

A Comparative Study of the Destination Positioning of Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines

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Abstract

Southeast Asia tourism industry has seen a rapid growth throughout the years especially Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. This study aims to 1) compare and contrast the three countries as an international destination in terms of destination image, 2) examine dissimilarities between first time and repeat visitors in Thailand, 3) analyze the differences in perception among tourists with different demographic profile, and 4) determine the effect of perception on the travel intention of tourists to revisit Thailand. The sample population for this research consists of tourists visiting major attractions in Bangkok, Thailand such as Grand Palace, Temple of the Reclining Buddha (Wat Pho), Khaosan Road, and Asiatique Riverfront. A total of 200 tourists participated in this study through self-administered questionnaire. The findings of this study will benefit the tourism ministries, travel agents, marketers, and other tourism related agencies of Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines in order to promote their destination efficiently.

Keywords : destination image, travel intention, demographic profile, first time and repeat travellers

Introduction

Tourism is an important sector that significantly contributes to the economy of a lot of countries especially Thailand, Indonesia, and Philippines, the tiger cub economies of Southeast Asia with maritime, nature, and culture as their main tourism promotion. Their publicized tourism marketing campaign titles include Amazing Thailand Discovering Thainess 2015, Wonderful Indonesia, and It's More Fun in the Philippines. As forecasted by World Travel & Tourism Council (2014), there will be an increase of 3.8% from the current 4.2% of the Philippines; while in Indonesia will have an increase of 8.1% from 3.1% of GDP, however, Thailand would not have an increase from its current 9% direct contribution to its GDP.

According to Cater (2007, p. 6), the increase of interest in the global marine environment had meant that the growth rate of marine tourism exceeded that of most of the rest of the tourism industry. As stated by Orams (as cited in Cater, 2007, p.7), "Coastal and marine tourism includes those recreational activities which involve travel away from one's place of residence which have as their host or focus the marine environment and/or the coastal zone." This is the case for Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. Located at the Pacific Ocean, both Indonesia and Philippines are two of the main archipelagos of the world, while Thailand is engulfed by the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand. The main similarity of these three countries is they are internationally well-known for their maritime tourism such as island-hopping, scuba diving, and coastal water sports. Some of their famous islands are Komodo Island of Indonesia, Puerto Princesa of the Philippines, both winners of New7

Wonders of Nature, a global poll organized from 2007 – 2011 by New7Wonders Foundation, and Phuket of Thailand, voted as one of the best destinations to visit by different international media such as CNN and The New York Times. As noted by Chen (2010), "For many islands and countries situated near sea, marine tourism is an important part in tourism industry."

Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines also focus on their nature based tourism for their destination marketing. This includes any travelling experience in the environment such as wildlife tourism, adventure travel, and ecotourism. In the case of Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines, they are known for their exotic flora and fauna from dwelling of endangered animals such as Orangutans, Philippine Eagle, and Bumblebee Bat, to preserving Rafflesia Arnoldii, known as the "corpse flower". These exotic features can motivate tourists to engage in wildlife tourism, as stated by Curtin and Kragh (2014), "Wildlife tourism like this, which occurs in natural, aesthetically pleasing environments, has great potential to reawaken human connection with the natural world." This wildlife conservation contributes to the ecotourism of their countries which includes excursions to National Parks, scuba-diving with whale sharks, and bird watching. With the growing concerns for environmental issues, promoting ecotourism will result into positive image and an increase in motivation for tourists to visit the destination. As Perkins and Grace (2009) claimed, there had been a growing worldwide interest in the natural environment and a "greening" of social processes. In addition, they had said that the economic market had also recognized the potential that "eco" and "green" marketing campaigns had in selling almost anything. Furthermore, Fennel (as cited in Perkins

and Grace, 2009) had suggested that there has been a rapid growth, varying between 7% and 30% in ecotourism as opposed to the tourism industry as a whole. Ceballos-Lascurain (as cited in McCool and Moisey, 2008, p. 41) defined ecotourism as “Traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas”. In addition, Weaver (2001, p. 8) stated, “A feature of ecotourism experiences is education and interpretation about the natural environment and any associated ‘cultural manifestations’”. Besides wildlife and ecotourism, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines provide outdoor adventure activities for adrenaline junkies such as wilderness hiking, caving, rafting, and trekking. As explained by Weaver (2001, p. 75), “Adventure tourists are primarily interested in accessing settings that facilitate the desired level of risk and physical exertion.” He stressed that adventure tourism is “valued primarily for the personal and challenges that they offer, not for their scientific interest or associated species of wildlife”.

Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines, known for their rich culture and history, have used cultural tourism to gain competitive advantage between each other and to other countries. According to Ritzer and Urry (as cited in Liu, 2014), cultural tourism “has developed to become a significant phenomenon in the travel and tourism industry and an essential element of the tourism system”. As stated by Liu (2014), “Through the development of cultural tourism, cities or regions can increase their attractiveness as destinations to visit, live and invest in enhancing their competitiveness.” Currently,

Thailand has a new marketing campaign for 2015 titled “Discovering Thainess” which “aims to create an understanding of Thailand and the Thai people’s way of life, or what we call ‘Thainess’” (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2015). Moreover, both Indonesia and the Philippines have on-going promotional tours which include tourists to engage in the unique culture of their countries. These cultural activities will provide a sense of novelty to travellers of these destinations.

Although Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines offer the same tourism products, there is a huge difference on their tourist arrivals as stated on figure 1.

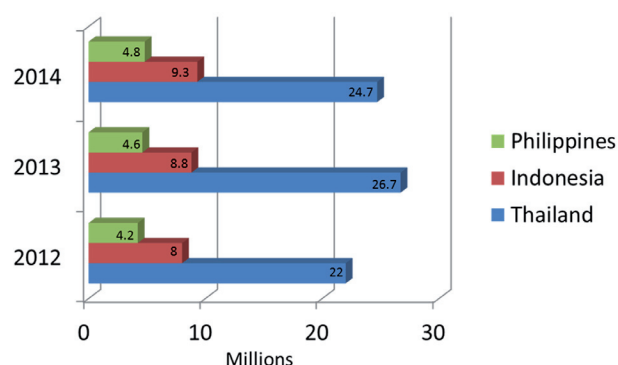


Figure 1: International Tourist Arrivals in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines 2012-2014

Sources: Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Thailand (2014)

Philippine Department of Tourism (2014)

Indonesia National Statistics Board (2015)

Unfortunately, there have been few researches about tourism in Indonesia and the Philippines as compare to Thailand which has an abundance of studies. In correlation to this, the primary purpose of this study is therefore to differentiate Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines and analyze their destination positioning based self-administered

questionnaire about tourist perceptions. The analysis of this study will help Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines to improve and reposition (if needed) their destinations.

Literature Reviews

Image

According to McCool and Moisey (2008, p. 132), destination image “indicates a perspective from the outside, the tourists or other stakeholders, and a perspective that may be accurate or distorted from reality”. They added that “Destination image is often analyzed through multidimensional scaling representing the perceived attributed of the destination.” However, as stated by El Kadhi (2009, p. 39), “One’s image of a destination depends on whether previous experience at the place exists or not”.

Destination image can be classified into two types which are Functional and Symbolic. According to Chon and Maier (2010, p. 62), “A functional image of a destination is associated with specific activities and attractions at the destination” whereas “Symbolic image is related to the ‘personality’ of the area as perceived by the visitor”. They added that “both functional and symbolic images of a destination area are highly correlated with choice. That is, depending on the tourist’s perception of symbolic images associated with the destination, the tourist will or will not select the place as a travel destination.”

The importance of destination image has been claimed by a lot of researchers. Cooper et al; Frochot and Legohere as cited in El Kadhi (2009, p. 34) have asserted that “The image of a place is a powerful and vital element in the decision of destination choice for a vacation”. Furthermore, Correia and

Kozak (2010) states that, “the competitiveness of destinations can be perceived through the ability of targeting the consumers’ minds with the right image.” They also added that, “it can be argued that tourism products made through a wide combination of components to offer the overall travel experience to tourists and composed through a variety of activities is influenced through social and demographic factors as well as by cultural values in which gender can be perceived as one dimension that influences the competitiveness of the destination”. Awareness of the destination image is vital for marketers in order to efficaciously promote their destination and to gain competitive advantage over their competing destination. Moreover, the demographic profile of the tourists must be considered as well since it influences the way the tourists perceive a travel destination.

Revisit Intention

Repeat visitors are crucial to retain or increase the market share of a destination. As L. Reid and S. Reid (as cited in Uysal and Fesenmaier, 2012, p. 3) stated, “Repeat visitors not only represent a stable source of tourist revenues, they also act as information channels that informally link network of friends, relatives and other potential travelers to a destination.” Moreover, repeat visitors can reduce the marketing cost to promote a destination. As Keller and Beiger (2010, p. 34) noted, “The advantages of retaining repeat visitors are those of saving the cost of advertising and gaining revenue from a relatively small number of acquainted visitors rather than from a large number of non-acquainted visitors”. However, it is difficult to retain tourists as Correia and Crouch (as cited in Perdue et al. 2004, p. 123) claims,

“consumers do not always repeat the same purchase because they want to discover new destinations”.

In comparison to first time traveller, which Lew et al. (2008, p. 45) describes as “interested in exploring widely throughout a destination and have a strong desire to discover an area’s cultural and natural amenities”, repeat travellers are “more interested in social experiences, entertainment, shopping, and dining” (Lew et al., 2008, p. 44). In addition, some researchers (as cited in Perdue et al., 2004, p. 104) noted that repeat visitors’ “previous experience leads to a much more diversified and detailed demand for information and level of awareness”.

According to Brida et al. (2012), “It is likely that a positive experience in a given destination may influence the likelihood of a return visit”. Furthermore, Keller and Beiger (2010, p. 34) asserted that “the portion of repeat visitors is a reflection of the quality service”. This indicates that destinations should not only focus on attracting prospective tourists, but rather improve their quality of service and offer a sense of novelty in order to encourage tourists to revisit the destination.

Purposes

This study has four major purposes. The first is to evaluate tourist perceptions of Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines as an international destination and determine whether there are significant differences. The second is to assess the dissimilarity between first time and repeat visitors in Thailand. The third is to examine any differences in perceptions among tourists with different demographic profile. The fourth is to

compare the effect of perception to the intention to revisit Thailand.

Hypothesis (if any)

This study proposes two hypotheses: H1: There is a significant difference on the destination image among Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines as an international travel destination. H2: Positive destination image affect revisit intention to a travel destination.

Benefit of Research

This comparative study will provide better understanding of the destination positioning of Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines through tourist perceptions and revisit intention. This will benefit the tourism ministries, service providers, marketers, and other tourism related agencies in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines in order to efficiently promote their destinations.

Research Process

This study uses a self-complete questionnaire to measure the destination image of Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines as an international travel destination. The data collection was conducted by the authors at Grand Palace, Temple of the Reclining Buddha, Khaosan Road, and Asiatique Riverfront from January 23 – February 8, 2015. The questionnaire was distributed to international tourists who can understand English since the questionnaire was written in English.

Population and Sample

The target population of this study was international tourists visiting major attractions in Bangkok, Thailand such as Temple of the Reclining Buddha, Grand Palace, Khaosan Road, and Asiatique Riverfront. A convenience sampling was used in this study. Out of approximately 280 tourists approached, 200 tourists participated in this survey representing 71% response rate.

Instruments

The data for this research were collected through self-administered questionnaire used to determine the travel perception of international tourists to the destination image of Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines, travel characteristics of international tourists, and intention of travelers to revisit Thailand.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics including frequency distribution, independent sampling mean t-test, and ANOVA were used to analyze the data. First, frequency distribution was used to describe the travel characteristics, demographic profile, and the mean differences in perception between Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Second, independent sampling mean t-test was used to identify any mean difference in the destination perceptions between tourists who visited Thailand for the first time and those revisiting Thailand. Furthermore, independent sampling mean t-test was used to determine any mean difference on tourist perceptions with different demographic profile in terms of gender, education, and marital status. Whereas, ANOVA was run to

distinguish any mean difference on tourist perceptions with different demographic profile in terms of age and continent of residence.

Results

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. Based on the sample, female (55%) were slightly more than male (45%) and most of them were single (68.3%). Moreover, more than three-fourths of the respondents were 'young adult' (78%), while 'adolescence' (3%) and 'senior adult' (4%) have the least population. In addition, 66% were employed, 24.5% were students, while 9.5% were not in the workforce, and most were degree holders (86%). Furthermore, most of the respondents were from Western countries (65%), while the remaining were respondents from Asian countries (35%).

Table 2 shows the travel characteristics of the respondents. Based on this sample, most were first time travellers (60.5%) while 39.5% were repeat visitors. Since the survey was conducted at major tourist attractions in Bangkok, Thailand such as Grand Palace, Temple of the Reclining Buddha, Khaosan Road, and Asiatique Riverfront, the majority of the respondents were leisure tourists (90.5%). Meanwhile, 'business travellers' (5%), and 'travellers with other purpose' (4.5%) participated in this study as well when they visited the major tourist attractions in Bangkok, Thailand. In addition, most respondents stayed in Thailand for more than one week (63.5%). Moreover, almost all of the respondents have intention to revisit Thailand (93.5%), and 58.4% of them would like to come back to Thailand within two years. In relation to this, 98% of the respondents will recommend Thailand to their friends and relatives

Table 1 : Demographic Profile

Items	Categories	Frequency	Percent
<i>Gender</i>	Male	90	45.0
	Female	110	55.0
	Total	200	100.0
<i>Age Group</i>	Adolescence	6	3.0
	Young Adult	156	78.0
	Middle-aged Adult	30	15.0
	Senior Adult	8	4.0
	Total	200	100.0
<i>Marital Status</i>	Single	136	68.3
	Married	63	31.7
	Total	199	100.0
<i>Continent of Residence</i>	Asia	70	35.0
	Europe	94	47.0
	The Americas	30	15.0
	Oceania	6	3.0
	Total	200	100.0
<i>Occupation</i>	Employed	132	66.0
	Retired/Unemployed/Housewife	19	9.5
	Student	49	24.5
	Total	200	100.0
<i>Educational Level</i>	Non-degree Holders	28	14.0
	Degree Holders	172	86.0
	Total	200	100.0

as an international travel destination. Furthermore, almost half of the respondents look for ‘price’ (44.5%) as the most important type of travel information followed by ‘tourist attractions’ (24.5%), while the least important was ‘friendliness of people’ (7.5%).

Descriptive statistics was used to obtain the mean value of each item under travel destination perception (as shown in table 3 below) for Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Based on the figures, Thailand has the highest mean score for ‘overall image’ (4.16), followed by Philippines (3.34) then Indonesia (3.32). As for Thailand, the highest mean

score for the perception was ‘cultural/historical’ (4.34) ‘friendliness of people’ (4.22), and ‘price’ (4.20), whereas ‘convention/exhibition facilities’ (3.69) has the lowest mean score. As for the Philippines, the highest mean score for the perception was ‘natural scenery’ (3.95), ‘friendliness of people’ (3.89), and ‘climate’ (3.78), whereas ‘safety and security’ (2.91) has the lowest mean score. As for Indonesia, the highest mean score for the perception was ‘natural scenery’ (3.75), ‘climate’ (3.72), and ‘price’ (3.61), whereas ‘safety and security’ (3.06) has the lowest mean score.

Table 2 : Travel Characteristics

Items	Categories	Frequency	Percent
No. of Visits	One time	121	60.5
	2 - 3 times	58	29.0
	4 - 5 times	12	6.0
	More than 5 times	9	4.5
	Total	200	100.0
Purpose of Visit	Vacation / Sightseeing	181	90.5
	Business	10	5.0
	Others	9	4.5
	Total	200	100.0
Length of Stay	3 nights or fewer	43	21.5
	4 to 7 nights	30	15.0
	1 to 2 weeks	71	35.5
	More than 2 weeks	56	28.0
	Total	200	100.0
Type of Information	Price	89	44.5
	Safety	23	11.5
	Climate	24	12.0
	Tourist Attractions	49	24.5
	Friendliness of People	15	7.5
	Total	200	100.0
Intention to Revisit	Yes	187	93.5
	No	13	6.5
	Total	200	100.0
If yes, when do you plan to visit Thailand again?	Within one year	31	16.8
	1-2 years	77	41.6
	3-5 years	48	25.9
	More than 5 years	29	15.7
	Total	185	100.0
Will you recommend Thailand to your friends/relatives?	Yes	195	98.0
	No	4	2.0
	Total	199	100.0

Table 3 : Mean Differences in Tourists' Perceptions between Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines

<i>Items</i>	Thailand			Philippines			Indonesia		
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Shopping	193	3.99	.784	102	3.10	.827	106	3.15	.714
Cultural/Historical	197	4.34	.692	102	3.16	.865	108	3.56	.824
Natural Scenery	197	4.15	.731	102	3.95	.905	106	3.75	.892
Climate	197	4.08	.778	102	3.78	.875	108	3.72	.905
Cuisine in restaurants	197	4.13	.851	102	3.10	.873	108	3.37	.804
Hotels/Resorts	197	4.04	.699	102	3.40	.836	108	3.57	.811
Overall Service Quality	197	3.90	.739	102	3.47	.780	108	3.50	.815
Convention/Exhibition Facilities	196	3.69	.770	102	3.21	.708	106	3.17	.710
Friendliness of People	197	4.22	.826	102	3.89	.900	108	3.51	.803
Price	196	4.20	.713	102	3.72	.968	108	3.61	.841
Ease of Access	197	3.88	.757	102	3.09	.759	108	3.31	.757
Transportation	197	3.87	.839	102	3.00	.731	108	3.17	.779
Safety and Security	197	3.96	.762	102	2.91	.902	108	3.06	.857
Overall Image	197	4.16	.575	102	3.34	.777	108	3.32	.708
Valid N (listwise)	191			102			106		

Perception Scale: 5 = very good, 1 = very poor

t-test was applied to compare the perceptions of Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines between demographic profile (age, education and marital status) as well as to assess if there are differences in perceptions of Thailand between first time and repeat visitors whereas, ANOVA was applied to compare the perceptions of Thailand between demographic profile (age and continent of residence). The dependent variable is each of the destination perception dimensions, including 'ease of access', 'safety and security', 'cultural/historical sites', 'hotels/resorts', 'overall image', 'natural scenery', 'friendliness of people', 'cuisine in restaurants', 'overall service quality', 'price' and 'convention/exhibition facilities' (see Tables 4,5,6,7).

As shown in table 4, results indicated that first time ($M=3.80$, $SD=.791$) and repeat travellers ($M=3.87$, $SD=.689$) were significantly different on their perceptions on 'ease of access', $t(195)=-2.033$, $p<.044$, two-tailed. First time travellers' perception of Thailand's 'ease of access' were less than repeat visitors. In addition, first time ($M=3.87$, $SD=.071$) and repeat travellers ($M=4.09$, $SD=.083$) were significantly different on their perceptions on 'safety and security', $t(195)=-1.979$, $p<.051$, two-tailed. Repeat visitors' perception of Thailand's 'safety and security' was better than first time travellers.

On the other hand, results on table 5 regarding the perception of the Philippines indicated that male visitors ($M=2.95$, $SD=.108$) and female visitors

Table 4 : t-test Results Comparing First Time and Repeat Visitors on their Perceptions

		First Time		Repeat Visitor		
		N	Mean	N	Mean	t-value
Thailand						
Ease of access	118	3.80	79	4.01	-2.033 *	
Safety and security		118	3.87	79	4.09	-1.979 *

Perception scale: 5 = very good, 1 = very poor

** significant at $p < 0.05$*

Table 5 : t-test Results Comparing Male Visitors and Female Visitors on their Perceptions

	First Time		Repeat Visitor		t-value
	N	Mean	N	Mean	
Philippines					
Cultural/Historical Sites	42	2.95	60	3.30	-2.139 *

Perception scale: 5 = very good, 1 = very poor

** significant at $p < 0.05$*

Table 6 : t-test Results Comparing Unmarried Visitors and Married Visitors on their Perceptions

	Unmarried		Married		t-value
	N	Mean	N	Mean	
Thailand					
Hotels/Resorts	135	3.84	61	4.02	-2.133 *
Overall Image	135	4.09	61	4.31	-2.485 *
Philippines					
Hotels/Resorts	67	3.52	35	3.17	2.242 *
Indonesia					
Natural Scenery	71	3.89	35	3.49	2.729 *
Friendliness	71	3.61	37	3.32	1.982 *

Perception scale: 5=very good, 1=very poor

** significant at $p < 0.05$*

($M=3.30$, $SD=.122$) were significantly different on their perception on the ‘cultural/historical sites’, $t(99.687)=-2.139$, $p<.035$, two-tailed. Female visitors perceived Philippines’ ‘cultural/historical sites’ better than male visitors.

As shown in Table 6, unmarried visitors ($M=3.84$, $SD=.058$) and married visitors ($M=4.02$, $SD=.093$) were significantly different on their perceptions on Thailand’s ‘hotel/resorts’, $t(108.4)=-2.133$, $p<.035$, two-tailed. Married visitors perceived Thailand’s ‘hotel/resorts’ better than unmarried visitors. Furthermore, unmarried visitors ($M=4.09$, $SD=.048$) and married visitors ($M=4.31$, $SD=.076$) were significantly different on their perceptions on Thailand’s ‘overall image’, $t(108.876)=-2.485$, $p<.014$, two-tailed. Married visitors perceived Thailand’s ‘overall image’ better than visitors that were single. In addition, there was a significant difference between unmarried visitors ($M=3.52$, $SD=.109$) and married visitors ($M=3.17$, $SD=.112$) on their perception on Philippines’ ‘hotels/resorts’, $t(88.177)=2.242$, $p<.027$, two-tailed. Unmarried visitors perceived Philippines’ ‘hotels/resorts’ better than married visitors. In addition, results indicated that unmarried visitors ($M=3.89$, $SD=.120$) and married visitors ($M=3.49$, $SD=.086$) were significantly different on their perceptions on ‘natural scenery’ of Indonesia, $t(103.928)=2.729$,

$p<.007$, two-tailed. Unmarried visitors perceived Indonesia’s ‘natural scenery’ better than married visitors. Moreover, results indicated that unmarried visitors ($M=3.61$, $SD=.105$) and married visitors ($M=3.32$, $SD=.095$) were significantly different on their perceptions on ‘friendliness of people’ in Indonesia, $t(100.428)=1.982$, $p<.050$, two-tailed. Married visitors perceived Indonesia’s ‘friendliness of people’ less than unmarried visitors.

As shown in table 7, results indicated that there was a significant difference between degree holder tourists ($M=3.94$, $SD=.771$) and non-degree holder tourists ($M=4.29$, $SD=.810$) on their perception about ‘shopping’ in Thailand, $t(191)=2.183$, $p<.030$, two-tailed. Degree holder tourists perceived ‘shopping’ in Thailand less than tourists without degree. Moreover, degree holder tourists ($M=4.00$, $SD=.699$) and non-degree holder tourists ($M=4.29$, $SD=.659$) were significantly different on their perceptions on ‘hotels/resorts’ in Thailand, $t(195)=2.020$, $p<.045$, two-tailed. Non-degree holder tourists perceived Thailand’s ‘hotels/resorts’ better than degree holder tourists.

ANOVA shows significant differences in the perceptions of Thailand across age group and continent of residence. Based on table 8, there was a significant difference between ‘young adult’ tourists

Table 7 : *t*-test Results Comparing Non-degree Holders and Degree Holders on their Perceptions

	Non-degree		Degree		t-value
	N	Mean	N	Mean	
Thailand					
Shopping	28	4.29	165	3.94	2.183 *
Hotels/Resorts	28	4.29	169	4.00	2.020 *

Perception scale: 5=very good, 1=very poor

** significant at $p<0.05$*

Table 8 : Significant Differences of Perception of Thailand across Age Group

Factors	Mean				F Ratio	F- Probability	Significant Differences Between Groups
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4			
Cuisine in restaurants	4.40	4.14	4.07	4.38	4.065	0.008	Group 2 and Group 3
Hotels/Resorts	4.00	3.94	4.46	4.50	6.055	0.001	Group 1 and Group 3 Group 2 and Group 3
Overall Service Quality	3.80	3.79	4.39	4.38	6.898	0.00	Group 2 and Group 3
Convention/Exhibition	3.60	3.61	3.96	4.38	4.011	0.008	Group 2 and Group 4
Friendliness	4.40	4.14	4.39	5.00	3.47	0.017	Group 2 and Group 3 Group 2 and Group 4
Ease of Access	4.40	3.78	4.21	4.38	4.891	0.003	Group 2 and Group 3
Safety & Security	3.80	3.90	4.07	4.75	3.56	0.015	Group 2 and Group 3

Perception scale: 5 = very good, 1 = very poor

Group 1: Adolescence, Group 2: Young Adult, Group 3: Middle-aged Adult, Group 4: Senior Adult

Table 9 : Significant Differences of Perception of Thailand across Continent of Residence

Factors	Mean				F Ratio	F- Probability	Significant Differences Between Groups
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4			
Thailand							
Shopping	4.33	3.81	3.74	4.00	7.764	0.000	Group 1 and Group 2 Group 1 and Group 3 Group 1 and Group 4
Climate	3.87	4.34	3.68	4.33	8.902	0.000	Group 1 and Group 2 Group 2 and Group 3
Friendliness of people	4.00	4.43	3.96	4.67	5.50	0.001	Group 1 and Group 2 Group 2 and Group 3

Perception scale: 5 = very good, 1 = very poor

Group 1: Asia, Group 2: Europe, Group 3: The Americas, Group 4: Oceania

and ‘middle-aged adult’ tourists on their perceptions of Thailand in terms of ‘cuisine in restaurants’ ($F=4.065, p=.008$), ‘hotels/resorts’ ($F=6.055, p=.001$), ‘overall service quality’ ($F=6.898, p=0.00$), ‘friendliness of people’ ($F=3.47, p=.017$), ‘ease of access’ ($F=4.891, p=0.003$), and ‘safety and security’ ($F=3.56, 0.015$). Moreover, there was a significant difference between ‘young adult’ tourists and ‘senior adult’ tourists on their perceptions of Thailand in terms of ‘convention/exhibition’ ($F=4.011, p=.008$) and ‘friendliness of people’ ($F=3.47, p=.017$). Furthermore, there was a significant difference between ‘adolescence’ tourists and ‘senior adult’ tourists on their perceptions of Thailand in terms of ‘hotels/resorts’ ($F=6.055, p=.001$).

As shown on table 9, there was a significant difference between tourists from ‘Asia’ and to tourists coming from ‘Europe’, ‘The Americas’, and ‘Oceania’ on their perception of ‘shopping in Thailand’ ($F=7.764, p=.000$). Moreover, tourists from ‘Asia’ has a significant difference with tourists from ‘Europe’ in terms of Thailand’s ‘climate’ ($F=8.902, p=.000$) and ‘friendliness of people’ ($F=5.50, p=.001$). Furthermore, tourists from ‘Europe’ and ‘The Americas’ were significantly different in terms of their perception on ‘climate’ ($F=8.902, p=.000$) and ‘friendliness of people’ ($F=5.50, p=.001$) in Thailand.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines as an International Travel Destination

Destination image is one of the deciding factors that tourists consider in choosing a travel destination. The study has found that Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines have a positive destination image which is a good indication that there is a possibility that tourists will visit or revisit these

destinations. Out of the three countries, Thailand has the highest overall image. Since, the data collection was conducted in Thailand, tourists had more positive image of Thailand that might be from their current experience. Moreover, most of the tourists have not been to Indonesia and the Philippines. These explain that there was a correlation between previous experience at the destination and the current perceived image of the destination. However, the results were not surprising as Thailand is known as one of the best destinations in the world. A recent news article from Travel Daily News Asia-Pacific (2015) had published that Bangkok, the capital of Thailand was voted as one of the World’s Top 20 Destinations to Visit by voters run by gogobot.com, a renowned travel website.

In relation to the results of this study, tourists nowadays consider price as one of the main factors to visit a destination. Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines have high results on their prices. As suggested by Smith (2015) in his article ‘The Cheapest Countries in the World’, “Indonesia and the Philippines will provide the best value [travel], followed by Vietnam and Thailand”. As more tourists are becoming budget conscious, using price to promote can be advantageous for Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Moreover, tourist attractions can be a good addition to the ‘price’ as a marketing promotion. As shown in the results, ‘tourist attractions’ was the second most highly sought information for a travel destination. As indicated in the results, Thailand has a good image for their tourist attractions as compare to Indonesia and the Philippines. Indonesia and the Philippines should try to improve their tourist attractions to gain competitive advantage.

Since all three countries have differences in terms of history and religion, their tourist attractions would not overlap each other.

Dissimilarities between First Time and Repeat Visitors

The findings of this study shows that there were differences between first time and repeat visitors on their perceptions of 'ease of access' and 'safety and security' in Thailand. First time visitors had a lower perception on these two factors compare to repeat visitors. Familiarity can be a reason to this as first time visitors do not know the destination that well as opposed to repeat visitors who were already accustomed to the destination. In order to overcome this, service providers and marketers must provide comprehensive guide to their guests to make them feel secured during their stay at the destination. Moreover, since most of the young generations were more concerned about safety and security, the use of digital and social media to relay real-time events are advised.

Thailand's Image Differences by Demographics

This study also found that married tourists have high perception on Thailand's hotels and resorts. Based on the news article from Travel Daily New Asia-Pacific (2015) wherein they had written that Phuket and Samui were voted as one of the world's most romantic destinations by Fordors.com and VeryFirstTo.com, two top travel and lifestyle publications. This suggests that there will be an influx of married couples in Thailand due to its romantic symbolic image. In correlation to this, tourism service providers in Thailand such as hotels and resorts will

possibly focus on creating packages for this market. If Thailand would like to retain its position as one of the world's romantic destinations, it should not only offer romantic packages for married couples but as well as to unmarried tourists. Tourism service providers could create a romantic package for bachelors and bachelorettes. As reported by Fox News (2011), "As more singles are opting to take adventurous tour vacations alone, long-term love and even marriage are becoming a happy by product of these trips", and "kind of intimacy, combined with the excitement of creating shared new experiences [traveling] and typically small group size lays a solid groundwork for lasting love". This can strengthen the image of Thailand as a romantic destination.

The study also indicates that tourists without degree had better perception on Thailand's shopping, hotels and resorts than tourists with degree. Although degree holders are mostly considered to have more wealth as compare to non-degree holders, they are more deliberate when purchasing products or services. It is advisable for tourism and hospitality service providers in Thailand to improve the quality of their service offerings as well as to create better benefits in order to satisfy degree holder tourists.

The study found out young travellers had significant differences with middle-aged travellers. Middle-aged travellers have higher perception of Thailand as opposed to the young travellers, although the latter still has a high perception of Thailand. As opposed to middle-aged travellers, young travellers are more concerned about price, Wi-Fi connection, online reviews, last-minute bookings, unique destination, and open work areas (Skift, 2015). Young visitors would likely book accommodation with smaller space but with better price, unique

design and tech amenities. This implies that young travellers have a lot of demands to be satisfied as compare to middle-aged travellers. Since most middle-aged travellers have more income as compare to young travellers, they would likely stay in a better hotel and require less demand than the latter.

Revisit Intention to Thailand

The results shows that tourists would like to revisit Thailand in the future. Although most of the tourists had stayed in Thailand for more than a week, they would like to return as they were satisfied as seen in their high rating of Thailand's image. Moreover, these tourists will recommend Thailand to their friends and relatives which show how delighted they were during their trip.

Since most tourists would likely revisit Thailand, Tourism Authority of Thailand, service providers, marketers, and other tourism related agencies in Thailand should slightly revamp their tour packages to provide a sense of novelty to repeat visitors. Moreover, highlight the value for money and tourist attractions which are the main type of travel information that tourists look for.

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