A Study on Myanmar Tourists’ Loyalty Based on Thailand as a Destination Brand

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate Myanmar tourists’ loyalty toward Thailand as a destination brand by testing the relationships of brand loyalty with brand awareness, brand image, brand quality, and brand value. This study is based on non-probability convenience and judgment sampling with 384 respondents of Myanmar tourists who have visited Thailand during October and November 2015. The questionnaires were distributed at the air ticket check-in areas of Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueng International airports in Bangkok. The data were analyzed by descriptive and inferential analyses. The Pearson’s correlation was used to achieve favorable hypotheses testing. The findings of the hypotheses indicated that there is a moderate positively significant relationship between brand awareness and brand loyalty. It was showed that the majority of Myanmar tourists have awareness of Thailand as a destination since most of them know/ hear about Thailand before visiting. Additionally, there is a strong positively significant relationship between brand image and brand loyalty, brand quality and brand loyalty, and brand value and brand loyalty. In Myanmar respondents’ point of view, they have a positive image of Thailand as a destination brand. Also they believed that Thailand has high level of brand quality as majority of them expressed Thailand was the best destination choice for visiting. Besides, they believed Thailand provides value for money. Finally, it was also found that the most influent information source besides friends and family was social media (e.g. facebook) and followed by TV, movie, travel agents, and Youtube. Additionally, this research would help tourism related organizations such as national tourism organizations, tour operators and travel agents, hotels to be more understanding about the loyalty of Myanmar tourists toward Thailand as a destination brand.

Key words: Myanmar Tourists’ Loyalty, Destination Brand, Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Brand Quality, Brand Value, and Brand Loyalty

Introduction

Tourism is definitely an important and profitable industry for many countries which are paying attention to drive an investment in own country. And the contribution that tourism has to the continuous economic growth and development of the tourism industry leading to the competition of promoting destinations in each country (Bierzynski, 2011). Moreover, tourists today are more educated, informed, demanding and experienced. Consequently, they expect good value, quality, and higher standards. The changes are happening on the demand side, coupled with recent development in information and communication technology that has influenced all aspects of marketing strategy and tourist behavior. From a marketing perspective, the requirement of meeting or exceeding tourists’ needs and wants should be balanced against the growing requirement of places and destinations, to develop and protect destination attractions, assets and resources in the most sustainable way (Kozak & Baloglu, 2011). The powerful marketing tool for a destination to differentiate itself from competitors is the destination branding and the contemporary national tourism organizations adapt it to their destination to win over the tourist’s mind.

A successful destination branding not only attracts new customers, but also maintains the existing customers. When the existing customers become loyal to the products and services, they continue to utilize the products and even recommend or share their positive experiences to others like friends and family. Therefore, customer’s loyalty is very important to any organizations and industries including tourism industry because it might bring new customers and repeat purchase in products and services. According to Mechinda and Anuwichanont (2014), the favorable brand awareness was found to be the indicator of repeat purchase and tourists’ loyalty. Pike and Bianchi (2013) also indicated that brand image was found to be the most important predictor to the destination loyalty as well as the most crucial variable to the intention to revisit of the tourists (Mechinda, Serirat, Popaijit, Lertwannawit & Aunwichanont, 2010). Brand value was the main driven force for the destination loyalty, according to Pike and Bianchi (2013). Next, the perceived brand quality were influence on the destination choice, products and services consumption, and revisiting to the destination, according to Kim, Holland, and Han (2013). Therefore this research explored how Thailand destination brand attributes (brand awareness, brand image, brand quality, and brand value) are meaningful and significantly related to the loyalty of Myanmar tourists.