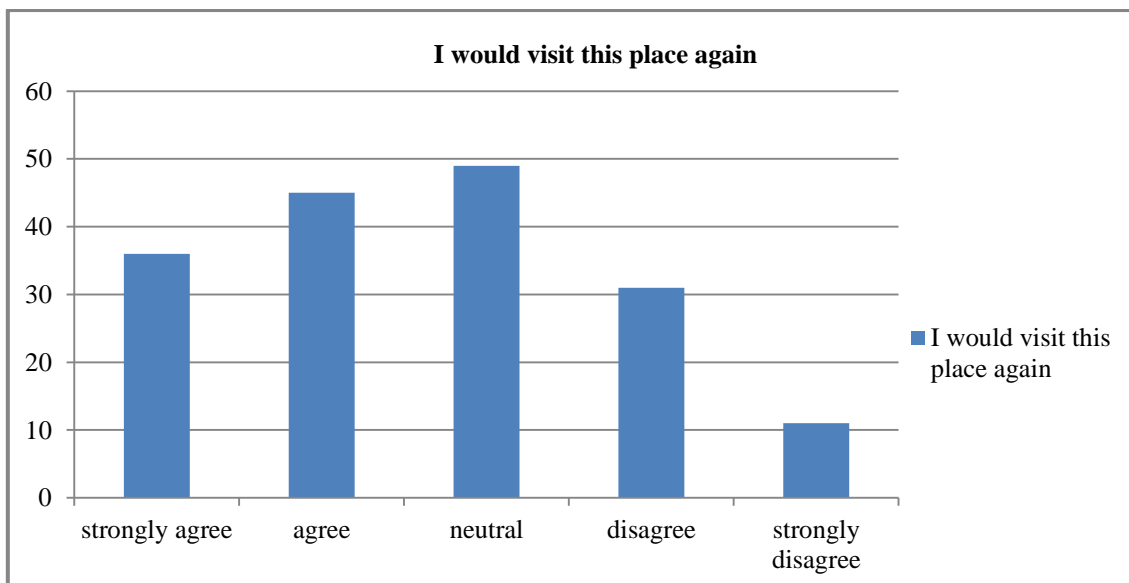
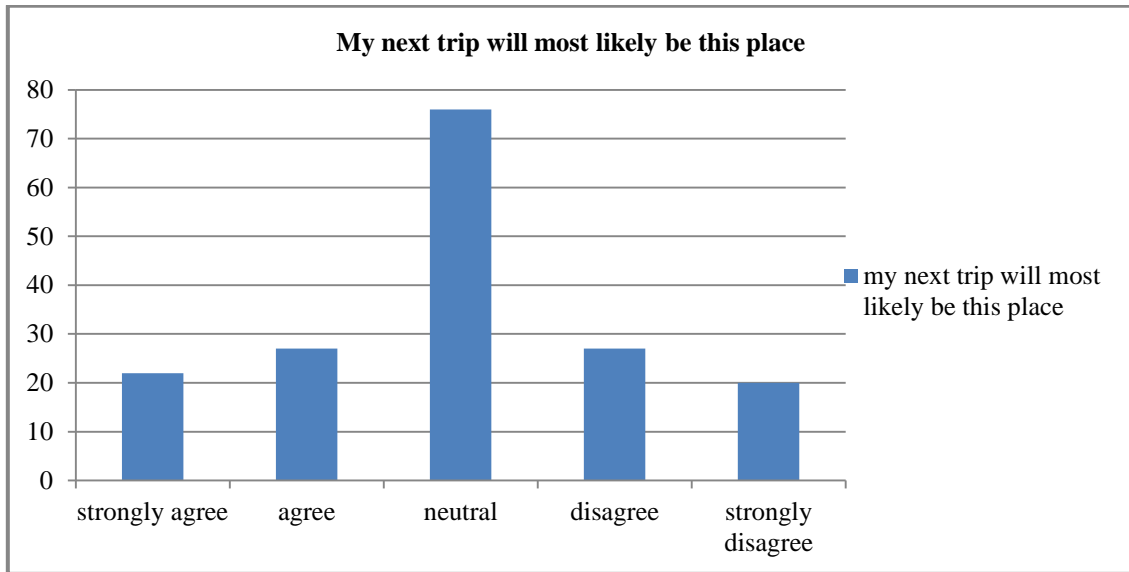


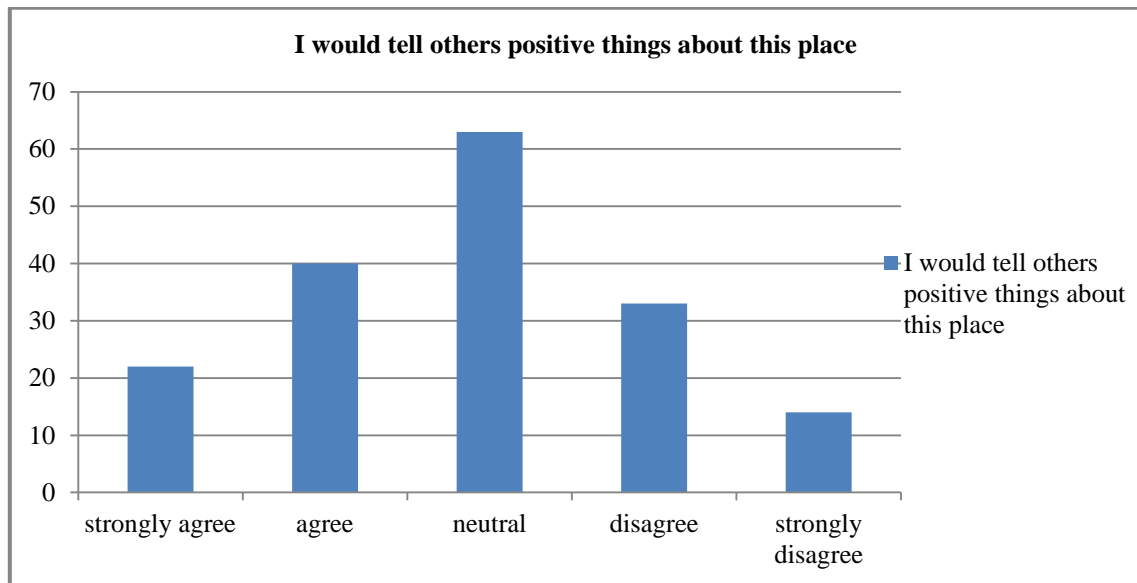


According to tables above, 1st table 1 indicates that tourist satisfaction was considered as neutral level. 2nd table indicates tourist satisfaction as agree level. 3rd Table shows that tourist satisfaction was considered between strongly agree and neutral level fourth and fifth table present tourist satisfaction as neutral level.

– Tourist Loyalty/Revisit Intention:







From the 1st table tourist loyalty was considered as agree level whereas other tables were considered as neutral level in tourist loyalty section.

6. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the factors affect tourist loyalty of international graduate students in Pattaya destination, Thailand. The purposes of this study were to identify the relationship between destination image, perceived value, service quality, satisfaction and tourist loyalty/revisit intention, who visited in Pattaya destination, and to analyze the differences in the level of agreement of tourists in terms of demographic and tourist loyalty, the relationship between destination image, perceived value, service quality and satisfaction.

This empirical study provides evidence that destination image, perceived value, service quality and satisfaction of tourist destination are closely associated with destination loyalty. As tourism is contributing economy of Thailand, it can be argued that major findings of this study have significant policy and managerial implications for the country's core tourist destinations and support services in tourism. These are fundamental in extending length of stay, increasing satisfaction and enhancing destination loyalty of foreign tourists.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation from this study is that all factors of tourist loyalty are importance for tourist places and better of those in the destination bring more tourists toward destination. The researcher suggests that Pattaya tourism organization create a city image of the tourism destination and create a civilization, health tourism city and avoid tourist detonation dirty, chaotic and poor.

Pattaya tourism organizations have to increase perceived value, satisfaction and improve the quality of the service such as Pattaya destination (the location should be highly accessible), hotel (the location of the hotel, the ease of access to the room, restaurant, transportation stations, etc.), accommodation quality, interactions (with accommodation provider's personnel or other guests taking place during the stay at the accommodation unit), environment (i.e. physical evidence of the hotel), value (the value of accommodation worth to the paid cost).

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