

ASSESSMENT OF THE U.S. TRAVELERS' DESTINATION IMAGE OF THAILAND

by

SARINYA SUNGKATAVAT

B.Arch., Rangsit University, 2003
M.B.A., Kansas State University, 2009

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Hospitality Management and Dietetics
College of Human Ecology

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2013

Abstract

Thailand is one of the world's most popular tourist destinations. However, it has not been successful in capturing and sustaining the U.S. travel market, one of the world's top source markets by international tourism expenditure. The destination image (DI) is a key factor that affects destination selection, but there has been limited research exploring U.S. travelers' DI of Thailand. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to measure U.S. travelers' DI of Thailand and identify important attributes for U.S. travelers in terms of destination selection using mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative approaches.

To explore American travelers' DI of Thailand, personal interviews with 56 U.S. travelers were conducted at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Thailand. Maximum variation purposeful sampling was used to ensure diversity of the sample. One interviewer and a verifier ensured consistent and credible data collection and analyses. Data analyses included inductive, deductive and cross-case analyses. "Friendly People," "Beaches and Islands," and "Amazing" described Thailand's DI. First-time visitors had tourist attraction and activity-based images, while repeat visitors rated people and culture-related experience as top reasons for destination selection. Results from the qualitative study were used to identify common and unique attributes for the quantitative survey instrument.

To access general perception of Thailand's DI among U.S. travelers, an online survey was conducted with 522 international travelers including non-visitors (n=173), virtual-visitors (n=175) and visitors to Thailand (n=174). Descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and factor analyses were conducted. Of five factors that solidified the DI of Thailand, cultural attributes and local experiences represented Thailand's DI the most. DIs were different among different types of visitors. Importance-Performance Analysis illustrated Thailand's destination attributes and their importance for destination selection. For U.S. travelers, travel environment was the most important factor but had low performance. Thailand tourism organizations may use these findings for future marketing efforts toward the U.S. travel market.

Words: 302

Keywords: Destination Image • Destination Marketing • Thailand • Tourism • U.S. travelers • Mixed Methods • Marketing Strategy • Tourism Marketing • Tourism Management

ASSESSMENT OF THE U.S. TRAVELERS' DESTINATION IMAGE OF THAILAND

by

SARINYA SUNGKATAVAT

B.Arch., Rangsit University, 2003
M.B.A., Kansas State University, 2009

A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Hospitality Management and Dietetics
College of Human Ecology

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2013

Approved by:

Co-Major Professor
Junehee Kwon Ph.D.

Approved by:

Co-Major Professor
Deborah Canter Ph.D.

Copyright

SARINYA SUNGKATAVAT

2013

Abstract

Thailand is one of the world's most popular tourist destinations. However, it has not been successful in capturing and sustaining the U.S. travel market, one of the world's top source markets by international tourism expenditure. The destination image (DI) is a key factor that affects destination selection, but there has been limited research exploring U.S. travelers' DI of Thailand. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to measure U.S. travelers' DI of Thailand and identify important attributes for U.S. travelers in terms of destination selection using mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative approaches.

To explore American travelers' DI of Thailand, personal interviews with 56 U.S. travelers were conducted at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Thailand. Maximum variation purposeful sampling was used to ensure diversity of the sample. One interviewer and a verifier ensured consistent and credible data collection and analyses. Data analyses included inductive, deductive and cross-case analyses. "Friendly People," "Beaches and Islands," and "Amazing" described Thailand's DI. First-time visitors had tourist attraction and activity-based images, while repeat visitors rated people and culture-related experience as top reasons for destination selection. Results from the qualitative study were used to identify common and unique attributes for the quantitative survey instrument.

To access general perception of Thailand's DI among U.S. travelers, an online survey was conducted with 522 international travelers including non-visitors (n=173), virtual-visitors (n=175) and visitors to Thailand (n=174). Descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and factor analyses were conducted. Of five factors that solidified the DI of Thailand, cultural attributes and local experiences represented Thailand's DI the most. DIs were different among different types of visitors. Importance-Performance Analysis illustrated Thailand's destination attributes and their importance for destination selection. For U.S. travelers, travel environment was the most important factor but had low performance. Thailand tourism organizations may use these findings for future marketing efforts toward the U.S. travel market.

Words: 302

Keywords: Destination Image • Destination Marketing • Thailand • Tourism • U.S. travelers • Mixed Methods • Marketing Strategy • Tourism Marketing • Tourism Management

Table of Contents

List of Figures	xii
List of Tables	xiii
Acknowledgements.....	xiv
Dedication	xvi
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Purpose and Objectives of the Study	5
Significance of the Study.....	5
Limitations of the Study	6
Definitions of Terms.....	7
References.....	8
Chapter 2 - Literature Review.....	12
Destination Image (DI)	12
Importance of DI.....	14
DI Formation.....	14
Stimulus Factors (External Factors).....	15
Traveler’s Characteristics (Internal Factors)	17
Stages of DI Formation.....	18
DI Components	20
DI Measurement.....	22
Degree of Familiarity and Types of Visitors	26
Non-visitors.....	27
Visitors.....	28
Importance-Performance Analysis	29
Research on Thailand’s DI	31
References.....	38
Chapter 3 - Methodology	46
Introduction.....	46

Target Population and the Study Sample	47
Qualitative Study	48
Sampling Procedures	49
Sample.....	49
Procedures.....	50
Interview Question Development	50
Pilot Study.....	52
Data Collection	52
The Researcher as a Measurement Tool	53
Data Analysis	53
Quantitative Study	54
Instrument Design and Development.....	55
Survey Design.....	56
Measurement.....	56
Screening Questions.....	57
Filtering Questions.....	57
Attribute-based Image of Thailand (TH)	57
Importance (IM).....	58
Positive-Neutral-Negative Influences (IF).....	58
Holistic Impression: Functional Characteristics	59
Holistic Impression: Psychological Characteristics.....	59
Uniqueness	60
Travel Experience	60
Travel Interest and Information Sources.....	60
Demographic Variables	61
Sampling Procedures	61
Sample.....	61
Procedures.....	62
Pilot Study.....	62
Data Collection	62
Statistical Analysis.....	63

Descriptive Statistics.....	63
Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)	64
Content Analysis.....	64
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).....	65
Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA)	65
References.....	66
Chapter 4 - Exploration of the U.S. Travelers' Destination Image (DI) of Thailand.....	69
Abstract.....	69
Introduction.....	70
Literature Review	70
Methodology.....	72
Study Location and Participant Selection	73
Data Collection and Analysis.....	74
Results.....	75
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	76
RQ1: What are U.S. travelers' attribute-based images and holistic impressions of Thailand as a destination?	78
Attribute-based images of Thailand.....	78
Holistic impressions of Thailand	82
RQ2: What unique features do U.S. travelers associate with Thailand?	84
Unique features of Thailand.....	84
RQ3: What hidden qualities does Thailand evoke as a travel destination for U.S. travelers?	88
Hidden qualities of Thailand.....	88
RQ4: What are important destination attributes of Thailand in terms of destination selection for U.S. travelers?	89
Discussion.....	91
Implication for Researchers	97
Implication for Practitioners	97
Conclusion	98
References.....	100

Chapter 5 - “Thailand” for U.S. Travelers: Comparison of Visitors, Virtual Visitors and Non- visitors.....	103
Abstract.....	103
Introduction.....	104
Literature Review	106
DI Formation.....	107
Non-visitors.....	108
Visitors.....	109
DI Components	110
Importance-Performance Analysis.....	112
Research on Thailand’s DI.....	114
Methodology.....	116
Measurement.....	117
Pilot Study.....	118
Sampling Procedures	118
Data Collection	118
Data Analysis	119
Results.....	120
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	120
U.S. Travelers’ Attribute-Based Images and Holistic Impressions of Thailand as a Destination	122
Summary of attribute-based images.....	122
Factors identified as attribute-based images of Thailand	123
Holistic impressions of Thailand	125
Unique Features of Thailand.....	128
Summary of unique features	128
Differences in DIs among Different Types of U.S. Visitors.....	129
Differences in unique features among different types of visitors	129
Differences in image factors among different types of visitors.....	129
Important Destination Attributes of Thailand Influencing Destination Selection	131
Summary of importance and influences of attribute-based image factors.....	131

Importance-performance of Thailand’s destination attributes	132
Discussion	143
Thailand’s DI	143
Thailand’s DIs for Visitors, Virtual Visitors and Non-Visitors.....	146
Important Attributes	147
Market Positioning of Thailand’ DI for U.S. Travelers	148
Conclusion	150
Implication for Researchers	151
Implication for Practitioners	151
References.....	153
Chapter 6 - Summary and Conclusions	160
Summary of Research.....	160
Objective 1: To examine U.S. travelers’ attribute-based image and holistic impression of Thailand as a destination.....	162
Objective 2: To identify the unique features of Thailand presented to U.S. travelers.....	163
Objective 3: To discover the hidden qualities of Thailand as a destination	164
Objective 4: To evaluate the differences among visitors’, virtual-visitors’ and non-visitors’ perceptions of Thailand as a destination.....	165
Objective 5: To identify important attributes of Thailand in terms of destination selection	166
Objective 6: To determine the positions of Thailand’s destination attributes regarding their importance for U.S. travelers	166
Quadrant I “Concentrate Here”	166
Quadrant II “Keep Up the Good Work”	167
Quadrant III “Low Priority”	167
Quadrant IV “Possible Overkill”	167
Implication and Recommendations for Future Research.....	168
Implication for Researchers	168
Implication for Practitioners	169
Limitations	170
Conclusion	170

References.....	172
Appendix A - Interview	175
Appendix B - Survey	178
Appendix C - Qualitative Interview Respondent Profile.....	196
Appendix D - Glossary	199
Appendix E - IRB Approval	201

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 The Components of DI in 3 Dimensions	21
Figure 2.2 Importance-Performance Matrix (IP Matrix) (Martilla & James, 1977).....	30
Figure 3.1 Research Methodology Frameworks.....	47
Figure 3.2 Maximum Variation Matrix of U.S. Travelers	50
Figure 3.3 Importance-Performance Matrix	65
Figure 4.1 The Components of DI in 3 Dimensions.....	71
Figure 4.2 Maximum Variation Matrix of U.S. Travelers	73
Figure 4.3 Variation Matrix of Respondents' Characteristics	76
Figure 4.4 Thailand's DI in Different Dimensions	93
Figure 5.1 The Components of DI in 3 Dimensions.....	111
Figure 5.2 Importance-Performance Matrix (IP Matrix) (Martilla & James, 1977).....	113
Figure 5.3 IPA Matrix of Thailand's Attribute-Based Images for U.S. Travelers	133
Figure 5.4 IPA Matrixes of Thailand's Attribute-Based Images for Three Types of Visitors ...	135
Figure 5.5 Thailand's DI Components in 3D.....	144

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Selected Definitions of Image and Destination Image	12
Table 2.2 Research of Thailand’s DI and Selected Attributes in the Studies	33
Table 2.3 Common Attributes of Thailand’s DI.....	35
Table 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	77
Table 4.2 Major Themes of Thailand’s Attribute-Based Image.....	81
Table 4.3 Major Themes of Thailand’s Holistic Impression	84
Table 4.4 Major Themes for Thailand’s Unique Features.....	87
Table 4.5 Important Themes for Thailand’s Attributes in terms of Destination Selection.....	91
Table 5.1 Respondent profile.....	121
Table 5.2 Descriptive Statistics of Measurement Items for Attribute-Based Images.....	122
Table 5.3 Five-Factor Principle Component Exploratory Factor Solution (N = 522)	124
Table 5.4 Holistic Impression of Thailand among Visitor Types.....	126
Table 5.5 Descriptive Statistics of the Unique Features	128
Table 5.6 Chi Square Analysis of Unique Features Among 3 Types of Visitors	129
Table 5.7 ANOVA and Post Hoc Test of Types of Visitors on Different DI Factors	130
Table 5.8 Attribute-Based Image Factors’ Importance and Influences in Terms of Destination Selection.....	132
Table 5.9 Attributes and the Representing numbers.....	134
Table 5.10 Importance of Attributes in Terms of Destination Selection	139
Table 5.11 Performances of Attributes in Terms of Destination Selection	141
Table 6.1 Specific Objectives Achieved by Qualitative and Quantitative Studies.....	161
Table 6.2 Population and Study Samples in Qualitative and Quantitative Studies	162
Table 6.3 Thailand’s Attribute-Based Images and Holistic Impressions	163
Table 6.4 Thailand’s Unique Features	164

Acknowledgements

For friendships and emotional support, for both my dissertation work and life throughout my PhD program, there are hundreds of people around the world who helped me, and I would like to express my deepest appreciation to each of them.

A teacher who has never let me believe that I cannot do it, a person who gave me a hug when I needed it the most, and a friend who made me never ever give up and even fed me sometimes; she is my beloved major professor, Dr. Junehee Kwon. She made me believe that nothing is impossible, and I cannot imagine of my life toward a PhD without her. Today, I would like to tell her, “You are my inspiration; you are the reason I did not give up.”

My co-major professor, Dr. Deborah Canter is the first person I came to know in the Department of Hospitality Management and Dietetics and the one who admitted me into this program. She has always been positive and encouraging. She made me feel that she was the person who waited to see me beautifully bloom under her tree.

Dr. Brian Niehoff, my major professor for the MBA program and a supervisory committee member for my doctoral program, saw me sitting in a corner of a classroom, looking down on the floor, being afraid to speak. He was the first teacher in the U.S. I really opened up to, the first person in this country who listened to my story, good and bad, and I know he did listen. You will always be my friend, Dr. Niehoff!

Dr. Karen Myers-Bowman was the last person who joined my committee. She is actually like another major professor to me. We spent a great deal of time together when she introduced me the magic of qualitative research. She put a lot of effort and time into helping me understand this concept. She is a wonderful motivator who helped me believe in myself. For me, she is like *a warm breeze on a cold winter day*.

I would also like to recognize several individuals who helped me through my dissertation research. Dr. Bongkosh Ngamsom Rittichainuwat from Siam University, Dr. Bharath Josiam from University of North Texas, Dr. Chihyung Ok from Temple University, and Dr. Elizabeth B. Barrett from Kansas State University, thank you for your support and expertise for my research. I also thank my mother, Dr. Pranee Sungkatavat, my dad, Sarun Sungkatavat, and a division from Thai government for helping me secure locations for data collection in Thailand.

Besides, many life-time friends gave me a hand when I needed. Masahiro Sugiyama, Young Gin Choi, Han Wen, Pei Liu, Yee Ming Lee, Fiona Yen, Seunghyun Park, Sooyoung Choi, Hyeong Jin Jeon, Heidi Weil, Ms. Nancy Hansen, Angelina Dabagyan, Grace Lin, Karl Anderson, Thai students, Americans and many international students at Kansas State University, thank you! Little things like words to cheer me up on Facebook, messages on my phone, and all the phone calls were very much appreciated. You made me strong and helped me go through every single difficult step.

I have many more people to recognize for their support for my journey: family, close friends, former co-workers, governors, and even strangers. I will always remember and never forget every kindness. As mentioned, there are so many wonderful people I would love to recognize. However, I believe there may be not enough space here to express everything. Thus, to hundreds of you, I extract thousands of words that I would like to say into two words, short but meaningful. I will let it blow with the warmest wind to you... “Thank you.”

Dedication

To my father, Sarun Sungkatavat, my mother, Dr. Pranee Sungkatavat, and my grandparents, who I called “day-dad” and “day-mom”. You all helped me believe that there is always the light at the end of the tunnels. You always love me and support me unconditionally without cease. I do love you, as always.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Thailand is one of the world's most popular tourism destinations. Out of 204 million tourists visiting Asia and the Pacific regions in 2010; Thailand was ranked fourth, drawing 15 million international visitors (World Tourism Organization [WTO], 2011). Thailand has long been known for her stunning natural scenery, rich culture, authentic and delicious food, a modern capital city, friendly people and good value for money (FutureBrand, 2012; Tourism Authority of Thailand [TAT], 2013). According to the 2011-2012 Country Brand Index, Thailand received the World's best "brand" in terms of "Value for Money", in 2006 through 2008 and again in 2011. Moreover, in 2011, Thailand was listed in the top 10 in the following categories (FutureBrand):

- 6th in overall Tourism Ranking (Resort and Lodging Options, Food, Attractions, Value for Money, Beaches, Nightlife and Shopping)
- 6th in the best brand for Food
- 6th in the best brand for Beaches
- 8th in the best brand for Nightlife
- 9th in the best brand for Shopping
- 10th in the best brand for Resort and Lodging Options.

In addition, Thailand has been recognized as a reliable medical tourism destination and was ranked 47th by the World Health Organization for its healthcare systems (Medical Tourism Corporation, 2012). Famous health and wellness services include Thai massage, spa, and alternative healthcare. Thailand is a very diverse destination, providing almost everything a tourist would look for in a destination (FutureBrand, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

Thailand's tourism industry directly contributed to 7.3% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2012 (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2013). The tourism industry created over two million jobs within the industry and almost five million travel and tourism related jobs. Although a large number of visitors visited Thailand within the past few years, its tourism industry contributes a smaller portion of the GDP, and generates much less money, than other service industries (Economy Watch Content, 2010).

In 2011, the tourist's average daily expenditure was around \$53 per person for local tourists and about \$125 per person for international tourists (Department of Tourism, 2011). The average length of stay for international visitors was approximately 9 to 10 days. The average daily expenditure of both the local and international tourists from East Asian countries who came with group tours obviously was considered very low (Pongsirirushakun & Naewmalee, 2003). In addition, according to WTTC (2013), there was no significant change in the growth of the Thailand tourism industry while the other destinations within the same region experienced an increase. For example, the numbers of international travelers in the Philippines and Indonesia have increased in 2012 by 14% and 10% respectively (WTO, 2012).

Tourism is one of the key industries that helps drive Thailand's economy. However, during the past decade, Thailand has faced many issues that affected its tourism industry; including a tsunami, Avian influenza, H1N1 influenza, the global economic downturn, political crisis and the worst flood in a half century in 2011 (Vanhaleweyk, 2013). Ongoing political instability, since 2005, has also negatively impacted the Thai tourism industry. For example, the 2008 anti-government protest at Bangkok's international airport caused tourist arrivals in 2009 to decrease from the previous year and resulted in an additional 2 million visitors canceling their trips to Thailand (Barnes, 2009; Beech, 2008; Department of Tourism, 2009).

Making the situation worse, the U.S. visitor arrivals to Thailand in 2009 declined 6.33% due to the global economic downturn and the fear of the H1N1 influenza epidemic (Barnes, 2009; "TRIS rating see," 2009). Some individuals also expressed a negative image of Thailand as a country of sex tourism, such as prostitution (Nuttavuthisit, 2007). Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) has become one of the most serious ongoing issues in Thailand over the past two decades. About 490,000 Thais lived with human immunodeficiency virus infection (HIV) in 2011 (UNAIDS, 2012). The total number of people living with HIV in 2011 was estimated at 34 million worldwide. Thailand was ranked 2nd in 2011 for the number of people living with HIV in Asia and 14th worldwide (UNAIDS). These negative issues mentioned above however, may not be widespread problems. Those visitors who know Thailand well may not have been affected by these issues. Moreover, because Thailand has many diverse destinations, there are many positive features and qualities that still attract travelers (TAT, 2013).

Maintaining loyal visitors who come back to Thailand repeatedly, would require lower advertising expenditures than attracting new visitors. However, in order to be successful in

tourism development in Thailand, focusing only on the existing markets may not be enough (Keiningham, Vavra, Aksoy, & Wallard, 2005). Previous research suggests that in order to ensure sustainability, it is important to both retain repeat visitors and consistently attract first-time visitors (Shanka & Taylor, 2004). To do so, TAT (2012) has organized many events to rebuild the good image of Thai tourism and facilitate travelers' intention to visit.

Recently, several tourism experts suggested that Thailand should try to increase the number of international visitors as well as capture markets that ranked at the top in terms of tourism expenditure, such as the U.S., to increase the income per visitor and total revenue (Pongsirirushakul & Naewmalee, 2003; "Record growth in," 2013; Ruggia, 2012; "Thai tourism arrivals," 2013). The WTO (2013) reported that the world's greatest top source market by international tourism expenditure in 2012 was China, followed by Germany, the U.S., the U.K. and the Russian Federation. According to the Department of Tourism (2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013) the statistics of traveler arrivals from China, Germany, the U.K. and the Russian Federation to Thailand showed consistent increases whereas the number of visitors from the U.S. has been inconsistent and unpredictable.

The U.S. market segment is large, compared to other potential segments, and they are also ranked third for the world's leading travel spenders as a country (Cripps, 2013; WTO, 2013). Overall growth patterns of U.S. traveler arrivals in Thailand in recent years were inconsistent: (a) there was a decrease between 2009 to 2010 of 2.44%; (b) there was a sharp increase between 2010 and 2011 of 11.43% and 12.75% accordingly; and (c) there was a slowdown during January to April between 2012 and 2013 (Department of Tourism, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). This information shows that it is hard to predict the trend for this particular segment. Further, despite the fact that U.S. travelers to Thailand increased in 2011 and 2012, the importance of U.S. travelers as a source market of arrivals has weakened from being ranked 7th in 2010 to 11th in 2012 (Department of Tourism, 2010, 2012). Considering the potential of the U.S. market, Thailand's destination marketers may have to increase their efforts to acquire and maintain the U.S. market.

Inconsistency of obtaining and maintaining the U.S. market may be caused by the absence of an effective strategy for attracting U.S. travelers (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008). An effective promotion and marketing strategy for Thailand tourism may be different among target markets due to the varying perception and preference of each market. The lack of

knowledge about U.S. travelers was identified as a barrier to developing an effective marketing strategy to target this market (Stepchenkova & Morrison).

Destination Image (DI) plays one of the most significant roles in destination selection and travel decision-making process that influence travel behavior (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Goodrich, 1978; Mayo, 1973). Travelers increase their motivation and decide on a choice of destination based on its image and attractiveness (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Dann, 1981; Yuksel & Bilim, 2009).

DI consists of different dimensions including attribute-based and holistic components (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993, 2003). Each destination may contain both common and unique features. When attempting to access the DI of a destination, it is important to understand these components and be able to identify them. In order to obtain insight into the U.S. traveler segment, research needs to be conducted regarding U.S. travelers and their DI of Thailand (Echtner & Ritchie; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008).

Martilla and James (1977) suggested that before developing a marketing strategy for a product or service, marketers should know answers to the following two questions: (a) “How important is this feature?” and (b) “How well did the (product/service) perform?” (p. 77). Thus, to provide meaningful information to destination marketers, researchers should not only identify the DI of Thailand among U.S. travelers, but also assess the importance of destination attributes to U.S. travelers when selecting a destination. For this matter, Martilla and James introduced a useful technique for evaluating the importance and performance of products/services used in marketing strategy development called “Importance-Performance Analysis” (IPA). This technique has been used by marketers to understand the gaps between consumers’ expectations and their satisfaction with products/services (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012). The information acquired from IPA is meaningful to the marketers when developing strategies for a target market (Matzler, Bailom, Hinterhuber, Renzl, & Pichler, 2004). Therefore, research assessing U.S. travelers’ DI of Thailand using IPA may be needed for developing strategies effectively targeting this market.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The guiding purpose of the current study was to measure U.S. travelers' Destination Image (DI) of Thailand and to identify important attributes for U.S. travelers in terms of destination selection. The specific objectives of this study were:

- (1) to examine U.S. travelers' attribute-based image and holistic impression of Thailand as a destination;
- (2) to identify the unique features of Thailand presented to U.S. travelers;
- (3) to discover the hidden destination attributes of Thailand as a destination;
- (4) to evaluate the differences among visitors', virtual-visitors' and non-visitors' perceptions of Thailand as a destination;
- (5) to identify important attributes of Thailand in terms of destination selection; and
- (6) to determine the positions of Thailand's destination attributes regarding their importance for U.S. travelers.

Based on the purpose and objectives of this study, U.S. travelers' DI of Thailand were identified. Further, the research outcomes offer suggestions for developing effective tourism-marketing strategies for Thailand and may support the development of successful promotions for the U.S. market segment. Ultimately, the Thailand travel industry may be able to develop sustainable destination marketing and management strategies toward the U.S. market.

Significance of the Study

This study has significance for both scholars in tourism studies and destination marketers. First, this study introduces multiple dimensions of DI. The majority of previous DI research has focused only on attribute-based images of destinations, and excluded holistic impressions and unique features (Pike, 2002; Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010). Such exclusions were common due to difficulty of measuring these dimensions using a simple survey.

This study included a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve broad results. The mixed methods approach allowed researchers to identify attribute-based images as well as holistic impressions, hidden qualities and unique features. Echtner and Ritchie (2003) suggested that, "In order to capture all of these components, a combination of structured and unstructured methodologies should be used to measure destination image" (p. 46). This

study; therefore, captured a more complete picture of Thailand's DI as perceived by U.S. travelers than other studies which used only one method.

The second unique feature of this study is the introduction of "virtual visitors". Today's improving technology, social media and networks allow travelers to share information, photos, videos, and more; instantly providing opportunities for others to have visual experiences with destinations without actually being there. It is very conceivable that one can establish a realistic DI than before such technologies existed. Those who seek more information through available resources may have different DIs than those who do not. This study defines "virtual visitors" as those who have not visited Thailand but have sought information regarding Thailand. DIs of non-visitors, virtual visitors and actual visitors were compared to find significant differences between or among groups. Moreover, by investigating how different groups of visitors/non-visitors receive information from various sources, the results of this study revealed how the DI of Thailand was generated through multiple information agents. This information may be beneficial for destination marketers when comparing the findings to the desired DI. If there were any undesirable and/or incorrect images of Thailand, destination marketers and the Thailand travel industry leaders would be able to correct them, accordingly.

Last, this study was planned to provide useful information to help develop an effective tourism-marketing plan for Thailand and lead the destination to be successfully promoted in the U.S. market segment. To do so, destination marketers must access not only travelers' perceptions of DI (in other words, performance of a destination product), but also the importance of different destination's attributes (Martilla & James, 1977). This study used the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) because it allowed the researcher to simply illustrate the position of each destination's attribute regarding how well it performed versus the demands on each attribute. In the long-term, results from this study will support the TAT to achieve sustainable tourism programs toward the U.S. market.

Limitations of the Study

As an accepted principle of DI research, DI identified in a study can be only applied to a specific market and destination. Therefore, findings of this study are limited to U.S. travelers and Thailand as a destination, accordingly. Moreover, this study focused only on the importance of destination attributes which help motivate or facilitate the intention to travel. Several researchers

believed that inhibitors have a stronger impact on the final destination decision than facilitators do (Sönmez, 1998; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998a, 1998b; Um & Crompton, 1992). However, both of these factors clearly play significant roles in the destination decision process. Therefore, future research may take inhibitors into account to investigate what stops them from traveling to Thailand.

Definitions of Terms

Destination Image: A traveler's general perceptions about a place as a destination, including objective knowledge, prejudice, imagination, ideas, impressions and beliefs (Crompton, 1979; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991).

International Traveler: A visitor who travels to a destination outside of his/her country of residence when: (a) the country visited is not the traveler's usual environment; (b) the length of stay in the country visited is no more than twelve months; and (c) he/she is not employed by a resident entity in the country visited (WTO, 2008).

Visitor: "A traveler taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited. A visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor), if his/her trip includes an overnight stay, or as a same-day visitor (or excursionist) otherwise" (WTO, 2008, p. 10).

Virtual-visitor: A traveler who has not visited an identified destination, but has virtual experience with the destination. This group of visitors normally has interest in or intention to visit the destination and receives information from commercial sources and/or reviews/opinions about the destination; such as brochures, ads, travel websites, trip advice, reviews, etc.

Non-visitor: A traveler who has not taken a trip to an identified destination.

References

- Azzopardi, E., & Nash, R. (2012). A critical evaluation of importance-performance analysis. *Tourism Management*, 35, 222-233. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2012.07.007
- Barnes, J. (2009). *Restoring Thailand's tourism destination image in the wake of the recent political crisis: A few proposals*. (Master's thesis, Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand) Retrieved from [http://gsbejournal.au.edu/2V/Journal/RESTORING THAILANDS TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE IN THE WAKE OF THE RECENT POLITICAL CRISES A FEW PROPOSALS.pdf](http://gsbejournal.au.edu/2V/Journal/RESTORING%20THAILANDS%20TOURISM%20DESTINATION%20IMAGE%20IN%20THE%20WAKE%20OF%20THE%20RECENT%20POLITICAL%20CRISES%20A%20FEW%20PROPOSALS.pdf)
- Beech, H. (2008). Thailand's political crisis becomes a global one. *Time World*. Retrieved from <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1862366,00.html>
- Chen, C. F., & Tsai, D. (2007). How destination image and evaluative factors affect behavioral intentions? *Tourism Management*, 28, 1115-1122. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2006.07.007
- Cripps, K. (2013). Chinese travelers the world's biggest spenders. *CNN Travel*. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2013/04/05/travel/china-tourists-spend>
- Crompton, J. L. (1979). An assessment of the image of Mexico as a vacation destination and the influence of geographical location upon that image. *Journal of Travel Research*, 17(4), 18-23. doi:10.1177/004728757901700404
- Dann, G. (1981). Tourist motivation an appraisal. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 8, 187-219. doi:10.1016/0160-7383(81)90082-7
- Department of Tourism (2008). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php?id=7>
- Department of Tourism (2009). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php?id=6>
- Department of Tourism. (2010). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php?id=5>
- Department of Tourism. (2011). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php?id=4>
- Department of Tourism. (2012). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php>
- Department of Tourism. (2013). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php>

- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1991). The meaning and measurement of destination image. *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 2(2), 2-12.
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1993). The measurement of destination image: An empirical assessment. *Journal of Travel Research*, 31(4), 3-13.
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (2003). The meaning and measurement of destination image. *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 14(1), 37-48.
- Economy Watch Content. (2010). Thailand economic structure. *Economy Watch*. Retrieved from http://www.economywatch.com/world_economy/thailand/structure-of-economy.html
- Fakeye, P. C., & Crompton, J. L. (1991). Image differences between prospective, first-time, and repeat visitors to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. *Journal of Travel Research*, 30(2), 10-16. doi:10.1177/004728759103000202
- FutureBrand. (2012). *FutureBrand 2011 – 2012 country brand index*. Retrieved from http://www.futurebrand.com/images/uploads/studies/cbi/2011-2012_FutureBrand_CBI_ENG.pdf
- Goodrich, J. N. (1978). The relationship between preferences for and perceptions of vacation destinations: Application of a choice model. *Journal of Travel Research*, 17(2), 8-13. doi:10.1177/004728757801700202
- Keiningham, T. L., Vavra, T. G., Aksoy, L., & Wallard, H. (2005). *Loyalty myths: hyped strategies that will put you out of business--and proven tactics that really work*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Martilla, J. A., & James, J. C. (1977). Importance-performance analysis. *Journal of Marketing*, 41(1), 77-79.
- Matzler, K., Bailom, F., Hinterhuber, H. H., Renzl, B., & Pichler, J. (2004). The asymmetric relationship between attribute-level performance and overall customer satisfaction: A reconsideration of the importance-performance analysis. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 33, 271-277. doi:10.1016/S0019-8501(03)00055-5
- Mayo, E. J. (1973). *Regional images and regional travel behaviour*. The travel research association 4th annual conference, Sun Valley, ID.
- Medical Tourism Corporation. (2012). *Thailand medical tourism*. Retrieved from <http://www.medicaltourismco.com/thailand-hospitals/medical-tourism-Thailand.php>
- Nuttavuthisit, K. (2007). Branding Thailand: Correcting the negative image of sex tourism. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 3(1), 21-30. doi:10.1057/palgrave.pb.6000045
- Pike, S. (2002). Destination image analysis—a review of 142 papers from 1973 to 2000. *Tourism Management*, 23, 541-549. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(02)00005-5

- Pongsirirushakun, A., & Naewmalee, K. (2003). An analysis of foreign tourist expenditure in Thailand. *TDRI Quarterly Review*, 18(2), 9-16.
- Record growth in tourism arrivals to Thailand. (2013). *eTN Global Travel Industry News*. Retrieved from <http://www.eturbonews.com/34634/record-growth-tourism-arrivals-thailand>
- Ruggia, J. (2012). Thailand enters top ranks of successful tourism destinations. *Travel Pulse*. Retrieved from <http://www.travelpulse.com/thailand-enters-top-ranks-of-successful-tourism-destinations.html>
- Shanka, T., & Taylor, R. (2004). Discriminating factors of first-time and repeat visitors to wine festivals. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 7(2), 134-145. doi:10.1080/13683500408667976
- Sönmez, S. F. (1998). Tourism, terrorism, and political instability. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25(2), 416-456. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(97)00093-5
- Sönmez, S. F., & Graefe, A. R. (1998a). Determining future travel behavior from past travel experience and perceptions of risk and safety. *Journal of Travel Research*, 37(2), 171-177. doi: 10.1177/004728759803700209
- Sönmez, S. F., & Graefe, A. R. (1998b). Influence of terrorism risk on foreign tourism decisions. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25, 112-144. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(97)00072-8
- Stepchenkova, S., & Mills, J. E. (2010). Destination image: A meta-analysis of 2000–2007 research. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 19, 575-609. doi:10.1080/19368623.2010.493071
- Stepchenkova, S., & Morrison, A. M. (2008). Russia's destination image among American pleasure travelers: Revisiting Echtner and Ritchie. *Tourism Management*, 29, 548-560. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2007.06.003
- Thai tourism arrivals cross 22 million mark in 2012. (2013). *TAT News*. Retrieved from <http://www.tatnews.org/component/lexicontent/53-media-releases-2013/802-thai-tourism-arrivals-cross-22-million-mark-in-2012>
- Tourism Authority of Thailand. (2012). *Thailand travel manual 2012-2013*. Retrieved from http://www.tourismthailand.org/fileadmin/upload_img/Multimedia/Ebrochure/409/TTM2012.pdf
- Tourism Authority of Thailand. (2013). *About Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://www.tourismthailand.org>
- TRIS rating sees a/H1N1 flu outbreak to temporarily hit tourism industry. (2009). *RYT9*. Retrieved from <http://www.ryt9.com/es/trsn/78850>

- Um, S., & Crompton, J. L. (1992). The roles of perceived inhibitors and facilitators in pleasure travel destination decisions. *Journal of Travel Research*, 30(3), 18-25. doi: 10.1177/004728759203000303
- UNAIDS. (2012). *UNAIDS world AIDS day report: 2012*. Retrieved from http://www.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/epidemiology/2012/gr2012/JC2434_WorldAIDSday_results_en.pdf
- Vanhaleweyk, G. (2013). *Thailand: Tourist arrivals from 1998 till first quarter 2013*. Retrieved from <http://www.thaiwebsites.com/tourism.asp>
- World Tourism Organization. (2008). *International recommendations for tourism statistics*. Retrieved from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc08/bg-tourismstats.pdf>
- World Tourism Organization. (2011). *UNWTO tourism highlight: 2011 Edition*. Retrieved from <http://mkt.unwto.org/en/highlights>
- World Tourism Organization. (2012). *UNWTO tourism highlight: 2012 Edition*. Retrieved from <http://mkt.unwto.org/en/highlights>
- World Tourism Organization. (2013). *World tourism barometer*. Retrieved from <http://mkt.unwto.org/en/barometer>
- World Travel & Tourism Council. (2013). *Travel & tourism economic impact 2013: Thailand*. Retrieved from http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/thailand2013.pdf
- Yuksel, F., & Bilim, Y. (2009). Interactions between visual appeals, holiday motivations, destination personality and the self-Image: Implications for destination advertising. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Research*, 9, 75-104.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of Destination Image (DI) and includes definitions, elements of its formation, constructs, and destination attributes used in previous DI studies. It also provides a description of Thailand's image found in previous research. This chapter introduces the concept of Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) and its use in tourism research. Furthermore, findings from Thailand's DI will be discussed.

Destination Image (DI)

The concept of DI has been adopted for use in tourism studies for several decades and in several disciplines, such as social and environmental psychology, marketing, and consumer behavior. DI has been defined differently among researchers since the 1970's (Gallarza, Saura, & Garcia, 2002; Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008). Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993, 2003) commented that several definitions of DI described in previous studies are inexplicit because of its complex nature. Table 2.1 shows selected definitions of DI from previous studies (Gallarza et al., p. 60; Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, p. 264). The frequently used definition of DI describes travelers' general perceptions about a place as a destination, including objective knowledge, prejudice, imagination, ideas, impressions and beliefs (Crompton, 1979; Echtner & Ritchie).

Table 2.1 Selected Definitions of Image and Destination Image

Author/s	Definition
Assael (1987)	Total perception of the destination that is formed by processing information from various sources over time
Baloglu and McCleary (1999a)	An individual's mental representation of knowledge, feelings, and global impressions about a destination

Table 2.1 (Continue)

Author/s	Definition
Chon (1990)	Result of the interaction of a person's beliefs, ideas, feelings, expectations and impressions about a destination
Crompton (1979)	An image may be defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination
Dichter (1985)	The concept of image can be applied to a political candidate, a product, and a country. It describes not individual traits or qualities but the total impression and entity makes on the minds of others
Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993, 2003)	The perceptions of individual destination attributes and the holistic impression made by the destination
Fakeye and Crompton (1991)	Image is the mental construct developed by a potential tourist on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions
Hunt (1975)	Impressions that a person or persons hold about a state in which they do not reside
MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997)	A composite of various products (attractions) and attributes woven into a total impression
Moutinho (1987)	An individual's attitude toward the destination attributes based on their knowledge and feelings
Phelps (1986)	Perceptions or impressions of a place
Reynolds (1965)	A mental construct developed by the consumer on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions. It comes into being through a creative process in which selected impressions are elaborated, embellished and ordered

Importance of DI

For several decades, topics related to DI have gained much attention, from both academic researchers and tourism industry practitioners, as DI has played a significant role in tourism marketing and management (Chon, 1991). This deeper understanding of DI has significantly contributed to greater knowledge in several tourism-related areas, such as tourists' decision making and destination selection behaviors (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Goodrich, 1978; Mayo & Jarvis, 1981). Previous studies have found that DI has a significant influence on pre-purchase destination selection, travel-related decision and travel behavioral intention (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Henkel, Henkel, Agrusa, Agrusa, & Tanner, 2006; Mayo, 1973; Rittichainuwat, Qu, & Brown, 2001). DI also has a significant impact on trip-purchasing behavior and level of satisfaction with a destination (Chon, 1990).

DI formation and changes of DI in different traveling stages, helps explain DI and travelers' satisfaction with their trip (Chon, 1989). Visitors who hold positive DI have favorable on-site experiences that lead to higher satisfaction levels and positive behavioral intentions to revisit the destination (Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2005). Several researchers believe that studies on the relationship between DI and trip satisfaction help in the development of methods to increase the intention to revisit and willingness to recommend a destination to others (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Chi & Qu, 2008). In addition, DI is viewed as another approach to access a competitive position as a destination and to create positioning strategies (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Haahti, 1986; Pike & Ryan, 2004).

Many studies have confirmed that in the destination selection process, potential travelers' DI, including destination strengths and weaknesses, is an essential factor that can ultimately affect the destination's viability (Baloglu, 2000; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a, 1999b; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Goodrich, 1978; Hunt, 1975). These findings have influenced destination marketers to look closely into DI factors that can help develop successful marketing strategies. Therefore, DI is considered a key component of successful destination marketing.

DI Formation

DI formation refers to a construct in which a traveler selects or receives information from different sources and converts it into a mental picture of a destination (Gartner, 1994; Gunn,

1972, 1988, 1997). Balogu and McCleary (1999a) and Beerli and Martin (2004) found that DI is formed by two main factors including stimulus factors (external factors) and traveler's characteristics (internal factors).

Stimulus Factors (External Factors)

Stimulus factors can be described as travelers' impressions of selected information received from various sources (Balogu & McCleary, 1999a). These information sources include organic, autonomous, induced, and modified induced sources (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Gartner, 1994; Jenkins, 1999; Phelps, 1986), perceived before experiencing a destination and which Phelps called secondary images. Each of these is discussed in detail in the following sections.

Organic Sources. Organic sources include opinions of others such as family members, relatives, friends, travel agents, and online reviews about the destination based on the storyteller's individual experiences and/or knowledge (Gartner, 1994). Several researchers have confirmed that family and friends play significant roles in developing DI. Their word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations play important roles in the destination selection process and are considered by travelers as the most reliable source of destination information (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Jenkins, 1978; Sussmann & Unel, 1999; Vogt, Stewart, & Fesenmaier, 1998). In today's world of rapid changes in technology, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has started to have an impact on destination perception among travelers (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). eWOM is defined as "all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers" (Litvin et al., p. 461). However, many tourists may find that eWOM may be abused by marketers of a destination. Thus, the eWOM would have a significant effect on travelers' destination selection only if they believe that the voices within the community are independent of commercial influence (Litvin et al.). The destination usually has no direct control over organic sources (O'Leary & Deegan, 2005).

Autonomous Sources. Autonomous sources of information include messages from mass media including news, newspapers, television documentaries, movies, books, magazines, Wikipedia and educational materials (Gartner, 1994). Kotler (1987) found that there is a relationship between DI and its national image formed by autonomous information agents. Echtner and Ritchie (2003) added that the comprehensive knowledge regarding history, politics,

economics and society gathered from non-commercial sources is an important component of a nation's DI.

Riley, Baker, and Van Doren (1998) indicated that movies have significant influences on travel decisions. The visitation growth rate for the locations where movies are filmed tend to increase constantly for up to four years after the movies are released (Riley et al., 1998). Gartner (1994) also explained that mass media has high credibility and the ability to reach large audiences. This information agent may change the DI quickly, either positively or negatively, especially if the information raises concerns about safety and risks such as terrorism, war, natural disaster, and spread of disease (Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Mansfeld, 1999; Milo & Yoder, 1991; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Sonmez, 1998). However, several researchers have argued that the DI formed or changed by autonomous sources, such as popular culture and news, holds influence for only a short period of time (Gartner, 1994; Kim & Richardson, 2003).

Induced Sources. Unlike organic sources, destination marketers typically control what is presented and emphasized by induced information agents (O'Leary & Deegan, 2005). Induced information includes promotional literature such as travel brochures, posters and travel websites (Jenkins, 1999). For instance, E-Brochures are the promotional literature for Thailand created by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), advertising for Tourism in Thailand and the TAT website. Walmsley and Young (1998) explained that DI for local destinations tends to be formed by personal knowledge through actual experience whereas induced information is likely to be a crucial source for international destinations. Marketers use promotions, advertisements, publicity and campaigns to develop DI among travelers. Destination marketers select different features of a destination to appeal to different target markets. Thus, one may expect that induced images may help form travelers' expectations about the destination and generate interest in visiting it. However, if the information advertised is unrealistic compared to the existing images, it can cause a negative impact on visitors' satisfaction levels during the visit (Chon, 1990; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). Chon found that travelers' satisfaction often depends on the comparison between their actual experiences and their pre-visit images.

Modified Induced Sources. Modified induced information comes from personal experiences at a destination that result in forming a "complex image" (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Jenkins, 1999). This source of information is at least as important, if not more important, to travelers as other sources. When visitors travel to a destination, they have a chance to compare

their preconceptions to their actual experiences at the destination (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998a, 1998b). Sönmez and Graefe (1998a, 1998b) also found that an absence of an actual experience, in other words, information from a modified induced source, may decrease the likelihood of travel to or increase intention to avoid traveling to certain destinations because of travelers' perceptions from other sources. On the other hand, as travelers' experience with a destination increased, they held a more realistic and positive image of the destination (Milman & Pizam, 1995; Pearce, 1982; Richards & Wilson, 2004; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001). As mentioned, if the actual experiences at the destination meet or exceed the expectations held by travelers prior to the actual visit, travelers will form a positive image of the destination as well as be satisfied with their trip (Chon, 1990).

Traveler's Characteristics (Internal Factors)

Um and Crompton (1990) explained that, while external factors affect the formation of DI, internal factors of travelers also make the nature of personal beliefs vary depending on individuals' characteristics. Thus, travelers build their own DI based on external stimuli projected by their unique characteristics (Gartner, 1994). These individual characteristics include socio-demographic and the psychological factors as presented in the following sections.

Socio-demographic characteristics. Socio-demographic characteristics include age, gender, social class, level of education, country of origin, ethnicity/race, and presence of children in the household (Dann, 1996; Gartner, 1994; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Several researchers disregard the value of demographics when conducting DI studies because they believe that there is no relationship between a consumer's social status and his/her perceived image (Hunt, 1975; Litvin & Kar, 2004). However, many scholars have argued that people have different perceptions and do not see things in exactly the same way, especially those who do not have similar backgrounds (Dann, 1996; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Results from several research studies support that there are significant differences in DI among people with different characteristics (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001). Other studies confirm this association between demographics and DI partially because the results show that there is no significant difference of perceived DI among certain socio-demographic factors, such as age, gender, level of education, and/or income (Baloglu, 1997; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Mackay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Smith & Mackey, 2001). These contradictory findings may be due

to differences in sampling and/or differences in the study design. For example, international travelers would respond differently from travelers from only one country of origin.

Psychological Characteristics. Psychological characteristics refer to personal needs, preferences, interests, motivations, values, prior knowledge, personality, and lifestyle (Dann, 1996; Gartner, 1994). These factors act as a filter and affect how travelers perceive DI (Dann; Gartner); and because of these factors, the interpretation of perceived DI is also based on personal biases, preconceptions, assumptions, and even fantasies (Mackay & Fesenmaier, 2000; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Past experiences may also influence DI, especially for an international destination. Cohen (1972) found that if individuals increase their global awareness, they tend to be more open-minded and have a more positive outlook. Sönmez and Graefe (1998a) explained that prior knowledge and/or experiences influence one's perceived image by allowing for a comparison of the new information received to what they have experienced, especially the perceptions of risk and safety. Travelers tend to believe in their own perceptions of the destination if they have prior knowledge and experience in the area, regardless of whether that region is actually safe or risky (Sönmez & Graefe).

Selby and Morgan (1996) added that travelers tend to prejudge a destination based on its surrounding areas. In addition to prior knowledge/experience, the number of visits, the amount of international experience and the length of stay were also found to influence DI development (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Hu & Ritchie, 1993; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). Moreover, cultural differences, especially for international travelers, are one of the personal factors that need to be considered in determining how individuals perceive image (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Personal preference and interest were determined as factors that influence the development of DI (Suh & Gartner, 2004). Suh and Gartner illustrated that vacation and business travelers have different DIs based on their attribute desires. For example, although they visit the same destination, vacation travelers may discover more touristic attributes and services at the destination than business travelers (Suh & Gartner).

Stages of DI Formation

Echtner and Ritchie (2003) suggested that DI formation can be illustrated by Gunn's (1972) model of the seven phases of travel experience. Each source of information influences DI formation at a different stage of traveling. As explained, even though travelers have not visited the destination, they hold some form of DI (Mayo, 1973). The information acquired before the

actual visit forms DI through secondary images as opposed to primary images formed through actual experience (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Phelps, 1986). Gunn's model of the seven phases of travel experience include:

Stage 1: "Accumulation" of mental images about vacation experiences

Stage 2: "Modification" of those images by further information

Stage 3: "Decision" to take a vacation trip

Stage 4: "Travel to the destination"

Stage 5: "Participation" at the destination

Stage 6: "Return travel"

Stage 7: "New accumulation," modification of images based on the vacation experience (p. 120).

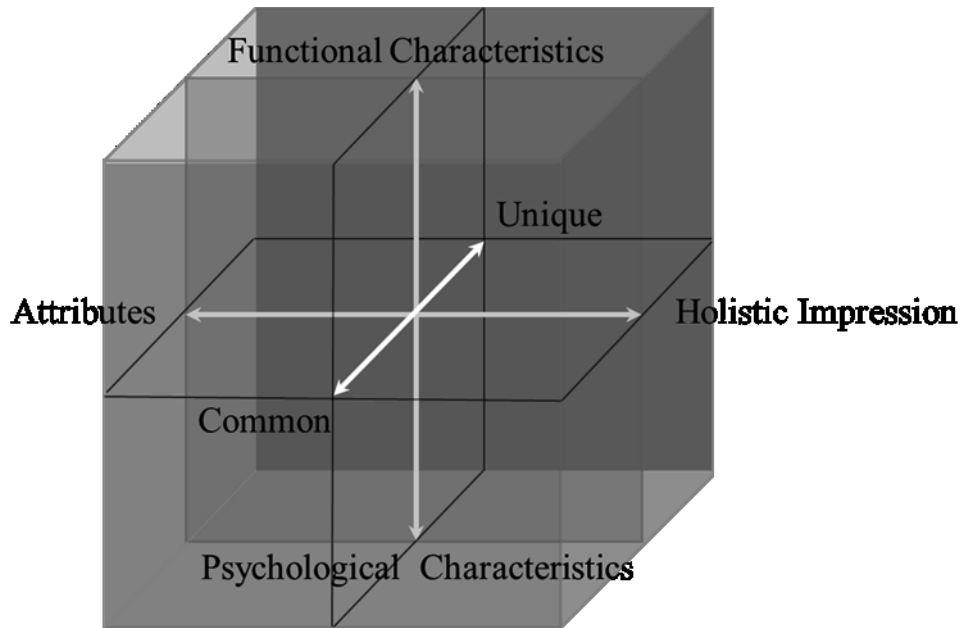
In this model, DI is initially formed at stages 1 and 2 or at stage 7 (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). In stage 1, organic and autonomous or non-commercial sources of information are processed and help to form DI (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). In stage 2, DI is either formed or modified based on induced or commercial information sources (Gunn, 1972; Jenkins, 1999). For first-time visitors, travel decisions are based on limited information from organic, autonomous and induced sources. The actual experience at the destination is the source of information that modifies or changes DI during stages 5 and 7 to be more realistic, complex and differentiated than the DI from earlier stages (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Gunn, 1972; Jenkins, 1999; Pearce, 1982; Phelps, 1986). If the actual experience at the destination is better than or at least equal to the pre-visit DI, the DI will be improved (Chon, 1990). Repeat visitors usually decide to revisit the destination based on a favorable, modified DI. In addition, travelers who hold both positive and negative modified DI may become organic sources or provide WOM recommendations for other potential visitors (Westbrook, 1987). While positive WOM recommendations increase the expectations of potential visitors (Díaz-Martín, Iglesias, Vazquez, & Ruiz, 2000), negative WOM may have significant influence on potential visitors' DI to be unfavorable (Crick, 2003; Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2003). These show that in each stage of the travel experience, different information agent(s) play unique and significant roles in DI development. It is therefore important for destination marketers and managers to promote favorable DI while developing or improving the quality of the destination's features.

DI Components

Most researchers support the idea that DI has at least two distinctive elements; cognitive and affective images (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Chon, 1991; Mackay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002). The cognitive image or rational element is described as an idea or the knowledge about a destination, while the affective image or emotional element refers to feelings toward a place or an area; such as favorable, unfavorable, or neutral (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Gartner, 1994; Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010). The cognitive image of a destination held by travelers can be explained as a set of relevant attributes (Stepchenkova & Mills).

Several researchers argue that there are some gaps as well as an interrelationship between those two elements; and that there is an additional dimension, conative, to the DI construct (Gartner, 1994; Pike & Ryan, 2004; White, 2004). They consider the conative element as an action component that is influenced by the cognitive and affective components. Conation may be viewed as an intention to visit a destination within a certain time frame (Pike & Ryan, 2004). Some researchers have suggested the use of an overall image that includes all three dimensions, cognitive, affective, and conative elements, when capturing the complexity of the DI construct. Because of this complexity, it has been hard for researchers to identify and create a complete measurement of DI. In 1991, Echtner and Ritchie applied components of product image (MacInnis & Price, 1987) to develop DI components. Additionally, as suggested by Dichter (1985), viewing an “image” typically involves the subject’s traits or qualities as well as its overall impression. Echtner and Ritchie proposed that DI comprises two major components including attributes and holistic images. They also recommended that DI components can be illustrated by using three dimensions with a different continuum on each axis. The three axes include (1) attribute vs. holistic; (2) functional or tangible features vs. psychological characteristics or intangible features; and (3) common vs. unique characteristics, as shown in Figure 2.1 (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993, 2003).

Figure 2.1 The Components of DI in 3 Dimensions



Both attribute-based images and holistic impressions contain functional and psychological characteristics. Figure 2.1 illustrates these components. The functional-attributes capture characteristics of DI that are observable and measurable (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993). The examples of functional-attributes are price level, climate of a destination, and an efficient local transportation system. The functional-holistic images focus on physical characteristics and imagery such as one's mental picture of a destination (Echtner & Ritchie). For instance, the functional-holistic images may include sun, sand, or mountains.

The psychological characteristics are more difficult to measure than functional characteristics because they are intangible (Jenkins, 1999). The psychological attributes, such as friendliness, are easier to identify than the psychological holistic image. The psychological holistic impressions are the general feelings or atmosphere of a destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993). Many studies have focused on functional characteristics of DI, while fewer researchers have included psychological holistic impression in their studies, because they are more difficult to assess and measure (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Jenkins, 1999; Pike, 2002; Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010).

In addition, Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993, 2003) introduced the third dimension of common vs. unique features as components of DI as shown in Figure 2.2. Common features

focus on shared traits or general qualities for destinations (Echtner & Ritchie). These common features can be compared among most destinations. Some examples of common features are friendliness, safety of the destination, climate and price level. The unique dimension is interested in special characteristics, icons or events of a destination that form part of its image (Echtner & Ritchie; Jenkins, 1999). For example, when speaking of France, travelers may have an image of the Eiffel Tower while people often think of kangaroos, koalas, or the Sydney Opera House when speaking about Australia. Famous and special events or festivals, such as the Venice Carnival in Italy, Songkran Festival in Thailand, and San Fermin (Pamplona Bull Run) in Spain, can also be identified as destination uniqueness that distinguishes one destination from others. Researchers often overlook this dimension, despite the fact that the uniqueness of a destination is a very important factor that attracts travelers. Echtner and Ritchie suggested that the unique aspects of a destination also need to be taken into consideration when identifying DI.

DI Measurement

The measurement of DI in each study is based on how DI is conceptualized (Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010). A majority of previous DI research focused on cognitive images or an attribute-based component of destinations; while affective image, holistic impression, and unique features were excluded because they were hard to measure (Pike, 2002; Stepchenkova & Mills). Echtner and Ritchie (1991) suggested that researchers should include all components of DI when developing measurements and that to focus only on certain components of DI, while excluding the others, results in an incomplete measurement.

Echtner and Ritchie (2003) suggested that future researchers should follow these guidelines: “(a) include a complete DI measurement that involves both attribute-based and holistic components; (b) measure attribute-based as well as holistic components in both functional and psychological characteristics; (c) incorporate general, common destination traits and/or unique features of a particular destination; and (d) use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies to capture complete DI components” (p. 46).

A majority of previous studies have applied structured methodologies to examine common attribute-based images (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Pike, 2002; Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010). Each attribute was rated using Likert-type scales. In designing a scale, the specific set of attributes should be selected based on each destination’s features, qualities, characteristics and its

positioning or the objectives of the DI assessment (Beerli & Martín, 2004). Then, general attributes may be selected to fulfill the attribute list for a destination. A variety of attributes under nine categories used in the existing scales was gathered from previous studies by Beerli and Martín (2004, p. 659):

- Natural Resources
 - Weather
 - Temperature
 - Rainfall
 - Humidity
 - Hours of sunshine
 - Beaches
 - Quality of seawater
 - Sandy or rocky beaches
 - Length of the beaches
 - Overcrowding of beaches
 - Wealth of countryside
 - Protected nature reserves
 - Lakes, mountains, deserts, etc.
 - Variety and uniqueness of flora and fauna
- Culture, History and Art
 - Museums, historical buildings,
 - Monuments, etc.
 - Festival, concerts, etc.
 - Handicraft
 - Gastronomy
 - Folklore
 - Religion
 - Customs and ways of life
- Tourist Leisure and Recreation
 - Theme parks
 - Entertainment and sports activities
 - Golf, fishing, hunting, skiing, scuba diving, etc.
 - Water parks
 - Zoos
 - Trekking
 - Adventure activities
 - Casinos
 - Night life
 - Shopping
- Social Environment
 - Hospitality and friendliness of the local residents

- Under privilege and poverty
- Quality of life
- Language barriers
- Natural Environment
 - Beauty of the scenery
 - Attractiveness of the cities and towns
 - Cleanliness
 - Overcrowding
 - Air and noise pollution
 - Traffic congestion
- Political and Economic Factors
 - Political stability
 - Political tendencies
 - Economic development
 - Safety
 - Crime rate
 - Terrorist attacks
 - Prices
- General Infrastructure
 - Development and quality of roads, airports and ports
 - Private and public transport facilities
 - Development of health services
 - Development of telecommunications
 - Development of commercial
 - Infrastructures
 - Extent of building development
- Tourist Infrastructure
 - Hotel and self-catering accommodation (Number of beds, Categories, Qualities)
 - Restaurants (Number, Categories, Qualities)
 - Bars, discotheques and clubs
 - Ease of access to destination
 - Excursions at the destination
 - Tourist centers
 - Network of tourist information
- Atmosphere of the Place
 - Luxurious
 - Fashionable
 - Place with a good reputation
 - Family-oriented destination
 - Exotic
 - Mystic

- Relaxing
- Stressful
- Fun, enjoyable
- Pleasant
- Boring
- Attractive or interesting

While common attribute-based images can be simply measured by using scale items, unique features of a destination may not be captured by a pre-identified type of scale (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). The holistic impression also cannot be measured by using a quantitative approach because it is intangible (Echtner & Ritchie; Jenkins, 1999). Qualitative approaches or unstructured methodologies use open-ended questions that allow respondents to answer freely in their own words (Patton, 2002). Hence, several researchers have used a qualitative approach to discover unique features of a particular destination and to study the holistic component of DI (O’Leary & Deegan, 2003; Ryan & Cave, 2005; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008).

Echtner and Ritchie (1991) have developed measurements to be used for (1) unique features and (2) holistic impressions in terms of functional and psychological characteristics. A question: “Please list any distinctive or unique tourist attractions that you can think of in (destination)”, captures unique features of a destination (Echtner & Ritchie, p. 11). These researchers also established two open-ended questions to capture functional- and psychological-holistic component: “What images or characteristics come to mind when you think of (destination) as a travel destination?” (functional-holistic impression) and “How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting (destination)?” (psychological-holistic impression) (Echtner & Ritchie, p. 11).

Echtner and Ritchie (1991) suggested that DI could be identified by asking about either the strengths or weaknesses of the destination. Thus, a complete measurement of DI should consist not only of all DI’s components but should also allow respondents to identify a destination’s positive and negative qualities. Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) measured a set of attributes based on both positive and negative images of Thailand. Their list of attributes was developed based on secondary sources of information such as promotional literature.

Stepchenkova and Morrison (2008) adopted measurements developed by Echtner and Ritchie to examine U.S. travelers’ DI of Russia. These measurements included the three abovementioned open-ended questions to capture unique features and holistic impressions of Russia, permitting participants to respond freely with positive or negative comments. They found

that Russia as a destination was perceived negatively by U.S. travelers. The marketing implication of their research suggested to the tourism authority to reconsider targeting the U.S. market segment. Focusing on other markets may require less marketing efforts because of the DI held by those markets compared to the U.S. travelers' negative DI of Russia.

As mentioned previously, DI has been measured in various ways based on how it is defined. A complete measurement should include both tangible and intangible images of a destination. Pre-determined attributes may not be able to capture certain features of the destination, such as holistic impressions. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods (i.e., a mixed model approach) should be used to capture a complete DI. In addition, DI, unlike product images, consists of positive/negative and favorable/unfavorable images. However, several features or qualities may be difficult for a researcher to determine whether they have positive or negative influences in terms of decision making. Hence, travelers should be allowed to indicate whether they are favorable or not.

Degree of Familiarity and Types of Visitors

The degree of familiarity with a destination is an important factor that influences a traveler's DI development (Baloglu, 2001; Yilmaz, Yilmaz, Icigen, Ekin, & Utku, 2009). Different amounts of previous knowledge and/or experiences with a destination can be defined as the familiarity with the destination (Baloglu; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008). Milman and Pizam (1995) found that "familiarity with the destination (i.e., previous visitation) had a significant impact on future intentions and therefore, may forward the consumer into an advanced stage in the purchasing decision process (i.e., repeat visitation)" (p. 26). Baloglu suggested that familiarity with a destination may be acquired from two different classes of experience including indirect and direct experiences. Indirect experiences include when travelers receive information about the destination while direct tourism experiences are acquired from the actual visit to the destination.

Availability of information from various sources, especially commercial and promotional literature, allows individuals to develop DI, even though they have never visited a destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Gunn, 1972, 1988; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). The presented information may vary among different market segments; or travelers may elect to receive information from the sources they trust, which possibly describes distinct qualities of the

destination. Thus, travelers will develop or adjust their DI based on the received or selected information (Echtner & Ritchie; Gunn; MacKay & Fesenmaier).

Fakeye and Crompton (1991) categorized the roles of images formed by organic, autonomous, induced, and modified induced information agents to three functional roles: (1) The role of autonomous image is to inform because it has credibility and ability of mass media. (2) The role of induced image is to persuade because it represents the actual tourism products that may generate interest and desire to travel. (3) The role of the modified induced image is to remind because it is formed by actual experience (the most credible sources of information). The organic image was not mentioned in these functional categories perhaps because it plays different roles than other images. These functional roles of image created different degrees of familiarity with the destination. The degree of familiarity is different among various types of visitors (Fakeye & Crompton). These are discussed in the following section.

Non-visitors

Travelers who hold autonomous images are usually familiar with a destination only in terms of general knowledge. This group of travelers has no actual experience with a destination. Milman and Pizam (1995) found that there were no significant difference in DI between travelers who were only aware of a destination but with no direct experience and those who were not aware of it at all. This may be explained by the fact that the autonomous image was not controlled by the destination, and the presented image may be positive or negative. Thus, this non-visitor group may not have any interest or likelihood of visiting the destination.

On the other hand, travelers who hold induced images may be more familiar with a destination due to their perception of actuality of destination represented through promotional material and destination literature. MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997, 2000) suggested that before an actual visit, marketing material including verbal and visual messages, especially from the destination, are a determinant of travelers' DI. This group of travelers also includes non-visitors, but they may have interest and/or desire to visit the destination due to the persuasive nature of the induced information they received. Considering the level of today's technology and the Internet, travelers with interest or desire to travel to a destination would naturally seek out more information and acquire more realistic images. Thus, they may become more familiar with the particular destination than those who only have general knowledge of and/or have no interest in

the destination. Because the destination usually has control over the commercial sources of information, marketers tend to promote the image they believe is appealing and important to potential travelers. Fakeye and Crompton (1991) contended that sometimes, the non-visitors who seek out information about the destination held a more positive image of the destination than those who have actual experience of the destination due to influences of marketing materials. Therefore, DI may differ between these two groups of non-visitors.

Visitors

Fakeye and Crompton (1991) found that prospective and actual visitors hold different DIs. Non-visitors and visitors may hold different DI because of the gaps between travelers' expectations and actual experiences at the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Fakeye & Crompton). The actual experience allows travelers to perceive realistic images themselves and improve their familiarity with the destination. Travelers' actual experiences may alter their DI by comparing them to their expectations (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a). Ahmed (1991), Chon (1987) and Dann (1996) reported that post-visitation DI tended to be more positive than pre-visitation DI. Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) also added that DI held by first-time and repeat visitors may differ in certain aspects as "repeat travelers become aware of hidden qualities, which may not be immediately obvious to first-time travelers" (p. 90). Thus, the more travelers visit a destination, the more familiar they are with it.

Degree of familiarity with the destination not only influences the DI development or changes DI, but also encourages the future intention to visit a destination (Baloglu, 2001; Milman & Pizam, 1995). In addition, "degree of familiarity implied differential visual information evaluation" (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997, p. 560), in other words, different levels of knowledge and experiences. MacKay and Fesenmaier also stated that the less familiar travelers' DI was formed with a more cognitive image with an exclusion of emotional attachments while the more familiar travelers' DI was formed based on a more affective image than just cognitive evaluation. Echtner and Ritchie (2003) and Baloglu and McCleary (1999a) contended that it would be useful to measure strengths, weaknesses, accuracies and inaccuracies of the existing DI as well as information sources among visitors/non-visitors with different degrees of familiarity when designing marketing strategies.

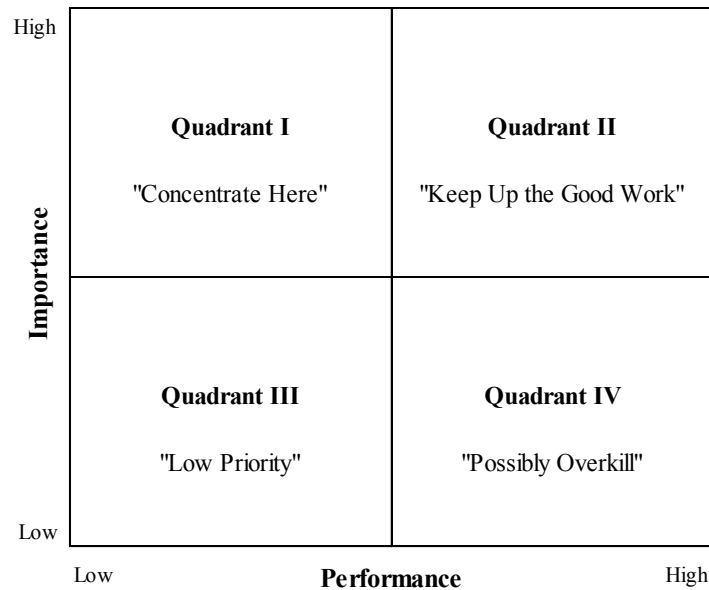
Various types of travelers have different degrees of familiarity because they receive information from multiple agents. Studying different types of visitors and their DI may help destination marketers to evaluate the current performances of their marketing strategies as well as provide guidance for future marketing efforts (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008).

Importance-Performance Analysis

Martilla and James (1977) first introduced the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) as an evaluation technique for consumers' perceptions of a product or service based on both importance and performance of an attribute. Measuring the importance or performance of an attribute can provide useful managerial implications. However, when these measurements are combined, it offers the ability to effectively identify the competitive position of a product/service and provides useful insights for marketing strategy development (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012; Martilla & James; Matzler, Bailom, Hinterhuber, Renzl, & Pichler, 2004). IPA has been established as a simple and effective tool used to determine improvement priorities of a product/service (Deng, 2007; O'Neill & Palmer, 2004; Slack, 1994). It suggests resource allocation (Chu & Choi, 2000; Deng, 2007; Joppe, Martin, & Waalen, 2001; Matzler et al., 2004; Matzler, Sauerwein, & Heischmidt, 2003) and gives managerial recommendations for strategic planning to increase its competitiveness and/or customer satisfaction (Hollenhorst, Olson, & Fortney, 1992; Martilla & James; Oh, 2001).

In order to understand the dimensions of IPA, it is essential to know what the terms "attribute importance" and "attribute performance" mean. Attribute importance refers to perceived worth/value of traits or features when purchasing a product/service while attribute performance refers to the perceived functioning of those qualities when consuming the product/service (Martilla & James, 1977). Martilla and James suggested that researchers should ask two questions regarding the importance and performance of each attribute: "How important is this feature?" and "How well did the (product/service) perform?" (p. 77). The original Martilla and James' IPA approach measured attribute importance and performance based on a Likert scale. Martilla and James also recommended that the results be presented in an Importance-Performance Matrix as shown in Figure 2.3 (Martilla & James, p. 78). The means of performance and importance is used as center points to divide the matrix into four quadrants in which each quadrant has a different interpretation (Martilla & James).

Figure 2.2 Importance-Performance Matrix (IP Matrix) (Martilla & James, 1977)



Quadrant I: “Concentrate Here” (high importance and low performance). Attributes falling in this quadrant are perceived to be very important, while the performance levels of these attributes are relatively low (Martilla & James, 1977). This quadrant indicates weaknesses of the product/service, which require immediate attention for improvement, to increase its competitiveness (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012).

Quadrant II: “Keep Up the Good Work” (high importance and high performance). Attributes falling in this quadrant are perceived to be very important and have high performance, representing success of the product/service in meeting consumers’ expectations (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012). This quadrant indicates strengths of the product/service that need to be consistently maintained to stay competitive (Martilla & James, 1977).

Quadrant III, “Low Priority” (low importance and low performance). Attributes falling in this quadrant are perceived to have low importance and low performance (Martilla & James, 1977). These attributes are not a threat to competitiveness because of their low importance (Martilla & James). This may represent minor weaknesses of the product/service about which the product/service manager should not be overly concerned (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012). To allocate extra resources and effort to improve these attributes is likely unnecessary (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012).

Quadrant IV, “Possible Overkill” (low importance and high performance). Attributes falling in this quadrant are perceived to have high performance but low importance (Martilla &

James, 1977). These attributes represent minor competitiveness because of their low importance (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012). This may indicate the ineffective and inefficient allocation of resources and effort (Martilla & James).

IPA has been adopted for use in a number of research projects across many fields, including tourism (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012; Oh, 2001). Several researchers have applied the IPA approach with destination studies for various purposes including assessing DI, identifying competitive positioning of destinations, and evaluating travelers' satisfaction after visits (Deng, 2007; Enright & Newton, 2004; Murdy & Pike, 2012; O'Leary & Deegan, 2005; Pike, 2002; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Song, An, & Zheng, 2006; Sörensson & Friedrichs, 2013; Zhang, Luo, Xu, & Zhou, 2009; Zhenfang, Xiang, & Yuxuan, 2002).

Research on Thailand's DI

Several researchers have conducted studies about Thailand's DI (Henkel et al., 2006; Lertputtarak, 2012; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). These research studies targeted different groups and included various destination attributes. Table 2.3 shows the set of attributes that were used in each study to examine the DI of Thailand in the targeted population. Table 2.4 shows the common attributes of Thailand's DI used in previous studies.

In their research, Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) focused on visitors and repeat visitors from the top thirteen inbound tourism markets for Thailand. The majority of respondents were from Asian countries. Henkel et al. (2006) included Thai residents and international travelers in their study. The international travelers involved in their research consisted of visitors and non-visitors from the U.S. and 32 other countries but did not separate and compare them as two different groups. About 70% of the participants who were international travelers had never visited Thailand before. Rittichainuwat et al. and Henkel et al. found that international travelers and Thai residents had both positive and negative images of Thailand. Rittichainuwat et al. reported beautiful architecture and buildings, interesting customs and culture, and numerous cultural and historical attractions as the three strongest positive images of Thailand among international travelers. On the other hand, Henkel et al. found that the top three images rated by both Thai residents and international travelers were cultural sightseeing (i.e., temples, markets, crafts and festivals), beaches and food.

Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) suggested that perceptions of DI may vary depending on travelers' country of residence. Henkel et al. (2006) also supported this claim by suggesting that international travelers and Thai residents hold several different DIs of Thailand. One of the differences of DIs of Thailand between residents and travelers was about sex tourism. Henkel et al. reported that international travelers emphasized Thailand's image of sex tourism more than Thai residents. Henkel et al. added that the perceived importance of destination attributes were different between these two groups. For example, international travelers rated freedom from diseases and terrorism as the two most important attributes for destination selection while these items were neutral for Thai residents.

Table 2.2 Research of Thailand’s DI and Selected Attributes in the Studies

Author/s	Year	Population	# of attributes	Positive Attributes	Negative Attributes
Tapachai and Waryszak	2000	Non-visitors (Australian)	14 for Thailand (16 for the United States)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fascinating cheap shopping • Exotic food • Friendly local people • Historical sites • Tropical beaches • Unspoiled countryside • Beautiful scenery • Suitable for all ages • Relaxation and Calm • Experience of different culture • Experience of different climate • Proximity to Australia • Cheap travel • Accessibility to other neighboring countries 	-
Rittichainuwat, Qu, and Brown	2001	International visitors (First-time and repeat visitors)	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautiful architecture and buildings • Interesting customs and culture image • Numerous cultural and historical attractions • A trip to Thailand is worth the money • Friendly people • Easy access • Scenic and natural beauty • A variety of cuisines • Availability of international-standard accommodations • Easy immigration procedures • A variety of activities • Opportunity for adventure • Restful and relaxing atmosphere • A safe place to travel • Good bargain shopping • Availability of tourist-information centers • Many fashionable brand-name products in malls and stores • Stable political situation • Good vacation place for children and family • Few language barriers • High standards for sanitation and cleanliness • Pleasant climate • Good golf courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A large gap between rich and poor • Crowding in big cities • Adult-oriented destination • A lot of traffic jams • Heavy pollution • Numerous massage parlors, bars, night clubs, and prostitution • A risky destination due to AIDS • Inefficient local transportation

Table 2.2 (Continue)

Author/s	Year	Population	# of attributes	Positive Attributes	Negative Attributes
<p>Henkel, Henkel, Agrusa, and Tanner</p>	<p>2006</p>	<p>International visitors and Thai residents</p>	<p>27+</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shopping • Beaches • Nightlife and entertainment • Nature, wildlife and parks • Sports (golf, scuba, Thai boxing) • Exotic destination • Budget vacation (cost of total vacation) • Food • Friendly people • Historic architecture • Hiking • Health tourism • Cultural sightseeing (temples, museums, markets, crafts, festivals, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleanliness of the community • Quality of public services • Traffic flow • Availability of clean drinking water • Distance traveling to tourist destinations • Availability of entertainment • Availability of recreation • Availability of cultural activities • Freedom from drug-related activities • Freedom from prostitution • Freedom from threats of terrorism • Freedom from threats of disease
<p>Lertputtarak</p>	<p>2012</p>	<p>International Travelers</p>	<p>8 for Pattaya (19 for food image)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for adventure • Exciting nightlife and entertainment • Relaxing • Pleasant • Friendly /trustworthy people • Communicative people 	<p>-</p>

Table 2.3 Common Attributes of Thailand's DI

Attributes	Tapachai & Waryszak (2000)	Rittichainuwat et al. (2001)	Henkel et al. (2006)	Lertputtarak (2012)
Value for Money	•	•	•	
Building & Architecture		•	•	
Cultures & Customs	•	•	•	
Food	•	•	•	•
Friendly People	•	•	•	•
Shopping	•	•	•	
Historical & Cultural Sightseeing/Activities	•	•	•	•
Nature & Scenery	•	•	•	
Climate	•	•		
Nightlife & Entertainment		•	•	•
Sex & Erotic Tourism		•	•	
Accessibility	•	•	•	
Relaxation	•	•		•
Adventure		•		•
Language Barrier/Communication		•		•
Safe Environment		•	•	•
Health Tourism		•	•	
Suitable For All Ages	•	•		
Cleanliness		•	•	
Sports		•	•	
Traffic Jam		•	•	
Service Availability		•	•	

Tapachai and Waryszak (2000) conducted a research study in Australia focused on non-visitors of Thailand and the United States. They investigated the DI formed by secondary sources of information and not actual experience. The researchers concentrated mainly on beneficial images of each destination that influenced the decision to visit Thailand. The results showed that among non-visitors, Thailand held images of good value for money, shopping, exotic food, friendliness of people, historical sites, unspoiled countryside, beautiful scenery, rich and unique culture, different climate experience, close to Australia, inexpensive travel, and accessibility to other neighboring countries (Tapachai & Waryszak). The findings further showed that most respondents did not perceive Thailand as a suitable place for all ages and social statuses or a place for relaxation (Tapachai & Waryszak).

Unlike other research conducted regarding Thailand's DI, Lertputtarak (2012) focused on Pattaya, an area in Thailand, as a destination. The majority of participants in her study were Asian travelers, chosen by using a convenience sampling method. This research examined relationships of Pattaya's DI, food image, and travelers' intention to revisit, only. Lertputtarak found that Pattaya's image consisted of exciting nightlife and entertainment, communicative people, attractive tourist sightseeing and activities. DI and Thai food's image were found to have a positive relationship with travelers' intention to revisit.

Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) found that more than 75% of international travelers who have visited Thailand indicated that they are likely to revisit this destination. Most research related to Thailand's DI confirmed that favorable images increase the intention to visit/revisit (Henkel et al., 2006; Lertputtarak, 2012; Rittichainuwat et al.; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). They also suggested that Thailand's destination marketers should promote favorable images through various information agents, especially advertising. In addition, those unfavorable images should be fixed, by providing correct information to the potential visitors and/or creating campaigns that promote favorable images, because they may negatively influence the travel decision (Henkel et al.; Rittichainuwat et al.).

However, the results of these studies may not be generalized to international Western travelers because the majority of respondents of these studies were from Asia (Lertputtarak, 2012; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001). In addition, Henkel et al. (2006) did not identify visitors and non-visitors in their research, and Tapachai and Waryszak (2000) focused only on non-visitors

using convenient samples in Australia. Lertputtarak also stated that her findings were limited to only Pattaya, and not the whole of Thailand.

Another limitation is the fact that these studies focused only on attribute-based images while holistic impressions were excluded. Furthermore, there has been limited published research related to Thailand's DI beyond these three studies or on addressing non-visitors' DI of Thailand. Future research was suggested to relate personal characteristics of travelers such as age, family background, life-style, and preferences when examining DI (Lertputtarak, 2012). In addition, the qualitative approach was recommended in order to capture in-depth information regarding DI, rather than using researchers' predetermined ideas about Thailand as a destination (Lertputtarak).

DI is a key factor for a destination when developing an effective marketing strategy to increase the number of visitors and for sustaining the tourism industry of the destination. DI formation is based on external (information sources) and internal (traveler's characteristics) factors (Balogu & McCleary, 1999a; Beerli & Martin, 2004)). Each information agent influences the development of DI at a different stage of the travel experience, which creates various degrees of familiarity with a destination for travelers. Thus, travelers' DI among different degrees of familiarity may vary.

DI may also imply that the performance of each information source is attached to each stage of travel experience. Travelers may be classified into multiple groups; including visitors and non-visitors. Non-visitors may further be defined as virtual visitors and non-visitors based on their experience of seeking out available information. Therefore, these three groups (i.e., visitors, virtual visitors, and non-visitors) may have varying familiarity with the destination.

DI consists of attribute-based images and holistic impressions, including functional and psychological characteristics, and common and unique features (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993, 2003). Based on recommendations from previous studies (Echtner & Ritchie), to measure a more complete DI, a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches need to be used. By incorporating a qualitative approach, researchers' limited views will not affect exploring the DI of Thailand. In addition, merely identifying DI will not provide as meaningful information. A combination of analyses in importance and performance, using IPA, is needed to offer valuable insights for marketing strategy development.

References

- Ahmed, Z. U. (1991). Marketing your community: Correcting a negative image. *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 31(4), 24-27.
- Assael, H. (1987). *Consumer behavior and marketing action* (Vol. 3). Boston, MA: Kent Publishing Company.
- Azzopardi, E., & Nash, R. (2012). A critical evaluation of importance-performance analysis. *Tourism Management*, 35, 222-233. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2012.07.007
- Baloglu, S. (1997). The relationship between destination images and socio-demographic and trip characteristics of international travelers. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 3, 221-233. doi:10.1177/135676679700300304
- Baloglu, S. (2000). A path analytic model of visitation intention involving information sources, socio-psychological motivations, and destination image. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 8(3), 81-90. doi:10.1300/J073v08n03_05
- Baloglu, S. (2001). Image variations of Turkey by familiarity index: Informational and experiential dimensions. *Tourism Management*, 22, 127-133. doi: 10.1016/S0261-5177(00)00049-2
- Baloglu, S., & McCleary, K. W. (1999a). A model of destination image formation. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26, 868-897. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(99)00030-4
- Baloglu, S., & McCleary, K. W. (1999b). US international pleasure travelers' images of four Mediterranean destinations: A comparison of visitors and non-visitors. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38, 144-152. doi:10.1177/004728759903800207
- Beerli, A., & Martin, J. D. (2004). Factors influencing destination image. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31, 657-681. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2004.01.010
- Chen, P. J., & Kerstetter, D. L. (1999). International students' image of rural Pennsylvania as a travel destination. *Journal of Travel Research*, 37, 256-266. doi:10.1177/004728759903700307
- Chi, C. G. Q., & Qu, H. (2008). Examining the structural relationships of destination image, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty: An integrated approach. *Tourism Management*, 29, 624-636. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2007.06.007
- Chon, K. S. (1987). An assessment of images of Korea as a tourist destination by American tourists. *Hotel and Tourism Management Review*, 3(1), 155-170.
- Chon, K. S. (1989). Understanding recreational traveler's motivation, attitude and satisfaction. *Tourism Review*, 44(1), 3-7. doi:10.1108/eb058009

- Chon, K. S. (1990). The role of destination image in tourism: A review and discussion. *Tourism Review*, 45(2), 2-9. doi:10.1108/eb058040
- Chon, K. S. (1991). Tourism destination image modification process: Marketing implications. *Tourism Management*, 12, 68-72. doi:10.1016/0261-5177(91)90030-W
- Chu, R. K., & Choi, T. (2000). An importance-performance analysis of hotel selection factors in the Hong Kong hotel industry: A comparison of business and leisure travelers. *Tourism Management*, 21, 363-377. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(99)00070-9
- Cohen, E. (1972). Toward a sociology of international tourism. *Social Research*, 39, 164-182.
- Crick, A. P. (2003). Internal marketing of attitudes in Caribbean tourism. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 15, 161-166. doi:10.1108/09596110310470202
- Crompton, J. L. (1979). An assessment of the image of Mexico as a vacation destination and the influence of geographical location upon that image. *Journal of Travel Research*, 17(4), 18-23. doi:10.1177/004728757901700404
- Dann, G. M. (1996). *The language of tourism: A sociolinguistic perspective*. Oxford, England: Cab International.
- Deng, W. (2007). Using a revised importance-performance analysis approach: The case of Taiwanese hot springs tourism. *Tourism Management*, 28, 1274-1284. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2006.07.010
- Díaz-Martín, A. M., Iglesias, V., Vázquez, R., & Ruiz, A. V. (2000). The use of quality expectations to segment a service market. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 14, 132-146. doi:10.1108/08876040010320957
- Dichter, E. (1985). What's in an image? *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 2(1), 75-81. doi:10.1108/eb038824
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1991). The meaning and measurement of destination image. *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 2(2), 2-12.
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1993). The measurement of destination image: An empirical assessment. *Journal of Travel Research*, 31(4), 3-13.
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (2003). The meaning and measurement of destination image. *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 14, 37-48.
- Enright, M. J., & Newton, J. (2004). Tourism destination competitiveness: A quantitative approach. *Tourism Management*, 25, 777-788. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2004.06.008

- Fakeye, P. C., & Crompton, J. L. (1991). Image differences between prospective, first-time, and repeat visitors to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. *Journal of Travel Research*, 30(2), 10-16. doi:10.1177/004728759103000202
- Gallarza, M. G., Saura, I. G., & García, H. C. (2002). Destination image: Towards a conceptual framework. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29, 56-78. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(01)00031-7
- Gartner, W. C. (1994). Image formation process. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 2, 191-216. doi:10.1300/J073v02n02_12
- Goodrich, J. N. (1978). The relationship between preferences for and perceptions of vacation destinations: Application of a choice model. *Journal of Travel Research*, 17(2), 8-13. doi:10.1177/004728757801700202
- Gunn, C. A. (1972). *Vacationscape: Designing tourist regions*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin.
- Gunn, C. A. (1988). *Vacationscape: Designing tourist regions* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Gunn, C. A. (1997). *Vacationscape: Developing tourist areas* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis.
- Haahti, A. J. (1986). Finland's competitive position as a destination. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 13, 11-35. doi:10.1016/0160-7383(86)90055-1
- Henkel, R., Henkel, P., Agrusa, W., Agrusa, J., & Tanner, J. (2006). Thailand as a tourist destination: Perceptions of international visitors and Thai residents. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 11, 269-287. doi:10.1080/10941660600753299
- Hirschman, E. C., & Holbrook, M. B. (1982). Hedonic consumption: Emerging concepts, methods and propositions. *Journal of Marketing*, 92-101.
- Hollenhorst, S. J., Olson, D., & Fortney, R. (1992). Use of importance-performance analysis to evaluate state park cabins: The case of the West Virginia state park system. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 10(1), 1-11.
- Hu, Y., & Ritchie, J. B. (1993). Measuring destination attractiveness: A contextual approach. *Journal of Travel Research*, 32(2), 25-34. doi:10.1177/004728759303200204
- Hunt, J. D. (1975). Image as a factor in tourism development. *Journal of Travel Research*, 13(3), 1-7. doi:10.1177/004728757501300301
- Jenkins, G. N. (1978). *The physiology and biochemistry of the mouth*. Oxford, England: Blackwell.

- Jenkins, O. H. (1999). Understanding and measuring tourist destination images. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 1, 1-15.
- Joppe, M., Martin, D. W., & Waalen, J. (2001). Toronto's image as a destination: A comparative importance-satisfaction analysis by origin of visitor. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39, 252-260. doi:10.1177/004728750103900302
- Kim, H., & Richardson, S. L. (2003). Motion picture impacts on destination images. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30, 216-237. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(02)00062-2
- Kotler, P. (1987). Semiotics of person and nation marketing. *Marketing and Semiotics*. Berlin, Germany: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Lee, C. K., Lee, Y. K., & Lee, B. (2005). Korea's destination image formed by the 2002 World Cup. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32, 839-858. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2004.11.006
- Lepp, A., & Gibson, H. (2003). Tourist roles, perceived risk and international tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30, 606-624. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(03)00024-0
- Lertputtarak, S. (2012). The relationship between destination image, food image, and revisiting Pattaya, Thailand. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 7(5), 111-122.
- Litvin, S. W., & Kar, G. H. (2004). Individualism/collectivism as a moderating factor to the self-image congruity concept. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 10, 23-32. doi:10.1177/135676670301000103
- Litvin, S. W., Goldsmith, R. E., & Pan, B. (2008). Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. *Tourism Management*, 29, 458-468. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2007.05.011
- MacInnis, D. J., & Price, L. L. (1987). The role of imagery in information processing: Review and extensions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13, 473-491.
- MacKay, K. J., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (1997). Pictorial element of destination in image formation. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24, 537-565. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(97)00011-X
- MacKay, K. J., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2000). An exploration of cross-cultural destination image assessment. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38, 417-423. doi:10.1177/004728750003800411
- Mansfeld, Y. (1999). Cycles of war, terror, and peace: Determinants and management of crisis and recovery of the Israeli tourism industry. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38, 30-36. doi:10.1177/004728759903800107
- Martilla, J. A., & James, J. C. (1977). Importance-performance analysis. *Journal of Marketing*, 41(1), 77-79.

- Martin, H. S., & Rodríguez del Bosque, I. A. (2008). Exploring the cognitive-affective nature of destination image and the role of psychological factors in its formation. *Tourism Management, 29*, 263-277. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2007.03.012
- Matzler, K., Bailom, F., Hinterhuber, H. H., Renzl, B., & Pichler, J. (2004). The asymmetric relationship between attribute-level performance and overall customer satisfaction: A reconsideration of the importance-performance analysis. *Industrial Marketing Management, 33*, 271-277. doi:10.1016/S0019-8501(03)00055-5
- Matzler, K., Sauerwein, E., & Heischmidt, K. (2003). Importance-performance analysis revisited: The role of the factor structure of customer satisfaction. *The Service Industries Journal, 23*, 112-129. doi:10.1080/02642060412331300912
- Mayo, E. J. (1973). *Regional images and regional travel behavior*. The Travel Research Association 4th annual conference, Sun Valley, ID.
- Mayo, E. J., & Jarvis, L. P. (1981). *The psychology of leisure travel. Effective marketing and selling of travel services*. Boston, MA: CBI Publishing Company, Inc.
- Milman, A., & Pizam, A. (1995). The role of awareness and familiarity with a destination: The central Florida case. *Journal of Travel research, 33*(3), 21-27. doi:10.1177/004728759503300304
- Milo, K. J., & Yoder, S. L. (1991). Recovery from natural disaster: Travel writers and tourist destinations. *Journal of Travel Research, 30*, 36-39. doi:10.1177/004728759103000107
- Morgan, N. J., Pritchard, A., & Piggott, R. (2003). Destination branding and the role of the stakeholders: The case of New Zealand. *Journal of Vacation Marketing, 9*, 285-299. doi:10.1177/135676670300900307
- Moutinho, L. (1987). Consumer behavior in tourism. *European Journal of Marketing, 21*(10), 5-44. doi:10.1108/EUM00000000004718
- Murdy, S., & Pike, S. (2012). Perceptions of visitor relationship marketing opportunities by destination marketers: An importance-performance analysis. *Tourism Management, 33*, 1281-1285. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2011.11.024
- O'Leary, S., & Deegan, J. (2003). People, pace, place: Qualitative and quantitative images of Ireland as a tourism destination in France. *Journal of Vacation Marketing, 9*, 213-226. doi:10.1177/135676670300900302
- O'Leary, S., & Deegan, J. (2005). Ireland's image as a tourism destination in France: Attribute importance and performance. *Journal of Travel Research, 43*, 247-256. doi:10.1177/0047287504272025
- O'Neill, M. A., & Palmer, A. (2004). Importance-performance analysis: A useful tool for directing continuous quality improvement in higher education. *Quality Assurance in Education, 12*(1), 39-52. doi:10.1108/09684880410517423

- Oh, H. (2001). Revisiting importance–performance analysis. *Tourism Management*, 22, 617-627. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(01)00036-X
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Pearce, P. L. (1982). Perceived changes in holiday destinations. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 9, 145-164. doi:10.1016/0160-7383(82)90044-5
- Phelps, A. (1986). Holiday destination image—The problem of assessment: An example developed in Menorca. *Tourism Management*, 7, 168-180. doi:10.1016/0261-5177(86)90003-8
- Pike, S. (2002). Destination image analysis—a review of 142 papers from 1973 to 2000. *Tourism Management*, 23, 541-549. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(02)00005-5
- Pike, S., & Ryan, C. (2004). Destination positioning analysis through a comparison of cognitive, affective, and conative perceptions. *Journal of Travel Research*, 42, 333-342. doi:10.1177/0047287504263029
- Reynolds, W. H. (1965). The role of the consumer in image building. *California Management Review*, 7(3), 69-76.
- Richards, G., & Wilson, J. (2004). The impact of cultural events on city image: Rotterdam, cultural capital of Europe 2001. *Urban Studies*, 41, 1931-1951. doi:10.1080/0042098042000256323
- Riley, R., Baker, D., & Doren, C. S. V. (1998). Movie induced tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25, 919-935. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(98)00045-0
- Rittichainuwat, B., Qu, H., & Brown, T. (2001). Thailand's international travel image: Mostly favorable. *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 42, 82-95. doi:10.1016/S0010-8804(01)80020-3
- Ryan, C., & Cave, J. (2005). Structuring destination image: A qualitative approach. *Journal of Travel Research*, 44, 143-150. doi:10.1177/0047287505278991
- Selby, M., & Morgan, N. J. (1996). Reconstructing place image: A case study of its role in destination market research. *Tourism Management*, 17, 287-294. doi:10.1016/0261-5177(96)00020-9
- Slack, N. (1994). The importance-performance matrix as a determinant of improvement priority. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 14(5), 59-75. doi:10.1108/01443579410056803
- Smith, M. C., & MacKay, K. J. (2001). The organization of information in memory for pictures of tourist destinations: Are there age-related differences? *Journal of Travel Research*, 39, 261-266. doi:10.1177/004728750103900303

- Song, Z. B., An, Y. M., & Zheng, P. (2006). An IPA analysis of tourism destination image: A case study of Xi'an residents' perception on the tourism destination image of Hainan, China. *Tourism Tribune*, 21(10), 26-32.
- Sönmez, S. F. (1998). Tourism, terrorism, and political instability. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25, 416-456. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(97)00093-5
- Sönmez, S. F., & Graefe, A. R. (1998a). Determining future travel behavior from past travel experience and perceptions of risk and safety. *Journal of Travel Research*, 37, 171-177. doi:10.1177/004728759803700209
- Sönmez, S. F., & Graefe, A. R. (1998b). Influence of terrorism risk on foreign tourism decisions. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25, 112-144. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(97)00072-8
- Sönmez, S., & Sirakaya, E. (2002). A distorted destination image? The case of Turkey. *Journal of Travel Research*, 41, 185-196. doi:10.1177/004728702237418
- Sörensson, A., & Friedrichs, Y. V. (2013). An importance–performance analysis of sustainable tourism: A comparison between international and national tourists. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 2, 14-21. doi:10.1016/j.jdmm.2012.11.002
- Stepchenkova, S., & Mills, J. E. (2010). Destination image: A meta-analysis of 2000–2007 research. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 19, 575-609. doi:10.1080/19368623.2010.493071
- Stepchenkova, S., & Morrison, A. M. (2008). Russia's destination image among American pleasure travelers: Revisiting Echtner and Ritchie. *Tourism Management*, 29, 548-560. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2007.06.003
- Suh, Y. K., & Gartner, W. C. (2004). Perceptions in international urban tourism: An analysis of travelers to Seoul, Korea. *Journal of Travel Research*, 43, 39-45. doi:10.1177/0047287504265511
- Sussmann, S., & Unel, A. (1999). Destination image and its modification after travel: An empirical study on Turkey. In S. Sussmann, & A. Unel, *Consumer Behavior in Travel and Tourism* (pp.207-226). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Tapachai, N., & Waryszak, R. (2000). An examination of the role of beneficial image in tourist destination selection. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39, 37-44. doi:10.1177/004728750003900105
- Tasci, A. D., & Gartner, W. C. (2007). Destination image and its functional relationships. *Journal of Travel Research*, 45, 413-425. doi:10.1177/0047287507299569
- Um, S., & Crompton, J. L. (1990). Attitude determinants in tourism destination choice. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 17, 432-448. doi:10.1016/0160-7383(90)90008-F

- Vogt, C. A., Stewart, S. I., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (1998). Communication strategies to reach first-time visitors. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 7, 69-89. doi:10.1300/J073v07n02_04
- Walmsley, D. J., & Young, M. (1998). Evaluative images and tourism: The use of personal constructs to describe the structure of destination images. *Journal of Travel Research*, 36, 65-69. doi:10.1177/004728759803600307
- Westbrook, R. A. (1987). Product/consumption-based affective responses and post purchase processes. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 24, 258-270.
- White, C. J. (2004). Destination image: to see or not to see? *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 16, 309-314. doi:10.1108/09596110410540285
- Yilmaz, Y., Yilmaz, Y., İçigen, E. T., Ekin, Y., & Utku, B. D. (2009). Destination image: A comparative study on pre and post trip image variations. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 18, 461-479. doi:10.1080/19368620902950022
- Zhang, Y., Luo, Y., Xu, J., & Zhou, D. Q. (2009). IPA on tourism destination image of ancient town in Southern China: A case study of Xitang in Zhejiang. *East China Economic Management*, 3.
- Zhenfang, H., Xiang, L., & Yuxuan, G. (2002). Measurement and analysis on tourism destination image: Taking Nanjing as a study case. *Nankai Business Review*, 3.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to measure U.S. travelers' Destination Image (DI) of Thailand and to identify the important destination attributes for U.S. travelers in terms of decision making. Specific objectives of this study were (a) to examine the attribute-based image and holistic impression of Thailand as a destination for U.S. travelers; (b) to identify the unique features of Thailand for U.S. travelers; (c) to discover the hidden destination attributes of Thailand as a destination; (d) to evaluate the differences among visitors', virtual-visitors' and non-visitors' perceptions of Thailand as a destination; (e) to identify important attributes of Thailand in terms of destination selection; and (f) to determine the positions of Thailand's destination attributes regarding their importance for U.S. travelers.

To achieve the research objectives, this study used a mixed methods approach employing a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Patton, 2002). Mixed methods research is "a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry" (Creswell & Clark, p.5).

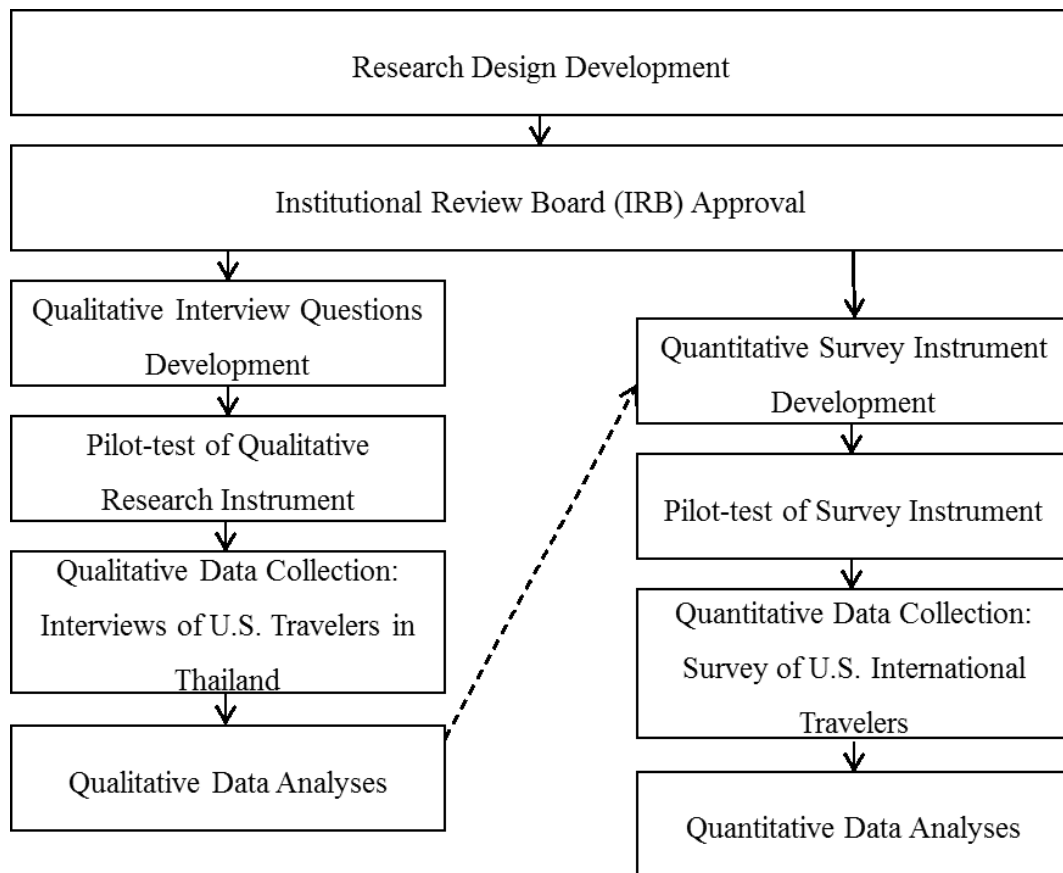
In reality, there is complexity in human reasoning and to attempt to predetermine all factors may limit a study's possible findings (Patton, 2002). In order to capture travelers' experiences, perceptions, opinions and feelings; which are very complex, the study needed flexibility in data collection using a qualitative approach. By using this approach, the researcher sought to identify a more inclusive list of attributes and impressions beyond pre-perceived ideas of existing research.

On the other hand, to identify the DI of Thailand and to obtain generalizable data, a quantitative approach was necessary from a large sample size. Using mixed methods, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, this study provides a better understanding of research questions than either approach would if carried out alone (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Mixed methods allowed participants to identify important attributes of Thailand's DI and illustrate their DI perceptions of Thailand in their own words, while also offering the possibility to obtain more details to explain the hidden qualities driving DI and a unique dimension of Thailand as a destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993, 2003; Ryan & Cave,

2005). The results from the qualitative study were also used when developing the quantitative research instrument.

This chapter describes the procedures that were used to attain the research objectives. The target population, sample selection process, instrument development, data collection, and statistical analysis procedures used in both the qualitative and quantitative approaches are discussed in the following sections. The research procedure is also illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Research Methodology Frameworks



Target Population and the Study Sample

Aims of this study included developing a tourism-marketing strategy for Thailand as a destination. The researcher attempted to capture the market segment of U.S. travelers. Thus, the target population of both qualitative and quantitative studies was the citizens of the U.S. who travel internationally. The World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2008) defines “traveler” as

“someone who moves between different geographic locations for any purpose and any duration,” (para. 2.4). In this study, “international travelers” were defined as people who travel to a destination outside of their resident country for less than one year (WTO). The purpose of traveling can be for leisure, business or another purpose. This study captured potential travelers who may travel to an international location including Thailand for any of these purposes.

For the qualitative component of this study, we sought to find the DI of Thailand based on the personal experiences of individuals who have already traveled to Thailand. Therefore, U.S. travelers who visited Thailand were recruited at a Thailand airport. For the quantitative component of the study, we sought to collect data from travelers who have traveled abroad previously, because they would have the potential to travel again internationally, including to Thailand (Cohen, 1972). Therefore, the sample was selected from U.S. travelers who have traveled outside of North America. Due to parental consent required for minors and the fact that only individuals who are 18 or older may travel internationally independently, only individuals 18 years or older were included in the sample.

Prior to contacting study participants, all research protocol was reviewed by the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for appropriate use of human subjects in research. The IRB determined that the risks involved in this current study were minimal and would not create harm to participants.

Qualitative Study

Qualitative methods can provide depth and detail at a very personal level of experience for a study based on open-ended questions (Patton, 2002). Using open-ended questions in a qualitative study facilitates capturing participants’ perceptions and experiences in their own words (Lofland, 1971; Patton).

This study was designed to explore variables that influence Thailand’s DI including attribute-based and holistic impressions, unique features, and hidden qualities as well as the important attributes driving destination selection for the U.S. travelers. Holistic impressions are intangible and hard to measure without capturing detail. There is also no way to identify the unique features and hidden qualities of Thailand’s DI with only a predetermined set of attributes. Thus, qualitative inquiry was a perfect fit for this specific purpose of the study. Qualitative methods were therefore used to investigate the following research questions:

- RQ1. What are U.S. travelers' attribute-based images and holistic impressions of Thailand as a destination?
- RQ2. What unique features do the U.S. travelers associate with Thailand?
- RQ3. What hidden qualities does Thailand evoke as a travel destination for the U.S. travelers?
- RQ4. What are important destination attributes of Thailand in terms of destination selection?

Sampling Procedures

The focus of this component of the study was breadth, which concentrates on “a narrow range of experiences for a larger number of people” (Patton, 2002, p. 227). The maximum variation purposeful sampling technique was used. The sample size depended on data collection when saturation or redundancy in data is reached (Law et al., 1998; Patton).

Sample

The unit of analysis in this study was the individual. The target participants were U.S. citizens, 18 years or older who have traveled to Thailand. The sample was expected to capture major variations including age, gender, and travel behavior (travel alone/with a group, first-time/repeated visit and choice of airlines).

According to Patton (2002), “the size of the sample depends on what you want to find out, why you want to find it out, how the findings will be used, and what resources (including time) you have for the study” (p. 244). In qualitative research, a key indicator of sample size is the point where theoretical saturation or redundancy in data is achieved (Law et al., 1998). The focus of this study was breadth, and therefore tried to capture numbers of U.S. travelers at the airport that were large enough to cover various groups. Hence, the anticipated target sample size was approximately 50 U.S. travelers. However, the exact sample size was set to be flexible depending on when saturation or redundancy in data occurred considering the purpose of the study (Patton).

Procedures

The sampling approach was designed to reach maximum variation. Maximum variation sampling was a purposeful sampling strategy that aimed to represent diverse characteristics of the samples (Patton, 2002). A matrix shown in figure 3.2 was used when searching for participants. The matrix used dimensions including age, gender, and travel behavior (travel alone/with a group, first-time/repeated visit and choice of airlines) to ensure that each participant(s) in the sample was as different as possible from the others (Patton). The U.S. travelers were asked several questions, including demographic information and their travel behavior, to identify their identities in the matrix and to maximize sample variation.

Figure 3.2 Maximum Variation Matrix of U.S. Travelers

FMIJA	FWIJA	FMGJA	FWGJA	RMIJA	RWIJA	RMGJA	RWGJA	F First-time visitor R Repeated visitor M Male W Female I Travel Alone G Travel with group J Age 18-34 S Age 34 and over A American Origins Airlines U Other Airlines
FMISA	FWISA	FMGSA	FWGSA	RMISA	RWISA	RMGSA	RWGSA	
FMIJU	FWIJU	FMGJU	FWGJU	RMIJU	RWIJU	RMGJU	RWGJU	
FMISU	FWISU	FMGSU	FWGSU	RMISU	RWISU	RMGSU	RWGSU	

Interview Question Development

This study used the standardized open-ended interview approach. The interview protocol was formatted to include standard questions, sequence of questions and following probes. The standardized interview instrument ensured consistency for the interviewer with all participants. The interview questions were open-ended and were developed based on the literature review and research questions. Considering the characteristics of an airport, the time available to interview each participant(s) was limited. Thus, the interview instrument was designed to gather data in 10 minutes. The structured open-ended interview questions included:

Screening question

- “Are you an American citizen?”
- “What is your purpose of visiting Thailand?”

Brief demographic information

- The participants were asked to identify their age and income level on separate pieces of paper.
- The interviewer took a note of gender, travel alone/with a group and choice of airline.

Brief travel behavior information

- “Where else have you traveled internationally?”
- “How many times have you visited Thailand including this trip?”
- “How long were you in Thailand this time?”
- “Which parts of Thailand have you visited?”

Attribute-based image and holistic impression

- “If someone were considering a trip to Thailand, what would you recommend to him or her?”
- “When you get home and are telling people about your trip to Thailand, what will you tell them?”

Uniqueness

- “What are distinct or unique features of Thailand compared to other destinations?”

Hidden image

- “What did you find out while traveling in Thailand this time that you did not expect or did not know before?”

Important destination attributes

- “What influenced you to choose Thailand as the destination?”

Important destination attributes

- “To sum up, could you give me about 6 words to conclude your experience in Thailand?”
The concept of the question was adopted from Six-Word Memoir®. It was expected to help summarize the large quantity of information from each interview and highlight key features and/or quality of Thailand for the respondents.

Tourism and hospitality experts in Tourism and/or Hospitality Management programs in a number of universities were asked to review the interview questions to clarify the directions and content validity. The interview questions were modified based on their responses and recommendations.

Pilot Study

Hospitality, tourism and marketing experts (n=5) were asked to review the structured interview questions for clarity, question wording directions, and content validity as well as the appropriateness, necessity and adequacy of questions. The experts were defined as those (a) who have been active in hospitality, tourism, or marketing research for at least the last 5 years or (b) who have worked in higher education or government organizations in the hospitality, tourism, or marketing area for at least 5 years.

Prior to finalizing the interview protocols, a pilot study was conducted with five U.S. international travelers in Manhattan, Kansas and surrounding areas who have visited Thailand. They were recruited in person or via e-mail that was sent out through several listservs.

The interview followed the script using the structured questions. In addition, probing questions were used if necessary in order to capture desired information. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Time to complete the interview was measured. After reviewing the interview content, questions that were not providing useful data were revised or discarded. The interview questions were revised based on the responses received from the pilot study and the total time of the interview. Consequently, the final revision of the questions was created (Appendix A).

Data Collection

Data were collected from personal interviews, using structured open-ended questions. The personal interview with the U.S. travelers took place in Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport during the month of July 2013. Interviews were conducted by a single researcher to maintain control over the interviews and reduce variations among different interviewers. The U.S. travelers were approached at the departure area and were asked to participate in a short 10-minute interview. They were given choices of an individual or a group interview if they were traveling with a group. If they chose to have a group interview, the questions were addressed to the group as a whole and any member of the group could answer the questions. These choices

were given to participants because of the appropriateness for traveling groups and the fact that they may help each other to fill in some missing information and provide more detail regarding their experiences. Participants received a souvenir from Thailand as a thank you gift for their time and effort.

The interviewer used Maximum Variation Matrix of U.S. Travelers shown in figure 3.2 to help select participants. After each interview was completed, the interviewer marked down the appropriate cell(s) in the matrix based on the interviewees' characteristics.

Participants were briefly informed about the purpose of study and were guaranteed confidentiality before agreeing to be interviewed. Each interview was conducted and audio-recorded upon participant agreement. The interviewer followed the interview script and used the probing technique as needed to capture desired information. Recruitment of interview participants and interviews continued until saturation or redundancy in data was reached.

The Researcher as a Measurement Tool

The researcher was born and grew up in Thailand. The researcher has also lived in the U.S. for 7 years. The U.S. citizens' images and characteristics of Thailand were well-known to the researcher. Because of these characteristics, the researcher could be biased when analyzing the data. The researcher looked at the data in many different ways, including across interview questions and demographic group, to examine the data thoroughly and identify all possible themes and patterns related to Thailand's DI. In addition, because of the use of the standardized open-ended interview technique, a cross-case analysis approach was easily applied to analyze the data (Patton, 2002). Responses from different participants were grouped into common themes identified from each research question. Triangulation was used by including a verifier when analyzing the data. The verifier was selected based on (1) the United States' citizenship, (2) international travel experience, and (3) experience with qualitative analysis. The use of a verifier added strength and credibility to this research. The themes were used when developing a quantitative research instrument.

Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed verbatim except for those who did not give permission. When individual participants did not give permission to record conversations, the interviewer recorded handwritten summaries of conversations. The raw data were backed-up before further

analyses and kept separately. Inductive and deductive analyses were used to examine each research questions based on their appropriateness.

Inductive analyses were applied to answer RQ1 (What are U.S. travelers' attribute-based images and holistic impressions of Thailand as a destination?) and RQ2 (What unique features do the U.S. travelers associate with Thailand?). The researcher organized data in a systematic order, and the data were segregated, grouped, regrouped and coded based on similar meanings and concepts. The researcher searched to identify themes in the data and looked for patterns that helped to explain the findings. Consequently, the findings in this section were used to develop survey questions on attributes and unique features of Thailand.

Deductive analyses were used for RQ3 (What hidden qualities does Thailand evoke as a travel destination for the U.S. travelers?). Destination attributes of Thailand found in Henkel, Henkel, Henkel, Agrusa, Agrusa, and Tanner (2006), Lertputtarak (2012), Rittichainuwat, Qu, and Brown (2001), and Tapachai and Waryszak (2000) were used as an existing framework to search for Thailand's hidden qualities in the data. RQ4 (What are important destination attributes of Thailand in terms of destination selection?) needed both deductive and inductive analyses to identify the important destination attributes of Thailand in terms of destination selection by using the attributes found in RQ1 and RQ2.

The data were looked at in many different ways, including across interview questions and demographic groups, to examine the data thoroughly and to identify all possible themes and patterns related to Thailand's DI. Cross-case analyses were also used to analyze the data, accommodated by the use of standardized open-ended questions (Patton, 2002). Responses from different participants were grouped into common themes identified from each research question. After the analyses, the verifier compared the emerging themes with the data to recognize how themes were identified, suitability of each theme and its meaning, fitness of grouped themes and categories, and confirming the patterns found in data. Consequently, the researcher and the verifier discussed the results and finalized the findings.

Quantitative Study

The purpose of the quantitative component of the study was to assess general perceptions of Thailand as a destination by using the measurement developed in previous research as well as in the qualitative study described in the previous section. Attributes, holistic impressions,

functional qualities and psychological characteristics were measured using the quantitative study. The same items were also used to determine the positions of attributes regarding their importance and performances between visitors and non-visitors of Thailand from the U.S. Moreover, this study investigated the unique qualities of Thailand identified by U.S. travelers.

Instrument Design and Development

The initial survey instrument was developed based on specific objectives of this study and the review of literature from previous research (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 2003; Henkel et al., 2006; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001). Both open-ended and closed-ended questions were used to provide flexibility in the survey to capture the desired information (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2009). The closed-ended questions included items regarding the respondents' demographic information, travel experience, interest of traveling to Thailand, functional attributes of Thailand, psychological attributes of Thailand, and other attributes affecting destination decision making.

Five-point Likert-type scales were used for questions regarding destination attributes and importance measures (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012; Martilla and James, 1977). The scales were labeled as appropriate for each question in the survey based on respondents' degrees of agreement, frequency, or perceived importance.

Other close-ended questions used multiple choices, dichotomous, categorical, ordinal and numerical scales as appropriate. Survey questions related to Thailand's functional holistic impression and psychological holistic impression were open-ended questions to provide respondents with the flexibility to answer in their own words. A survey question asking for unique features also had an option for respondents to add more features which provided flexibility in answers.

The major travel information sources relating to Thailand as a destination were also reviewed to help identify destination attributes of Thailand. The major information sources included primary and secondary sources, such as promotional literature published by the Tourism Authority of Thailand [TAT], (2012), Country Brand Index: Tourism (FutureBrand, 2011, 2012, 2013) as well as well-known movies about traveling to Thailand. Content analyses of E-Brochure and Travel Manual 2012-2013 (TAT, 2012) were used to determine Thailand's destination attributes as secondary sources of information. In addition, three movies about traveling to Thailand released within the past decade were reviewed to help reinforce the

Thailand destination attributes list, including “The Beach” (2000), “Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason” (2004), and “The Hangover Part II” (2011).

The list of Thailand destination attributes was modified based on the results of the qualitative study. The identified destination attributes of Thailand were used to both discover the U.S. travelers’ perception and examine the importance of each attribute regarding destination selection and travel decision making.

Survey Design

The quantitative component of this study used an Internet survey format to collect data. Visual design is considered important in this type of survey as well as question wording and order (Dillman et al., 2009). Appropriate instrument design helps reduce time to complete the survey, decrease dropouts and enhance the quality of the data (Dillman et al., 2009). Thus, several survey design techniques were used in this survey development.

First, this survey used simple wording to make it easy to read and understand the researcher’s intention. Similar questions were reworded or deleted based on clarification and necessity of the questions. Second, the order of the questions was determined on to avoid confusion and question order effects (Dillman et al., 2009). Demographic questions were put at the end of the questionnaire, except the screening questions, to filter and stratify respondents for this study. Third, general instructions were placed at the beginning of the questionnaire. Specific instructions and transitory statements were located at the beginning of sections or within sections as needed. Fourth, font, size, and style were selected to improve readability, increase attention and avoid skipping important word(s) in the questions and instructions. Bernard and Mills (2000) found that 12-point Arial font was most preferable for reading on the web and consumed shorter time for reading. Last, the researcher ensured that skip patterns were accurately followed based on the participants’ earlier answers. For example, when answering screening questions, if the participants were not qualified, they would be directed out of the survey. There was also a filter question that added a skip pattern to terminate those answering without reading the questions.

Measurement

Measurement items were identified based on the specific objectives of this study, the literature review, and results from the qualitative study. The instrument consisted of (a) quantitative questions that measure pre-identified functional and psychological attribute

components of Thailand's DI (TH, n = 36), their importance regarding destination selection (IM, n = 36), their influences on destination selection (IF, n = 36), travel experience, and travel interest as well as participants' demographic information; (b) qualitative items addressed the functional and psychological holistic impression; and (c) quantitative measurements with allowance for text entry asked for unique features of Thailand's DI. Each component included in the survey is described below with examples of questions. The completed survey instrument is found in Appendix B.

Screening Questions

According to the purposes of this study and the target population, the following screening questions were asked to ensure that the sample fit the purpose of this research: "Are you a citizen of the United States?"; "Are you 18 years or older?" and "Have you traveled outside of North America (i.e., United States, Canada and Mexico)?"

Filtering Questions

Two filtering questions were asked to divide participants into three different groups: Visitors, virtual-visitors, and non-visitors. The survey question, asking for the best description of the respondents' experience/knowledge about Thailand, included "Have you visited Thailand?" and "Have you looked or sought for information about traveling to Thailand?" The visitor group was designated for the individuals who answered yes to the first question (i.e., participants visited Thailand). For those who answered no to the first question but answered yes to the second question were identified as virtual visitors. The participants who answered no to both questions were defined as non-visitors.

Attribute-based Image of Thailand (TH)

The attribute-based image included functional and psychological characteristics that were developed based on previous research instruments by Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993, 2003), Henkel et al. (2006), Lertputtarak (2012), Rittichainuwat et al. (2001), and Tapachai and Waryszak (2000). The measurement items were designed to measure attributes with functional and psychological characteristics of destination attributes (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). The destination attributes listed by Echtner and Ritchie, Henkel et al., Lertputtarak, Rittichainuwat et al., Tapachai and Waryszak were revised based on a comprehensive review of promotional

literature, movies about traveling to Thailand, recent news and articles, and the results from the qualitative study. TH was rated by using a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*. For example:

“For each of the following items, what is your level of agreement that the descriptor contributes to Thailand’s image as a travel destination?”

Items	Image of Thailand				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Beautiful architecture and buildings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interesting customs and cultures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural and historical attractions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Importance (IM)

The measurement of destination attributes’ importance in terms of destination selection were the same items used in Thailand’s attribute-based image and includes functional and psychological characteristics. Even though the items used in IM are the same as TH, they were listed separately in two different sections to reduce the order effects. IM was addressed by asking the participants to rate the importance of each item on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = *not important at all* and 5 = *extremely important*. The measurement of IM was set as side by side questions with IF measurement.

Positive-Neutral-Negative Influences (IF)

The positive, neutral and negative effects were used to determine whether the importance of the attributes impacted DI positively or negatively when deciding on a destination selection. IF was determined by asking the participants to identify the influence of each item on a response scale including *positive*, *neutral* and *negative influence*. The participants were asked to indicate if each attribute has a positive, neutral or negative influence on their destination selection process.

The following is the example for IM and IF questions:

“In the following section, you will be asked two (2) different types of questions about how you select a destination. Please indicate:

- (1) How unimportant/important each item is to you when selecting travel destination(s); and
- (2) If each attribute has negative, neutral or positive influence on your destination decision.”

Martilla and James (1977) suggested separating measurements of attributes’ importance and performances to diminish “compounding and order effects” (p. 79). Thus, IM and IF questions were asked as side-by-side questions, while TH was located in a separate section. Each item was identified on the left and the participants were asked to rate IM and IF for each item on the same line (See appendix B).

Items	Importance					Influence		
	Not Important at all	Somewhat unimportant	Undecided/neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Beautiful architecture and buildings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interesting customs and cultures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural and historical attractions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Holistic Impression: Functional Characteristics

An open-ended question was used to assess the travelers’ holistic impression of Thailand with functional characteristics. The question was rewritten based on Echtner and Ritchie (1991) to fit this study. The survey question was “When you think of Thailand as a travel destination, what images or characteristics do come to your mind?”

Holistic Impression: Psychological Characteristics

To discover the psychological characteristics of the travelers’ impression of Thailand, an open-ended question was best suited, rather than a question with pre-identifies choices. The question was adopted from Echtner and Ritchie (1991) and reworded to better fit this study. The survey question was, “How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting Thailand?”

Uniqueness

The unique features of Thailand were identified using a close-ended question with an option of text entry. The question developed by Echtner and Ritchie (1991) was revised for use in this study and the choices were developed based on the qualitative study's results. The participants also had a choice to include their own input. The survey question was "What are some tourist attractions and characteristics of Thailand that are distinctive or unique compared to other destinations? Please check all that apply and specify if needed."

Travel Experience

Participants were asked to measure their travel experiences. The data collected with these measurements were also used for analyses to find patterns among travel experiences, travel interest, perception of Thailand's DI and rated importance in terms of destination selection. The survey questions included: "When traveling internationally, what is the main purpose of most of your trips?"; "How often do you travel internationally?"; "When was the last time you traveled internationally?"; "Where have you traveled internationally? Please check all regions that apply."

Travel Interest and Information Sources

The questions about travel interest asked participants to determine their interest about traveling to Thailand as well as to identify information sources that influence their interest to travel. This information helped stratify the sample for this study to recruit similar numbers of travelers who have visited Thailand, those who have interest to visit but have never visited Thailand, and those who have no interest and have never visited Thailand. The survey questions included: "What source(s) do you usually use to arrange your international trip? (Please select all that apply)"; "What time of the year do you most prefer to travel?"; "When you travel internationally, how long would your trip likely be?"; "When you travel internationally, who would you most likely travel with?"; "From which source(s) did you receive information about 'Thailand' Please select all that apply."; "If you have a chance to travel, how likely will you consider Thailand as one of your destination choices?"; "How likely will you travel to Thailand?"; "How likely is it that you will recommend Thailand to your friends or relatives?"

Demographic Variables

Demographic information about the U.S. travelers was also included in the questionnaire. Demographic information included individual characteristics such as age, gender and income level, presence of children under 18 in a household and geographic location of the respondents' residences.

The initial questionnaire was reviewed by tourism hospitality experts in Hospitality and Tourism Management programs in several universities in the U.S. and Thailand to review the questionnaire (n=5). They were asked to provide feedback on question wording, necessity and usefulness of the questions, clarification of the instructions, and the survey's ease of administration. Questions and answer choices were revised based on the results from the expert review.

Sampling Procedures

Sample

The target population of this study was U.S. international travelers from all over the country who have traveled outside of North America. The sample included approximately 500 international travelers who are 18 years and older. Similar numbers of individuals were recruited for each of three groups (i.e., visitors, virtual visitors, and non-visitors of Thailand) by presetting quotas for the groups. The survey company was requested to set the quota at 170 individuals per group. The sample of this study was also expected to capture both male and female travelers of various ages and across income levels.

Gorsuch (1983) and Hatcher (1994) suggested that in exploratory factor analysis (EFA) the subject-to-item ratio should be at least 5:1. Considering the number of attributes (36), the minimum sample size of this study should be at least 180 participants. As mentioned, this research targeted three different groups of participants and aimed to capture the general ideas that U.S. international travelers have of Thailand as a destination. Thus, the sample must be large enough to generalize the results. Comrey and Lee (1992) believed that sample size of 500 is acceptable for such analyses. Moreover, MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang and Hong (1999) suggested that, if possible, the study should obtain a sample size of 500 or more. The necessary number of participants needed for data analyses is 500.

Procedures

This study used an online research company (<http://www.e-rewards.com>) to distribute the questionnaire and collect data. The total number of international travelers from the U.S. who were included in their database was 522,757 individuals. The online research company randomly distributed the surveys across the U.S. to those who declare themselves as international travelers and stopped collecting the data when they reached the quota for each group.

Pilot Study

Upon development of the survey instrument, an e-mail was sent to U.S. international travelers in Manhattan, Kansas and surrounding areas (n=30), asking for their participation in the survey to provide feedback about the suitability and the clarity of the directions.

The survey instrument was revised based on the results of the pilot test. Oppenheimer, Meyvis and Davidenkothe (2009) found that when taking surveys, participants may not always read and follow instructions. Thus, they suggested, an Instructional Manipulation Check (IMC) can help to detect participants who do not read and/or follow instructions. Consequently, it possibly helps to increase the reliability of the dataset (Oppenheimer et al., 2009). After reviewing the pilot study results, it was evident that our pilot test participants did not carefully read questions. Therefore, an IMC question was added to the survey.

Data Collection

This study collected data through an online research company, using a self-report questionnaire (Qualtrics Survey Software). The survey questions were created on the website prior to the launching of an e-mail. After uploading all survey questions on the website, an online research company randomly distributed questionnaires to the sample population seeking their participation. The online research company used the screening questions to identify potential respondents and direct them to the survey link.

The participants were informed that (1) their identities, responses, and establishments would not be revealed and each participant would be completely anonymous; (2) the results of the study would be presented only in summary form; and (3) they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants who did not agree with the informed consent were terminated from the survey. Filtering questions were used to sort participants into different groups (i.e., non-visitors, virtual visitors, and visitors). The quota was deliberately set at a similar

number for each group. An IMC question was located in the IM and IF section at a point where it was the highest possibility that participants would skip reading. The IMC question was “For this item, please select “Extremely important” and “Negative”. Participants who did not select both options as instructed were terminated from the survey.

Reminder e-mails were sent by the online research company to increase number of respondents (Dillman, 2011). The online research company continued to distribute the survey until they reached the desired number of 500 respondents.

Statistical Analysis

In this study, the analyses included four major components: (a) descriptive statistics were used to determine the frequency distribution of the participants’ type of visitors, demographic profiles, and images of Thailand; (b) exploratory factor analyses (EFA) were used to reduce a large number of attribute-based image variables to a smaller set of factors and also to extract essential attribute-based images of Thailand; (c) content analysis techniques were used to analyze the data collected from open-ended questions asking for holistic impression and unique features of Thailand; (d) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to find differences between and among groups of travelers (i.e., non-visitors, virtual visitors and visitors) and different image factors of Thailand. Different groups of travelers in gender, age range, income levels, residence regions, number of children under 18 in the household and travel behaviors were also analyzed to find more patterns; and (e) Importance-Performance Analyses were used to identify each attribute-based image’s competitive position perceived by the participants.

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data; including the frequency distribution of the DI of Thailand, the demographic profiles of the respondents, and cross-tabulation. The demographic profiles of the respondents indicated the frequency distribution between genders, among different income levels, among different age ranges, among different residence regions, and among different numbers of children under 18 in the household. The descriptive statistics of Thailand’s attributes were also used to illustrate the image variables that make an impression on the travelers. After cross-tabulation, chi square analysis was used to analyze the differences of unique features associated with Thailand among the U.S. travelers and

among different types of visitors. The results were also used to find patterns with respondents' types of visitors.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

EFA was used to identify the underlying dimensions of attribute-based images of Thailand and reduce some variables that are not significant (Rittichainuwat et al., 2001). EFA was processed using the IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 20.0 (2011, IBM Corp, Armonk, NY). Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) ($KMO > .5$) and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used to indicate whether the factor analysis is likely to be appropriate for the attribute-based image data set. Results showed that KMO was greater than 0.5, thus, the sample was adequate for factor analysis. Consequently, principal components analysis (PCA) was used to extract factors (Field, 2009). Field (2009) suggested that not all factors in an analysis are statistically important. This study used multiple criteria to determine which factor(s) is/are statistically important, including the cumulative percentage of variance extracted, Scree plot and Kaiser's criterion ($eigenvalue > 1$) (Field, 2009; Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Then, to improve interpretability, the orthogonal varimax rotation was used. In this study, EFA was applied for 36 attribute-based images to find the factors that significantly contribute to the DI of Thailand. Any attribute-based image variables with communality less than 0.5 and factor loading less than 0.4 were dropped (Field, 2009). After deleting those variables, EFA was rerun to ensure that the total variance increased significantly. The identified factors were used later in ANOVA as independent variables when analyzing the significant differences of DI's perception among different types of visitors.

Content Analysis

The data collected from open-ended questions were coded separately for each question. The content was analyzed qualitatively to identify (1) the holistic impression of Thailand with functional characteristics; (2) the holistic impression of Thailand with psychological characteristics; and (3) the unique features associated with Thailand among the U.S. travelers. The results were then used to find patterns with respondents' types of visitors.

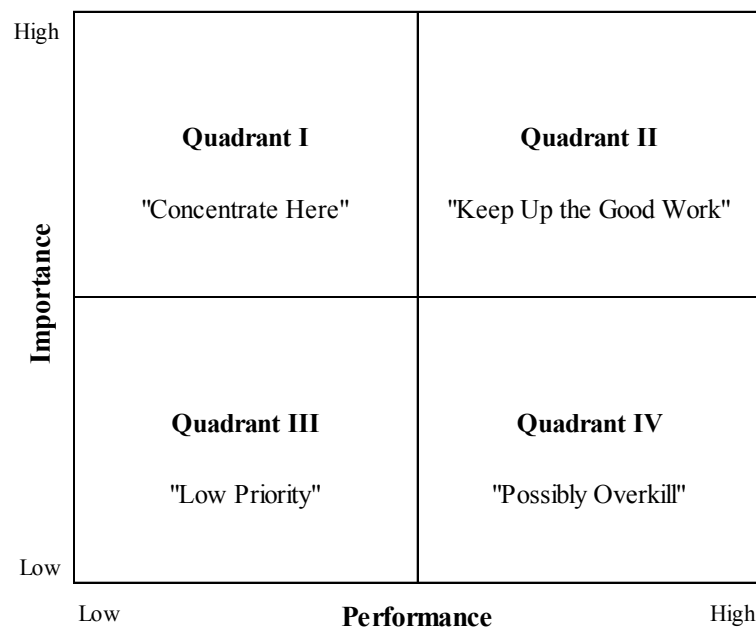
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

ANOVA was run to find if there were any significant differences in mean scores of each attribute-based image factor of Thailand among different categories of respondents regarding their degree of familiarity with Thailand as a destination (non-visitors, virtual visitors and visitors). Post hoc analyses were used to compare mean scores of each of Thailand's attribute-based image factors considering all different combinations of non-visitors, virtual visitors and visitors. ANOVA tests were also used to analyze significant mean differences of the importance of Thailand's destination attributes among the same groups. Data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 20.0 (2011, IBM Corp, Armonk, NY).

Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA)

Both importance in terms of destination selection and performances of Thailand's attribute-based images rated by participants were plotted on IPA matrix as shown in figure 3.3. The researcher chose to identify a central point in each grid using actual mean values because of the appropriateness (Martilla & James, 1977). Each attribute plotted in IPA matrix was analyzed based on the quadrant in which it was located as shown in Figure 3.3 (Martilla & James, 1977).

Figure 3.3 Importance-Performance Matrix



References

- Azzopardi, E., & Nash, R. (2012). A critical evaluation of importance-performance analysis. *Tourism Management, 35*, 222-233. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2012.07.007
- Bernard, M., & Mills, M. (2000). So, what size and type of font should I use on my website? *Usability News 2.2*. Retrieved from <http://usabilitynews.org/so-what-size-and-type-of-font-should-i-use-on-my-website/>
- Bevan, T., Fellner, E., Cavendish, J. (Producers), & Kidron, B. (Director). (2004). *Bridget Jones: The edge of reason* [Motion picture]. United Kingdom, France, Germany, & Ireland: Miramax.
- Cohen, E. (1972). Toward a sociology of international tourism. *Social Research, 39*, 164-182.
- Comrey, A. L., & Lee, H. B. (1992). *A first course in factor analysis* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dillman, D. A. (2011). *Mail and internet surveys: The tailored design method-2007 update with new internet, visual, and mixed-mode guide*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2009). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1991). The meaning and measurement of destination image. *Journal of Tourism Studies, 2*(2), 2-12.
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1993). The measurement of destination image: An empirical assessment. *Journal of Travel Research, 31*(4), 3-13.
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (2003). The meaning and measurement of destination image. *Journal of Tourism Studies, 14*(1), 37-48.
- Field, A. (2009). *Discovering statistics using SPSS*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- FutureBrand. (2011). *FutureBrand 2010 – 2011 country brand index*. Retrieved from <http://www.futurebrand.com/foresight/cbi/cbi-2010>
- FutureBrand. (2012). *FutureBrand 2011 – 2012 country brand index*. Retrieved from <http://www.futurebrand.com/foresight/cbi/cbi-2011>
- FutureBrand. (2013). *FutureBrand 2012 – 2013 country brand index*. Retrieved from <http://www.futurebrand.com/foresight/cbi/cbi-2012>

- Goldberg, D., Phillips, T. (Producers), & Phillips, T. (Director). (2004). *The hangover part II* [Motion picture]. United States: Warner Bros. Pictures.
- Gorsuch, R. L. (1983). *Factor analysis* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R.E. (2010). *Multivariate Data Analysis: A global perspective* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hatcher, L. (1994). *A step-by-step approach to using the SAS system for factor analysis and structural equation modeling*. Cary, NC: SAS Institute Inc.
- Henkel, R., Henkel, P., Agrusa, W., Agrusa, J., & Tanner, J. (2006). Thailand as a tourist destination: Perceptions of international visitors and Thai residents. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 11*, 269-287. doi:10.1080/10941660600753299
- Law, M., Stewart, D., Letts, L., Pollock, N., Bosch, J., & Westmorland, M. (1998). *Critical review form - qualitative studies*. Ontario, Canada: McMaster University Occupational Therapy Evidence-Based Practice Research Group.
- Lertputtarak, S. (2012). The relationship between destination image, food image, and revisiting Pattaya, Thailand. *International Journal of Business and Management, 7*(5), 111-122.
- Lofland, J. (1971). *Analyzing social settings*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- MacCallum, R. C., Widaman, K. F., Zhang, S., & Hong, S. (1999). Sample size in factor analysis. *Psychological Methods, 4*, 84-99.
- MacDonald, A. (Producer), & Boyle, D. (Director). (2000). *The beach* [Motion picture]. United Kingdom, & United States: 20th Century Fox.
- Martilla, J. A., & James, J. C. (1977). Importance-performance analysis. *Journal of Marketing, 41*(1), 77-79.
- Oppenheimer, D. M., Meyvis, T., & Davidenkothe, N. (2009). Instructional manipulation checks: Detecting satisficing to increase statistical power. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 45*, 867-872. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2009.03.009
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Rittichainuwat, B., Qu, H., & Brown, T. (2001). Thailand's international travel image: Mostly favorable. *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 42*, 82-95. doi:10.1016/S0010-8804(01)80020-3
- Ryan, C., & Cave, J. (2005). Structuring destination image: A qualitative approach. *Journal of Travel Research, 44*, 143-150. doi:10.1177/0047287505278991

Tapachai, N., & Waryszak, R. (2000). An examination of the role of beneficial image in tourist destination selection. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39, 37-44.
doi:10.1177/004728750003900105

Tourism Authority of Thailand. (2012). *Thailand travel manual 2012-2013*. Retrieved from http://www.tourismthailand.org/fileadmin/upload_img/Multimedia/Ebrochure/409/TTM2012.pdf

World Tourism Organization. (2008). *International recommendations for tourism statistics*. Retrieved from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc08/bg-tourismstats.pdf>

Chapter 4 - Exploration of the U.S. Travelers' Destination Image (DI) of Thailand

Abstract

Thailand is one of the world's most famous destinations but it has not yet successfully secured the U.S. market. To explore American travelers' destination image (DI) of Thailand, personal interviews with 56 U.S. travelers were conducted at Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport by one interviewer. Maximum variation purposeful sampling was used to ensure diversity of the sample. Inductive, deductive and cross-case analyses were conducted. "Friendly people," "beaches and islands," and "amazing" were the strongest descriptors of Thailand's DI. First-time visitors had tourist attraction/activity-based features, while repeat visitors rated people and culture-related items as the top reasons for their decision to travel to Thailand. Thailand tourism organizations may use the findings in future U.S. marketing efforts.

Words: 113

Keywords: Destination Image • Qualitative • Personal Interview • Thailand

Introduction

Known for its natural beauty, unique cultures, food, nightlife, good value for money and friendly people, Thailand is one of the world's most popular tourist destinations (FutureBrand, 2012; Tourism Authority of Thailand [TAT], 2013). Thailand's tourism industry attracts millions of visitors each year (TAT, 2013) and contributed 7.3% of the country's GDP in 2012 (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2013). However, it has not been successfully attracting and/or maintaining the U.S. market. The number of arrivals from the U.S. has decreased its importance ranking as a source market fell from seventh in 2010 to eleventh in 2012 (Department of Tourism, 2010, 2012).

One of the key factors in tourism marketing is destination image (DI). It plays a significant role in destination selection for travelers (Fakeye & Crompton 1991; Goodrich, 1978; Mayo, 1973). With the U.S. travel market being one of the largest in the world and one of the top sources in terms of travel expenditure (World Tourism Organization [WTO], 2013), it would be beneficial for Thailand's travel industry and authority to understand the DI of Thailand from U.S. travelers' perspectives.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to measure U.S. travelers' DI of Thailand. The specific objectives were (1) to examine the features and qualities of Thailand as a destination for U.S. travelers, (2) to identify the unique features of Thailand according to U.S. travelers, (3) to discover the hidden qualities of Thailand's DI, and (4) to identify important attributes of Thailand in terms of destination selection for U.S. travelers. Furthermore, the results of this study were intended to provide tourism organizations of Thailand with current Thailand's DI for development of an effective strategy for capturing the U.S. market.

Literature Review

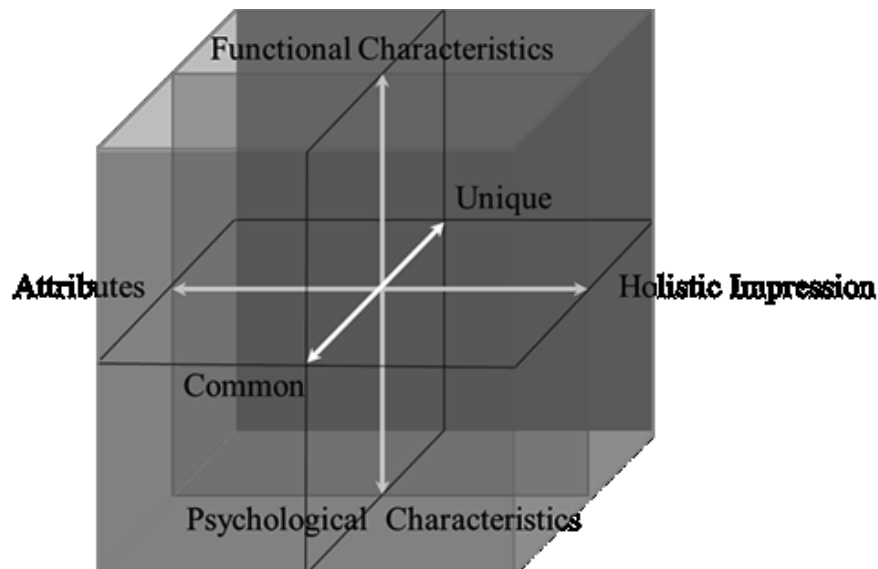
Destination image (DI) refers to the overall ideas about an area or a place as a destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). DI has a substantial impact on destination selection, travel-related decisions, and travel behavior intentions (Echtner & Ritchie; Henkel, Henkel, Agrusa, Agrusa, & Tanner, 2006; Rittichainuwat, Qu, & Brown 2001). Thus, DI is a key factor for successful destination marketing.

DI is formed as travelers create mental pictures of a destination based on information they receive from actual experiences as well as from movies, commercials, and other marketing

media (Gartner, 1994; Gunn, 1988). Individuals may develop DI even without personal experiences at a destination (Gartner). Pre-visit DI can be changed after the actual visitation because pre-visit DI may include incorrect information or personal biases (Balogu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004).

According to Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993, 2003), DI is comprised of three dimensions: attribute-based images vs. holistic impressions, functional (tangible features) vs. psychological (intangible features) characteristics, and common vs. unique features. Both attribute-based images and holistic impressions contain either functional or psychological characteristics. Each characteristic is also considered either a common or a unique feature. The functional-attribute-based images are observable and measurable while functional-holistic impressions (one's mental pictures of a destination) are hard to measure (Echtner & Ritchie). The psychological/attribute-based images are feelings attached with a destination, whereas psychological/holistic impressions are identified as general feelings about or the atmosphere of a destination (Echtner & Ritchie). Because holistic impressions are difficult to measure, the majority of DI studies have excluded this component from their research (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Echtner & Ritchie; Jenkins, 1999; Pike, 2002; Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010). Researchers have also rarely sought to identify unique features of a destination although they may be essential qualities that attract travelers (Echtner & Ritchie). Figure 4.1 illustrates how any destination can be examined based on a combination of the DI dimensions.

Figure 4.1 The Components of DI in 3 Dimensions



Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) suggested that destination marketers should be aware of the hidden qualities of a location's DI. These qualities appear only to travelers who have visited the destination or are familiar with it. Awareness of hidden qualities can help marketers in future destination promotions.

Several researchers have conducted studies about Thailand's DI (Henkel et al., 2006; Lertputtarak, 2012; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). However, these studies focused on Asian visitors, and hence, the findings cannot be generalized to U.S. travelers. Some studies identified non-visitors as their target sample (Henkel et al.; Tapachai & Waryszak), and therefore, may be unrealistic and/or inaccurate. Additionally, earlier research has been based on pre-determined attributes, which may have overlooked some unique features and hidden qualities. Moreover, they excluded the holistic dimension of DI, which is one of its important components.

Echtner and Ritchie (2003) found that the majority of the previous research on DI relied on quantitative methodology. A qualitative approach was not often used because of high costs and time (Echtner & Ritchie). However, researchers suggested that the use of a qualitative approach is necessary to capture the complete DI of a location. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to capture multiple dimensions of DI and to establish the current DI of Thailand among U.S. travelers.

Methodology

Qualitative methods used in this study facilitated capturing the participants' perceptions and experiences in their own words (Patton, 2002). The research questions were:

- RQ1. What are U.S. travelers' attribute-based images and holistic impressions of Thailand as a destination?
- RQ2. What unique features do U.S. travelers associate with Thailand?
- RQ3. What hidden qualities does Thailand evoke as a travel destination for U.S. travelers?
- RQ4. What are important destination attributes of Thailand in terms of destination selection?

Study Location and Participant Selection

Personal interviews were conducted in the departure waiting areas of Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport on August 3-5, 2013 by a single researcher to maintain control over the interviews and minimize variations among interviews. The target population included U.S. citizens, 18 years or older who have visited Thailand. The location of the interview was ideal because individuals had just finished their trips; therefore, their experiences and mental pictures of Thailand were fresh in their minds.

First, travelers were screened for inclusion criteria: U.S. citizens traveling for pleasure. Those traveling in a group were then given the choice to be interviewed as individuals or to complete a group interview. If they chose to have a group interview, the questions were addressed to the group as a whole and any member of the group was invited to answer. Participants were given this choice because they had completed their travel in a group and they could help each other to provide details regarding their mutual experiences.

This study focused on “breadth,” aiming to obtain “a narrow range of experiences for a larger number of people” (Patton, 2002, p. 227). In order to capture the DI from travelers with different characteristics, the maximum variation purposeful sampling technique was employed (using a matrix as a guide) when searching for participants (Figure 4.2). The criteria in the matrix included frequency of visiting Thailand, gender, traveling alone or with a group, age, and airline choices. The participants were asked several questions regarding their demographic information and travel choices in order to identify their placement in the matrix and maximize sample variation.

Figure 4.2 Maximum Variation Matrix of U.S. Travelers

FMLJA	FWLJA	FMGJA	FWGJA	RMLJA	RWLJA	RMGJA	RWGJA	F First-time visitor R Repeated visitor M Male W Female I Travel Alone G Travel with group J Age 18-34 S Age 34 and over A American Origins Airlines U Other Airlines
FMISA	FWISA	FMGSA	FWGSA	RMISA	RWISA	RMGSA	RWGSA	
FMLJU	FWLJU	FMGJU	FWGJU	RMLJU	RWLJU	RMGJU	RWGJU	
FMISU	FWISU	FMGSU	FWGSU	RMISU	RWISU	RMGSU	RWGSU	

Considering characteristics of the airport (i.e., rush, busy and crowded) and the focus of this study, the interviews were designed to be short. Each interview lasted from 5 to 10 minutes. The size of the sample was based on this study's specific objectives to find common ideas of U.S. travelers on Thailand's DI. The researcher stopped recruiting new participants when saturation in data was reached as suggested by Law et al. (1998).

Data Collection and Analysis

Standardized open-ended questions, including main questions and probes, were used for the interviews to enhance consistency of the interviews. The questions were created based on the study objectives and were reviewed by a panel of experts. Examples of questions used were:

- “How many times have you visited Thailand including this trip?”
- “How long were you in Thailand this time?”
- “What influenced you to choose Thailand as the destination?”
- “Which parts of Thailand have you visited?”
- “If someone were considering a trip to Thailand, what would you recommend to him or her?”
- “When you get home and are telling people about your trip to Thailand, what will you tell them?”
- “What did you find out while traveling in Thailand this time that you did not expect or did not know before?”
- “Where else have you traveled internationally?”
- “What are distinct or unique features of Thailand compared to other destinations?”
- “How does Thailand compare to other destinations?”
- “To sum up, could you give me about 6 words to conclude your experience in Thailand?” The concept of the question was adopted from Six-Word Memoir®. It was expected to help summarize the large quantity of information from each interview and highlight key features and/or quality of Thailand for the respondents.

Every respondent was asked all of the main questions while probing questions were used only when necessary and/or appropriate to capture the desired information. For example “Why

did they (family/friends) recommend Thailand?” was asked as a follow-up question only when the reasons for the family/friends' recommendation were not initially given.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, except ones who did not give permission, whose summary of the interviews were recorded by hand. The complete interview script can be found in Appendix A. All participants were given Thai souvenirs as thank-you gifts after they completed the interviews.

The interviewer was born and raised in Thailand but has lived in the U.S. for 7 years. Although the interviewer was well informed about Americans' DI of Thailand and characteristics of the U.S. citizen, triangulation was used when analyzing the data to minimize the researcher bias by including a verifier. The verifier was a U.S. citizen born in the U.S. and an international traveler. This helped add strength and credibility to this study.

Inductive and deductive analyses were used to examine each research question based on its appropriateness. RQ1 and RQ2 required inductive analyses. The data were organized in systematic order, segregated, grouped, regrouped and coded based on similar meanings and concepts. Consequently, themes and patterns were identified. Deductive analyses were used for RQ3. Destination attributes of Thailand found in Henkel et al., (2006), Lertputtarak, (2012), Rittichainuwat et al., (2001), and Tapachai and Waryszak, (2000) were used as an existing framework to search for Thailand's hidden qualities in the data. RQ4 needed both deductive and inductive analyses to identify the important destination attributes of Thailand in terms of destination selection. The data were examined many different ways, including across interview questions and demographic groups, in order to identify all possible themes and patterns related to Thailand's DI. Cross-case analyses were also used to analyze the data. The use of standardized open-ended questions supports the application of cross-case analyses (Patton, 2002). Responses from different participants were grouped into common themes identified from each research question.

Results

The qualitative analyses revealed a number of themes, categories and patterns in the U.S. visitors' responses regarding Thailand's DI. Most of the first-time visitors had developed multiple ideas about Thailand before their visit, and they adjusted these ideas based on their actual experiences. On the other hand, almost all repeat visitors had stronger images on selective

attributes and impressions than first-time visitors. Frequencies were also used to compare and illustrate the differences in destination attributes and impressions between the various groups of respondents.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Fifty-six interviews were conducted. Thirty-seven of those interviews included one individual, while nineteen of the interviews included more than one person. Each group contained between 2 and 6 people who had traveled together. The total number of participants in the 19 group interviews was 46; hence a total of 83 individuals participated in the study. However, the interviewer did not seek to gather opinions of everyone in each group, and responses from each group interview were considered as coming from one interview. Therefore, the data analyses were based on 56 completed interviews. Figure 4.3 illustrates distribution of participants' characteristics including first-time/repeat visitors, male/female, traveled alone/with group, age ranges, and choice of airlines based on 83 individuals. Table 4.1 shows the demographic characteristics of overall respondents and those who had individual/group interviews. The demographic characteristics of respondents in each interview can be found in Appendix C.

Figure 4.3 Variation Matrix of Respondents' Characteristics

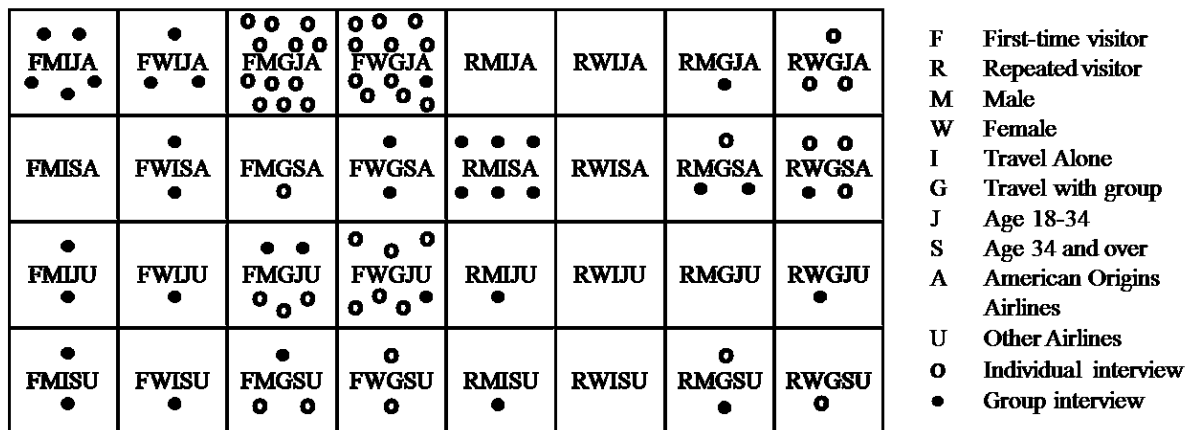


Table 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Total	Individual interview	Group Interview (n=19)
	(n=83)	(n=37)	(n=46)
Travel behavior:			
Travel alone	24	24	0
Travel with group	59	13	46
Gender:			
Male	44	24	20
Female	39	13	26
Frequency of visitation:			
First-time visitor	60	23	37
Repeat visitor	23	14	9
Age range:			
Under 18 years old	0	0	0
18-24 years old	18	6	12
25-34 years old	35	12	23
35-54 years old	13	10	3
55-64 years old	14	8	6
Over 65 years old	3	1	2
Annual household income level:			
Under \$25,000	6	3	3
\$25,000 - \$49,000	18	10	8
\$50,000 - \$74,999	15	7	8
\$75,000 - \$99,999	6	2	4
\$100,000 - \$199,999	11	6	5
\$200,000 - \$299,999	8	4	4
\$300,000 or greater	1	1	0
Prefer not to answer	18	4	14
Ethnicity:			
White	66	29	37
Black	3	1	2
African American	1	0	1
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	3	3	0
American Indian, or Alaska Native	0	0	0
Asian	8	2	6
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	1	1
Others(Please Specify)	2	2	0
Prefer not to answer	2	2	0
Choices of airlines:			
U.S. origins airlines	54	23	31
Others	29	14	15

RQ1: What are U.S. travelers' attribute-based images and holistic impressions of Thailand as a destination?

Attribute-based images of Thailand

When asked to describe their experiences in Thailand, what they would recommend to others, and the story they will tell people about their trips; participants identified various attributes based on their perceptions. Several attributes were revealed throughout other parts of the interviews as well. Each attribute was considered as a subtheme. Subthemes which revealed similarity were grouped into five major themes. Common themes and subthemes of attribute-based images mentioned by the participants were as follows.

Natural Attractions: This theme included images of places that were created by nature such as views and landscapes. Subthemes within the main theme were:

- **Beaches and islands:** *“Talking about how beautiful the beaches are! It’s amazing.”*
- **Mountains, forest and waterfalls:** *“I did a hike up in Chiang Mai, like a 4-hour hike up into one of the villages up on the top of the mountain, which is beautiful.”*
“We went to Erawan, the seven-tiered waterfall.”

Cultural experiences: This theme represented destination features related to the exploration and experiences of Thai cultures and history. In this theme, participants identified the quality of interactions with people, culture, cuisine, and the variety of experiences that are available for travelers. Subthemes included in this theme are:

- **Friendly people:** *“People are warm. I found it to be very friendly to a stranger and people are very kind.”*
- **Interesting Thai cultures and customs:** *“Definitely, the culture. Everyone is very respectful here and very humble of the culture, so much pride in the culture and how we greet each other. So, that’s what I took from Thailand.”*
- **Historical and cultural attractions:** *“I’ve done ruins in Ayutthaya and temples in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai.”*
“We did a cultural experience in Chiang Mai. It’s really good. They showed a lot of their whole tribe.”
- **Delicious Thai food:** *“Really amazing flavors of food.”*

- **Opportunity for learning experiences:** This feature refers to the numerous opportunities travelers found for learning something new about Thailand. These opportunities included “voluntourism” (which is the concept of experiencing through volunteerism), cooking classes, Muay Thai (Thai boxing) school, massage school, royal initiative projects, and interacting with the locals to learn various cultures.

“We learned a lot of the culture of the people because we didn’t go with the typical tourist guide. We really took taxi drivers and we learned, we talked to them, and know them more than just a tourist guide. We talked about other things, their culture and the people here.”

Outdoor activities & adventures: This theme contained features of recreational activities and exciting or unusual experiences. Subthemes consisted of the following:

- **Opportunity for hiking, climbing, and sightseeing:** *“I think Thailand requires a lot of research because it’s such a different country than the U.S... And then of course, getting around town and all those little things like that.”*

“We went hiking and trekking...”

- **Elephant trekking and exotic animal encounters:** *“I went to ride elephants. So, that was one of the huge things.”*

“We went to the tiger village, saw the tigers. I got to pet the tigers.”

- **Scuba diving and snorkeling:** *“And of course the beaches and scuba diving, it’s what I would recommend.”*

City life: This theme reflected images of various lifestyles in the big cities of Thailand.

Subthemes included the following.

- **Modern cities:** *“Everything is very modern, upscale places.”*

“I didn’t think Bangkok is going to be as modern as it was. I thought it’s going to be a little farther behind.”

- **Nightlife, party and adult entertainment:** *“A lot of partying, a lot of night life, a lot of drinking...”*

“In downtown, you’ve got go-go bars and stuff like that. I’ve never seen that anywhere else where basically it’s a take out.”

- **Shopping:** *“There are lots of good shopping opportunities.”*

- **Crowded and traffic jams:** *“Prepare for taxis and crazy traffic.”*

“That’s not to say anything negative; it’s just, it’s very populated here.”

Accommodation for traveling: This theme represented features that supported travel during the trip in Thailand. Subthemes included:

- **Good value for money:** *“That just...how cheap everything was, yeah.”*
- **Efficient local transportation systems:** *“I didn’t know how easy it was to get around and how good the infrastructure was as far as people setting up things for you. I mean it’s really simple to navigate ... They make it really easy to travel here.”*
- **Variety of quality accommodations:** *“And we stayed at a really nice hotel than we were in Phuket and we stayed at the Ramada. That was nice here in Bangkok.”*
“We stayed on a floating hotel.”
- **Ease of travel for English speaker:** *“I’ve never been to Asia and [Thailand] it’s a pretty easy country to go to without speaking the language”*
“Probably the amount of English that’s spoken here. A lot of people do speak English, so it’s easy to talk to people.”

Table 4.2 illustrates the five main themes and subthemes that emerged through inductive analyses.

The results showed that Thailand’s DI consisted of both positive and negative attribute-based images such as crowded and traffic jam. The content analysis further revealed several patterns:

- First-time travelers expected to see beautiful beaches while they mentioned that they were surprised by how truly friendly people in Thailand were.
- First-time vacationers participated in more activities than those who were repeat visitors.
- First-time visitors did not expect that Thailand would be well-developed, especially in a city such as Bangkok.
- Repeat visitors were well-aware of modern cities and were more likely to visit authentic places in Thailand.
- Repeat visitors reported fewer numbers of attributes and were more specific in their descriptive images of Thailand.

Table 4.2 Major Themes of Thailand's Attribute-Based Image

Major Themes	All	First-time visitor	Repeat visitor	Travel alone	Travel with group
	(n=56)	(n=39)	(n=17)	(n=24)	(n=32)
% of participants in each group					
Natural Attractions					
Beaches and islands	70	85	35	67	72
Mountains, forest and waterfalls	21	21	24	21	22
Cultural experiences					
Friendly People*	77	69	94	83	72
Interesting Thai cultures and customs*	61	67	47	54	66
Historical and cultural attractions	64	67	59	50	75
Delicious Thai food*	48	46	53	42	53
Opportunity for learning experience**	25	31	12	25	25
Outdoor activities & adventures					
Opportunity for hiking, climbing, sightseeing	45	51	29	42	47
Elephant trekking & Exotic animal encounter***	39	46	24	25	50
Scuba Diving & Snorkeling	25	26	24	21	28
City life					
Modern cities**	41	38	47	46	38
Nightlife, party and adult entertainment	32	36	24	38	28
Shopping	29	33	18	17	38
Crowded & traffic jam	21	23	18	21	22
Accommodation for traveling					
Good value for money	32	38	18	33	31
Efficient local transportation systems**	30	28	35	29	31
Variety of quality accommodations	23	26	18	25	22
Ease of travel for English speaker**	18	21	12	13	22

* *These items were also identified as unique features*

** *Hidden qualities of Thailand*

Several minor themes also were revealed during the interviews, such as Thai massage, health-related services, lady-boys, street food, and the respect shown to the king in Thailand.

Fewer people referred to these themes than to the major themes. The findings also showed that certain destination attributes appeared to be negative for several respondents while some participants expressed the same features with neutral or positive feelings. The strongest attribute-based images of Thailand that appeared to most respondents were beaches/islands, friendly people and culture-related items.

Holistic impressions of Thailand

Various themes of holistic impressions emerged when participants described their experiences in Thailand, especially when asked to summarize their visit with 6 words. All themes were classified into three categories: positive, neutral and negative impressions.

Positive impressions: This category represented good feelings or atmospheres regarding Thailand as a destination. Themes in this category include the following:

- **Amazing:** *“It was an amazing time. I had a lot of fun. It was great. It rained the entire time, but it was a lot of fun and I would definitely do it again in a heartbeat. “That it was amazing and once a lifetime.”*
- **Relaxing:** *“I just felt comfortable here. I feel at home.”*
“Great time that I will always remember, peacefulness, getting away, relaxation and freedom.”
- **Fun:** *“I expected lots of beach-fun times and I was satisfied with that and I’ll definitely come back.”*
“That it’s fun. It’s fun. If you want to relax and enjoy the atmosphere, you got to go Thailand.”
- **Pleasure:** *“It made traveling nice. It was a pleasure.”*
- **Visual impression (Beautiful):** *“Beautiful, the landscape is amazing.”*
“I think I didn’t think it would be as pretty as I have thought. It’s beautiful, yeah.”
- **Friendly:** *“A smaller town feels very friendly, the most friendly we saw, I think.”*
- **Adventurous:** *“Innovative, daring, adventure, let’s see, wonderful though, surprising and beautiful.”*
“A wonderful adventure.”

Neutral impressions: This category included beliefs related to Thailand which did not strongly represent either the positive or negative side. Themes consisted of the following:

- **Authentic/exotic:** *“Thailand is an amazing, beautiful, exotic country, mysterious in its own ways.”*

“Totally different world and culture.”

- **Crazy/wild:** *“Thailand is a crazy place [Laughter]. It’s really crazy... Thailand is a wild place. We had a lot of fun here... crazy, hot, alcohol, clubs, partying, women.”*

Negative impressions: This category contained bad/unfavorable atmospheres of Thailand.

Themes in this category included the following:

- **Chaotic:** *“I guess, personally, Bangkok was a little busy and a little more stressful than Phuket.”*

“I did not think it was going to be as crowded as it was. I thought it’s going to be a little bit more laidback and relaxed.”

Table 4.3 shows three main categories of the holistic impression of Thailand discovered through inductive analyses.

The results showed that a majority of travelers had positive impressions of Thailand; however, several participants expressed some negative or neutral feelings towards their trips. The content analyses revealed several patterns:

- All travelers who reported “relaxing,” spent time outside of Bangkok.
- Only travelers who visited Bangkok reported chaotic, busy, no-rest and fast-paced travel.
- Repeat visitors described their impressions of Thailand as relaxing, while first-time visitors more often depicted it more often as adventurous.

Many respondents reported more than one impression. Several participants expressed mixed feelings about their time in Thailand. The most common holistic impressions were “amazing,” “relaxing” and “fun.” There was an extreme case in which a respondent expressed mostly negative feelings towards her experiences in Thailand. This respondent was a female, first-time visitor, traveling by herself. Her responses included, *“Unfortunately, I bought into photos and movies and I got sort of like... I was fooled by Hollywood so to speak,”* and *“I don’t know where to start. Do I start with me getting robbed? Do I start with... adding a word of caution to everybody? It’s a developing country. We have to remember that it’s not Europe. It’s not the US. You have to be ready to... no high expectations. You have to be prepared for what you’re going to see.”*

Table 4.3 Major Themes of Thailand’s Holistic Impression

Major Themes	All	First-time visitor	Repeat visitor	Travel alone	Travel with group
	(n=56)	(n=39)	(n=17)	(n=24)	(n=32)
% of participants in each group					
Positive impression					
Amazing	70	79	47	71	69
Relaxing	52	44	71	54	50
Fun	50	51	47	50	50
Pleasure	38	36	41	33	41
Visual impression (Beautiful)	34	36	29	13	50
Friendly*	32	33	29	29	34
Adventurous	18	21	12	13	22
Neutral impression					
Authentic/exotic*	34	36	29	33	34
Crazy/wild**	13	13	12	13	13
Negative impression					
Chaotic	25	28	18	25	25

* *These items were also identified as unique features*

** *Hidden qualities of Thailand*

On the other hand, another participant who is a male-repeat visitor, traveling alone said, “It’s amazing. Amazing Thailand and I always tell everybody, you know, okay – they say, ‘Oh, I’m planning a trip to Thailand.’ And my eyes open up I’m like I’m telling them everything about it, you know, because it is amazing. This is an amazing country.” The results showed that respondents created both attribute-based images and holistic impressions based on their expectations and experiences.

RQ2: What unique features do U.S. travelers associate with Thailand?

Unique features of Thailand

Unique features were identified when participants described what made Thailand distinct from other destinations. Unique feature themes also emerged throughout the interviews when

respondents explained how their experiences in Thailand differed from other places. Themes were grouped and classified into categories. Major themes, subthemes, and sample quotes are described below.

Unique Experiences: This category included unique experiences travelers recalled when thinking of Thailand. Themes in this category are:

- **Thai culture and Buddhism as a way of living:** *“The whole culture is very different. I think being Buddhist makes the culture very different from other places that I’ve been, even different than Korea, which is also has Buddhism.”*
“Just the way that things run over here, just so different than, you know, America, and just, you know, North America. Just different [a] way of life.”
“Cultural heritage is so different. I mean the culture, the history, you know, I think is so unique compared to Europe obviously. So, I think that really stands out”
“Definitely...definitely the culture...culture. Everyone is very respectful here and very humble of the culture, so much pride in the culture and how we greet each other.”
- **Friendly people:** *“I didn’t expect people be so friendly, regardless if it was the lady cleaning on the street all the way to one of the managers at the hotel. Everyone is very open, friendly and treated you with respect.”*
“Definitely the idea of the land of smiles, like I said. Extremely helpful strangers... if you’re lost... if they can speak just a little bit of English, they’re willing to help. And yeah, when I was in Mexico, [and] when I’m in Korea, you definitely don’t experience that.”
- **Diverse experience among different regions in Thailand:** *“The country is extremely different from the northern part to the southern part and the people are different.”*
“It depends on what they’re looking for. If they want some adventure, I would say north, and some relaxation, they [should] go south.”
- **Wide varieties of delicious Thai food:** *“The food was better than anything I could have hoped for. I love Thai food but yeah, the real stuff was amazing... I never knew about is it called Som Tum, papaya salad. Oh, my god, that is just like Christmas for your mouth.”*
- **"Look away":** Using the indigenous technique, this theme was created by adopting words used by a participant. “A lot of look away” was identified by a participant who

stated “*So much [of] what we saw here, if it happened back in America, it’d be like lawsuit, lawsuit, lawsuit.*” The “look away” refers to people disregarding (looking away from) illegal activities that they thought were not to be taken seriously, such as four riders on motorbikes with no helmets, prostitution, and street vendors at places where they are not allowed.

“That’s prostitution. Is that legal in Thailand? They overlook it, right? So, there’s a lot of looking away in Thailand.”

“Unique features, hmm. Driving on the sidewalk, that’s unique. And they expect you to move out of their way, very unique.”

“The motorcycles, you know, people don’t wear helmets on [them]. They have kids on [the bike] like 3 to 4 people.”

Unique Attractions: This category included perceptions related to Thailand which did not strongly represent either positive or negative sides. Themes consisted of the following:

- **Temples:** *“The Buddhism temples and the writing are not like anything I’ve ever seen in other places.”*
“The temples definitely, you know, I mean when I went to Italy there were a lot of the cathedrals and a lot of villages, monuments. But the temples here are so ornate compared to that which I thought was a very distinct feature.”
- **Elephant trekking:** *“It’s stuff you can’t do back in America. I mean you probably can, but it’d be hard to find, you know, ride an elephant through the waters. It’s not the same experience.”*
- **Encounters with exotic animals:** *“The elephants and the tigers that you can, you know, be up close and personal with them.”*
- **Floating market:** Thai floating markets are traditional markets along the canals where boat vendors sell food such as fresh fruits and desserts.
“Yeah, the floating market was fun. I had fun. That was different. That was very unique.”

Table 4.4 illustrates two categories found in inductive analyses as unique features of Thailand.

Table 4.4 Major Themes for Thailand’s Unique Features

Major Themes	All	First-time visitor	Repeat visitor	Travel alone	Travel with group
	(n=56)	(n=39)	(n=17)	(n=24)	(n=32)
% of participants in each group					
Experiences					
Thai culture and Buddhist way of living	50	54	41	50	50
Friendly people	43	38	53	54	34
Diverse experience among different regions in Thailand**	18	18	18	17	19
Wide varieties of delicious Thai food	14	13	18	13	16
"Look away"***	13	10	18	8	16
Attractions					
Temples	29	36	12	21	34
Elephant trekking**	21	23	18	13	28
Encounters with exotic animals**	16	21	6	21	13
Floating market	7	3	18	4	9

** *Hidden qualities of Thailand*

The findings showed a pattern where repeat travelers considered their overall experiences in Thailand to be unique while first-time visitors focused more on specific attractions in Thailand as unique features. Features, such as “city never sleeps” and the tuk-tuk (a three-wheeler or an auto rickshaw) were considered unique by some respondents and common by others. Several participants had a hard time identifying Thailand’s unique features, and a few respondents indicated they did not find any unique features in Thailand. However, the majority of respondents reported one or more unique features. The results showed that most respondents identified friendly people and Buddhism-related attributes as unique features.

RQ3: What hidden qualities does Thailand evoke as a travel destination for U.S. travelers?

Hidden qualities of Thailand

In deductive analyses, seven themes were identified when using the attributes of Thailand reported by Henkel et al. (2006), Lertputtarak (2012), Rittichainuwat et al. (2001), and Tapachai and Waryszak (2000). These themes were also listed in Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4. All hidden qualities appeared to both first-time and repeat visitors. Minor themes also emerged regarding the hidden qualities of Thailand, such as the respect given to the king, quality health and wellness services, and fun rides in local taxis (tuk-tuk). Hidden qualities of Thailand that were mentioned by participants included:

- **Modern cities:** *“I was surprised [by] how well-developed it was. I thought it was going to be a lot more like, I don’t know, second-world or fifth-world but it feels very first-world and very organized. And I don’t know; it’s nice. I like it”*
- **Efficient local transportation systems:** *“I thought that it was going to be difficult to get around like from Chiang Mai to the Lao Border for example. We’re just like, okay, get on a bus. [The] bus is nice, do it and you’re there before you know it. I thought it was going to be a lot more of a hassle.”*
- **Ease of travel for English speakers:** *“It was really interesting to see the people in Thailand’s ability to speak English... and even with a broken English, they will understand... We were thinking to go to Japan and we heard it’s exactly the opposite... They’re not really communicating... Their English is really hard.”*
- **Opportunities for learning experiences:** *“Well, what we learned about the Elephant Nature Park is a lot of stuff about the treatment of the elephants be it when they [are] brought in captivity versus free elephants. So, that was kind of nice. We also learned a lot about the Buddhist culture and the Thai culture in general such as, you know, saying “Thank You” and we’re loving the food. We even took a cooking class.”*
- **Buddhist way of living:** *“Interestingly we saw some of the stuff on a Buddhist religion... And so, it was interesting. You know, the culture is different here definitely.”*

- **Diverse experience among different regions in Thailand:** *“Some people want to party, go to the beach. Some people want to go hike, go to the northern part. Some people like to shop, go to Bangkok.”*

“I would say just a lot of different activities. It was a lot of stuff. We did zip lining. We did an elephant ride. We went to the beach. We went rock climbing. We went to Wat Pho [temple]; that was really neat.”

- **Elephant trekking:** *“We rode elephants like in a jungle”*
- **Encounter with exotic animals:** *“[We] played with tigers. We went to the Tiger Temple.”*

“Look away”: *“It’s just different from the U.S. I mean, for us it seems like, you know, walking some streets we’re in today where the markets are going on and there’s like people gambling on the side of the street and there’s people like cooking all sorts of stuff.”*

- **Crazy/wild:** *“Pattaya surprised me how crazy that was and how many bars and restaurants and people and girls and I was surprised to see kids there. It’s like crazy to me.”*

Thai culture as a whole was not considered as a hidden quality. Thirty percent of all participants (36% of first-time visitors, 18% of repeat visitors, 21% of visitors who travelled alone and 38% of visitors who travelled with group) only identified that Buddhist way of living (which is included in Thai culture) as a hidden quality of Thailand. For example, one participant stated: *“I think maybe just a little bit of culture shock but like in positive and negative ways but I mean either way it’s all like a good learning experience... It’s the first Buddhist country that I have ever been to, and so that culture really shines through in just about everything. And so, that was a really unique and wonderful experience to be a part of.”*

RQ4: What are important destination attributes of Thailand in terms of destination selection for U.S. travelers?

When participants were asked to share what influenced them to travel to Thailand and what would they would recommend to others, several important themes were identified. Themes also emerged during the inductive and deductive analyses.

Scenery and relaxation: This theme included images for travelers who seek to relax on vacation. Subthemes included:

- **Beaches & Islands:** *“If they’re looking for somewhere to travel for like vacation, beaches and things like that, I would say Thailand is the place to go”*
- **Beautiful places:** *“You know, people talked about how beautiful the place is”*
- **Relaxing places:** *“[I] laid on beautiful beaches... We just came for vacation.”*

New experiences: This theme represented destination attributes for travelers looking to experience something different than their usual environment. Subthemes included:

- **Opportunity for Learning Experiences:** *“It was eye-opening and makes you want to learn more. I’m definitely intrigued to know more about the people like I want to learn the language and come back and actually get to know the culture.”*
- **Thai Cultures:** *“And then the culture was what brought us back.”*
- **Friendly people:** *“I would recommend just going to mainly for the culture and how nice the people are.”*
- **Thai Food:** *“The food was better than anything I could have hoped for. I love Thai food, but yeah, the real stuff was amazing.”*

Accommodation for traveling: This theme included features that supported travel during the trip in Thailand. Subthemes included:

- **Value for money:** *“You’d hear from other people like it’s cheap... That’s what I expected.”*
- **Easy & safe to travel:** *“It’s easy to get around. One thing, I’ve lived in different parts of the developing world, Latin America and different parts and I often would feel like I was being ripped off but I didn’t feel that way in Thailand.”*

Outdoor activities: This theme consisted of images related to activities for tourists. Subthemes consisted of the following:

- **Cultural & historical attractions:** *“I would recommend visiting all of the, you know, the historic temples and monuments and places like the Grand Palace. So, like visit all of the, you know, the historic places in Thailand.”*
- **Partying:** *“The party scene is cool.”*
- **Scuba diving and Snorkeling** *“The very first time diving here is what interested me.”*

Table 4.5 shows major themes found when examining important attributes contributing to the decision to visit Thailand.

Table 4.5 Important Themes for Thailand’s Attributes in terms of Destination Selection

Major Themes	All	First-time visitor	Repeat visitor	Travel alone	Travel with group
	(n=56)	(n=39)	(n=17)	(n=24)	(n=32)
% of participants in each group					
Scenery & relaxation					
Beaches & Islands	34	41	18	38	31
Beautiful places	20	23	12	13	25
Relaxing places	18	21	12	25	13
New experiences					
Opportunity for Learning Experiences	29	31	24	25	31
Thai Cultures	27	26	29	17	34
Friendly people	25	18	41	33	19
Thai Food	21	21	24	25	19
Accommodation for traveling					
Value for money	18	21	12	17	19
Easy & Safe to travel	18	15	24	21	16
Outdoor activities					
Cultural & historical attractions	18	18	18	8	25
Partying	16	18	12	13	19
Scuba diving and Snorkeling	14	13	18	17	13

The results showed that for most visitors (especially first-time visitors), the most important attributes in terms of destination selection were the beaches and islands. However, for repeat visitors that attribute was less important than friendly people and the opportunity for learning experiences.

Discussion

This study identifies different dimensions of Thailand’s DI from U.S. traveler’s perspectives. The results are based on interviews that provided rich information about U.S. travelers’ DI of Thailand and the important attributes influencing their destination selection. The

analyses revealed that, similar to the international travelers in Rittichainuwat et al.'s (2001) study, the DI of Thailand was mostly favorable for U.S. visitors. However, neutral and negative images were also identified. Thailand's DI included attribute-based images and holistic impressions, functional and psychological characteristics, as well as common and unique features. This section includes the key findings, applications of Thailand's DI, limitations of the study as well as implications for both researchers and practitioners.

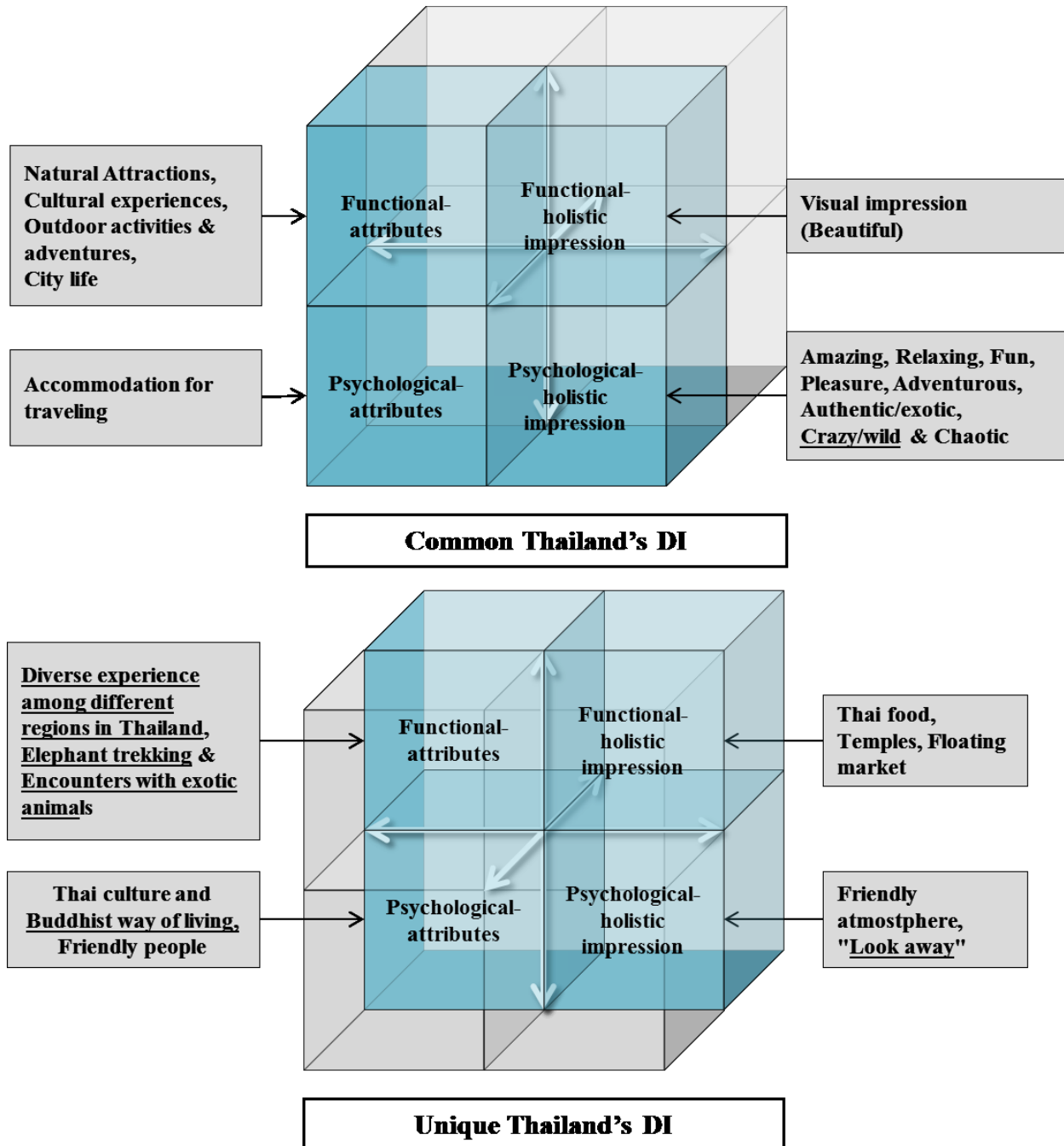
Figure 4.1 illustrates a combination of the DI dimensions explained by Echtner and Ritchie (1991; 1993), Figure 4.4 show Thailand's features and qualities, found in this study, in three dimensions of DI. Individual items were allocated in different cells based on how each dimension was described by Echtner and Ritchie. The underlined items show what features this study added when comparing the findings to the previous research results (Henkel et al., 2006; Lertputtarak, 2012; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000), which were presented in the RQ3 as hidden qualities of Thailand.

Compared to previous research that used pre-determined DI identified by reviewing only secondary sources of information (such as promotional literature), this study's findings included additional features and qualities of Thailand. It confirmed that the use of open-ended questions provided the respondents with flexibility to describe their perceptions of Thailand as a destination in their own words. Efficient local transportation systems and ease of travel for English speakers were found to be different from Rittichainuwat et al. (2001), which suggested that there was inefficient local transportation and some language barriers. The differences in DI perception occurred possibly because of the inclusion of Asian versus U.S. visitors. However, these may also be caused by changes in the development in Thailand, because the previous research was conducted in 2001. Gartner and Hunt (1987) conducted a study to analyze how Utah's image changed over a 12-year period (1971-1983) and found that several attributes changed slowly over time and mostly became more positive, which resulted in a more desirable destination.

The findings showed that first-time travelers tended to create their expectations about Thailand based on word-of-mouth, movies, travel guidebooks, brochures and Internet sources. Their pre-visit DI was confirmed or changed, positively or negatively, based on their actual experiences (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). A first-time visitor to Thailand experienced the change of his DI after the visit and stated, "*Whenever I told anyone I was coming here, they referred to*

the latest movie in America, Hangover II. So, they're like, oh, my gosh, you're going to have a crazy time; but that's definitely not what we'd experienced."

Figure 4.4 Thailand's DI in Different Dimensions



In this study, most respondents expressed that, even though there were a few unexpected events, they were satisfied with their experiences in Thailand and it was worth the trip. Many also expressed their desire to revisit Thailand. Travelers became more familiar with the destination, which may have changed their pre-visit DI, and also influenced their future intentions to revisit (Baloglu, 2001; Milman & Pizam, 1995).

A total of five major themes consisting of 18 subthemes were identified as current attribute-based images while three major themes including 10 subthemes emerged as holistic impressions of Thailand. “*I/We wanted to experience differences*” was repeatedly mentioned by different travelers, especially first-time visitors. First-time visitors based their DI of Thailand on their various activities during their trips. They were inquisitive and had the desire to explore new things, whereas repeat visitors were more selective about their travel experiences (Lau & McKercher, 2004). That helped explain why first-timers had more attribute-based images than those who had visited more than once. Repeat visitors were aware of the destination and its offerings, thus, they revisited with specific desires to pursue certain activities. Repeat visitors tended to seek relaxation, which was also consistent with the findings of a study by Gitelson and Crompton (1984). Repeat visitors to Thailand in this study mostly indicated that they were expecting to relax, spend time with friends and/or family, and enjoy the dining experiences.

Both attribute-based images and holistic impressions of Thailand consisted of positive, neutral and negative features depending on both the visitors’ expectations and experiences. Because first-time visitors had the desire to explore the destination, they were likely to travel to various parts of the country and visit major tourist attractions. They felt that the atmosphere of Thailand was amazing, fun and adventurous. A few of them also had negative impressions if they experienced something unexpected or shocking, such as crowded conditions and traffic jams in a big city, and scams of local people. Alternatively, repeat visitors felt more relaxation and pleasure and had fewer negative impressions than first-time visitors, because they were more familiar with the destination (Rittichainuwat et al., 2001). Therefore, they knew what to expect and how to avoid trouble during their trips. Thus, providing detailed information about Thailand to travelers prior to their arrival would minimize these negative experiences. TAT may provide a suggested itinerary for different groups of travelers based on their expectations and desires. For example, a specific set of suggestions may be developed for those who visit Thailand for relaxation and a different set may be developed for those seeking city and nightlife or adventure.

One of the strongest images of Thailand was its friendly people. The friendly people were mentioned more frequently by repeat visitors than first-time visitors, who were focusing more on attractions and activities. This may indicate that while attractions and activities make a big impression on first-time visitors, the friendliness of Thailand's people is what brings them back. Thailand has been well-known for the name “Land of smiles.” Consequently, participants in this study identified friendliness as one of Thailand’s unique features.

Repeat visitors tend to discover more qualities that were not noticed by those who have made only one visit (Rittichainuwat et al., 2001). Repeat visitors are important in terms of cost-effective market segment as well as sustaining a destination (Oppermann, 1998; 2000). Since friendly people may be a key to attracting repeat visitors, the travel industry leaders and constituents may want to emphasize the importance of guest relations and re-promote the concept of “Thailand: The Land of Smiles” to Thai people.

Unlike hidden qualities, unique features were found more by first-time visitors than repeat visitors in this study. Echtner and Ritchie (1991) suggested that the unique features of a destination could be used to market it. Considering the inquisitive characteristic of first-time visitors, the unique features identified in this study may be used when attracting potential visitors through promotional literature.

Other major unique features of Thailand were its Buddhist and culture-related items, such as the way of life in Thailand and its attractions. There was some conflict in the results showing that a few qualities are unique for some groups but not for others. For example, Bangkok or Pattaya as a “city never sleeps” was compared to Las Vegas and some noted that the “tuk-tuk” is also available in Cambodia. Even though these features share some similarity with other destinations, they are sometimes seen as unique qualities. The differences between Thailand as a “city never sleeps” and Las Vegas are that Thailand has no casinos but night market. “Tuk-tuk” in Thailand are also different from taxis in Cambodia because their functions and features are different. Nevertheless, these differences may appear to people who are more familiar with the destination than those who visited only once (Rittichainuwat et al., 2001). Besides, Qu, Kim, and Im (2011) suggested that only strong unique features affect DI and therefore those features should be used to differentiate the destination and stimulate destination decisions. Thus, some of these features, such as “city never sleeps” and “tuk-tuk” may or may not be used as icons to promote Thailand as a destination to U.S. travelers.

Hidden qualities found in this study consisted of both common and unique features of Thailand. These features were identified by both first-time and repeat visitors. All hidden images were positive and may have significant influences on destination selection, such as “ease of travel for English speakers” and “efficient local transportation system.” Being aware of and promoting these qualities may help attract more conservative travelers. One participant said, *“A lot of people, they’ve never come to Asia. Maybe they’re a little bit apprehensive, like is it going to be too foreign? Maybe no one speaks English or maybe ‘I can’t read any of the signs.’ And I tell people, ‘Start with Thailand. It is the easiest for transition. It’s the most user-friendly.’ [I’m] just impressed by how easy it is and how stress-free.”*

The key attributes identified as important for destination selection included natural attractions, activities, new experiences and accommodation for traveling. It is obvious that for the first-time visitors, attractions and activities were the most important attributes attracting them while repeat visitors were drawn to the Thai culture, people and food. There were also certain groups of travelers who came for very specific reasons, such as scuba diving and biking. These groups were not looking for any other main attributes. Thus, when promoting in scuba diving websites or magazines, TAT may incorporate specific attributes for these groups. Bicycle travelers or cyclist may be another niche market in which TAT is interested and may need more research.

Visitors who traveled alone and with groups had no major differences, except that those who travelled with groups focused on exploring and experiencing novelty more than those who travelled alone. Groups were also more concerned with budget than were individual travelers. Individual travelers mentioned friendliness more frequently than group travelers. Because they travel alone, individual travelers may appreciate friendliness more than group travelers. One of the important travelers’ motivations is to meet new people, but that is frequently difficult to achieve (Crompton, 1979). “Friendliness” may not be the main reason for visiting Thailand; however, this feature possibly supports and influences destination decisions. As one of the participants mentioned, *“I think Thai people are more friendly towards foreigners especially Americans and I’m American and so, that makes things a lot easier.”* With the friendliness feature of Thailand, travelers are more likely to achieve their desires of meeting new people. TAT may also promote social interaction between visitors and local people. Thailand's low cost of living should also be presented by comparing what U.S. travelers normally spend money on

with how much they can experience and explore in Thailand. For example, for the same amount of money a person spends on a luxury meal in New York, he/she could go to the beach, take an elephant ride, stay at a nice hotel, have relaxing massage, and go shopping in Thailand.

Although the majority of respondents reported positive images of Thailand, a few participants experienced scams and robbery. Many people visited Thailand without encountering any problems, but when it happened, it ruined the reputation of Thailand. There was an article, “*Thailand Urged to Tackle Dark Side of Land of Smiles*,” that disclosed information about safety issues in Thailand (Rook, 2013).

Nowadays, information travels very fast though travelers tend to believe in their own perceptions of the destination if they have prior knowledge and experience in the area, regardless of whether that region is actually safe or risky (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998). However, safety issues may become Thailand’s DI for potential visitors. TAT needs to investigate ways to maintain travel safety in Thailand.

Implication for Researchers

This study exemplifies the need for employing qualitative methodology when studying DI (whether it is a pure qualitative study or uses mixed-methods), because images are complex and dynamic. The findings of this study support the belief that examining only pre-determined features may not result in a complete picture of DI. The findings suggest that DI in nature consists of multiple positive, neutral and negative features. Researchers should consider including positive, neutral and negative features and qualities when conducting a study to capture a more realistic perception of a destination. Hidden qualities may also exist and need to be considered because they may have a significant influence on destination selection.

This study indicates that when studying DI, country of origin may affect travelers’ perceptions of a destination. In addition, DI may change over a period of time. This study also suggests that interpretation of DI using the three dimensions of DI’s components helps to understand the complexity of DI, and supports the study by Echtner and Ritchie (1991; 1993) on DI’s structures.

Implication for Practitioners

This study also offers destination marketers some marketing research ideas. The results suggest that different groups of travelers hold different DIs. Tourism organizations may need to

look into destination information available from various sources and evaluate how accurate the information is. Consequently, tourism organizations should try to have some control over these information and present meaningful destination features and qualities to their target(s). Tourism authorities should seek to identify all dimensions of DI for a location and categorize them according to their importance and performances. These useful marketing information will help the tourism organizations in developing effective strategies for capturing desired market(s). These also will provide guidance for improving destination features to stay competitive.

This study provided meaningful information for TAT's marketing efforts. For U.S. travelers, more detailed information about Thailand needs to be provided, including suggested choices of itineraries for travelers with different travel purposes. Unique features, such as cultural-related items and the concept of "Land of Smiles," should still be used to market the destination for U.S. travelers. Furthermore, promoting the images of travel conveniences such as effective local transportation and ease of travel for English speakers will possibly attract more first-time travelers looking for learning experiences. For attracting repeat-visitors, TAT needs to work with people, especially those involved in the tourism industry, to maintain the great qualities of Thailand (such as friendliness), and to focus on solving the travel safety issues. TAT may also create promotional materials to encourage travelers to review their trips to Thailand on different social media websites and/or blogs, which will help promote Thailand as a destination.

Thailand's tourism industry is well-developed and attracts numerous travelers to the country. There are many great features of Thailand as a destination that TAT and the Thai people need to be aware of and maintain in order to sustain its DI.

Conclusion

Thailand is a very diverse destination and travelers visit for different reasons. The most important and obvious features of Thailand found in this study were friendly people, beaches/islands, and amazing beauty. The features, "ease of travel for English speakers" and "opportunity for learning experiences" as hidden qualities of Thailand were discovered in this study. Travelers found that Buddhism-related attributes and the friendliness of Thailand were distinct from other destinations; these features were considered important for destination decision. The other important attributes that influenced destination selection were "beaches and islands", especially for first-time visitors. "Beaches and islands" are considered common

features. Many travelers visited Thailand for this features; however, they may not return to experience the same thing, unless there were some unique quality attached to it. Therefore, TAT may need to consider enhancing the quality of beaches/islands or creating unique selling points for these features. The implications of this study illustrate what needs to be considered when studying DI, and which important attributes should be included in future promotions. They also imply that maintaining the qualities and highlighting the uniqueness of the destinations are very important for successful tourism for Thailand.

This study provided strengths of richness in data collected from qualitative interviews. Because of the complexity of DI, qualitative interviews provided visitors with the opportunity to identify Thailand's DI with rich content and unique details in their own words. The large sample size of this study also presented broad ideas from a variety of travelers. The last question of the interview, asking travelers to provide six words to summarize their trip, was used as a filter to extract the most obvious features of Thailand from the visitors. The concept of the question was derived from Six-Word Memoir®, which is an idea of how limited words become more powerful. This technique helped to sum up the large amount of information in each interview. The strength of this technique was that researchers may identify the strongest DI of Thailand for each traveler based on this information.

The limitations of this study are that the findings apply only to a specific market (i.e., U.S. travelers) and a destination (i.e., Thailand). The duration of each interview was limited due to the characteristics of the airport. So, in some cases, the interviews may not have captured sufficient details of travelers' sentiments. However, this study focused on capturing broad ideas about Thailand's DI from a larger number of visitors. Therefore, future research may employ in-depth interviews to capture more details regarding individual reasoning (i.e., preferences, expectations and experiences) behind Thailand's DI.

References

- Baloglu, S. (2001). Image variations of Turkey by familiarity index: Informational and experiential dimensions. *Tourism Management, 22*, 127-133. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(00)00049-2
- Baloglu, S., & McCleary, K. W. (1999a). A model of destination image formation. *Annals of Tourism Research, 26*, 868-897. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(99)00030-4
- Beerli, A., & Martin, J. D. (2004). Factors influencing destination image. *Annals of Tourism Research, 31*, 657-681. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2004.01.010
- Crompton, J. L. (1979). An assessment of the image of Mexico as a vacation destination and the influence of geographical location upon that image. *Journal of Travel Research, 17*(4), 18-23. doi:10.1177/004728757901700404
- Department of Tourism. (2010). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php?id=5>
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1991). The meaning and measurement of destination image. *Journal of Tourism Studies, 2*(2), 2-12.
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1993). The measurement of destination image: An empirical assessment. *Journal of Travel Research, 31*(4), 3-13.
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (2003). The meaning and measurement of destination image. *Journal of Tourism Studies, 14*, 37-48.
- Fakeye, P. C., & Crompton, J. L. (1991). Image differences between prospective, first-time, and repeat visitors to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. *Journal of Travel Research, 30*(2), 10-16. doi:10.1177/004728759103000202
- FutureBrand. (2012). *FutureBrand 2011 – 2012 country brand index*. Retrieved from http://www.futurebrand.com/images/uploads/studies/cbi/2011-2012_FutureBrand_CBI_ENG.pdf
- Gartner, W. C. (1994). Image formation process. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 2*, 191-216. doi:10.1300/J073v02n02_12
- Gartner, W. C., & Hunt, J. D. (1987). An Analysis of State Image Change Over a Twelve-Year Period (1971-1983). *Journal of Travel Research, 26*(2), 15-19. doi:10.1177/004728758702600204
- Gitelson, R. J., & Crompton, J. L. (1984). Insights into the repeat vacation phenomenon. *Annals of Tourism Research, 11*, 199-217. doi:10.1016/0160-7383(84)90070-7

- Goodrich, J. N. (1978). The relationship between preferences for and perceptions of vacation destinations: Application of a choice model. *Journal of Travel Research*, 17(2), 8-13. doi:10.1177/004728757801700202
- Gunn, C. A. (1988). *Vacationscape: Designing tourist regions* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Henkel, R., Henkel, P., Agrusa, W., Agrusa, J., & Tanner, J. (2006). Thailand as a tourist destination: Perceptions of international visitors and Thai residents. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 11, 269-287. doi:10.1080/10941660600753299
- Jenkins, O. H. (1999). Understanding and measuring tourist destination images. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 1, 1-15.
- Lau, A. L., & McKercher, B. (2004). Exploration versus acquisition: A comparison of first-time and repeat visitors. *Journal of Travel Research*, 42, 279-285. doi:10.1177/0047287503257502
- Law, M., Stewart, D., Letts, L., Pollock, N., Bosch, J., & Westmorland, M. (1998). *Critical review form - qualitative studies*. Ontario, Canada: McMaster University Occupational Therapy Evidence-Based Practice Research Group.
- Lertputtarak, S. (2012). The relationship between destination image, food image, and revisiting Pattaya, Thailand. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 7(5), 111-122.
- Mayo, E. J. (1973). *Regional images and regional travel behaviour*. The travel research association 4th annual conference, Sun Valley, ID.
- Milman, A., & Pizam, A. (1995). The role of awareness and familiarity with a destination: The central Florida case. *Journal of Travel research*, 33(3), 21-27. doi:10.1177/004728759503300304
- Oppermann, M. (1998). Destination threshold potential and the law of repeat visitation. *Journal of Travel Research*, 37, 131-137. doi:10.1177/004728759803700204
- Oppermann, M. (2000). Tourism destination loyalty. *Journal of travel research*, 39, 78-84. doi:10.1177/004728750003900110
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Pike, S. (2002). Destination image analysis-a review of 142 papers from 1973 to 2000. *Tourism Management*, 23, 541-549. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(02)00005-5
- Qu, H., Kim, L. H., & Im, H. H. (2011). A model of destination branding: Integrating the concepts of the branding and destination image. *Tourism Management*, 32, 465-476.

- Rittichainuwat, B., Qu, H., & Brown, T. (2001). Thailand's international travel image: Mostly favorable. *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 42, 82-95.
doi:10.1016/S0010-8804(01)80020-3
- Rook, D. (2013). Thailand urged to tackle dark side of Land of Smiles. *Fox News.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/07/19/thailand-urged-to-tackle-dark-side-land-smiles/>
- Sönmez, S. F., & Graefe, A. R. (1998). Determining future travel behavior from past travel experience and perceptions of risk and safety. *Journal of Travel Research*, 37, 171-177.
doi:10.1177/004728759803700209
- Stepchenkova, S., & Mills, J. E. (2010). Destination image: A meta-analysis of 2000–2007 research. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 19, 575-609.
doi:10.1080/19368623.2010.493071
- Tapachai, N., & Waryszak, R. (2000). An examination of the role of beneficial image in tourist destination selection. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39, 37-44.
doi:10.1177/004728750003900105
- Tourism Authority of Thailand. (2013). *About Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://www.tourismthailand.org>
- World Tourism Organization. (2013). *World tourism barometer*. Retrieved from <http://mkt.unwto.org/en/barometer>
- World Travel & Tourism Council. (2013). Travel & tourism economic impact 2013: Thailand. Retrieved from http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/thailand2013.pdf

Chapter 5 - “Thailand” for U.S. Travelers: Comparison of Visitors, Virtual Visitors and Non-visitors

Abstract

Thailand is one of the world’s most famous tourist destinations. However, it has not yet been successful in capturing and sustaining the U.S. travel market. Destination image (DI) is a key factor that affects destination selections and behaviors, but there has been limited research exploring U.S. travelers’ DIs of Thailand. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to measure U.S. travelers’ DIs of Thailand, and identify important attributes for U.S. travelers in terms of destination decision-making using quantitative and qualitative techniques. To access general perceptions of Thailand’s DI among U.S. travelers, an online survey was conducted with 522 international travelers, including non-visitors (n=173), virtual-visitors (n=175) and visitors (n=174) to Thailand. Descriptive statistics, an ANOVA, and factor analyses were conducted. Of the five factors that emerged as DIs of Thailand, cultural attributes and local experiences most represented Thailand’s overall DI; although these DIs were different among different types of visitors. An Importance-Performance Analysis illustrated Thailand’s destination attributes and their importance in destination selection. For U.S. travelers, the travel environment was considered to be Thailand’s weakness, requiring immediate attention, while recreational attractions and cultural experiences represented Thailand’s strengths. Thailand tourism organizations may use these findings for future marketing efforts toward the U.S. travel market.

Words: 202

Keywords: Destination Image • Destination Marketing • Thailand • Tourism • U.S. travelers • Mixed Methods

Introduction

Thailand is one of the world's most popular tourism destinations, and has been recognized for its stunning natural scenery, rich culture, authentic and delicious food, modern capital city, health and wellness, friendly people, and good value for the money (FutureBrand, 2012; Medical Tourism Corporation, 2012; Tourism Authority of Thailand [TAT], 2013).

Thailand's tourism industry directly contributed to 7.3 % of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2012 (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2013). Out of 204 million tourists visiting Asia and the Pacific regions in 2010, Thailand was ranked fourth, drawing about 15.84 million international visitors (World Tourism Organization [WTO], 2011). The Global Destination Cities Index announced Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand, as the most visited city in the world by international tourists, making it the first Asian country in this index since it was launched (Hedrick-Wong & Choog, 2013). In 2013, the expected number of arrivals for Bangkok alone was 15.98 million (Hedrick-Wong & Choog) and 21.8 million for Thailand as a whole (WTTC). The tourism industry of Thailand created over 2 million jobs within the industry, and almost 5 million beyond the industry as travel and tourism-related jobs. Although a large number of travelers have visited Thailand within the past few years, its tourism industry contributes to a smaller portion of the GDP, and generates much less money, than other service industries or the manufacturing industry (Economy Watch Content, 2010).

Recently, several tourism experts have suggested that Thailand should try to capture markets that rank at the top, in terms of tourism expenditures, to increase the income per visitor and total revenue (Pongsirirushakul & Naewmalee, 2003; "Record growth in," 2013; Ruggia, 2012; "Thai tourism arrivals," 2013). The WTO (2013) reported that the world's greatest top source market by international tourism expenditure in 2012 was China, followed by Germany, the U.S., the U.K., and the Russian Federation. According to the Department of Tourism (2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013), among these five countries, only the number of travelers from the U.S. were inconsistent in growth rates, while the other markets showed consistency in their growth rates. The U.S. may need to be one of the first priorities for Thailand's destination marketers in their marketing efforts, and for effective marketing, there must be a sufficient understanding of this market segment. Based on information, effective strategies are needed for the successful promotion and marketing of Thailand's tourism. More specifically, the

perceptions and preferences of this particular segment should be explored (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008).

Destination Image (DI) plays one of the most significant roles in destination selection and travel decision-making processes, and influences travel behaviors (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Goodrich, 1978; Mayo, 1973). Travelers increase their motivation and choose their destinations based on image and attractiveness (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Dann, 1981; Yuksel & Bilim, 2009). DI consists of many different dimensions: attribute-based images vs. holistic impressions, functional (tangible features) vs. psychological (intangible features) characteristics, and common vs. unique features (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993). When attempting to assess the image of a destination, it is important to understand and identify these dimensions.

Martilla and James (1977) suggested that before developing a marketing strategy for any product or service, marketers should know answers to the following two questions: (a) “How important is this feature to the users?” and (b) “How well did the (product/service) perform?” (p. 77). Thus, to provide meaningful information to Thailand destination marketers, researchers should not only identify the DIs of Thailand among U.S. travelers, but also assess the importance of the destination attributes to U.S. travelers when selecting a destination.

For this, Martilla and James (1977) introduced a useful technique for evaluating the importance and performance of products/services used in marketing strategy development, called “Importance-Performance Analysis” (IPA). This technique has been used by marketers to understand the gaps between consumer expectations and their satisfaction with products/services (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012). The information acquired from an IPA is meaningful to the marketers when developing strategies for a target market (Matzler, Bailom, Hinterhuber, Renzl, & Pichler, 2004). Although DI development is specific to the target market and the destination of interest, there has been a lack of research assessing U.S. travelers’ DIs of Thailand; therefore, research assessing this may be required for effective marketing strategies, and the use of an IPA may provide helpful information regarding current performance. The guiding purpose of the current study was to measure U.S. travelers’ DIs of Thailand, and to identify important attributes for U.S. travelers in terms of destination decision-making.

Literature Review

The concept of DI has been adopted for use in tourism studies for several decades, and in a variety of disciplines, including social and environmental psychology, marketing, and consumer behavior. DI is frequently defined as travelers' general perceptions about a place as a destination, including objective knowledge, prejudice, imagination, ideas, impressions, and beliefs (Crompton, 1979; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993, 2003). Topics related to DI have gained much attention, from both academic researchers and tourism industry practitioners, because DI has played a significant role in tourism marketing and management (Chon, 1991). The deeper understanding of DI has significantly contributed to a greater knowledge in several tourism-related areas, such as tourist destination decision-making and destination selection behaviors (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Goodrich, 1978; Mayo & Jarvis, 1981).

Previous studies have found that DI has a significant influence on pre-purchase destination selection, travel-related decisions, travel behavioral intention, trip-purchasing behavior, and the level of satisfaction with a destination (Chon, 1990; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Henkel, Henkel, Agrusa, Agrusa, & Tanner, 2006; Mayo, 1973; Rittichainuwat, Qu, & Brown, 2001). DI formation and changes in DI during different traveling stages help explain DIs and travelers' satisfaction with their trips (Chon, 1989). Visitors who hold positive DIs have favorable on-site experiences that lead to higher satisfaction levels and positive behavioral intentions to revisit the destination (Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2005). DI is viewed as another approach to access a competitive position as a destination, and to create positioning strategies (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Haahti, 1986; Pike & Ryan, 2004).

Many studies have confirmed that in the destination selection process, potential travelers' DIs, including destination strengths and weaknesses, are essential factors that can ultimately affect the destination's viability (Baloglu, 2000; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a, 1999b; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Goodrich, 1978; Hunt, 1975). These findings have influenced destination marketers to look closely into DI factors that can help develop successful marketing strategies. Therefore, DI is considered to be a key component in successful destination marketing.

DI Formation

DI formation refers to a construct in which a traveler selects or receives information from different sources and converts it into a mental picture of a destination (Gartner, 1994; Gunn, 1972, 1988, 1997). Balogu and McCleary (1999b) and Beerli and Martin (2004) found that DI is formed by two main factors, including stimulus factors (external factors) and traveler's characteristics (internal factors). Stimulus factors can be described as travelers' impressions of selected information received from various sources (Balogu & McCleary).

These information sources include organic (opinions of others), autonomous (mass media and non-commercial information), induced (promotional literature), and modified induced sources (personal experiences) (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Gartner, 1994; Jenkins, 1999; Phelps, 1986). Even though travelers may not have visited the destination, they hold some form of DI (Mayo, 1973). The information acquired before the actual visit forms the DI through secondary images as opposed to primary images formed through actual experience (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Phelps).

Traveler's characteristics include socio-demographic (e.g., age, gender, and ethnicity/race) and psychological (e.g., personal preferences, interests, and personality) characteristics (Dann, 1996; Gartner, 1994). Um and Crompton (1990) explained that, while external factors affect the formation of DI, internal factors of travelers create the nature of personal beliefs, depending on an individual's characteristics. Thus, travelers build their own DIs based on external stimuli projected by their unique characteristics (Gartner, 1994).

Echtner and Ritchie (2003) suggested that DI formation can be illustrated by Gunn's (1972) model of the seven phases of travel experience. Each source of information influences DI formation at a different stage of traveling. Gunn's model of the seven phases of travel experience includes:

- Stage 1: "Accumulation" of mental images about vacation experiences,
- Stage 2: "Modification" of those images by further information,
- Stage 3: "Decision" to take a vacation trip,
- Stage 4: "Travel" to the destination,
- Stage 5: "Participation" at the destination,
- Stage 6: "Return" travel to the destination,

Stage 7: “New accumulation” by modification of images based on the vacation experience (p. 120).

In this model, the DI is initially formed at stages 1 and 2, or at stage 5 (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). For first-time visitors, travel decisions are based on limited information from organic, autonomous, and induced sources. The actual experience at the destination is the source of information that modifies or changes DIs during stages 5 and 7, or to be more realistic, makes more complex and differentiated than the DIs from earlier stages (Echtner & Ritchie; Gunn, 1972; Jenkins, 1999; Pearce, 1982; Phelps, 1986). If the actual experience at the destination is better than or equal to the pre-visit DI, the DI will be improved (Chon, 1990). Repeat visitors usually decide to revisit the destination based on a more favorable, modified DI. In addition, travelers who hold both positive and negative modified DIs may become organic sources, or provide word of mouth (WOM) recommendations for other potential visitors (Westbrook, 1987). In each stage of the travel experience, different information agent(s) play different and significant roles in DI development. It is therefore important for destination marketers and managers to promote favorable DIs while developing or improving the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b).

Another important factor that influences a traveler’s DI development is the degree of familiarity with a destination, determined by different amounts of previous knowledge and/or experiences with that destination (Baloglu, 2001; Yilmaz, Yilmaz, Icigen, Ekin, & Utku, 2009). Milman and Pizam (1995) found that “familiarity with the destination (i.e., previous visitation) had a significant impact on future intentions and therefore, may forward the consumer into a more advanced stage in the purchasing decision process (i.e., repeat visitation)” (p. 26). Baloglu (2001) suggested that familiarity with a destination may be acquired from two different classes of experience, including indirect and direct experiences. Indirect experiences are when travelers receive information about the destination, while direct tourism experiences are acquired from the actual visit to the destination. Different levels of familiarity with the destination classify the types of tourists as non-visitors and visitors.

Non-visitors

Travelers who hold autonomous images are usually familiar with a destination only in terms of general knowledge. This group of travelers has no actual experience with a destination. Milman and Pizam (1995) found that there were no significant differences between the DIs of

travelers who were only aware of a destination, with no direct experience, and of those who were not aware of the destination at all. This may be explained by the fact that the autonomous image, whether it is positive or negative, is not controlled by the destination. Thus, this non-visitor group may not have any interest in or likelihood of visiting the destination.

On the other hand, travelers who hold induced images may be more familiar with a destination due to their perception of the destination represented through promotional material and destination literature. MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997, 2000) suggested that before an actual visit, marketing material, including verbal and visual messages (especially from the destination), are a determinant of a traveler's DI. This group of travelers also includes non-visitors, but they may have an interest and/or desire to visit the destination due to the persuasive nature of the induced information they received. Considering the level of today's technology and the Internet, travelers with interests or desires to travel to a destination would naturally seek out more information, and this group of travelers develop DIs based on different sources of information (Choi, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007; Frías, Rodriguez, & Castañeda, 2008). Those who virtually visit a particular destination may become more familiar with it than those who only have general knowledge of, and/or have no interest in, the destination. Because the destination usually has control over the commercial sources of information, marketers tend to promote the image they believe is appealing and important to potential travelers (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). Fakeye and Crompton also contended that sometimes, the non-visitors who seek out information about the destination held a more positive image of the destination, than those who have actual experience of the destination, due to the influences of marketing materials. As a result, the DIs may differ between these two groups of non-visitors. These two groups can be identified as non-visitors and virtual visitors.

Visitors

Fakeye and Crompton (1991) found that prospective and actual visitors hold different DIs. Non-visitors and visitors may hold different DIs based on the gaps between travelers' expectations and actual experiences at their destinations (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). The actual experience allows travelers to form realistic images about, and improve their familiarity with, the destination. Travelers' actual experiences may alter their DIs by comparing them to their expectations (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b). Ahmed (1991), Chon (1987), and Dann (1996) reported that post-visitation DIs were usually found to be more positive

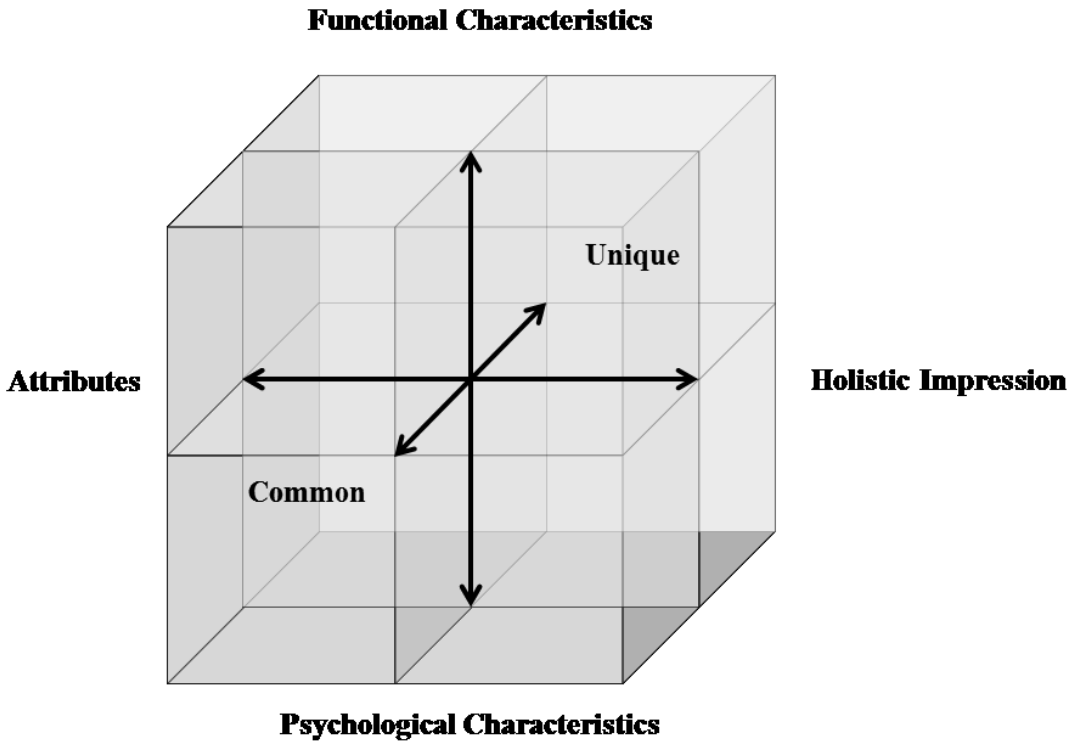
than pre-visitation DIs. Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) also added that DIs held by first-time and repeat visitors may differ in certain aspects, as “repeat travelers become aware of hidden qualities, which may not be immediately obvious to first-time travelers” (p. 90). Thus, the more often travelers visit a destination, the more familiar they become with it.

MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997, 2000) stated that the less familiar travelers’ DIs were formed with a more cognitive image, with the exclusion of emotional attachments, while the more familiar travelers’ DIs were formed based more on an affective image than only cognitive evaluation. Echtner and Ritchie (2003) and Baloglu and McCleary (1999b) contended that it would be useful to measure strengths, weaknesses, accuracies, and inaccuracies of the existing DIs, as well as information sources among visitors/non-visitors with different degrees of familiarity, when designing marketing strategies. Studying different types of visitors and their DIs may help destination marketers to evaluate the current performances of their marketing strategies, as well as provide guidance for future marketing efforts (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008).

DI Components

In 1991, Echtner and Ritchie applied components of product image (MacInnis & Price, 1987) to develop DI components. Additionally, as suggested by Dichter (1985), viewing an “image” typically involves the subject’s traits or qualities, as well as its overall impression. Echtner and Ritchie proposed that DI comprises the two major components of attributes and holistic images. They also recommended that DI components can be illustrated by using three dimensions, with a different continuum on each axis. The three axes include continuums of (1) attribute vs. holistic image; (2) functional or tangible features vs. psychological characteristics or intangible features; and (3) common vs. unique characteristics, as shown in Figure 5.1 (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993, 2003).

Figure 5.1 The Components of DI in 3 Dimensions



Both attribute-based images and holistic impressions contain functional and psychological characteristics. The functional attributes capture characteristics of DI that are observable and measurable (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993). Examples of functional attributes include value for money, climate of a destination, and an efficient local transportation system. The functional holistic images focus on physical characteristics and imagery, such as one's mental picture of a destination (Echtner & Ritchie). For instance, the functional holistic images may include sun, sand, or mountains.

The psychological characteristics are more difficult to measure (Jenkins, 1999). For example, the psychological attributes, such as friendliness, are easier to identify than the psychological holistic images, which are the general feelings or atmosphere of a destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993). Many studies have focused more on functional characteristics of DI, while fewer researchers have included psychological holistic images in their studies, because they are more difficult to assess and measure (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Jenkins, 1999; Pike, 2002; Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010).

Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993, 2003) introduced the third dimension of common vs. unique features as components of DI, as shown in Figure 2.1. Common images focus on shared traits or general qualities for destinations (Echtner & Ritchie). These common features can be compared among different destinations. Some examples of common features are the friendliness of people, safety of the destination, climate, and cost of travel. The unique dimension measures special characteristics, icons, or events of a destination (Echtner & Ritchie; Jenkins, 1999). For example, when speaking about France, travelers may have an image of the Eiffel Tower, while people often think of kangaroos, koalas, or the Sydney Opera House when speaking about Australia. Famous and special events or festivals, such as the Venice Carnival in Italy, Songkran Festival in Thailand, or San Fermin (Pamplona Bull Run) in Spain, can also be identified as destination uniqueness that distinguishes one destination from others. Researchers often overlook this dimension, despite the fact that the uniqueness of a destination is a very important factor in attracting travelers. Echtner and Ritchie have suggested that the unique aspects of a destination must also be taken into consideration when identifying DIs.

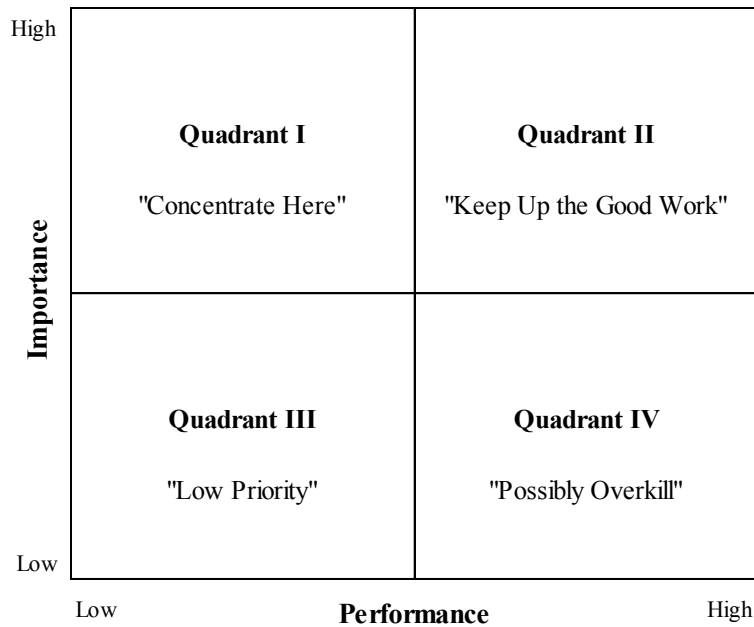
Importance-Performance Analysis

Martilla and James (1977) first introduced the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) as an evaluation technique for consumer perceptions of a product or service, based on both the importance and performance of an attribute. These combined measurements offer the ability to effectively identify the competitive position of a product/service, and provide useful insights for marketing strategy development (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012; Martilla & James; Matzler et al., 2004). IPA has been established as a simple and effective tool used to determine improvement priorities of a product/service (Deng, 2007; O'Neill & Palmer, 2004; Slack, 1994). It suggests resource allocation (Chu & Choi, 2000; Deng, 2007; Joppe, Martin, & Waalen, 2001; Matzler et al.; Matzler, Sauerwein, & Heischmidt, 2003) and provides managerial recommendations for strategic planning, to increase competitiveness and/or customer satisfaction (Hollenhorst, Olson, & Fortney, 1992; Martilla & James; Oh, 2001).

Attribute importance refers to perceived worth/value of traits or features when purchasing a product/service, while attribute performance refers to the perceived functioning of those qualities when consuming the product/service (Martilla & James, 1977). The original Martilla and James' IPA approach measured attribute importance and performance based on a Likert

scale. Martilla and James also recommended that the results be presented in an Importance-Performance Matrix, as shown in Figure 5.2 (Martilla & James, p. 78).

Figure 5.2 Importance-Performance Matrix (IP Matrix) (Martilla & James, 1977)



The means of performance and importance are used as center points to divide the matrix into four quadrants, in which each quadrant has a different interpretation (Martilla & James, 1977):

- **Quadrant I “Concentrate Here”**. Attributes falling in this quadrant are perceived to be very important, while the performance levels of these attributes are relatively low (Martilla & James, 1977). This quadrant indicates weaknesses of the product/service, which require immediate attention for improvement, in order to increase its competitiveness (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012).
- **Quadrant II “Keep Up the Good Work”**. Attributes falling in this quadrant are perceived to be very important and have high performance, representing the success of the product/service in meeting consumers’ expectations (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012). This quadrant indicates the strengths of the product/service that should be consistently maintained in order to stay competitive (Martilla & James, 1977).

- **Quadrant III “Low Priority”**. Attributes falling in this quadrant are perceived to have low importance and low performance (Martilla & James, 1977). These attributes are not a threat to competitiveness, because of their low importance (Martilla & James). These may represent minor weaknesses of the product/service about which the product/service manager should not be overly concerned (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012). To allocate extra resources and efforts to improve these attributes is likely unnecessary (Azzopardi & Nash).
- **Quadrant IV “Possible Overkill”**. Attributes falling in this quadrant are perceived to have high performance but low importance (Martilla & James, 1977). These attributes represent minor competitiveness because of their low importance (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012). These may indicate the ineffective and inefficient allocation of resources and efforts (Martilla & James).

The IPA has been adopted for use in a variety of research fields, including tourism (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012; Oh, 2001), and several researchers have applied the IPA with destination studies for various purposes (Deng, 2007; Enright & Newton, 2004; Murdy & Pike, 2012; O’Leary & Deegan, 2005; Pike, 2002; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Song, An, & Zheng, 2006; Sörensson & Friedrichs, 2013; Zhang, Luo, Xu, & Zhou, 2009; Zhenfang, Xiang, & Yuxuan, 2002). The key findings from these studies offered rich marketing information, such as assessing DIs, identifying competitive positioning of destinations, and evaluating traveler satisfaction after visits. Their findings were based on the analyses of each destination’s attribute importance, and the current DIs as the destination performances.

Research on Thailand’s DI

Researchers have conducted studies related to Thailand’s DI (Henkel et al., 2006; Lertputtarak, 2012; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000) targeting different groups of travelers, and including various destination attributes of Thailand. Tapachai and Waryszak (2000) conducted a research study in Australia by using a convenience sample and focusing on non-visitors of Thailand and the United States. This study investigated the DIs formed by secondary sources of information but not actual experiences. Therefore, the results of their study can only suggest pre-visit DIs of Thailand. In contrast, Rittichainuwat et al. focused

on actual visitors, in which the majority of respondents were from Asian countries. The participants of this study were approached during their trip in Thailand. Later, in 2006, Henkel et al. compared and contrasted Thai residents, international visitors, and non-visitors in their study, where about 70% of the participants who were international travelers in their study had never visited Thailand before. However, they did not consider the degree of familiarity of those non-visitors with Thailand. Unlike other research conducted regarding Thailand's DI, Lertputtarak (2012) focused on Pattaya, an area in Thailand, as a destination. The majority of participants in her study were Asian travelers, chosen by using a convenience sampling method. Most of these studies focused heavily on attribute-based images, while holistic impressions were excluded.

Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) suggested that perceptions of DI may vary, depending on the travelers' country of residence. Henkel et al. (2006) supported this claim by suggesting that international travelers and Thai residents hold several different DIs of Thailand. Even though travelers from different regions may hold different DIs, most research conducted regarding DIs showed that Thailand's were mostly favorable (Henkel et al., 2006; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). These studies also suggested that favorable images increase the intention to visit/revisit. More than 75% of international travelers who have visited Thailand indicate that they are likely to revisit this destination (Rittichainuwat et al., 2001).

These studies reported various DIs which may not be generalized to apply to international Western travelers because, as addressed earlier, the majority of the respondents of these studies were from Asia (Lertputtarak, 2012; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001). In addition, Henkel et al. (2006) did not identify visitors and non-visitors in their research, and Tapachai and Waryszak (2000) focused only on non-visitors using convenience samples in Australia. Lertputtarak stated that her findings were limited to only Pattaya, and not the whole of Thailand.

DI is a key factor for developing an effective marketing strategy to increase the number of visitors, and for sustaining the tourism industry of a destination. DI formation is based on external and internal factors (Balogu & McCleary, 1999b; Beerli & Martin, 2004), and each information agent influences the development of the DI at a different stage of the travel experience, creating various degrees of familiarity with a destination for travelers. Thus, a traveler's DI depends on different degrees of familiarity. Travelers may be classified into multiple groups, including visitors and non-visitors. Non-visitors may further be defined as virtual visitors and non-visitors based on their experience of seeking out available information

about the destination. Therefore, these three groups (i.e., visitors, virtual visitors, and non-visitors) may have varying familiarity with the destination and, therefore, hold different DIs.

The DI consists of attribute-based and holistic images, including functional and psychological characteristics, and common and unique features (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993, 2003). While some features are easy to measure, others are difficult to assess using the quantitative surveys. Hidden and unique features and images are especially hard to identify and measure using quantitative research methods, as researchers' preconceived ideas influence the outcomes (Echtner & Ritchie). Therefore, previous researchers (Echtner & Ritchie) recommend a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to identify a more complete DI. By incorporating a qualitative technique, researchers' limited views will not affect exploring the DIs of Thailand. In addition, merely identifying the DI will not provide as meaningful information. A combination of analyses in importance and performance, using the IPA, is required to offer valuable insights for marketing strategy development.

Therefore, the research questions of this study were:

RQ1. What are U.S. travelers' attribute-based images and holistic impressions of Thailand as a destination?

RQ2. What unique features do the U.S. travelers associate with Thailand?

RQ3. Are there any differences in DIs among different types of U.S. visitors?

RQ4. What are the important destination attributes of Thailand in terms of destination selection?

RQ5. What are the positions of Thailand's destination attributes regarding their importance for U.S. travelers?

Methodology

To assess the general perceptions of Thailand as a destination, this study used a quantitative method with a qualitative approach. The initial survey instrument was developed based on specific research questions of this study, and a literature review (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 2003; Henkel et al., 2006; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001). Prior to this research, an exploratory study was conducted to acquire current Thailand DIs, including:

- Content analyses on autonomous, organic and induced information.
 - E-Brochure and Travel Manual 2012-2013 (TAT, 2012)

- Online reviews on Thailand (www.tripadvisor.com)
- Three movies about traveling to Thailand released within the past decade: “The Beach” (2000), “Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason” (2004), and “The Hangover Part II” (2011)
- Content analyses on qualitative interviews from 56 visitors of Thailand.

This information was also used to create the initial questionnaire, which helped pre-identify the attribute-based images and unique features of Thailand.

Measurement

Both open-ended and closed-ended questions were used to capture the desired information (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). The instruments consisted of (a) quantitative questions that measure pre-identified functional and psychological attribute components of Thailand’s DI (TH, n=36), their importance regarding destination selection (IM, n=36), their influences on destination selection (IF, n=36), travel experience, and travel interest, as well as the participants’ demographic information. Five-point Likert-type scales were used for questions regarding destination attributes and importance measures (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012; Martilla and James, 1977); (b) qualitative measurements that ask for the functional and psychological holistic impression; and (c) quantitative measurements with allowance for text entry that ask for unique features of Thailand’s DI.

Screening questions, such as “Are you a citizen of the United States?”, “Are you 18 years or older?”, and “Have you traveled outside of North America (i.e., United States, Canada, and Mexico)?” were asked to ensure that the sample fit the purpose of this research. Consequently, two filtering questions asking for the best description of the respondents’ experience/knowledge about Thailand were used to divide the participants into three groups: visitors, virtual-visitors, and non-visitors.

The initial questionnaire was reviewed by tourism hospitality experts in Hospitality and Tourism Management programs in several universities in the U.S. and Thailand in order to review the questionnaire (n=5). They were asked to provide feedback on question wording, necessity and usefulness of the questions, clarification of the instructions, and the survey’s ease of administration. Questions and answer choices were revised based on the results from the expert review.

Pilot Study

The Pilot Study was conducted with U.S. international travelers in a Midwest city and surrounding areas (n=30), asking for their participation in the survey to provide feedback about the suitability and the clarity of the directions. The survey instrument was revised based on the results of the pilot test. In addition, the results of the pilot test showed that when taking surveys, participants may not always read and follow instructions. Oppenheimer, Meyvis, and Davidenkothe (2009) suggested that an Instructional Manipulation Check (IMC) can help to detect participants who do not read and/or follow instructions, and which could help to increase the reliability of the dataset (Oppenheimer et al., 2009). Thus, an IMC question was added to the survey. The completed survey instrument is found in Appendix B.

Sampling Procedures

The target population of this study was U.S. international travelers from across the country, who have traveled outside of North America and are 18 years of age and older. The quota was deliberately set at a similar number for each type of visitors. This study used an online research company (<http://www.e-rewards.com>) to distribute the questionnaire and collect data. The total number of international travelers from the U.S. who were included in their database was 522,757 individuals.

Data Collection

Data were collected through an online research company (<http://www.e-rewards.com>), using a link to a questionnaire created using Qualtrics (Qualtrics Survey Software). The online research company then distributed the questionnaires to a randomly selected sample population, international travelers, via emails. The online research company used the screening questions, whether they travel internationally or not, to identify potential respondents and direct them to the survey link.

The participants were informed that (1) their identities and individual responses would not be revealed, and each participant would remain completely anonymous; (2) the results of the study would be presented only in a summary form; and (3) they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants who did not agree with the informed consent were terminated from the survey. Filtering questions were used to sort participants into different groups (i.e., non-visitors, virtual visitors, and visitors). The goal number of participants for the

survey was 500, and a quota was deliberately set at a similar number for each group (approximately 170 per group). The online survey company was instructed to stop the survey when the quota was met for each group. An IMC question was located in the IM (Importance) and IF (Influence) sections at a point where it was most likely for the participants to skip reading. Participants who did not select both options as instructed were terminated from the survey. Reminder e-mails were sent by the online research company to increase number of respondents (Dillman, 2011). The online research company stopped accepting participants when the number of respondents reached 522, 7 days after the initial launching of the survey.

Data Analysis

The analyses included four major components, descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analyses (EFA), content analysis from the open ended questions, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and post-hoc test, and IPA. Data was analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 20.0 (2011, IBM Corp., Armonk, NY). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data. The frequencies of responses related to the types of visitors, demographic profiles, and images of Thailand were calculated. A Chi Square Analysis was used to analyze the differences in the unique features associated with Thailand among the U.S. travelers, and among different types of visitors. Different groups of travelers in terms of gender, age range, income levels, residence regions, number of children under 18 in the household, and travel behaviors were also analyzed to determine more patterns.

EFAs were used to reduce a large number of attribute-based image variables into a smaller set of factors, and also to extract essential attribute-based images of Thailand. In this study, EFA was applied for 36 attribute-based image attributes to find the factors that significantly contribute to the image of Thailand. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) ($KMO > .5$) and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used to indicate whether the factor analysis is likely to be appropriate for the attribute-based image data set. Results showed that the KMO was greater than 0.5, thus, the sample was adequate for factor analysis. Consequently, the principal components analysis (PCA) was used to extract factors (Field, 2009). This study used multiple criteria to determine which factor(s) is/are statistically important, including the cumulative percentage of the variance extracted, Scree plot, and Kaiser's criterion (eigenvalue > 1) (Field, 2009; Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Then, to improve

interpretability, the orthogonal varimax rotation was used. Any attribute-based image variables with communality less than 0.5 and factor loading less than 0.4 were dropped (Field, 2009). After deleting those variables, the EFA was rerun to ensure that the total variance increased significantly. The identified factors were used later in the ANOVA as independent variables when analyzing the significant differences of the DI's perception among different types of visitors.

Content analysis techniques were used to analyze the data collected from open-ended questions, asking for the holistic impression and unique features of Thailand, if needed. Themes were identified and classified based on their characteristics (i.e., functional and psychological holistic impressions).

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Scheffe's post-hoc test were used to find differences in the image factors of Thailand among the groups of travelers (i.e., non-visitors, virtual visitors, and visitors). All inferential statistics used p values $< .05$ when determining statistical significance.

Lastly, the IPA was used to identify each attribute-based image attribute's competitive position as perceived by the participants. Multiple analyses were conducted based on overall U.S. travelers, visitors, virtual-visitors, and non-visitors. The central point in each grid was determined using the actual mean values as recommended by Martilla and James (1977). IPA matrices of overall U.S. travelers, visitors, virtual-visitors, and non-visitors were compared to identify any differences in the attributes' locations on the four quadrants.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The total number of individuals who attempted to complete the survey was 605, but the IMC question helped screen out a total of 83 individuals who did not read/follow the instructions. Therefore, the number of completed surveys was 522, representing U.S. international travelers across the country, including visitors ($n=173$), virtual visitors ($n=175$), and non-visitors ($n=174$). There were similar numbers of participants who were male ($n=255$) and female ($n=265$). The majority of participants (64.0 %) were 55 years of age or older. While 106 participants preferred to not answer on their income, the income levels of the participants varied

with 99 respondents (19.0 %), indicating that their annual household income ranged between \$100,000 and \$149,999. Table 5.1 shows the respondent profile of this study.

Table 5.1 Respondent profile

Variable	n	%	Variable	n	%
Type of visitor			Ethnicity/Race		
Visitors	173	33.1	White/Caucasian	458	87.7
Virtual Visitors	175	33.5	African American	6	1.1
Non-visitors	174	33.3	Hispanic	9	1.7
Gender			Asian	47	9.0
Male	255	48.9	Native American	4	0.8
Female	265	50.8	Pacific Islander	-	-
Age range			Other	3	0.6
18-24 years old	29	5.6	Prefer not to answer	8	1.5
25-34 years old	47	9.0	Region of residence		
35-54 years old	112	21.5	West	172	33.0
55-64 years old	122	23.4	South	129	24.9
Over 65 years old	212	40.6	Midwest	84	16.1
Annual household income range			Northeast	137	26.2
Under \$25,000	7	1.3	Children under 18 years old in household		
\$25,000 - \$49,999	57	10.9	None	467	89.5
\$50,000 - \$74,999	49	9.4	1	19	3.6
\$75,000 - \$99,999	64	12.3	2	30	5.7
\$100,000 - \$149,999	99	19.0	3	5	1.0
\$150,000 - \$199,999	47	9.0	4	1	0.2
\$200,000 - \$299,999	37	7.1			
\$300,000 or greater	56	10.7			
Prefer not to answer	106	20.3			

The majority (n=458, 87.7 %) of the participants were White/Caucasian. Among 522 U.S. international travelers, 172 were from the Western region of the U.S., 129 resided in the Southern region, 84 in the Midwestern region, and 137 from the Northeastern region of the country. Only limited number of participants (10.5 %) reported having children, while the majority (n=467) of the respondents reported no children under 18 years old in their household.

U.S. Travelers' Attribute-Based Images and Holistic Impressions of Thailand as a Destination

Summary of attribute-based images

Many attribute-based images were identified representing Thailand's DI. When the mean scores > 3.00, as shown in Table 5.2, the attributes were considered to be viable DIs of Thailand. Among the 36 attributes identified in the review of the literature and qualitative research, the participants perceived "scenic and natural beauty" (4.26±0.71), "interesting customs and cultures" (4.26±0.61), and "cultural and historical attractions" (4.20±0.66), as the three strongest attribute-based images of Thailand.

Table 5.2 Descriptive Statistics of Measurement Items for Attribute-Based Images

Attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation	Attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation
Scenic and natural beauty	4.26	.706	A variety of outdoor activities	3.70	.767
Interesting customs and cultures	4.26	.606	Easy access to Thailand	3.67	.873
Cultural and historical attractions	4.20	.658	Opportunity for shopping	3.65	.748
Beautiful beaches and islands	4.09	.812	Beautiful diving and snorkeling sites	3.61	.819
Friendly people	3.94	.773	Romantic places for newlyweds or couples	3.58	.756
Opportunity for learning experience	3.94	.669	Adult-oriented destination	3.57	.794
Restful and relaxing places	3.93	.779	Nightlife, party and adult entertainment	3.56	.839
Traditional festivities	3.91	.689	Modern cities	3.53	.769
Beautiful architecture and buildings	3.88	.728	Safe place to travel	3.49	.825
Opportunity for adventure	3.82	.772	Crowded and traffic jam	3.46	.945
Availability of quality accommodations	3.81	.771	Quality health and wellness services	3.46	.778
A variety of cuisines	3.77	.789	Stable political situation	3.32	.820
Pleasant climate	3.70	.839	Availability of English signs and directions	3.32	.694
Good value for the money	3.70	.716	Language barriers	3.24	.751

Table 5.2 (Continue)

Attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation	Attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cleanliness	3.15	.795	Risk of acquiring disease	2.99	.857
Efficient local transportation system	3.12	.675	Lack of pollution	2.98	.815
Friendly destination for GBLT	3.07	.771	Quality golf courses	2.93	.611
Children and family friendly destination	3.02	.765	Easy access to drugs	2.87	.931

Factors identified as attribute-based images of Thailand

The EFA of the 36 items using a varimax rotation identified five factors. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis (KMO = 0.903, “marvelous”, Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999, p. 225). An initial analysis was run to obtain the eigenvalues for each factor in the data. Eight factors had eigenvalues over Kaiser’s criterion of 1, and in combination explained 59.75 % of the variance. Six image variables, including children and family friendly destination, language barriers, risk of acquiring disease, quality golf courses, easy access to Thailand, and crowded and traffic jams were dropped because of factorization issues.

The EFA was conducted again after removing these variables, and the “new and improved” KMO was 0.911. All KMO values for the individual items were greater than 0.768, above the acceptable limit of 0.5 (Field, 2013). Five factors had eigenvalues over 1.0, and explained 55.64 % of the variance. Table 5.3 shows the factor loadings after rotation. Each factor was named based on the content within each cluster, as shown in Table 5.3. Factor 1 represents “recreational attractions”, Factor 2 “travel environment”, Factor 3 “cultural and local experiences”, Factor 4 “city life and experiences”, and Factor 5 “lack of restriction”.

Table 5.3 Five-Factor Principle Component Exploratory Factor Solution (N = 522)

Attributes	Factor Loadings				CM*
Factor 1: Recreational attractions	F1				
A variety of outdoor activities	.765				.660
Beautiful beaches and islands	.741				.666
Restful and relaxing places	.715				.699
Opportunity for adventure	.706				.606
Beautiful diving and snorkeling sites	.661				.509
Romantic places for newlyweds or couples	.529				.421
Factor 2: Travel environment	F2				
Lack of pollution	.782				.672
Cleanliness	.764				.643
Stable political situation	.717				.556
Safe place to travel	.690				.630
Efficient local transportation system	.564				.372
Availability of English signs and directions	.533				.370
Pleasant climate	.454				.460
Factor 3: Cultural and local experiences		F3			
Interesting customs and cultures		.779			.723
Cultural and historical attractions		.773			.732
Traditional festivities		.705			.624
Opportunity for learning experience		.626			.521
Beautiful architecture and buildings		.588			.497
Scenic and natural beauty		.510			.598
Factor 4: City life and experiences			F4		
Availability of quality accommodations			.658		.619
Modern cities			.633		.511
Friendly people			.601		.578
A variety of cuisines			.524		.402
Opportunity for shopping			.510		.483
Good value for the money			.391		.451
Quality health and wellness services			.374		.409
Factor 5: Lack of restriction				F5	
Nightlife, party and adult entertainment				.728	.630
Adult-oriented destination				.706	.598
Friendly destination for GBLT				.692	.509
Easy access to drugs				.633	.545
Eigenvalues	8.738	3.211	2.061	1.552	1.131
Variance (%)	13.87	12.12	11.22	10.07	8.36
Cumulative variance (%)	13.87	25.99	37.21	47.29	55.64
Cronbach's Alpha	.857	.812	.834	.808	.719
Number of items (N=30)	6	7	6	7	4

Notes: *Communality

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = .911

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 6791.76 ($p < .001$)

Cronbach's Alpha = .902

Holistic impressions of Thailand

The major themes of the holistic impressions, including functional and psychological characteristics, emerged from answers to open-ended questions. All themes were classified into two categories: functional or psychological holistic impressions. The common themes of holistic impression included:

Functional holistic impression: This category represented physical characteristics and imagery, such as one's mental picture of a destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993). Themes in this category, with sample quotes, were the following:

- **Relaxing white sand beaches:** *"I think of image of sandy beach."*
 - "White sand beaches"*
 - "Sunny beach"*
 - "Beach and palm trees"*
 - "Very peaceful and relaxing beaches. I imagine some of the most beautiful beaches in the world."*
- **Bustling and crowded city:** *"Bangkok, population of over eleven million, largest city, its high-rise buildings, heavy traffic congestion, intense heat awesome nightlife, magnificent temples and palaces, authentic canals, busy markets, etc."*
 - "A bit crowded, too much traffic in the cities"*
- **Colorful cultures:** *"Ancient colorful temples. Colorful traditional costume."*
 - "Colorful festival"*
- **Magnificent temples, Buddha and ruins:** *"Golden temple"*
 - "Gorgeous temples and scenery"*
- **Delicious food:** *"Excellent food choices"*
 - "Amazing food"*
- **Stunning scenic views and landscape:** *"Stunning sights and sites."*
 - "A beautiful country with serene and scenic areas."*
 - "Beautiful landscape"*
- **Tropical weather:** *"Warm and tropical"*
 - "Warm if not too hot. Breezes. Tropical."*

Psychological holistic impression: This category represented the general feelings and atmosphere of a destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993). Themes in this category, with sample quotes, were the following:

- **Friendly:** *“Friendly and welcoming.”*
“Very polite, friendly”
- **Relaxing:** *“Soothing, calm, relaxing”*
“Tranquil, relaxing, peaceful yet mentally stimulating in every sense of the word”
- **Chaotic:** *“Hectic”*
“Bustling”
- **Pleasant:** *“Happiness, joy, pleasant”*
- **Exotic:** *“Exotic, sultry, ornate, mysterious, sensual”*
- **Colorful/lively:** *“Colorful atmosphere, charming and cheerful”*
“Vibrant and lively”
“Lively, a city that never sleeps”
- **Exciting:** *“Upbeat, exciting”*

Table 5.4 shows two main categories of the holistic impressions of Thailand, discovered through inductive analyses.

Table 5.4 Holistic Impression of Thailand among Visitor Types

Themes	All	Visitors	Virtual Visitors	Non-visitors
	(n=522)	(n=173)	(n=175)	(n=174)
% of participants in each group				
Functional-holistic impressions				
Relaxing white sand beaches	30	29	42	18
Bustling & crowded city*	29	33	33	21
Colorful cultures	22	23	23	20
Magnificent temples, Buddha & ruins	18	28	19	7
Delicious food	19	24	21	13
Stunning scenic & landscape	20	21	24	15
Tropical weather	17	19	17	14

Table 5.4 (Continue)

Themes	All	Visitors	Virtual Visitors	Non-visitors
	(n=522)	(n=173)	(n=175)	(n=174)
% of participants in each group				
Psychological-holistic impressions				
Friendly	33	47	32	18
Relaxing	30	32	36	24
Chaotic*	29	33	33	21
Pleasant	16	24	15	9
Exotic	15	8	19	17
Colorful/lively	10	8	14	9
Exciting	14	12	19	9
"No idea"	10	0	0	31

*Negative image

The results showed that the majority of Thailand's holistic impressions were positive images. Negative impressions were also found, including "bustling and crowded city" and "chaotic". Several patterns occurred in the content analyses:

- Visitors and virtual visitors reported more holistic impressions than non-visitors;
- Only non-visitors answered the questions regarding holistic impressions with "no idea" or "I don't know"; and
- Non-visitors did not provide useful information regarding holistic impressions, and they reported attribute-based images instead.

The majority of the respondents described Thailand with more than one impression. Many participants had mixed feelings, consisting of both positive and negative impressions. For example, one participant (visitor) mentioned, "*Bangkok is an attractive mix of east and west, although traffic is chaotic, etc. Rest of Thailand is much calmer. People are friendly, although they often tell you what they think you want to hear, easy to get around because much English is available, good transit.*" The most common mixed pictures of Thailand were between "relaxing white sand beaches" and "bustling and crowded city", and between "relaxing" and "chaotic". The most common holistic-functional characteristics found among respondents were "relaxing white sand beaches", "bustling & crowded city", and "colorful cultures", while the holistic-psychological characteristics were "friendly", "relaxing", and "chaotic".

A few minor themes were also found in the inductive analyses, including:

- Unique scene of architecture and buildings: *“Exotic architecture”*
“Asian influence in architecture”
- Sex trafficking: *“Human slave/sex traffic, prostitution, child molestation”*
“Prostitution, child sex trafficking, disgusting men from western world exploiting Thailand but the Thai's are okay with it.”
- Colorful nightlife: *“Nightlife, party, big city”*
“Awesome nightlife”

Unique Features of Thailand

Summary of unique features

Descriptive statistics showed that among the 11 features identified in the review of the literature and qualitative research, the participants perceived “Thai cultures” (n=408), “temples” (n=390), and “wide varieties of delicious Thai food” (n=357) as the three strongest unique features of Thailand. The majority of the respondents reported eight unique features that had positive influences, two neutral features, and one negative feature. Table 5.5 shows the descriptive statistics of the unique features of Thailand.

Table 5.5 Descriptive Statistics of the Unique Features

Rank	Unique features	Frequency	%	Positive Influence (%)	Neutral/ Undecided (%)	Negative Influence (%)
1	Thai cultures	408	78.2	80.7	18.4	1
2	Temples	390	74.7	75.3	23	1.7
3	Wide varieties of delicious Thai food	357	68.4	74.5	22.6	2.9
4	Buddhist country and way of living	336	64.4	54.8	42.3	2.9
5	Elephant trekking	245	46.9	47.5	40.6	11.9
6	Friendly people	244	46.7	91.2	8.8	0
7	Floating market	233	44.6	54.2	43.3	2.5
8	Tuk-Tuk	216	41.4	28.5	62.3	9.2
9	Diverse experience among different regions in Thailand	216	41.4	63.4	34.5	2.1
10	Exotic animals	180	34.5	44.4	41.8	13.8
11	Thai traditional massage	175	33.5	31.4	57.1	11.5
12	Ladyboys	91	17.4	2.7	29.1	68.2

Differences in DIs among Different Types of U.S. Visitors

Differences in unique features among different types of visitors

Cross tabulation with a chi-square analysis was performed, and found significant differences in the unique features associated with Thailand among three types of U.S. visitors. There was an association among the types of visitors when identifying the unique features of Thailand, and the results showed that visitors had more tendencies to agree that these unique features were related to Thailand. The results also indicated that virtual visitors had more tendencies to agree that these unique features represented Thailand. Table 5.6 shows the results from the chi-square analysis.

Table 5.6 Chi Square Analysis of Unique Features Among 3 Types of Visitors

Unique features	Type of visitor			<i>p</i> Value
	Visitors (%)	Virtual Visitors (%)	Non-visitors (%)	
Thai cultures	82.7	85.7	66.1	< .001
Temples	83.2	82.3	58.6	< .001
Wide varieties of delicious Thai food	80.3	74.3	50.6	< .001
Buddhist country and way of living	68.2	70.9	54.0	.002
Elephant trekking	53.2	53.7	33.9	< .001
Friendly people	61.3	52.6	26.4	< .001
Floating market	61.8	45.7	26.4	< .001
Tuk-Tuk	55.5	41.7	27.0	< .001
Diverse experience among different regions in Thailand	50.3	45.7	28.2	< .001
Exotic animals	33.5	42.3	27.6	.015
Thai traditional massage	46.8	36.6	17.2	< .001
Ladyboys	22.5	18.9	10.9	< .001

Differences in image factors among different types of visitors

The one-way ANOVA was used to identify the differences in the attribute-based image factors based on the types of visitors. The results indicate that there were differences among the different types of visitors in “city life and experiences” ($F(2, 519) = 58.54, p < 0.001$). Scheffe’s post-hoc analyses indicated that there were different perceptions regarding “city life and

experiences” among the three types of visitors. More specifically, the visitors perceived that the “city life and experiences” represented Thailand more than the virtual visitors. The visitors also agreed that this image factor was associated with Thailand more than the non-visitors, while the virtual visitors perceived this image factor as Thailand’s DI more than the non-visitors. There were also significant effects of the different types of visitors on “recreational attractions” $F(2, 519) = 25.91, p < 0.001$, “travel environment” $F(2, 519) = 4.30, p = 0.014$, “cultural and local experiences” $F(2, 519) = 42.96, p < 0.001$, and “lack of restriction” $F(2, 519) = 4.99, p = 0.007$. Table 5.7 illustrates the results from the ANOVA and post-hoc test.

Table 5.7 ANOVA and Post Hoc Test of Types of Visitors on Different DI Factors

Image	Type of visitor	Mean	Std. Deviation	F Value	p Value
Factor 1: Recreational attractions	Visitors ^x	3.89	0.59	25.91	< .001
	Virtual Visitors ^x	3.94	0.59		
	Non-visitors ^y	3.53	0.54		
Factor 2: Travel environment	Visitors ^x	3.36	0.54	4.30	.014
	Virtual Visitors ^{xy}	3.33	0.55		
	Non-visitors ^y	3.20	0.51		
Factor 3: Cultural and local experiences	Visitors ^x	4.18	0.45	42.96	< .001
	Virtual Visitors ^x	4.24	0.41		
	Non-visitors ^y	3.81	0.52		
Factor 4: City life and experiences	Visitors ^x	3.94	0.49	58.54	< .001
	Virtual Visitors ^y	3.74	0.48		
	Non-visitors ^z	3.40	0.45		
Factor 5: Lack of restriction	Visitors ^x	3.36	0.71	4.99	.007
	Virtual Visitors ^{xy}	3.28	0.61		
	Non-visitors ^y	3.16	0.49		

Note: ^{x, y, z} Mean scores with different superscripts indicate there is significant differences between groups based on $p < 0.05$.

Total number of visitors, virtual visitors, and non-visitors were 173, 175, and 174, respectively.

Important Destination Attributes of Thailand Influencing Destination Selection

Summary of importance and influences of attribute-based image factors

Among the 5 factors of Thailand's DIs derived from the EFAs, the participants perceived that two of the five attribute-based image factors, including "travel environment" (4.18 ± 0.50) and "cultural and local experiences" (4.12 ± 0.49), were considered to be important to the participants ($M \geq 4.00$) in terms of destination selection ($M > 0$), as shown in Table 5.8. Descriptive statistics indicated that two out of five image factors, including "city life and experiences" (3.76 ± 0.54) and "recreational attractions" (3.38 ± 0.73), were considered to be slightly important to the respondents ($M \geq 3.00$) when considering travel. These factors also had positive influences on destination selection ($M > 0$). "Travel environment" (0.71 ± 0.30), "cultural and local experiences" (0.75 ± 0.27), "city life and experiences" (0.53 ± 0.26), and "recreational attractions" (0.41 ± 0.35) had positive influences; while Factor 5, "lack of restriction" (-0.16 ± 0.35), was considered to be a negative influence on destination selection. Despite the negative influence on destination selection, the importance rating of "lack of restriction" was relatively low compared to other factors (2.21 ± 0.65). Table 5.8 shows the descriptive statistics of the importance and influences of image factor on destination selection.

Table 5.8 Attribute-Based Image Factors' Importance and Influences in Terms of Destination Selection

Rank			Importance		Influence	
			Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Factor 2: Travel environment	Visitors	4.02	0.53	0.67	0.30
		Virtual Visitors	4.20	0.45	0.72	0.29
		Non-visitors	4.30	0.47	0.73	0.29
		Total	4.18	0.50	0.71	0.30
2	Factor 3: Cultural and local experiences	Visitors	4.12	0.45	0.76	0.25
		Virtual Visitors	4.24	0.45	0.79	0.24
		Non-visitors	4.01	0.54	0.68	0.29
		Total	4.12	0.49	0.75	0.27
3	Factor 4: City life and experiences	Visitors	3.65	0.56	0.52	0.27
		Virtual Visitors	3.85	0.48	0.56	0.25
		Non-visitors	3.77	0.55	0.52	0.27
		Total	3.76	0.54	0.53	0.26
4	Factor 1: Recreational attractions	Visitors	3.28	0.66	0.40	0.32
		Virtual Visitors	3.58	0.72	0.47	0.34
		Non-visitors	3.29	0.79	0.36	0.39
		Total	3.38	0.73	0.41	0.35
5	Factor 5: Lack of restriction	Visitors	2.14	0.65	-0.15	0.36
		Virtual Visitors	2.32	0.68	-0.11	0.37
		Non-visitors	2.18	0.62	-0.21	0.33
		Total	2.21	0.65	-0.16	0.35

Note: Total numbers of visitors, virtual visitors, and non-visitors were 173, 175, and 174, respectively. Total number of respondents was 522.

Importance-performance of Thailand's destination attributes

The Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) of Thailand's destination attributes and their importance in terms of destination selection rated by U.S. international travelers were plotted on the IPA matrix. The central point in each grid was determined by actual mean values (3.51 for important rating and 3.57 for performance rating) based on recommendations by Martilla and James (1977). Figure 5.3 shows the importance and performances of the attribute-based images of Thailand from overall U.S. travelers' perspectives. Each number in the IPA represents different attribute-based images of Thailand, as shown in Table 5.9. Each attribute in

the IPA matrix was identified as Quadrant I, “Concentrate Here”; Quadrant II, “Keep Up the Good Work”; Quadrant III, “Low Priority”; or Quadrant IV, “Possible Overkill”.

Figure 5.3 IPA Matrix of Thailand’s Attribute-Based Images for U.S. Travelers

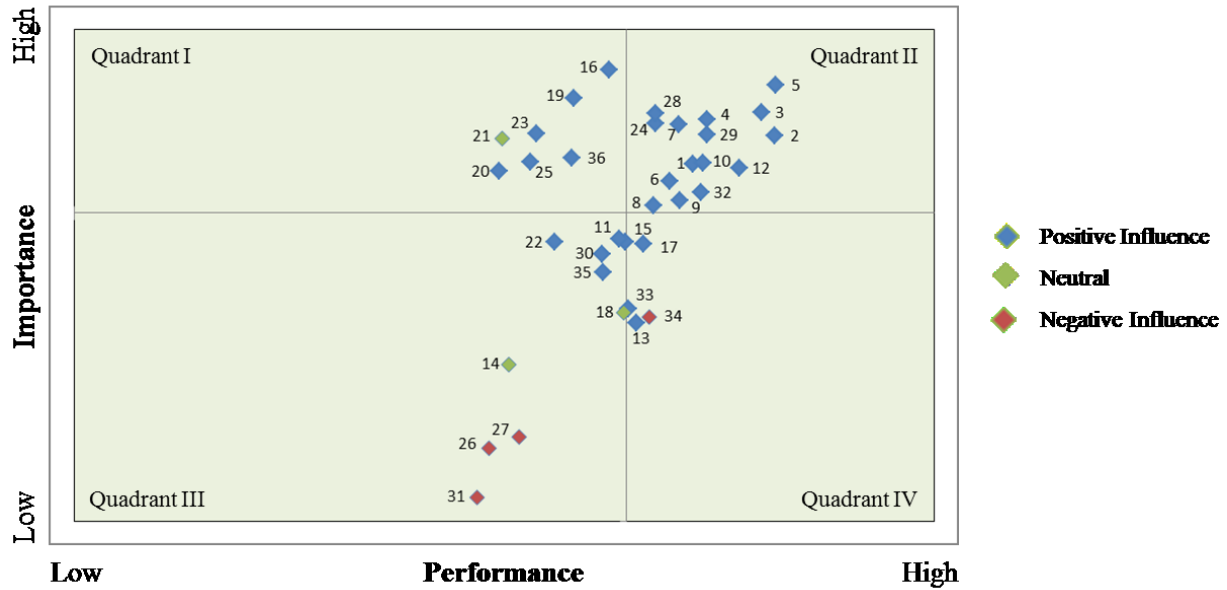
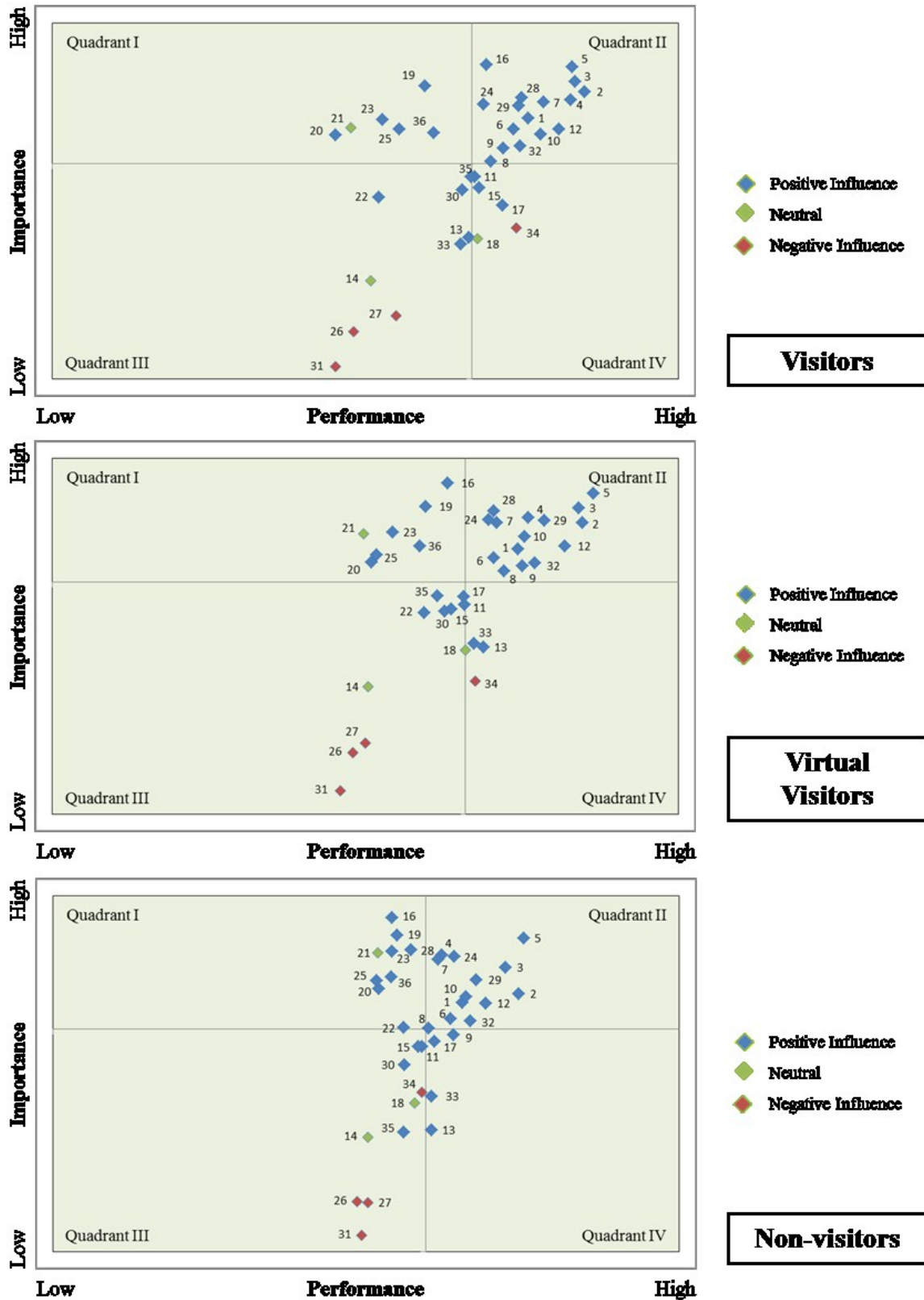


Figure 5.4 illustrates the details of the perceived importance and performances of Thailand’s attribute-based images from different types of visitors’ points of view. The central points in the IPA grids were also identified by the actual mean values of all attributes in each type of visitor: visitors (Importance: 3.42; Performance: 3.68), virtual visitors (Importance: 3.61; Performance: 3.64), and non-visitors (Importance: 3.50; Performance: 3.38).

Table 5.9 Attributes and the Representing numbers

No.	Attributes	All	Visitors	Virtual Visitors	Non-visitors
		Location in IPA matrix (Quadrant)			
1	Beautiful architecture and buildings	2	2	2	2
2	Interesting customs and cultures	2	2	2	2
3	Cultural and historical attractions	2	2	2	2
4	Friendly people	2	2	2	2
5	Scenic and natural beauty	2	2	2	2
6	A variety of cuisines	2	2	2	2
7	Availability of quality accommodations	2	2	2	2
8	A variety of outdoor activities	2	2	2	2
9	Opportunity for adventure	2	2	2	4
10	Restful and relaxing places	2	2	2	2
11	Modern cities	3	4	3	3
12	Beautiful beaches and islands	2	2	2	2
13	Beautiful diving and snorkeling sites	4	3	4	4
14	Children and family friendly destination*	3	3	3	3
15	Adult-oriented destination	3	4	3	3
16	Safe place to travel	1	2	1	1
17	Opportunity for shopping	4	4	3	4
18	Nightlife, party and adult entertainment*	3	4	3	3
19	Stable political situation	1	1	1	1
20	Lack of pollution	1	1	1	1
21	Risk of acquiring disease*	1	1	1	1
22	Language barriers	3	3	3	1
23	Cleanliness	1	1	1	1
24	Pleasant climate	2	2	2	2
25	Efficient local transportation system	1	1	1	1
26	Quality golf courses**	3	3	3	3
27	Friendly destination for GBLT**	3	3	3	3
28	Good value for the money	2	2	2	1
29	Opportunity for learning experience	2	2	2	2
30	Quality health and wellness services	3	3	3	3
31	Easy access to drugs**	3	3	3	3
32	Traditional festivities	2	2	2	2
33	Romantic places for newlyweds or couples	4	3	4	4
34	Crowded and traffic jam**	4	4	4	3
35	Easy access to Thailand	3	3	3	3
36	Availability of English signs and directions	1	1	1	1

Figure 5.4 IPA Matrixes of Thailand's Attribute-Based Images for Three Types of Visitors



The results showed that there were attributes located in every quadrant. Quadrant II “Keep Up the Good Work” contained the highest number of attributes (n=15), while Quadrant III “Low Priority”, and Quadrant I “Concentrate Here” had fewer items (n=10 and n=7, respectively). Quadrant IV “Possible Overkill” had only four items. The comparison of IPA matrices based on types of visitors illustrated visual differences in the distribution of attributes in the ranges, especially in the scale of performances. The items from the visitors’ and virtual visitors’ matrices were widely distributed, while the non-visitors’ matrix showed a narrow distribution of items.

Quadrant I “Concentrate Here”: Seven items fell into this quadrant, indicating high importance and low performance ratings. All of these items were clearly rated in relatively high importance. The three most important attributes in this quadrant included “safe place to travel” (4.67±0.57), “stable political situation” (4.44±0.76), and “cleanliness” (4.15±0.81). These attributes were identified because they had positive influences towards destination selection, with the exception of “risk of acquiring disease” which was seen as neutral or no influence.

Respondents rated the items in this quadrant with relatively lower performances than the other attributes in Quadrant II and IV. The three items with the lowest performances were “lack of pollution” (2.98±0.81), “risk of acquiring disease” (2.99±0.86), and “efficient local transportation system” (3.12±0.68).

Considering the IPA matrices for the different types of visitors, “safe place to travel” for visitors (3.77±0.79) indicated good performance among the other attributes, as it was located in Quadrant II. Other items were all located in the same quadrant with regard to the different types of visitors.

Quadrant II “Keep Up the Good Work”: Fifteen items fell into this quadrant, resulting from high ratings for both importance and performances. Participants clearly rated these attributes as relatively high importance. The three most important items were “scenic and natural beauty” (4.55±0.58), “cultural and historical attractions” (4.33±0.72), and “good value for the money” (4.32±0.68). All of these attributes were identified, as they had positive influences towards destination selection.

Respondents rated these items with relatively high performances. The top three with the lowest performances were “scenic and natural beauty” (4.26±0.71), “interesting customs and cultures” (4.26±0.61), and “cultural and historical attractions” (4.20±0.66).

Considering the IPA matrices for different types of visitors, “opportunity for adventure” for non-visitors (3.44 ± 1.05) indicated a relatively low importance among attributes. Non-visitors also rated the performances of “good value for the money” (3.29 ± 0.57) and “opportunity for adventure” (3.56 ± 0.66) lower than they considered other attributes. Thus, for non-visitors, “good value for the money” and “opportunity for adventure” were located in Quadrants 1 and 4, respectively.

Quadrant III “Low Priority”: Ten items fell into this quadrant, resulting from low ratings for both importance and performances. All of these items were clearly rated in relatively low importance. The three least important attributes were “easy access to drugs” (1.20 ± 0.63), “quality golf courses” (1.60 ± 1.01), and “friendly destination for GBLT (Gay-Bisexual-Lesbian-Transgender)” (1.69 ± 1.08).

Items in this quadrant included the attributes with positive, neutral, and negative influences on destination selection. Five attributes were identified, as they had positive influences on destination selection, while “nightlife, party and adult entertainment” and “children and family friendly destination” were rated as neutral or no influence. The other attributes, including “friendly destination for GBLT”, “quality golf courses”, and “easy access to drugs”, were seen as negative influences for destination decision.

Respondents rated these items with relatively lower performances than the other attributes in Quadrants II and IV. The three attributes with the lowest performances were “children and family friendly destination” (3.02 ± 0.76), “quality golf courses” (2.93 ± 0.61), and “easy access to drugs” (2.87 ± 0.93).

Considering the IPA matrices for the different types of visitors, “modern cities” (3.70 ± 0.81), “adult-oriented destination” (3.73 ± 0.85), and “nightlife, party and adult entertainment” (3.72 ± 0.96), with relatively high performances rated by visitors, were located in Quadrant IV. Respondents who were non-visitors rated the importance of “language barriers” (3.52 ± 0.94) relatively high among other attributes, thus, it was placed in Quadrant I.

Quadrant IV “Possible Overkill”: Four items fell into this quadrant, resulting from low rating importance and high rating performances. All of these items were rated in relatively low importance: “opportunity for shopping” (3.25 ± 1.13), “romantic places for newlyweds or couples” (2.73 ± 1.31), “crowded and traffic jam” (2.66 ± 1.25), and “beautiful diving and snorkeling sites” (2.61 ± 1.34). Respondents identified these attributes, as having positive

influences towards destination selection, except “crowded and traffic jam” which was seen as a negative influence.

Respondents rated these items with relatively higher performances than the other attributes in Quadrants I and III: “opportunity for shopping” (3.65 ± 0.75), “romantic places for newlyweds or couples” (3.58 ± 0.76), “crowded and traffic jam” (3.67 ± 0.87), and “beautiful diving and snorkeling sites” (3.61 ± 0.82).

Considering the IPA matrixes for different types of visitors, visitors rated “romantic places for newlyweds or couples” (3.61 ± 0.79) and “beautiful diving and snorkeling sites” (3.66 ± 0.88) lower in performances, compared to the other attributes, while virtual visitors rated “opportunity for shopping” (3.63 ± 0.75) lower in performances among the other items. Non-visitors rated the performance of “crowded and traffic jam” (3.36 ± 0.75) lower than the other attributes. Hence, these items were located in Quadrant III for these particular groups.

Tables 5.10 and 5.11 show all of the attributes’ importance and performances based on overall travelers, visitors, virtual visitors, and non-visitors.

Table 5.10 Importance of Attributes in Terms of Destination Selection

No.	Attributes	Mean \pm SD			
		All	Visitors	Virtual Visitors	Non-visitors
1	Beautiful architecture and buildings	3.90 \pm 0.83	3.93 \pm 0.81	3.98 \pm 0.74	3.80 \pm 0.91
2	Interesting customs and cultures	4.14 \pm 0.76	4.23 \pm 0.68	4.28 \pm 0.67	3.90 \pm 0.86
3	Cultural and historical attractions	4.33 \pm 0.72	4.34 \pm 0.64	4.44 \pm 0.67	4.20 \pm 0.81
4	Friendly people	4.27 \pm 0.72	4.14 \pm 0.73	4.34 \pm 0.71	4.33 \pm 0.69
5	Scenic and natural beauty	4.55 \pm 0.58	4.51 \pm 0.55	4.61 \pm 0.55	4.53 \pm 0.64
6	A variety of cuisines	3.77 \pm 0.90	3.81 \pm 0.89	3.89 \pm 0.91	3.61 \pm 0.87
7	Availability of quality accommodations	4.23 \pm 0.79	4.12 \pm 0.83	4.27 \pm 0.75	4.29 \pm 0.78
8	A variety of outdoor activities	3.57 \pm 1.00	3.45 \pm 0.92	3.74 \pm 0.98	3.51 \pm 1.07
9	Opportunity for adventure	3.61 \pm 1.02	3.60 \pm 1.00	3.79 \pm 1.00	3.44 \pm 1.05
10	Restful and relaxing places	3.91 \pm 0.92	3.75 \pm 0.94	4.12 \pm 0.77	3.87 \pm 0.99
11	Modern cities	3.30 \pm 0.96	3.27 \pm 0.97	3.31 \pm 0.91	3.30 \pm 1.00
12	Beautiful beaches and islands	3.87 \pm 1.00	3.81 \pm 0.93	4.02 \pm 0.93	3.79 \pm 1.13
13	Beautiful diving and snorkeling sites	2.61 \pm 1.34	2.59 \pm 1.35	2.88 \pm 1.32	2.37 \pm 1.31
14	Children and family friendly destination*	2.28 \pm 1.25	2.10 \pm 1.21	2.43 \pm 1.25	2.29 \pm 1.28
15	Adult-oriented destination	3.27 \pm 1.09	3.15 \pm 1.05	3.35 \pm 1.10	3.30 \pm 1.11
16	Safe place to travel	4.67 \pm 0.57	4.54 \pm 0.69	4.73 \pm 0.48	4.76 \pm 0.50
17	Opportunity for shopping	3.25 \pm 1.13	2.95 \pm 1.19	3.45 \pm 1.04	3.36 \pm 1.09
18	Nightlife, party and adult entertainment*	2.70 \pm 1.22	2.58 \pm 1.18	2.85 \pm 1.24	2.67 \pm 1.25

Table 5.10 (Continue)

No.	Attributes	All	Visitors	Virtual Visitors	Non-visitors
		Mean ± SD			
19	Stable political situation	4.44 ± 0.76	4.29 ± 0.80	4.46 ± 0.74	4.56 ± 0.72
20	Lack of pollution	3.85 ± 0.86	3.75 ± 0.87	3.83 ± 0.85	3.96 ± 0.86
21	Risk of acquiring disease*	4.11 ± 1.12	3.83 ± 1.22	4.15 ± 1.05	4.36 ± 1.02
22	Language barriers	3.28 ± 0.98	3.05 ± 1.02	3.26 ± 0.92	3.52 ± 0.94
23	Cleanliness	4.15 ± 0.81	3.91 ± 0.83	4.17 ± 0.83	4.37 ± 0.70
24	Pleasant climate	4.24 ± 0.74	4.09 ± 0.77	4.31 ± 0.65	4.32 ± 0.78
25	Efficient local transportation system	3.92 ± 0.78	3.81 ± 0.82	3.91 ± 0.75	4.05 ± 0.75
26	Quality golf courses**	1.60 ± 1.01	1.53 ± 1.01	1.69 ± 1.03	1.56 ± 0.98
27	Friendly destination for GBLT**	1.69 ± 1.08	1.71 ± 1.17	1.80 ± 1.13	1.55 ± 0.92
28	Good value for the money	4.32 ± 0.68	4.16 ± 0.69	4.41 ± 0.61	4.39 ± 0.71
29	Opportunity for learning experience	4.14 ± 0.75	4.07 ± 0.79	4.30 ± 0.68	4.06 ± 0.77
30	Quality health and wellness services	3.17 ± 1.16	3.13 ± 1.10	3.28 ± 1.16	3.10 ± 1.21
31	Easy access to drugs**	1.20 ± 0.63	1.14 ± 0.50	1.26 ± 0.69	1.18 ± 0.66
32	Traditional festivities	3.68 ± 0.88	3.62 ± 0.89	3.82 ± 0.84	3.60 ± 0.89
33	Romantic places for newlyweds or couples	2.73 ± 1.31	2.51 ± 1.26	2.92 ± 1.32	2.75 ± 1.33
34	Crowded and traffic jam**	2.66 ± 1.25	2.70 ± 1.16	2.50 ± 1.25	2.79 ± 1.33
35	Easy access to Thailand	3.02 ± 1.21	3.27 ± 1.09	3.45 ± 1.04	2.34 ± 1.20
36	Availability of English signs and directions	3.96 ± 0.86	3.77 ± 0.89	4.01 ± 0.82	4.09 ± 0.82

*Neutral influence, **Negative influence

Table 5.11 Performances of Attributes in Terms of Destination Selection

No.	Attributes	All	Visitors	Virtual Visitors	Non-visitors
		Mean ± SD			
1	Beautiful architecture and buildings	3.88 ± .728	4.04 ± .693	3.98 ± .735	3.61 ± .685
2	Interesting customs and cultures	4.26 ± .606	4.40 ± .559	4.39 ± .523	3.98 ± .636
3	Cultural and historical attractions	4.20 ± .658	4.34 ± .614	4.37 ± .590	3.89 ± .658
4	Friendly people	3.94 ± .773	4.31 ± .736	4.04 ± .698	3.48 ± .643
5	Scenic and natural beauty	4.26 ± .706	4.32 ± .707	4.46 ± .658	4.01 ± .680
6	A variety of cuisines	3.77 ± .789	3.95 ± .787	3.82 ± .849	3.54 ± .668
7	Availability of quality accommodations	3.81 ± .771	4.14 ± .726	3.84 ± .756	3.46 ± .677
8	A variety of outdoor activities	3.70 ± .767	3.80 ± .833	3.89 ± .742	3.40 ± .626
9	Opportunity for adventure	3.82 ± .772	3.88 ± .827	4.01 ± .754	3.56 ± .658
10	Restful and relaxing places	3.93 ± .779	4.12 ± .741	4.02 ± .806	3.64 ± .706
11	Modern cities	3.53 ± .769	3.70 ± .808	3.55 ± .793	3.36 ± .662
12	Beautiful beaches and islands	4.09 ± .812	4.24 ± .790	4.27 ± .791	3.76 ± .758
13	Beautiful diving and snorkeling sites	3.61 ± .819	3.66 ± .878	3.75 ± .852	3.42 ± .682
14	Children and family friendly destination*	3.02 ± .765	3.03 ± .813	3.02 ± .820	3.01 ± .654
15	Adult-oriented destination	3.57 ± .794	3.73 ± .850	3.63 ± .790	3.33 ± .683
16	Safe place to travel	3.49 ± .825	3.77 ± .793	3.53 ± .801	3.17 ± .768
17	Opportunity for shopping	3.65 ± .748	3.88 ± .757	3.63 ± .746	3.44 ± .675
18	Nightlife, party and adult entertainment*	3.56 ± .839	3.72 ± .956	3.64 ± .767	3.31 ± .726

Table 5.11 (Continue)

No.	Attributes	All	Visitors	Virtual Visitors	Non-visitors
		Mean ± SD			
19	Stable political situation	3.32 ± .820	3.38 ± .838	3.39 ± .863	3.20 ± .745
20	Lack of pollution	2.98 ± .815	2.81 ± .898	3.04 ± .812	3.08 ± .700
21	Risk of acquiring disease*	2.99 ± .857	2.91 ± .966	2.99 ± .802	3.07 ± .790
22	Language barriers	3.24 ± .751	3.09 ± .769	3.38 ± .747	3.24 ± .713
23	Cleanliness	3.15 ± .795	3.11 ± .899	3.18 ± .779	3.17 ± .698
24	Pleasant climate	3.70 ± .839	3.76 ± .835	3.79 ± .881	3.56 ± .786
25	Efficient local transportation system	3.12 ± .675	3.22 ± .827	3.07 ± .670	3.07 ± .476
26	Quality golf courses**	2.93 ± .611	2.92 ± .723	2.92 ± .582	2.94 ± .512
27	Friendly destination for GBLT**	3.07 ± .771	3.20 ± .887	3.00 ± .795	3.01 ± .589
28	Good value for the money	3.70 ± .716	4.00 ± .665	3.82 ± .709	3.29 ± .567
29	Opportunity for learning experience	3.94 ± .669	3.98 ± .735	4.14 ± .554	3.71 ± .636
30	Quality health and wellness services	3.46 ± .778	3.62 ± .879	3.51 ± .757	3.25 ± .638
31	Easy access to drugs**	2.87 ± .931	2.81 ± 1.014	2.84 ± .951	2.97 ± .815
32	Traditional festivities	3.91 ± .689	3.99 ± .656	4.09 ± .660	3.67 ± .683
33	Romantic places for newlyweds or couples	3.58 ± .756	3.61 ± .789	3.70 ± .731	3.42 ± .723
34	Crowded and traffic jam**	3.67 ± .873	3.97 ± .828	3.70 ± .930	3.36 ± .745
35	Easy access to Thailand	3.46 ± .945	3.68 ± 1.073	3.46 ± .914	3.24 ± .782
36	Availability of English signs and directions	3.32 ± .694	3.44 ± .765	3.35 ± .685	3.16 ± .596

*Neutral influence, **Negative influence

Discussion

This study measured U.S. travelers' DIs of Thailand, and identified important attributes for U.S. travelers in terms of destination selection, using a combination of quantitative methods and qualitative techniques. The answers from close-ended questions provided a lot of useful information regarding U.S. travelers' DIs of Thailand, among different types of visitors, while open-ended questions allowed the respondents to describe their feelings towards Thailand in their own words.

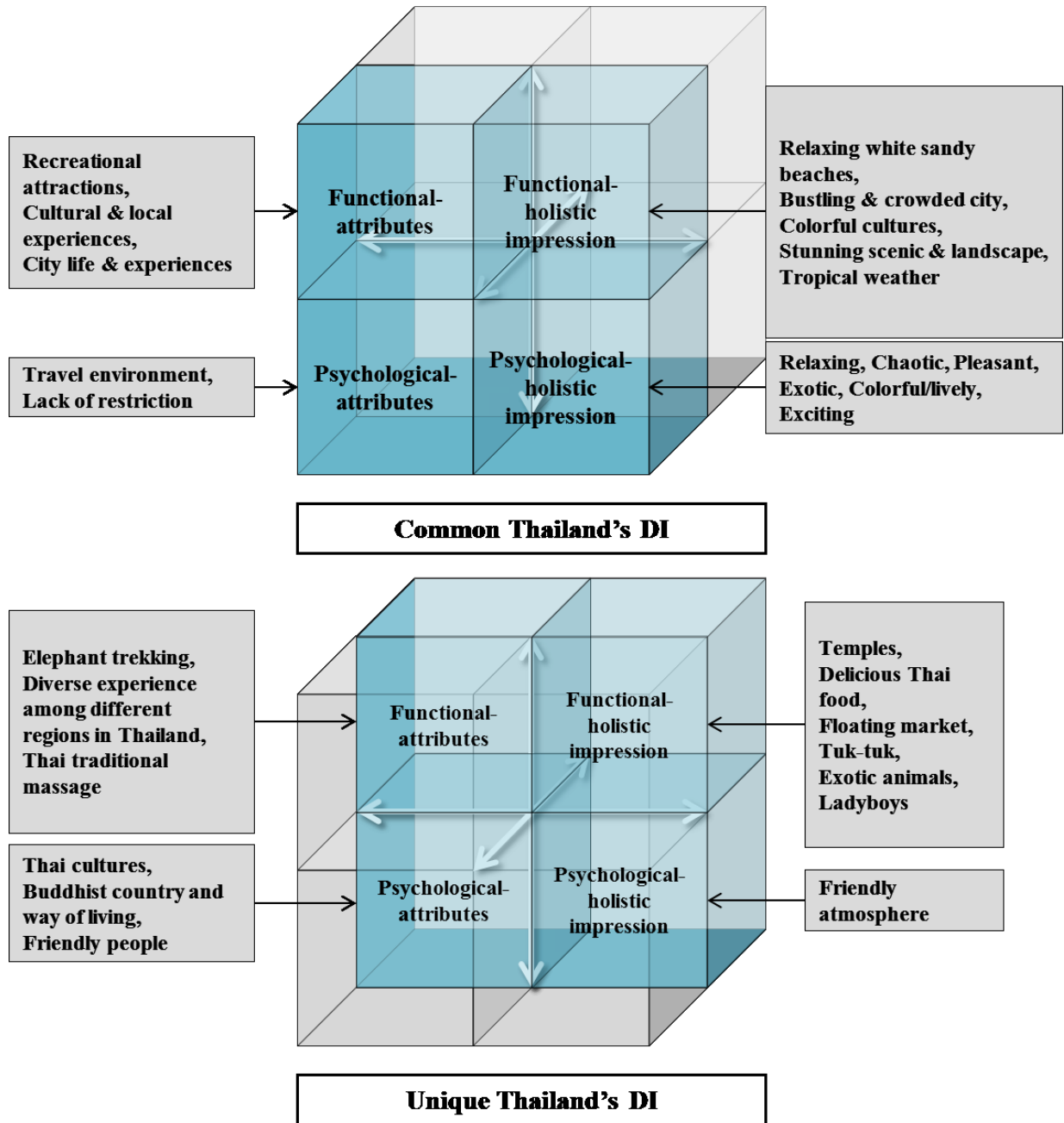
Unlike other research done on Thailand's DIs, all respondents in this study were American citizens, in which the majority of the respondents were White/Caucasian. This study is the first based on Western travelers, while the others focused on Asian and Australian travelers. Tapachai and Waryszak (2000) used a convenience sample and only focused on non-visitors from Australia; therefore, the DI found from their research was only a pre-visit DI. Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) included first-time and repeat visitors in their study. However, these participants were approached at a train station in Bangkok, which may have been the point where they just began or finished their trip. Thus, they may not have final ideas about Thailand, which could be considered incomplete primary information (i.e., actual experience). In the Henkel et al. (2006) study, the participants included both visitors and non-visitors, in which over 70 % of the participants were non-visitors from 33 different countries (which were not disclosed). They did not attempt to determine any differences among these two types of visitors. Unlike the other research mentioned above, this study attempted to identify Thailand's DI specifically from U.S. travelers. Thus, this study included all types of visitors, as well as different levels of interest in Thailand as a destination choice. Therefore, in this study, it can be said that the DI was identified based on the overall perception from U.S. international travelers.

Thailand's DI

Henkel et al. (2006) and Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) found that Thailand's DI included both positive and negative images. The analyses of this study revealed that Thailand's DI consisted of favorable, neutral, and unfavorable images. Thailand's DI included attribute-based images and holistic impressions, functional and psychological characteristics, containing both common and unique features. All of Thailand's attributes and impressions found in this study

were put together and allocated into different cells in 3-Dimensions of the DI's components, based on Echtner and Ritchie's work/model (1991, 1993) (Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5 Thailand's DI Components in 3D



Five factors emerged from 36 attributes representing Thailand's attribute-based images. Thirty out of 36 attributes included in these factors were similar to the previous research (Henkel et al., 2006; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). The other 7 attributes were additional items and features representing Thailand, including "opportunity for learning experience", "traditional festivities", "romantic places for newlyweds or couples", "modern cities", "availability of English signs and directions", "efficient local transportation system", and "friendly destination for GBLT".

Unlike previous research, the findings of this study suggested "efficient local transportation system" as a positive DI of Thailand, while Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) reported inefficient local transportation. Gartner and Hunt (1987) found that the DI may change slowly over time, based on their study with Utah's images over a 12-year period (1971-1983). They suggested that over time, DIs possibly become more positive, and thus, the destination becomes more desirable. It is plausible that after the time of previous studies conducted in 2000, 2001, and 2006, Thailand may have been developing and improving its transportation systems (Uddin, 2012).

Overall, the top three strongest individual attribute-based images belonged to natural attractions and culture-related factors. However, the factor analyses revealed that the cultural and local experiences factor contributed the most to Thailand's DI.

In previous research, holistic impressions were not clearly identified (Henkel et al., 2006; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000), while this study provided options to the participants when describing their images and feeling about Thailand. The findings suggested that there were seven functional-holistic impressions and seven psychological-holistic impressions. Overall, the strongest functional-holistic impressions found in this study were "relaxing white sand beaches" and "bustling and crowded city", while "friendly" and "relaxing" were the strongest psychological-holistic impressions about Thailand.

This study was also the first to identify the unique features of Thailand. Twelve unique features were identified in this study, and even though a few unique features, such as "Thai cultures", "delicious Thai food", "friendly people (friendly atmosphere)", and "temples", were also found to be similar to the common attributes and impressions found in previous research (Henkel et al., 2006; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000), they were located in unique dimensions, as shown in Figure 5.5, because the respondents agreed that these items

contained unique features compared to other destinations. The findings suggested that the top three most obvious unique features of Thailand were “Thai cultures”, “temples”, and “wide varieties of delicious Thai food”.

There were some contrasting images in Thailand’s DI components; for example, “bustling and crowded city” versus “relaxing white sandy beaches”, and “chaotic” versus “relaxing” and “pleasant” were found from the survey. As Thailand has diverse destinations within the country, such contrasting images can be explained by determining where the respondents have visited or virtually visited. Overall, the DI of Thailand was mostly favorable as it was found in Rittichainuwat et al. (2001).

Thailand’s DIs for Visitors, Virtual Visitors and Non-Visitors

Due to different degrees of familiarity, travelers hold different amounts of knowledge and perceptions about a destination (Baloglu, 2001). Different classes of experiences (i.e., direct and indirect experiences) affect degrees of familiarity as well (Baloglu). Today’s improving technology, including social media networks and wireless communications, allow travelers to share information, critiques, photos, and videos of a destination; instantly providing opportunities for others to have visual experiences of destinations without actually being there. It is very conceivable that one can establish more realistic DIs than before such technologies existed, influencing potential travelers’ destination selection. Therefore, those who seek more information through available resources may have different DIs than those who do not. MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997, 2000) suggested that available marketing materials from the destination are also a determinant of travelers’ DIs. In this study, we categorized travelers regarding a destination into three groups, including visitors, virtual visitors, and non-visitors, considering different amounts of knowledge and experiences. The results suggested that the DIs of visitors, virtual visitors, and non-visitors of Thailand were significantly different.

Considering the five factors extracted from the EFA, the findings suggest that there are significant differences in DIs among different types of visitors. “Recreational attractions” and “cultural and local experience” were seen more often from visitors’ and virtual visitors’ perspectives, while non-visitors had lower levels of agreement to these image factors representing Thailand. Visitors and non-visitors clearly perceived Thailand’s “Travel environment” and “lack of restriction” differently, whereas virtual visitors looked at these image

factors in the same way as both visitors and non-visitors. Unlike other image factors, “city life and experience” of Thailand was clearly represented by visitors more than the other groups. This image factor representing Thailand was also more obvious to virtual visitors than non-visitors.

Content analyses further supported that these three groups of visitors held different DIs of Thailand. Visitors and virtual visitors were able to report on holistic impressions, while 31 % of non-visitors were unable to describe any impressions or feelings associated with Thailand. Visitors, when answering questions, usually referred to their experiences, which were more realistic. Virtual visitors described Thailand’s DIs with images which often related to what they had heard from friends, and seen in travel websites, movies, news, or documentaries. Thus, these DIs were based on imagination as well as reality. Non-visitors’ DIs of Thailand were mostly based on imagination and information from mass-media; as a result, there were different DIs among these three groups of visitors.

Fakeye and Crompton (1991) found significant differences in the DIs between non-visitors and visitors. They also contended that, sometimes, the non-visitors who seek out information about the destination may hold different DIs from visitors due to the influences of marketing materials. Therefore, according to the literature review from previous studies and the findings from this study, “virtual visitors” may need to be considered as an additional type of visitor.

Important Attributes

The top two important image factors that clearly influenced destination selection were “travel environment” and “cultural and local experiences”. The results indicated that “city life and experiences” and “recreational attractions” were considered slightly important to travelers, and certainly influence destination selection. “Lack of restriction” was seen as an unimportant image factor, but also had a negative influence on destination selection.

Among the unique features, “friendly people”, “Thai culture”, “temples”, “Thai food”, “diverse experiences among different regions in Thailand”, “Buddhist country and way of living”, and “floating market” were identified by more than 50% of the respondents as positive influences on destination selection. The majority of visitors recognized these images. Even though these features have positive influences, only a small number of virtual visitors and non-visitors recognized “friendly people” and “floating market”.

These findings suggested that the TAT should consider focusing on “travel environment” and “cultural and local experiences” when promoting Thailand to U.S. travelers. It is also important, as suggested by Echtner and Ritchie (2003), to promote the unique characteristics. Thus, for Thailand, “friendly people” and “floating market” should be used as images to stimulate the Thailand tourism industry for the U.S. market.

Market Positioning of Thailand’ DI for U.S. Travelers

The results from the IPA illustrate that the most important attribute-based images of Thailand that the TAT should concentrate on in order to capture the U.S. market were mostly included in the travel environment image factor. These images included “cleanliness”, “stable political situation”, “safe place to travel”, “availability of English signs and directions”, “efficient local transportation system”, and “lack of pollution”. These attributes were found to be important to U.S. travelers when considering a destination. Moreover, they believed that these images of Thailand were not performing well when compared to other attributes. These images were considered to be weaknesses of Thailand as a destination, which require immediate attention for improvement, in order to increase its competitiveness (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012).

Destination managers should also consider working with local organizations and the government to develop plans and enhance these features of Thailand. The implementation may be achieved by working from both the development of the destination and its marketing. Baloglu and McCleary (1999b) found that travelers compare their experiences to their expectations, which may alter the DI. Chon (1990) suggested that only when their expectations were met or exceeded, would travelers be satisfied with their trip. Thus, if marketing promoted these images well, but travelers did not experience what they expected, they would not be satisfied and may not return to the destination.

The second most important aspect for TAT destination management to consider when working with the U.S. market is the need to maintain the images related to recreation and culture. These images were seen as highly important, with great performances, and were the strengths of Thailand as a destination that should be consistently maintained to stay competitive (Martilla & James, 1977). These attributes were “scenic and natural beauty”, “cultural and historical attractions”, “good value for the money”, “friendly people”, “pleasant climate”, “availability of quality accommodations”, “opportunity for learning experience”, “interesting customs and

cultures”, “restful and relaxing places”, “beautiful architecture and buildings”, “beautiful beaches and islands”, “a variety of cuisines”, “traditional festivities”, “opportunity for adventure”, and “a variety of outdoor activities”.

Moreover, there were several attributes representing minor competitiveness, and may indicate that the TAT has an ineffective and inefficient allocation of resources and efforts (Martilla & James, 1997). These attributes, including “opportunity for shopping”, “romantic places for newlyweds or couple”, and “beautiful diving and snorkeling sites”, were perceived to have high performances but low importance for U.S. travelers. Although the markets specifically attracted to these features are limited, performance in these areas is very important to the niche market. However, the TAT may consider attracting a larger target market group rather than focusing on this niche market. To attract more general international travelers, reallocating resources and efforts from these relatively low importance attributes to those attributes listed as first priority may need to be considered.

Furthermore, “modern cities”, “language barriers”, “adult-oriented destination”, “quality health and wellness services”, and “easy access to Thailand” were found not to be threats to competitiveness because of their low importance (Martilla & James, 1977). These attributes may be considered to be minor weaknesses of Thailand as a destination, but the TAT should not be overly concerned and it is unnecessary to allocate resources and efforts to improve or promote these attributes (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012).

All attributes mentioned above were found to be positive influences for destination selection. Concerning the other attributes with neutral and negative influences on destination selection, only “crowded and traffic jam” were rated in high performance and contained a negative impact on destination selection. However, they were not important in terms of destination selection; thus, the TAT may not need to be overly concerned. Even though “risk of acquiring disease”, which obviously had negative influences on destination selection, was considered to be a highly important attribute, Thailand was seen as low-performing. “Easy access to drugs”, as a negative image, was considered to be of low importance and performance. Therefore, these attributes may not be found to be serious for the TAT. Both “nightlife, party and adult entertainment” and “children and family friendly destination” were rated as low importance and performance. They also had no influences on destination selection. Although our participants’ characteristics of mostly not having children may have affected this question, the

IPA revealed that the TAT should not be overly concerned or allocate resources and efforts to improve these attributes. Finally, both “friendly destination for GBLT” and “quality golf courses” were found to be negative influences on destination selection, while they were rated as low importance and performance. This indicated that the TAT should ensure that they are not putting too many resources and allocations toward these. Although these items may be seen as positive for certain groups of U.S. travelers, the TAT should not consider putting these characteristics at the forefront of their marketing emphasis areas for the U.S. market.

In summary, this study suggested that in order to capture the U.S. market, the first priority for the TAT is to improve the travel environment-related attributes which were considered to be destination weaknesses for Thailand. The TAT must also maintain the destination’s strengths in order to stay competitive, while ensuring effectiveness and the efficient use of resources and efforts.

Conclusion

This study illustrated meaningful findings for destination marketers. The mixed methods used in this study provided convenience and flexibility at some level to the respondents when taking surveys and identifying the DIs in their own words. The other strengths of this study were the use of IMC techniques. These helped to screen out many participants who did not read and follow the instructions in the questionnaire, resulting in the better quality of the data collected, and possibly, increasing the reliability of the dataset (Oppenheimer et al., 2009).

Thailand’s DI for U.S. travelers consisted of multiple positive, neutral and negative attributes and impressions. The strongest attributes representing Thailand as a destination found in this study were images related to recreational attractions and culturally-related items. Thailand’s impressions were created depending on what travelers experienced or perceived. It was often suggested by U.S. travelers that outside of the major cities it was relaxing, while it was crowded and chaotic in the cities. Thai cultures, Buddhism-related attributes, Thai food and the friendliness of Thailand were seen by U.S. travelers as unique features of the destination. Travel environments in Thailand may need to attract immediate attention from the tourism authority. These features require more promotions and/or further improvement.

The findings of this study were limited to the specific market of U.S. international travelers, and Thailand as a destination. Thus, the findings may not be generalized to other

market segments or different destinations. This study also focused on visitors, virtual-visitors, and non-visitors. It attempted to identify differences in DI perceptions among different types of visitors, and focused on verifying whether or not the virtual visitors would be treated as a new type of visitor. Future research on DIs may continue, including first-time visitors, repeat visitors, and virtual-visitors, as they responded differently in this study. They may provide good potential tourists for destination marketers.

Implication for Researchers

This study confirmed that there are needs for qualitative technique involvement when studying DIs, because of image nature and complexity. The findings from previous research using only pre-determined images did not illustrate completed dimensions of DIs, as they were found in this study (Henkel et al., 2006; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). Researchers should not assume that pre-determined items on DIs will be sufficient, and should provide some flexibility to respondents when identifying DIs. The results from this study suggested researchers to be aware of DI characteristics which may contain positive and negative features and qualities, as well as neutral ones.

Including all categories of the DI to capture a more realistic picture of a destination may be suggested for future research. This study also showed that the analysis of the DI using all three dimensions provides a better understanding of DIs, with their complexity, as recommended by Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993).

Implication for Practitioners

This study offers implications for practitioners, including destination marketers, with several marketing research ideas, when there is a need for useful marketing information to help develop effective strategies aiming for capturing a particular market. The findings suggest that different types of visitors hold different DIs for their destinations. The tourism authority should be aware of available information from different information agents, and perhaps try to have full (or at least some) control over those sources. Practitioners must ensure that the available information generates favorable and desirable DIs for their target(s). The tourism authority may also need to recognize the DI in all dimensions, as well as to their positions on the IPA. Such analyses may provide more meaningful information when developing effective strategies, and to direct destination managers on how to improve the destination and its image.

This study was able to provide meaningful information for the TAT on the U.S. market segment. For U.S. travelers, there is a need for immediate attention in improving and promoting good travel environments. The TAT should also maintain good images of recreational and culturally-related items, because they were considered to be strengths of Thailand's DI. Unique features should also be used to market the destination for U.S. travelers; however, the TAT needs to consider whether those unique features have positive, neutral or negative influences which should be identify by travelers. Overall, Thailand's DI is mostly favorable; however, there is always a need for maintaining good images and improving the weaknesses, as well as effectively and efficiently allocating resources and efforts to improve and sustain the strengths of its DI.

References

- Ahmed, Z. U. (1991). Marketing your community: Correcting a negative image. *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 31(4), 24-27.
- Azzopardi, E., & Nash, R. (2012). A critical evaluation of importance-performance analysis. *Tourism Management*, 35, 222-233. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2012.07.007
- Baloglu, S. (2000). A path analytic model of visitation intention involving information sources, socio-psychological motivations, and destination image. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 8(3), 81-90. doi:10.1300/J073v08n03_05
- Baloglu, S. (2001). Image variations of Turkey by familiarity index: Informational and experiential dimensions. *Tourism Management*, 22, 127-133. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(00)00049-2
- Baloglu, S., & McCleary, K. W. (1999a). US international pleasure travelers' images of four Mediterranean destinations: A comparison of visitors and non-visitors. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38, 144-152. doi:10.1177/004728759903800207
- Baloglu, S., & McCleary, K. W. (1999b). A model of destination image formation. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26, 868-897. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(99)00030-4
- Beerli, A., & Martin, J. D. (2004). Factors influencing destination image. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31, 657-681. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2004.01.010
- Chen, C. F., & Tsai, D. (2007). How destination image and evaluative factors affect behavioral intentions? *Tourism Management*, 28, 1115-1122. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2006.07.007
- Choi, S., Lehto, X. Y., & Morrison, A. M. (2007). Destination image representation on the web: Content analysis of Macau travel related websites. *Tourism Management*, 28, 118-129.
- Chon, K. S. (1987). An assessment of images of Korea as a tourist destination by American tourists. *Hotel and Tourism Management Review*, 3(1), 155-170.
- Chon, K. S. (1989). Understanding recreational traveler's motivation, attitude and satisfaction. *Tourism Review*, 44(1), 3-7. doi:10.1108/eb058009
- Chon, K. S. (1990). The role of destination image in tourism: A review and discussion. *Tourism Review*, 45(2), 2-9. doi:10.1108/eb058040
- Chon, K. S. (1991). Tourism destination image modification process: Marketing implications. *Tourism Management*, 12, 68-72. doi:10.1016/0261-5177(91)90030-W

- Chu, R. K., & Choi, T. (2000). An importance-performance analysis of hotel selection factors in the Hong Kong hotel industry: A comparison of business and leisure travelers. *Tourism Management, 21*, 363-377. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(99)00070-9
- Crompton, J. L. (1979). An assessment of the image of Mexico as a vacation destination and the influence of geographical location upon that image. *Journal of Travel Research, 17*(4), 18-23. doi:10.1177/004728757901700404
- Dann, G. (1981). Tourist motivation an appraisal. *Annals of Tourism Research, 8*, 187-219. doi:10.1016/0160-7383(81)90082-7
- Dann, G. M. (1996). *The language of tourism: A sociolinguistic perspective*. Oxford, England: Cab International.
- Deng, W. (2007). Using a revised importance-performance analysis approach: The case of Taiwanese hot springs tourism. *Tourism Management, 28*, 1274-1284. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2006.07.010
- Department of Tourism (2008). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php?id=7>
- Department of Tourism (2009). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php?id=6>
- Department of Tourism. (2010). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php?id=5>
- Department of Tourism. (2011). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php?id=4>
- Department of Tourism. (2012). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php>
- Department of Tourism. (2013). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php>
- Dichter, E. (1985). What's in an image? *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 2*(1), 75-81. doi:10.1108/eb038824
- Dillman, D. A. (2011). *Mail and internet surveys: The tailored design method-2007 update with new internet, visual, and mixed-mode guide*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2009). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1991). The meaning and measurement of destination image. *Journal of Tourism Studies, 2*(2), 2-12.

- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1993). The measurement of destination image: An empirical assessment. *Journal of Travel Research*, 31(4), 3-13.
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (2003). The meaning and measurement of destination image. *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 14(1), 37-48.
- Economy Watch Content. (2010). Thailand economic structure. *Economy Watch*. Retrieved from http://www.economywatch.com/world_economy/thailand/structure-of-economy.html
- Enright, M. J., & Newton, J. (2004). Tourism destination competitiveness: A quantitative approach. *Tourism Management*, 25, 777-788. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2004.06.008
- Fakeye, P. C., & Crompton, J. L. (1991). Image differences between prospective, first-time, and repeat visitors to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. *Journal of Travel Research*, 30(2), 10-16. doi:10.1177/004728759103000202
- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Field, A. (2009). *Discovering statistics using SPSS*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Frías, D. M., Rodriguez, M. A., & Castañeda, J. A. (2008). Internet vs. travel agencies on pre-visit destination image formation: An information processing view. *Tourism Management*, 29, 163-179.
- FutureBrand. (2012). *FutureBrand 2011 – 2012 country brand index*. Retrieved from http://www.futurebrand.com/images/uploads/studies/cbi/2011-2012_FutureBrand_CBI_ENG.pdf
- Gartner, W. C. (1994). Image formation process. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 2, 191-216. doi:10.1300/J073v02n02_12
- Gartner, W. C., & Hunt, J. D. (1987). An Analysis of State Image Change Over a Twelve-Year Period (1971-1983). *Journal of Travel Research*, 26(2), 15-19. doi:10.1177/004728758702600204
- Goodrich, J. N. (1978). The relationship between preferences for and perceptions of vacation destinations: Application of a choice model. *Journal of Travel Research*, 17(2), 8-13. doi:10.1177/004728757801700202
- Gunn, C. A. (1972). *Vacationscape: Designing tourist regions*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin.
- Gunn, C. A. (1988). *Vacationscape: Designing tourist regions* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Gunn, C. A. (1997). *Vacationscape: Developing tourist areas* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis.

- Haahti, A. J. (1986). Finland's competitive position as a destination. *Annals of Tourism Research, 13*, 11-35. doi:10.1016/0160-7383(86)90055-1
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R.E. (2010). *Multivariate Data Analysis: A global perspective* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hedrick-Wong, Y. & Choog, D. (2013). *Global Destination City Index*. Retrieved from http://insights.mastercard.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Mastercard_GDCI_Final_V4.pdf
- Henkel, R., Henkel, P., Agrusa, W., Agrusa, J., & Tanner, J. (2006). Thailand as a tourist destination: Perceptions of international visitors and Thai residents. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 11*, 269-287. doi:10.1080/10941660600753299
- Hollenhorst, S. J., Olson, D., & Fortney, R. (1992). Use of importance-performance analysis to evaluate state park cabins: The case of the West Virginia state park system. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, 10*(1), 1-11.
- Hunt, J. D. (1975). Image as a factor in tourism development. *Journal of Travel Research, 13*(3), 1-7. doi:10.1177/004728757501300301
- Hutcheson, G. D., & Sofroniou, N. (1999). *The multivariate social scientist: Introductory statistics using generalized linear models*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Jenkins, O. H. (1999). Understanding and measuring tourist destination images. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 1*, 1-15.
- Joppe, M., Martin, D. W., & Waalen, J. (2001). Toronto's image as a destination: A comparative importance-satisfaction analysis by origin of visitor. *Journal of Travel Research, 39*, 252-260. doi:10.1177/004728750103900302
- Lee, C. K., Lee, Y. K., & Lee, B. (2005). Korea's destination image formed by the 2002 World Cup. *Annals of Tourism Research, 32*, 839-858. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2004.11.006
- Lertputtarak, S. (2012). The relationship between destination image, food image, and revisiting Pattaya, Thailand. *International Journal of Business and Management, 7*, 111-122.
- MacInnis, D. J., & Price, L. L. (1987). The role of imagery in information processing: Review and extensions. *Journal of Consumer Research, 13*, 473-491.
- MacKay, K. J., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (1997). Pictorial element of destination in image formation. *Annals of Tourism Research, 24*, 537-565. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(97)00011-X
- MacKay, K. J., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2000). An exploration of cross-cultural destination image assessment. *Journal of Travel Research, 38*, 417-423. doi:10.1177/004728750003800411

- Martilla, J. A., & James, J. C. (1977). Importance-performance analysis. *Journal of Marketing*, 41(1), 77-79.
- Matzler, K., Bailom, F., Hinterhuber, H. H., Renzl, B., & Pichler, J. (2004). The asymmetric relationship between attribute-level performance and overall customer satisfaction: A reconsideration of the importance-performance analysis. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 33, 271-277. doi:10.1016/S0019-8501(03)00055-5
- Matzler, K., Sauerwein, E., & Heischmidt, K. (2003). Importance-performance analysis revisited: The role of the factor structure of customer satisfaction. *The Service Industries Journal*, 23, 112-129. doi:10.1080/02642060412331300912
- Mayo, E. J. (1973). *Regional images and regional travel behaviour*. The travel research association 4th annual conference, Sun Valley, ID.
- Mayo, E. J., & Jarvis, L. P. (1981). *The psychology of leisure travel. Effective marketing and selling of travel services*. Boston, MA: CBI Publishing Company, Inc.
- Medical Tourism Corporation. (2012). *Thailand medical tourism*. Retrieved from <http://www.medicaltourismco.com/thailand-hospitals/medical-tourism-Thailand.php>
- Milman, A., & Pizam, A. (1995). The role of awareness and familiarity with a destination: The central Florida case. *Journal of Travel research*, 33(3), 21-27. doi:10.1177/004728759503300304
- Murdy, S., & Pike, S. (2012). Perceptions of visitor relationship marketing opportunities by destination marketers: An importance-performance analysis. *Tourism Management*, 33, 1281-1285. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2011.11.024
- O'Leary, S., & Deegan, J. (2005). Ireland's image as a tourism destination in France: Attribute importance and performance. *Journal of Travel Research*, 43, 247-256. doi:10.1177/0047287504272025
- O'Neill, M. A., & Palmer, A. (2004). Importance-performance analysis: A useful tool for directing continuous quality improvement in higher education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 12(1), 39-52. doi:10.1108/09684880410517423
- Oh, H. (2001). Revisiting importance-performance analysis. *Tourism Management*, 22, 617-627. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(01)00036-X
- Oppenheimer, D. M., Meyvis, T., & Davidenkothe, N. (2009). Instructional manipulation checks: Detecting satisficing to increase statistical power. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 45, 867-872. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2009.03.009
- Pearce, P. L. (1982). Perceived changes in holiday destinations. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 9, 145-164. doi:10.1016/0160-7383(82)90044-5

- Phelps, A. (1986). Holiday destination image—The problem of assessment: An example developed in Menorca. *Tourism Management*, 7, 168-180. doi:10.1016/0261-5177(86)90003-8
- Pike, S. (2002). Destination image analysis—a review of 142 papers from 1973 to 2000. *Tourism Management*, 23, 541-549. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(02)00005-5
- Pike, S., & Ryan, C. (2004). Destination positioning analysis through a comparison of cognitive, affective, and conative perceptions. *Journal of Travel Research*, 42, 333-342. doi:10.1177/0047287504263029
- Pongsirirushakun, A., & Naewmalee, K. (2003). An analysis of foreign tourist expenditure in Thailand. *TDMI Quarterly Review*, 18(2), 9-16.
- Record growth in tourism arrivals to Thailand. (2013). *eTN Global Travel Industry News*. Retrieved from <http://www.eturbonews.com/34634/record-growth-tourism-arrivals-thailand>
- Rittichainuwat, B., Qu, H., & Brown, T. (2001). Thailand's international travel image: Mostly favorable. *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 42, 82-95. doi:10.1016/S0010-8804(01)80020-3
- Ruggia, J. (2012). Thailand enters top ranks of successful tourism destinations. *Travel Pulse*. Retrieved from <http://www.travelpulse.com/thailand-enters-top-ranks-of-successful-tourism-destinations.html>
- Slack, N. (1994). The importance-performance matrix as a determinant of improvement priority. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 14(5), 59-75. doi:10.1108/01443579410056803
- Song, Z. B., An, Y. M., & Zheng, P. (2006). An IPA analysis of tourism destination image: A case study of Xi'an residents' perception on the tourism destination image of Hainan, China. *Tourism Tribune*, 21(10), 26-32.
- Sörensson, A., & Friedrichs, Y. V. (2013). An importance–performance analysis of sustainable tourism: A comparison between international and national tourists. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*. doi:10.1016/j.jdmm.2012.11.002
- Stepchenkova, S., & Mills, J. E. (2010). Destination image: A meta-analysis of 2000–2007 research. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 19, 575-609. doi:10.1080/19368623.2010.493071
- Stepchenkova, S., & Morrison, A. M. (2008). Russia's destination image among American pleasure travelers: Revisiting Echtner and Ritchie. *Tourism Management*, 29, 548-560. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2007.06.003

- Tapachai, N., & Waryszak, R. (2000). An examination of the role of beneficial image in tourist destination selection. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39, 37-44. doi:10.1177/004728750003900105
- Thai tourism arrivals cross 22 million mark in 2012. (2013). *TAT News*. Retrieved from <http://www.tatnews.org/component/flexicontent/53-media-releases-2013/802-thai-tourism-arrivals-cross-22-million-mark-in-2012>
- Tourism Authority of Thailand. (2012). *Thailand travel manual 2012-2013*. Retrieved from http://www.tourismthailand.org/fileadmin/upload_img/Multimedia/Ebrochure/409/TTM2012.pdf
- Tourism Authority of Thailand. (2013). *About Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://www.tourismthailand.org>
- Uddin, W. (2012, January 14). *Megacity sustainable transportation system: Bangkok mass transit systems, Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://infrastructureglobal.com/megacity-sustainable-transportation-system-bangkok-mass-transit-systems-thailand/>
- Um, S., & Crompton, J. L. (1990). Attitude determinants in tourism destination choice. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 17, 432-448. doi:10.1016/0160-7383(90)90008-F
- Westbrook, R. A. (1987). Product/consumption-based affective responses and post purchase processes. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 24, 258-270.
- World Tourism Organization. (2011). *UNWTO tourism highlight: 2011 Edition*. Retrieved from <http://mkt.unwto.org/en/highlights>
- World Tourism Organization. (2013). *World tourism barometer*. Retrieved from <http://mkt.unwto.org/en/barometer>
- World Travel & Tourism Council. (2013). *Travel & tourism economic impact 2013: Thailand*. Retrieved from http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/thailand2013.pdf
- Yilmaz, Y., Yilmaz, Y., İçigen, E. T., Ekin, Y., & Utku, B. D. (2009). Destination image: A comparative study on pre and post trip image variations. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 18, 461-479. doi:10.1080/19368620902950022
- Yuksel, F., & Bilim, Y. (2009). Interactions between visual appeals, holiday motivations, destination personality and the self-Image: Implications for destination advertising. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Research*, 9, 75-104.
- Zhang, Y., Luo, Y., Xu, J., & Zhou, D. Q. (2009). IPA on tourism destination image of ancient town in Southern China: A case study of Xitang in Zhejiang. *East China Economic Management*, 3.
- Zhenfang, H., Xiang, L., & Yuxuan, G. (2002). Measurement and analysis on tourism destination image: Taking Nanjing as a study case. *Nankai Business Review*, 3.

Chapter 6 - Summary and Conclusions

In this final chapter, the key findings of both the qualitative and quantitative studies are presented, along with an evaluation of the research objectives as presented in Chapter 1. In addition, this chapter discusses implications for researchers and practitioners, as well as limitations and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Research

Evidence shows that there has been inconsistency for Thailand in obtaining and maintaining the U.S. tourism market over the past few years (Department of Tourism, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). This may be caused by the lack of an effective marketing strategy, particularly for the U.S. market (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008), which may further be caused by a lack of knowledge about U.S. travelers (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008).

Destination Image (DI) plays one of the most significant roles in destination selection, and the travel decision-making processes that influence travel behavior (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Goodrich, 1978; Mayo, 1973). DI, and its appeal, influence travelers to consider more attractive destinations as their choices, as well as increase their motivation to travel (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Dann, 1981; Yuksel & Bilim, 2009).

To gain knowledge of the U.S. market for Thailand, this study was conducted on the DI of Thailand by focusing on U.S. travelers (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993, 2003; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008). Additionally, in order to provide more meaningful information to Thailand's destination marketers, the gaps between consumer expectations and their satisfaction with the product were identified by conducting an Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012; Martilla & James, 1977). The IPA is a useful tool when developing strategies for a target market (Matzler, Bailom, Hinterhuber, Renzl, & Pichler, 2004); therefore, research assessing U.S. travelers' DIs of Thailand with an IPA was needed to create strategies to effectively target this market.

The guiding purpose of this study was to measure U.S. travelers' DIs of Thailand, and to identify important attributes for U.S. travelers in terms of destination decision-making. The specific objectives of this study were to:

- (1) Examine U.S. travelers' attribute-based images and holistic impressions of Thailand as a destination;
- (2) Identify the unique features of Thailand presented to U.S. travelers;
- (3) Discover the hidden qualities of Thailand;
- (4) Evaluate the differences in perceptions among visitors, virtual-visitors, and non-visitors of Thailand as a destination;
- (5) Identify important attributes of Thailand in terms of destination selection; and
- (6) Determine the positions of Thailand's destination attributes with regard to their importance for U.S. travelers.

Based on the purpose and objectives of this study, qualitative and quantitative studies were conducted, and a series of research questions and methodologies were developed for each study. The qualitative and quantitative studies were designed to achieve both similar and different research questions, as shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Specific Objectives Achieved by Qualitative and Quantitative Studies

Specific Objectives	Qualitative Study	Quantitative Study
1	✓	✓
2	✓	✓
3	✓	
4		✓
5	✓	✓
6		✓

In general, the target population of both the qualitative and quantitative studies was the citizens of the U.S. who travel internationally. Each study focused on different groups of travelers, with regard to Thailand as a destination, as shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Population and Study Samples in Qualitative and Quantitative Studies

Study	Population: U.S. International Travelers			
Qualitative Study	First-Time Visitors	Repeat Visitors	N/A	N/A
Quantitative Study	Visitors		Virtual Visitors	Non-Visitors

The qualitative study was conducted to identify existing and realistic DIs which emerged for U.S. travelers. Therefore, this study focused on those who had direct experiences with Thailand (recent visitors). Fifty-six interviews were conducted, and participants in this study included first-time (n = 39) and repeat (n = 17) visitors.

The quantitative study was designed to investigate the DIs of Thailand among U.S. international travelers, regardless of their experience with Thailand. Thus, this study included different types of visitors. The total number of completed surveys was 522, consisting of visitors (n = 173), virtual visitors (n = 175), and non-visitors (n = 174). The following section includes conclusions drawn from these studies.

Objective 1: To examine U.S. travelers’ attribute-based image and holistic impression of Thailand as a destination

The research question developed to achieve this objective was “*What are U.S. travelers’ attribute-based images and holistic impressions of Thailand as a destination?*” This question was examined using both qualitative and quantitative studies. The major findings in this objective are presented in Table 6.3.

The qualitative study explored and discovered several features of Thailand from interviews with U.S. visitors. As shown in Table 6.3, the results from the quantitative study have confirmed the findings from the qualitative study and other literature. Attribute-based images and holistic impressions found in this study included both favorable and unfavorable, as well as neutral features and qualities, as suggested by previous research (Henkel, Henkel, Agrusa, Agrusa, & Tanner, 2006; Rittichainuwat, Qu, & Brown 2001). Thailand has been developing and improving its transportation systems over the past decade (Uddin, 2012). This was revealed in some of the evidence in the findings showing a few changes in Thailand’s features and qualities over time, by comparing the results of this study with the previous research studies on Thailand’s

DIs, such as “modern cities” and “efficient transportation system” (Rittichainuwat et al., 2001). This finding supported a study by Gartner and Hunt (1987) suggesting that attributes changed slowly over time, and typically became more positive and more desirable for travelers.

Table 6.3 Thailand’s Attribute-Based Images and Holistic Impressions

DI	Qualitative Study	Quantitative Study
Attribute-Based Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural attractions • Cultural experiences • Outdoor activities & adventures • City life • Accommodation for traveling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational attractions • Travel environment • Cultural and local experiences • City life and experiences • Lack of restriction
Holistic Impression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amazing • Relaxing • Fun • Pleasure • Visual impression (Beautiful) • Friendly • Adventurous • Authentic/exotic • Crazy/wild • Chaotic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxing white sand beaches • Bustling & crowded city • Colorful cultures • Magnificent temples, Buddha & ruins • Delicious food • Stunning scenic views & landscape • Tropical weather • Friendly • Relaxing • Chaotic • Pleasant • Exotic • Colorful/lively • Exciting

Objective 2: To identify the unique features of Thailand presented to U.S. travelers

The research question designed to achieve this objective was “*What unique features do the U.S. travelers associate with Thailand?*” This objective was fulfilled using both studies. The major findings in this objective are presented in Table 6.4.

Several unique features of Thailand were discovered from the interviews with U.S. visitors, and the results from the quantitative study also confirmed the findings from the qualitative study. Unique features found in this study included positive, neutral, and negative features. The findings supported suggestions from previous studies that the unique features

consisted of attribute-based images and holistic impressions, as well as functional and psychological characteristics (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993, 2003). This study was the first to consider the unique dimension for Thailand’s DI, and clearly identified the features and qualities included in this component (Henkel et al., 2006; Lertputtarak, 2012; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000).

Table 6.4 Thailand’s Unique Features

Qualitative Study	Quantitative Study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thai culture and Buddhist way of living • Friendly people • Diverse experiences among different regions in Thailand • Wide varieties of delicious Thai food • "Look away" • Temples • Elephant trekking • Encounters with exotic animals • Floating market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thai cultures • Temples • Wide varieties of delicious Thai food • Buddhist country and way of living • Elephant trekking • Friendly people • Floating market • Tuk-Tuk • Diverse experiences among different regions in Thailand • Exotic animals • Thai traditional massage • Ladyboys

Objective 3: To discover the hidden qualities of Thailand as a destination

The research question established to achieve this research objective was “*What hidden qualities does Thailand evoke as a travel destination for U.S. travelers?*” This research objective was attained only by using the qualitative study. The findings in this research objective are the following:

- Modern cities
- Efficient local transportation systems
- Ease of travel for English speakers
- Opportunities for learning experiences
- Buddhist way of living
- Diverse experiences among different regions in Thailand

- Elephant trekking
- Encounters with exotic animals
- “Look away”
- Crazy/wild

The hidden qualities of Thailand were discovered from the interviews with U.S. visitors. Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) suggested that hidden images usually appeared to repeat visitors rather than first-time visitors; however, the results of this study revealed that hidden images appeared to both first-time and repeat visitors. The findings also suggested that hidden images existed and needed to be taken into consideration when conducting research on DI. This implied that the qualitative method should be involved in DI research studies (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993, 2003). This study is also the first to clearly identify the hidden qualities of Thailand’s DI using qualitative interviews with Thailand’s visitors (Henkel et al., 2006; Lertputtarak, 2012; Rittichainuwat et al.; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000).

Objective 4: To evaluate the differences among visitors’, virtual-visitors’ and non-visitors’ perceptions of Thailand as a destination

The research question developed to achieve this research objective was “*Are there any differences in DI among different types of U.S. visitors?*” This research objective was accomplished only by using the quantitative study. The key findings of this research objective suggested that the DIs perceived by visitors, virtual visitors, and non-visitors were different. The results showed significant differences in “city life and experiences” among visitors, virtual visitors, and non-visitors. More specifically, visitors perceived “city life and experiences” more highly than virtual visitors and non-visitors, while virtual visitors perceived this image significantly higher than non-visitors. There were also significant differences between types of visitors in “recreational attractions”, “travel environment”, “cultural and local experiences”, and “lack of restriction”. Table 5.7 illustrates the results from the ANOVA and post-hoc test. This finding supported that different degrees of previous knowledge and/or experiences with the destination affect the DI (Baloglu, 2001). The results of this study implied that the virtual visitor is another type of visitor, positioned between actual visitors and non-visitors.

Objective 5: To identify important attributes of Thailand in terms of destination selection

The research question designed to achieve this research objective was “*What are the important destination attributes of Thailand in terms of destination selection?*” This objective was fulfilled by both the qualitative and quantitative studies. The findings in the qualitative study showed that “beaches and islands” were the most important attributes, especially for first-time visitors. However, for repeat visitors “friendly people” and “opportunity for learning experiences” were found to be more important to destination selection than the others. On the other hand, the results of the quantitative study indicated that for U.S. travelers, “travel environment” and “cultural and local experiences” were considered to be important image factors in terms of destination selection, while “city life and experiences” and “recreational attractions” were slightly important for them. These factors were also identified by respondents as positive influences on their destination selection. Unlike other factors, “lack of restriction” was rated to be unimportant, and contained negative influences on destination selection.

Objective 6: To determine the positions of Thailand’s destination attributes regarding their importance for U.S. travelers

The research question established to achieve this objective was “*What are the positions of Thailand’s destination attributes regarding their importance for U.S. travelers?*” This objective was attained by using only the quantitative study. The findings in this objective are discussed in the following section.

Quadrant I “Concentrate Here”

- This category indicates the destination’s weaknesses, and requires immediate attention in this group (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012; Martilla & James, 1977).
- Seven items fell into this quadrant. Most of the travel environment image factors were included this group.
- Attributes falling in this quadrant were identified as positive influences on destination selection, except “risk of acquiring disease” which was seen as neutral or no influence.
- For visitors “safe place to travel” (3.77±0.79) had a high performance.

Quadrant II “Keep Up the Good Work”

- This group is considered to be the strengths of the destination, because it represents high importance and high performance (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012; Martilla & James, 1977).
- The majority of attributes (n = 15) fell into this quadrant. The items in this group included Thailand’s features related to recreational attractions and cultural experiences.
- All of these attributes were considered to be favorable to the different types of travelers.

Quadrant III “Low Priority”

- This category indicates minor weakness of the destination, for which one should not be overly concerned (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012; Martilla & James, 1977).
- The second largest number of attributes (n = 10) fell into this group. The items in this category consisted of attributes from lack of restriction image factors, as well as some attributes related to city life and experiences.
- The city life and experiences-related attributes that fell into this group were considered favorable, while “nightlife, party, and adult entertainment” and “children and family friendly destination” were rated as neutral or no influence on destination selection. “Friendly destination for GBLT”, “quality golf courses”, and “easy access to drugs” were seen as negative influences on destination selection.
- For visitors, “modern cities” (3.70±0.81), “adult-oriented destination” (3.73±0.85), and “nightlife, party, and adult entertainment” (3.72±0.96) had relatively high performances. For non-visitors, “language barriers” (3.52±0.94) was considered to be slightly important.

Quadrant IV “Possible Overkill”

- This category indicates the possibility of ineffective and inefficient resource allocation (Azzopardi & Nash, 2012; Martilla & James, 1977).
- Only four items fell into this quadrant. The attributes included in this group were city life and experiences-related features, and one recreational attraction.

- The attributes included in this group were considered to be favorable images in terms of travel, with the exception of “crowded and traffic jam”, which was seen as a negative influence on destination selection.
- For visitors “romantic places for newlyweds or couples” (3.61 ± 0.79) and “beautiful diving and snorkeling sites” ($M = 3.66 \pm 0.88$) had relatively low performances. For virtual visitors, “opportunity for shopping” (3.63 ± 0.75) had a relatively low performance. For non-visitors, “crowded and traffic jam” (3.36 ± 0.75) had a relatively low performance.

As mentioned previously, this study did not assume how DI was perceived, and provided some choices to the respondents to identify the attribute’s influence on destination selection. The influence of attributes on destination selection as a variable was added to the original IPA (Martilla & James, 1977), because the DI consisted of not only positive but also negative images (Rittichainuwat et al., 2001).

Based on the purpose and objectives of this study, U.S. travelers’ DIs of Thailand, as well as the position of Thailand’s attributes, were identified. The summary of the major findings showed that every objective was achieved.

Implication and Recommendations for Future Research

Implication for Researchers

This study exemplifies the need for employing qualitative methodology when studying DIs, whether it is a pure qualitative study or one using mixed-methods, because the images are complex and dynamic. However, this study did not imply which method is better when studying DIs. For me, as a researcher, the qualitative technique is like “Superman”, powerful in nature and flexible; while “Iron Man”, with his controlling pre-set functions, resembles the quantitative method. Both are powerful and do well when being used properly. Thus, the answer to the question of which method to use when studying DIs should depend on the research objectives of the study, and the suitability of the method, as suggested by Patton (2002).

The findings suggest that DI could possibly be a combination of positive, neutral, and negative features and qualities. Future researchers should consider including multiple positive, neutral, and negative features and qualities when conducting a study, in order to capture a more realistic perception of a destination. Hidden qualities may also exist, and should be considered,

because they may have a significant influence on destination selection. This study was developed with an assumption that when studying DI, the country of origin may affect travelers' perceptions of a destination. In addition, DI may change over a period of time. Therefore, research on the DI for a certain destination should repeat those DI studies after a certain period of time in order to provide a more realistic and current DI. This study also suggests that the interpretation of DI using the three dimensions of the DI's components helps to understand the complexity of DI, and supports the studies by Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) on the DI's structures.

Implication for Practitioners

This study also offers destination marketers research ideas for marketing. The results suggest that different groups of travelers hold different DIs. The tourism authority should always be aware of available information about their destination from various information agents, and perhaps try to have some control over this information. They should also ensure that the available information generates favorable and desirable DIs for their target(s). The tourism authority should seek to identify all dimensions of their DI, and categorize their destination's attributes according to importance and performance. These will help organizations to evaluate the potential target market(s), and provide meaningful information when developing marketing strategies to capture their target market(s). They can provide guidance for improving the quality and attractiveness of the destination. In addition, the results from the IPA imply the effectiveness of the current marketing plan, as well as the destination's performances.

This study provided meaningful information for the Tourism Authority of Thailand's (TAT) marketing efforts toward the U.S. market. For U.S. travelers, there is a need for immediate attention in improving and promoting good travel environments. TAT may create a campaign encouraging the U.S. travelers who just visited Thailand to submit their clip video reviewing their experiences especially ease and safety of their trip online. TAT may use these reviews to help promote Thailand to the U.S. market. More detailed information about Thailand must be provided, including suggested choices of itineraries for travelers with different travel purposes. Unique features, such as culturally-related items and the concept of the "Land of Smiles", should still be used to market the destination for U.S. travelers.

Moreover, TAT should not assume how travelers perceive DI. Travelers from different countries of origin may see destination's attributes and their influences on destination selection differently. TAT may seek to identify how each individual attribute influences destination selection, and promote important and favorable features for Thailand. Furthermore, TAT could also create promotional materials to encourage travelers to review their trips to Thailand on different social media websites and/or blogs, which will help promote Thailand as a destination. Overall, Thailand's DI is mostly favorable; however, there is always a need to maintain the strengths of the destination, improving the weaknesses, as well as effectively and efficiently allocating resources and efforts to increase travel and sustain the DI of Thailand.

Limitations

The major limitations of this study were that the findings apply only to a specific market (U.S. travelers) and a destination (Thailand). This study also collected data in only one travel season which was rainy season in Thailand. In the qualitative study, the duration of each interview was limited due to the characteristics of the airport. In some cases, the interviews may not have captured sufficient details of the travelers' sentiments. However, this study focused on capturing broad ideas about Thailand's DI from a larger number of visitors. Therefore, future research may employ more in-depth interviews to capture more details of individual reasons behind Thailand's DI. The quantitative study focused on assessing DIs of visitors, virtual-visitors, and non-visitors. This study attempted to identify differences in DI perceptions among different types of visitors, and to verify whether or not the virtual visitors were a new type of visitor, different from the others. Future research on DIs may include first-time visitors, repeat visitors, virtual-visitors, and non-visitors, and seek more details on how the degree of familiarity affects DI.

Conclusion

This study provided insight into Thailand's DI by using mixed-methods in data collection and analyses. Because of the complexity of DI, qualitative interviews provided visitors with the opportunity to identify Thailand's images with rich content and unique details in their own words. Whereas, the quantitative techniques contributed to our understanding with a large sample size and included different types of travelers. This study did not assume that travelers

perceive images in the same way, and added flexibility for respondents to express how they perceived images (i.e., favorable, unfavorable, or neutral).

The last question of the qualitative interview asked travelers to provide six words to describe their trip to extract the most obvious features and qualities of Thailand from the visitors. The concept of the question was derived from the Six-Word Memoir® which proposes the idea that when limited, words become more powerful. This technique helped to sum up each interview, which had a lot of information. The strength of this technique was that the researchers were able to identify the strongest DI of Thailand for each traveler based on this information. Another innovative method was the use of an Instructional Manipulation Check (IMC), which helped to detect participants who do not read and/or follow instructions. This was expected to help increase the reliability of the dataset (Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenkothe, 2009).

Thailand's DIs for U.S. travelers are a combination of multiple positive, neutral, and negative attributes and impressions. The strongest attributes representing Thailand as a destination found in this study were images related to recreational attractions and culture-related items. Thailand's impressions for travelers depend on their knowledge and/or experiences with the destination. It was often suggested by U.S. travelers in both qualitative and quantitative studies that outside of the major cities it was relaxing, while it was crowded and chaotic in the cities. Thai cultures, Buddhism-related attributes, Thai food, and the friendliness of Thailand were seen as unique features of the destination by U.S. travelers. The uniqueness of the destination is important for a successful destination, as it separates one destination from all of the others. Features related to travel environments in Thailand should get immediate attention from the tourism authority, because these features require more promotions and/or further improvement. This study indicated that Thailand contained many attractive attributes to travelers, and the TAT should ensure the maintenance of these qualities of Thailand. As a consequence, Thailand may become more successful and competitive. There were limitations to this study; however, there were also strengths. The implications of this study have been provided for both researchers and practitioners, with regard to future studies and implementations.

References

- Azzopardi, E., & Nash, R. (2012). A critical evaluation of importance-performance analysis. *Tourism Management, 35*, 222-233. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2012.07.007
- Baloglu, S. (2001). Image variations of Turkey by familiarity index: Informational and experiential dimensions. *Tourism Management, 22*, 127-133. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(00)00049-2
- Chen, C. F., & Tsai, D. (2007). How destination image and evaluative factors affect behavioral intentions? *Tourism Management, 28*, 1115-1122. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2006.07.007
- Dann, G. (1981). Tourist motivation an appraisal. *Annals of Tourism Research, 8*, 187-219. doi:10.1016/0160-7383(81)90082-7
- Department of Tourism (2008). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php?id=7>
- Department of Tourism (2009). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php?id=6>
- Department of Tourism. (2010). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php?id=5>
- Department of Tourism. (2011). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php?id=4>
- Department of Tourism. (2012). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php>
- Department of Tourism. (2013). *Tourist arrivals in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://61.19.236.137/tourism/th/home/tourism.php>
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1991). The meaning and measurement of destination image. *Journal of Tourism Studies, 2*(2), 2-12.
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1993). The measurement of destination image: An empirical assessment. *Journal of Travel Research, 31*(4), 3-13.
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (2003). The meaning and measurement of destination image. *Journal of Tourism Studies, 14*(1), 37-48.
- Fakeye, P. C., & Crompton, J. L. (1991). Image differences between prospective, first-time, and repeat visitors to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. *Journal of Travel Research, 30*(2), 10-16. doi:10.1177/004728759103000202

- Gartner, W. C., & Hunt, J. D. (1987). An Analysis of State Image Change Over a Twelve-Year Period (1971-1983). *Journal of Travel Research*, 26(2), 15-19. doi:10.1177/004728758702600204
- Goodrich, J. N. (1978). The relationship between preferences for and perceptions of vacation destinations: Application of a choice model. *Journal of Travel Research*, 17(2), 8-13. doi:10.1177/004728757801700202
- Henkel, R., Henkel, P., Agrusa, W., Agrusa, J., & Tanner, J. (2006). Thailand as a tourist destination: Perceptions of international visitors and Thai residents. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 11(3), 269-287. doi:10.1080/10941660600753299
- Lertputtarak, S. (2012). The relationship between destination image, food image, and revisiting Pattaya, Thailand. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 7(5), 111-122.
- Martilla, J. A., & James, J. C. (1977). Importance-performance analysis. *Journal of Marketing*, 41(1), 77-79.
- Matzler, K., Bailom, F., Hinterhuber, H. H., Renzl, B., & Pichler, J. (2004). The asymmetric relationship between attribute-level performance and overall customer satisfaction: A reconsideration of the importance-performance analysis. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 33, 271-277. doi:10.1016/S0019-8501(03)00055-5
- Mayo, E. J. (1973). *Regional images and regional travel behaviour*. The travel research association 4th annual conference, Sun Valley, ID.
- Oppenheimer, D. M., Meyvis, T., & Davidenkothe, N. (2009). Instructional manipulation checks: Detecting satisficing to increase statistical power. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 45, 867-872. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2009.03.009
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Rittichainuwat, B., Qu, H., & Brown, T. (2001). Thailand's international travel image: Mostly favorable. *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 42, 82-95. doi:10.1016/S0010-8804(01)80020-3
- Stepchenkova, S., & Morrison, A. M. (2008). Russia's destination image among American pleasure travelers: Revisiting Echtner and Ritchie. *Tourism Management*, 29, 548-560. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2007.06.003
- Tapachai, N., & Waryszak, R. (2000). An examination of the role of beneficial image in tourist destination selection. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39, 37-44. doi:10.1177/004728750003900105
- Uddin, W. (2012, January 14). *Megacity sustainable transportation system: Bangkok mass transit systems, Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://infrastructureglobal.com/megacity-sustainable-transportation-system-bangkok-mass-transit-systems-thailand/>

Yuksel, F., & Bilim, Y. (2009). Interactions between visual appeals, holiday motivations, destination personality and the self-Image: Implications for destination advertising. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Research*, 9, 75-104.

Appendix A - Interview

Interview Script

(Script) Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is Sarinya. I am a PhD candidate from Kansas State University. I'm conducting research on tourism in Thailand. Do you mind if I ask you a few questions? *(If yes, continue.)* Are you an American citizen? *(If yes, continue.)* What is your purpose of visiting Thailand? *(If not for employment, continue; If business, ask, "Did you have time to travel around or sightseeing, if yes, continue; If not qualified, say, "Thank you very much for your time. Unfortunately, we're focusing Americans who are pleasure travelers or at least had chance to travel around.")* I would like to ask you some questions about your trip to Thailand. I will offer you a Thai souvenir as an appreciation for your time. It will take about 10 minutes or so to answer all the questions. Are you willing to help?

Thank you very much for your participation. The purpose of the study is to find out what US travelers think about Thailand, and to identify what helped you decide to travel here. Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time. I would like to ask for your permission to audiotape our interview to use for further analysis. However, your identity will be kept confidential. Is that alright? *(If yes, continue.)*

Thank you very much. First, could you please give me brief information about you by checking the items on this screen? *(Use a tablet/paper to collect demographic data.)*

Items to collect demographic information

Please indicate your age range:

- under 18 years old
- 18-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- Over 65 years old

Please indicate your annual household income level:

- Under \$25,000
- \$25,000 - \$49,000
- \$50,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$199,999
- \$200,000 - \$299,999
- \$300,000 or greater
- Prefer not to answer

Please indicate your ethnicity (Please check all that apply):

- White
- Black
- African American
- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish
- American Indian, or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Others (Please Specify) _____
- Prefer not to answer

Interview Questions:

- How many times have you visited Thailand including this trip?
- How long were you in Thailand this time?
- What influenced you to choose Thailand as the destination? (*Use probe questions as needed.*)
 - *What was it about Thailand? (What were specific things you expected to see/do?)*
 - *Where did you receive that information? (Where did you receive information about Thailand?)*
 - *Why did they recommend Thailand? (Family's/Friends' Recommendation)*
 - *What information about Thailand did your organization provide? (Business Travelers)*

- Which parts of Thailand have you visited?
 - Where have you been in Thailand?
 - What did you do in Thailand?
- If someone were considering a trip to Thailand, what would you recommend to him or her?
- When you get home and are telling people about your trip to Thailand, what will you tell them? *(Use probe questions as needed.)*
 - *Before you came to Thailand, what did you expect to experience?*
 - *What will you tell your friends/family that you especially enjoyed?*
- What did you find out while traveling in Thailand this time that you did not expect or did not know before? *(Use probe questions as needed.)*
 - *How did you like that/those experience(s)?*
- Where else have you traveled internationally?
 - Where have you been in Asia?
- What are distinct or unique features of Thailand compared to other destinations? *(Use probe questions as needed.)*
 - *How does Thailand compare to other destination (in Asia)?*
- To sum up, could you give me 6 words to conclude your experience in Thailand?

(Upon finishing the interview) Thank you very much for your time. Here is a Thai souvenir as my appreciation to you. I hope you're coming back to Thailand again. Have a safe trip.

(Complete the demographic information in the tablet: gender, travel alone/with a group and choice of airline.)

Appendix B - Survey

Screening Questions

Are you a citizen of the United States?

- Yes
- No

Are you 18 or older?

- Yes
- No

Have you traveled outside of the North America (United States, Canada and Mexico)?

- Yes
- No

If Yes Is Not Selected For Any Of These Items, Then Link To Terminate

Informed Consent

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to measure destination image of Thailand and identify important attributes in terms of decision-making among U.S. travelers. The questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. The confidentiality of your response is guaranteed as we do not have any access to your contact information. There is no foreseeable risk attached to your participation. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely without penalty.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Sarinya Sungkatavat, at (785) 317-6477, sarinya@ksu.edu or Dr. Junehee Kwon, jkwon@ksu.edu.

If you need or want to discuss any aspect of the research with an official of the university or the IRB, please contact Dr. Rick Scheidt, or Dr. Jerry Jaax at 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

I have read and understood the above consent form and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described.

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Link To Terminate

Survey Questionnaire

Have you visited Thailand?

- Yes
- No

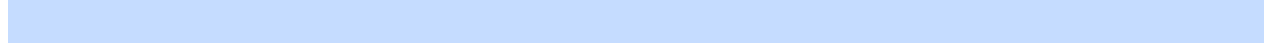
Have you looked or sought for information about traveling to Thailand? (i.e., from travel website, ads, promotion, travel manual, travel agency, etc.)

- Yes
- No

Filtering to Groups

If 'Yes'(1) Is Selected	=	Visitors	(n=170)
If 'Yes'(1) and 'Yes'(2) Are Selected	=	Virtual Visitors	(n=170)
If 'Yes'(1) and 'No'(2) Are Selected	=	Non-visitors	(n=170)

Terminate when quota is full for each category



When traveling internationally, what is the main purpose of most of your trips?

- Vacation
- Business trip
- Visiting family, relatives, friends, etc.
- Others (Please Specify) _____

What are other reasons that you travel? Please check all that apply.

- Vacation
- Business trip
- Visiting family, relatives, friends, etc.
- Others (Please Specify) _____
- None

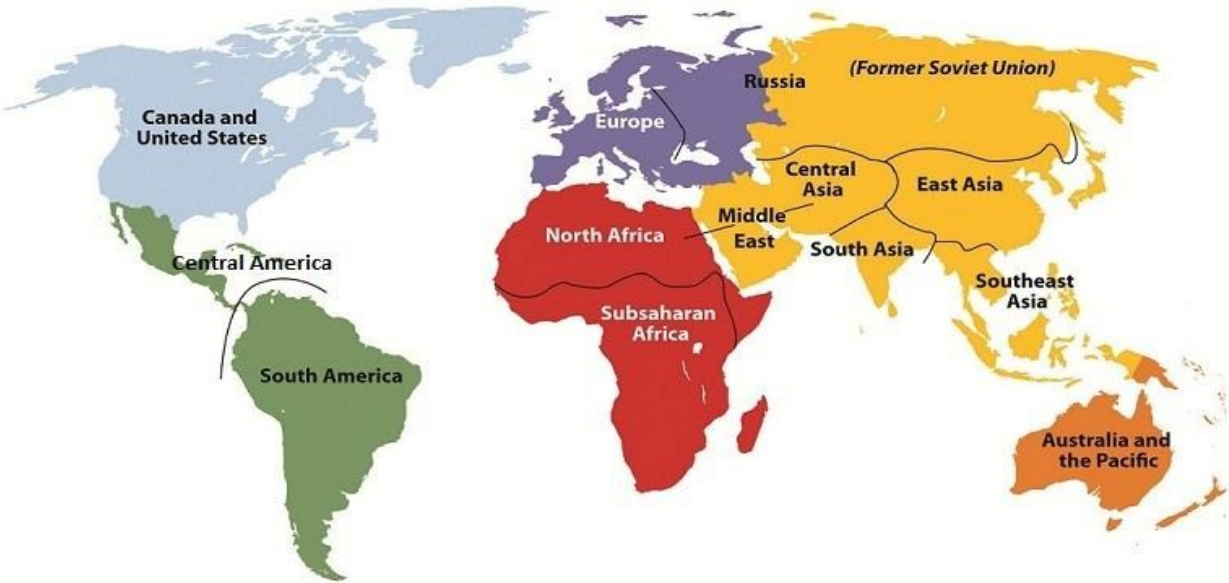
How often do you travel internationally?

- 2 or more times a year
- Once a year
- Once in 2 years
- Once in more than 2 years

When was the last time you traveled internationally?

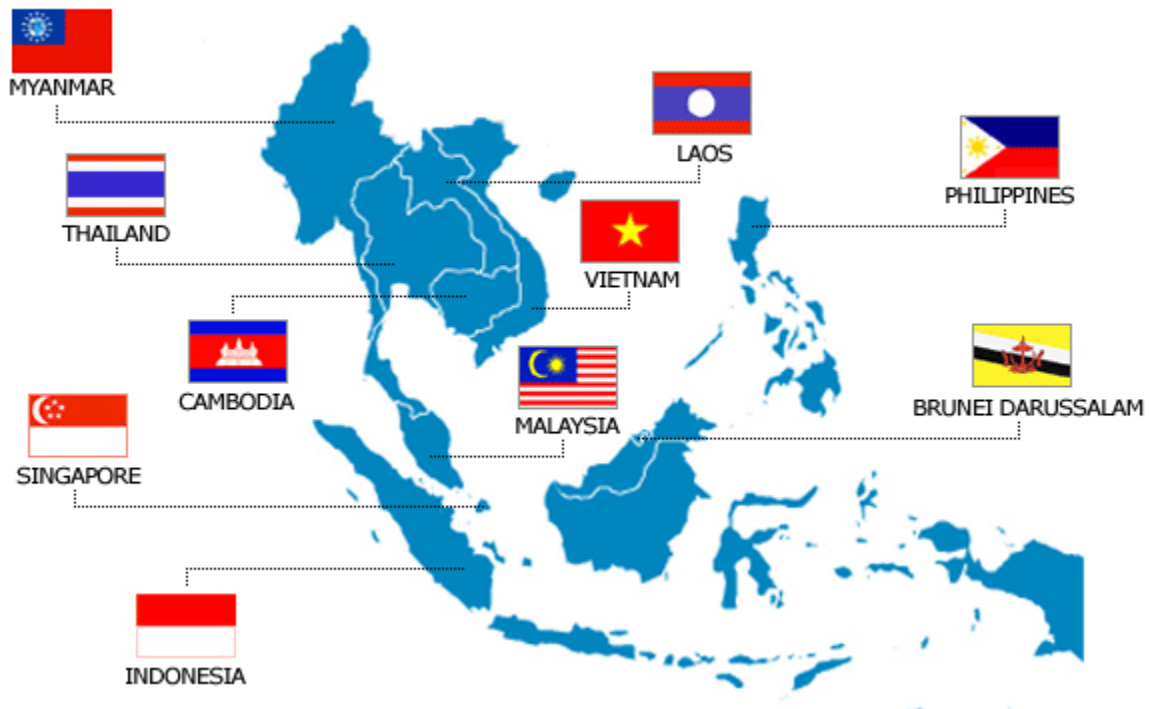
- Within the past 6 months
- 6 to 12 months ago
- 13 to 24 months ago
- Greater than 24 months ago

Where have you traveled internationally? Please check all regions that apply.



Shown If 'Southeast Asia' Is Selected

Where have you traveled in Southeast Asia? Please check all countries that apply.



How do you usually plan your trip?

- I usually plan my trips on my own
- I usually have someone else plan my trip for me (i.e. my family, partners, secretary, etc.)

Shown If 'I usually plan my trips on my own' Is Selected

What source(s) do you usually use to arrange your international trip? (Please select all that apply)

- The Internet (travel websites, blogs, etc.)
- Travel guide books
- Other (Please Specify) _____

Shown If 'I usually have someone else plan my trip for me (i.e. my family, partners, secretary, etc.)' Is Selected

What source(s) does your representative usually use to arrange your international trip? (Please select all that apply)

- The Internet
- Travel guide books
- A travel agent
- Other (Please Specify) _____
- I don't know

What time of the year do you most prefer to travel?

- December-February
- March-May
- June-August
- September-November

When you travel internationally, how long would your trip likely be?

- Less than 1 week
- 7 to 13 days
- 14 to 20 days
- 21 to 30 days
- More than 1 months

When you travel internationally, who would you most likely travel with?

- Alone
- With friends
- With boyfriend / girlfriend / spouse
- With families, including kids
- Other (Please Specify) _____

In the following section, you will be asked two (2) different types of questions about how you select a destination. Please indicate: (1) How unimportant/important each item is to you when selecting travel destination(s); and (2) If each attribute has either negative, neutral or positive influence on your destination decision.

	Importance					Influence		
	Not Important at all	Somewhat unimportant	Undecided/neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Beautiful architecture and buildings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interesting customs and cultures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural and historical attractions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendly people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scenic and natural beauty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A variety of cuisines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability of quality accommodations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A variety of outdoor activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunity for adventure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restful and relaxing places	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Modern cities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Beautiful beaches and islands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For this item, please select "Extremely Important" and "Negative"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Continue) In the following section, you will be asked two (2) different types of questions about how you select a destination. Please indicate: (1) How unimportant/important each item is to you when selecting travel destination(s); and (2) If each attribute has either negative, neutral or positive influence on your destination decision.

	Importance					Influence		
	Not Important at all	Somewhat unimportant	Undecided/neutral	Somewhat important	Extremely Important	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Beautiful diving and snorkeling sites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children and family friendly destination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adult-oriented destination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safe place to travel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunity for shopping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nightlife, party and adult entertainment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stable political situation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of pollution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Risk of acquiring disease (AIDS, H1N1, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Language barriers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleanliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pleasant climate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Continue) In the following section, you will be asked two (2) different types of questions about how you select a destination. Please indicate: (1) How unimportant/important each item is to you when selecting travel destination(s); and (2) If each attribute has either negative, neutral or positive influence on your destination decision.

	Importance					Influence		
	Not Important at all	Somewhat unimportant	Undecided/neutral	Somewhat important	Extremely Important	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Efficient local transportation system	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality golf courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendly destination for gay, bisexual, lesbian & transgender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good value for the money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunity for learning experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality health and wellness services (massage, spa, alternative healthcare, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easy access to drugs (cocaine, marijuana, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traditional festivities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Romantic places for newlyweds or couples	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Crowded and traffic jam	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easy access to Thailand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability of English signs and directions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The next section will ask you questions regarding "THAILAND" as a destination.

Please answer the following questions based on your best knowledge.

From which source(s) did you receive information about 'Thailand' Please select all that apply.

- News
- Movies
- Travel Magazines
- Travel agency
- Family and/or friend who had visited Thailand
- Online reviews/ blogs
- Major travel websites (i.e., Trip Advisors, Expedia, etc.)
- Thailand tourism brochures, ads, website
- My own experiences in Thailand
- Other (Please Specify) _____
- None

For each of the following items, what is your level of agreement that the descriptor contributes to Thailand’s image as a travel destination?

	Image of Thailand				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Beautiful architecture and buildings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interesting customs and cultures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural and historical attractions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendly people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scenic and natural beauty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A variety of cuisines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability of quality accommodations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A variety of outdoor activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunity for adventure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restful and relaxing places	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Modern cities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Beautiful beaches and islands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Continue) For each of the following items, what is your level of agreement that the descriptor contributes to Thailand's image as a travel destination?

	Image of Thailand				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Beautiful diving and snorkeling sites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children and family friendly destination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adult-oriented destination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safe place to travel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunity for shopping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nightlife, party and adult entertainment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stable political situation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of pollution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Risk of acquiring disease (AIDS, H1N1, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Language barriers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleanliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pleasant climate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Continue) For each of the following items, what is your level of agreement that the descriptor contributes to Thailand's image as a travel destination?

	Image of Thailand				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Efficient local transportation system	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality golf courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendly destination for gay, bisexual, lesbian & transgender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good value for the money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunity for learning experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality health and wellness services (massage, spa, alternative healthcare, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easy access to drugs (cocaine, marijuana, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traditional festivities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Romantic places for newlyweds or couples	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easy access to Thailand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Crowded and traffic jam	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability of English signs and directions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

When you think of Thailand as a travel destination, what images or characteristics do come to your mind?

How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting Thailand?

What are some tourist attractions and characteristics of Thailand that are distinctive or unique compared to other destinations? Please check all that apply and specify if needed.

- Friendly people
- Temples
- Buddhist country and way of living
- Thai cultures
- Wide varieties of delicious Thai food (e.g., pad-Thai, tom-yum, papaya salad, etc.)
- Thai traditional massage
- Floating market
- Tuk-Tuk (Thai auto-rikshaw)
- Elephant trekking
- Chance to encounter with exotic animals (e.g., tiger, crocodile, monkey, elephant, python, etc.)
- Ladyboys or katoeys (a transvestite or transsexual)
- Diverse experience among different regions in Thailand
- Other (Please Specify) _____
- None
- I don't know

Move all attributes provided on the left, to right side to indicate if they have positive, neutral or negative influences for your travel decision.

- Friendly people
- Temples
- Buddhist country and way of living
- Thai cultures
- Wide varieties of delicious Thai food
- Thai traditional massage
- Floating market
- Tuk-Tuk
- Elephant trekking
- Chance to encounter with exotic animals
- Ladyboys
- Diverse experience among different regions in Thailand
- Other (If specified in previous question)

Positive Influence	Undecided/ Neutral	Negative Influence

If you have a chance to travel, how likely will you consider Thailand as one of your destination choices?

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Undecided
- Likely
- Very Likely

How likely will you travel to Thailand?

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Undecided
- Likely
- Very Likely

How likely is it that you will recommend Thailand to your friends or relatives?

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Undecided
- Likely
- Very Likely

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Decline to answer

What year were you born?

What is your ethnicity / race? (Please check all that apply)

- White/Caucasian
- African American
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Native American
- Pacific Islander
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

What is your annual household income range?

- Under \$25,000
- \$25,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,999
- \$150,000 - \$199,999
- \$200,000 - \$299,999
- \$300,000 or greater
- Prefer not to answer

In what state do you currently reside?

How many children under 18 years old live in your household?

Appendix C - Qualitative Interview Respondent Profile

Inter- view No.	First-time visitors	Repeat visitors	Male	Female	Travel alone	Travel with group	18-34 years old	34 years and older	American origins Airlines	Other airlines
1	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓
2	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓
3	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓
4	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓
6	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓
7	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>

Inter- view No.	First-time visitors	Repeat visitors	Male	Female	Travel alone	Travel with group	18-34 years old	34 years and older	American origins Airlines	Other airlines
19	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
21	✓	✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
22	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓
23	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓
24	✓✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓✓
25	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓
26	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓
27	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓
28	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓
29	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓
30	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	✓
31	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
32	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
33	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
34	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
35	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
36	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
37	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/>

Inter- view No.	First-time visitors	Repeat visitors	Male	Female	Travel alone	Travel with group	18-34 years old	34 years and older	American origins Airlines	Other airlines
38	✓	□	□	✓	✓	□	□	✓	✓	□
39	✓	□	□	✓	□	✓	□	✓	✓	□
40	□	✓	✓	□	✓	□	□	✓	✓	□
41	✓✓✓	□	✓✓	✓	□	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	□	✓✓✓	□
42	□	✓	✓	□	✓	□	□	✓	✓	□
43	✓	□	✓	□	✓	□	✓	□	✓	□
44	✓✓✓✓	□	✓✓✓✓	□	□	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓	□	✓✓✓✓	□
45	✓✓	□	✓	✓	□	✓✓	✓✓	□	✓✓	□
46	□	✓	✓	□	□	✓	□	✓	✓	□
47	□	✓	✓	□	□	✓	✓	□	✓	□
48	□	✓	✓	□	✓	□	□	✓	✓	□
49	□	✓✓	□	✓✓	□	✓✓	✓✓	□	✓✓	□
50	✓	□	□	✓	□	✓	✓	□	✓	□
51	□	✓	✓	□	✓	□	□	✓	□	✓
52	✓	□	✓	□	✓	□	□	✓	□	✓
53	✓✓	□	✓	✓	□	✓✓	□	✓✓	□	✓✓
54	✓✓	□	✓	✓	□	✓✓	✓✓	□	✓✓	□
55		□	✓	□	✓	□	✓	□	□	✓
56	□	✓✓	✓	✓	□	✓✓	□	✓✓	□	✓✓

Note: ✓= an individual (n=1), □= None

Appendix D - Glossary

- Destination image:** A traveler's general perceptions about a place as a destination, including objective knowledge, prejudice, imagination, ideas, impressions and beliefs.
- Elephant trekking:** A ride on an elephant through authentic jungle paths or beach paths for stunning panoramic sea views.
- Floating market:** A local open-air market, located next to a body of river where goods, especially fresh food and fruits are sold from boats.
- International Traveler:** A visitor who travels to a destination outside of his/her country of residence when: (a) the country visited is not the traveler's usual environment; (b) the length of stay in the country visited is no more than twelve months; and (c) he/she is not employed by a resident entity in the country visited.
- Ladyboy:** A transvestite or transsexual, known as "katoey" in Thailand.
- Look away:** An action of people disregarding (looking away from) illegal activities that they thought were not to be taken seriously, such as four riders on motorbikes with no helmets, prostitution, and street vendors at places where they are not allowed.
- Non-visitor:** A traveler who has not taken a trip to an identified destination.
- Thai massage:** A unique massage therapy developed in Thailand focusing on sen and energy lines on human body to clear blockages in these lines to stimulate relaxation and energy.
- Tuk-Tuk:** A three-wheeler or an auto rickshaw used as a public transportation choice in the cities throughout Thailand.
- Virtual-visitor:** A traveler who has not visited an identified destination, but has virtual experience with the destination. This group of visitors normally has interest in or intention to visit the destination and receives information from commercial sources and/or reviews/opinions about the destination; such as brochures, ads, travel websites, trip advice, reviews, etc.

Visitor:

A traveler taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited. A visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor), if his/her trip includes an overnight stay, or as a same-day visitor (or excursionist) otherwise.

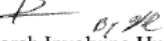
Appendix E - IRB Approval



University Research and Compliance Office

TO: Junehee Kwon
HMD
108 Justin

Proposal Number: 6747

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair 
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 07/09/2013

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, " Assessment of the U.S. Travelers' Destination Image of Thailand "

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for one year from the date of this correspondence, pending "continuing review."**

APPROVAL DATE: 07/09/2013

EXPIRATION DATE: 07/09/2014

Several months prior to the expiration date listed, the IRB will solicit information from you for federally mandated "continuing review" of the research. Based on the review, the IRB may approve the activity for another year. **If continuing IRB approval is not granted, or the IRB fails to perform the continuing review before the expiration date noted above, the project will expire and the activity involving human subjects must be terminated on that date. Consequently, it is critical that you are responsive to the IRB request for information for continuing review if you want your project to continue.**

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

- There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.
- There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review at least annually, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

