DESTINATION BRANDING AND TRAVELLING PROPENSITY TO
TRAVEL TO THAILAND : EXPLORING FROM CHINESE TOURISTS'
VIEWPOINT

by

MINGHAO LI

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts in Tourism Management

Graduate School of Business
Assumption University
Bangkok, Thailand

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Advisor and Committee Members/Examiners. It has been approved and accepted by all members of that committee, and it has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Tourism Management in the Graduate School of Tourism Management of Assumption University of Thailand.

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to study the roles of Thailand destination branding on Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand. Extensive literature reviews have helped identify some shortcomings of previous studies. Building upon these reviews, this study fully used the destination branding theory to predict the propensity of Chinese tourists who are vital to the development of Thailand tourism industry.

Specific research hypotheses were established to test whether there are relationships between Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand and destination brand of Thailand which includes physical attributes, brand personality and brand symbol, and whether different socio-demographic groups hold different propensities to travel to Thailand. Data were analyzed by using Pearson Correlation, One-way AVOVA, and Independent T-test.

The findings of this study indicate that the Thailand destination brand-'Happiness on Earth' being developed now plays a relative important role in affecting Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand since the results reveal that most of attributes promoted by Thailand destination branding have positive relationships with Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand, and also there is a positive relationship between Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand and brand personality of Thailand.

But the destination marketers in Thailand have to elaborate the destination brand being built and develop it in a sustainable and consistent way. Because some attributes, such as festivals, should be improved or developed more intensively since the results showed that there was no relationship between them, and there is no positive relationship between Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand and brand symbol of Thailand.

Recommendations suggest that the destination marketer of Thailand should develop a destination brand that can be sustained for a long time or ever.
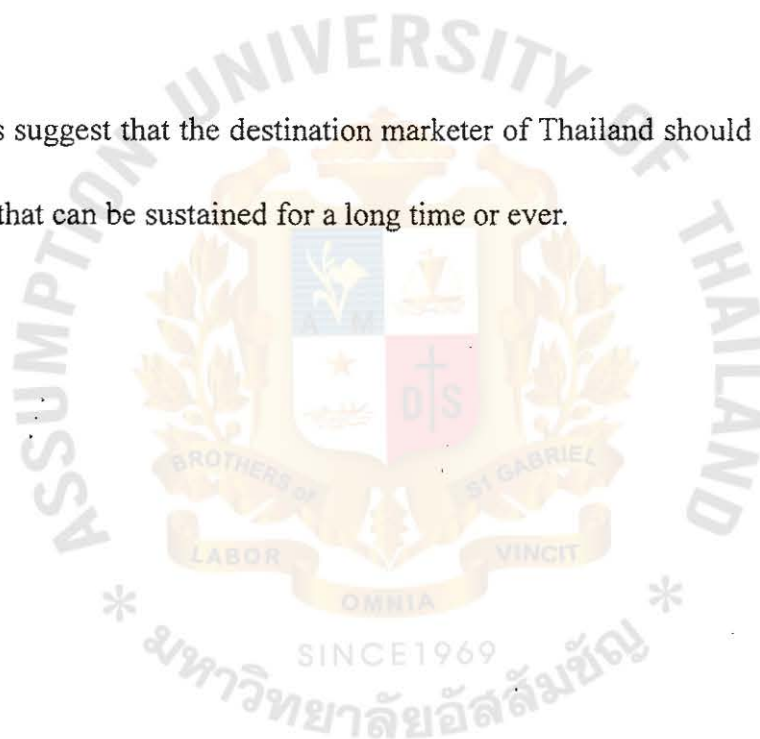
Acknowledgement

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to all the people and organizations that have supported me in the completion of this research. Without their support and kind help, it would not have been easy for me to conduct this study smoothly.

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my kind advisor, Dr. Jutamas Wisansing who contributed her valuable time to provide indispensable guidance and suggestions throughout my research. Deep appreciation also goes to Dr. Chanchai, Dr. Adarsh and Dr. Weerakhan for their important comments and suggestions for my study.

I would also like to thank for the kind help of HuBei Tianlu travel agency and Ms. Sun Feng who was in charge of the field survey. Without their help, this study would not have been finished efficiently and punctually.

I also really appreciate my parents and friends for their understanding and unconditional support during this tough period. This memorable period will always be deep in my heart.

Li Minghao

TABLE OF CONTENT

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter I   Generalities of the Study

1.1 Background of Study

Today tourism plays an increasing and crucial role in the growth of the global economy. In the 1990s, according to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), international tourism arrivals grew by 3.1 percent, the number of international tourism arrivals reaching a total of 715 million (WTO, 2003). Tourism generates directly and indirectly 11.7 percent of global gross domestic product and nearly 200 million jobs (WTO, 2001). By 2020, the number of people traveling internationally has been forecasted to increase to 1.56 billion and the revenue from international tourism should gross more than $2 trillion (WTO, 2000).

Despite the promising growth prospect, global competition within destinations is more intense. Most destinations have superb five-star resorts and attractions; every country claims a unique culture, landscape and heritage. As a result, the need for destinations to create a unique identity is more critical than ever (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002). Indeed, it has become the basis for survival within a globally competitive marketplace. Destination branding is perhaps the most powerful marketing weapon available to contemporary destination marketers confronted by tourists who are increasingly seeking lifestyle fulfillment and experience rather than recognizing differentiation in the more tangible elements of the destination products such as accommodation and attractions (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002).

1.1.1 Travel Market in Thailand

Thailand, a nation of more than 55 million people, is one of the developing world's most dynamic economies. A favourable economic climate in the 1980s propelled the

1

Thai economy into achieving one of the highest growth rates in the world with an average annual gross domestic product (GDP) of 10 percent from 1986 to 1990. Tourism plays an important role in the growth of the Thai economy as the country shifts from an agricultural base to a more industrialized and service-based economy. Tourism is Thailand's largest source of foreign-exchange earnings, with receipts accounting for about 5 percent of the country's GDP. The rapid growth of tourism in conjunction with strong international demand yielded high economic returns, stimulated the nation's economy, created jobs, encouraged investments, and raised the country's standard of living (TAT, 1993). The period 1987-1996 can be termed the Golden Decade of Thai Tourism. Over this period, the unprecedented economic growth of Thailand also stimulated local tourism. The international tourist arrivals continued increasing from 7.22 million to 10.80 million between 1997 and 2002. The war in Iraq and the SARS outbreak severely affected the tourism industry in Thailand. These events had negative effects on incoming tourism figures in late 2002 and the first half of 2003. On the currency side, the strength of the US dollar and particularly the euro against the baht has encouraged more European and American tourists as well as Japanese, Koreans, and Singaporeans to come to Thailand. After the war in Iraq and the SARS outbreak, the Thai government has been actively encouraging foreigners to travel to Thailand via Thai representatives abroad, including embassies, consulates, tourist offices and Thai Airways offices. This is only part of the plan by the Thai government to position Thailand as the top tourist destination in Asia due to its exotic beaches, unique culture, gastronomy, as well as the friendliness of their people. Thus, Thailand is not only the perfect country for leisure but also for business because of its advantaged geographical location in the heart of Southeast Asia (TAT, 2004).

1.1.2 Chinese Tourists' Contribution to Thai Travel Market

These recent years the booming economy in China and simplified procedures have boosted the number of Chinese travelling overseas past 16.5 million people in 2002. China is already the largest out-going tourist market in the Asian region, and the increase in mainland Chinese tourists to international destinations is a trend that will increase in the foreseeable future. Because of specific reasons such as accessibility, Thailand is now one of main tourism destinations for Chinese tourists. During the year of 2002, the number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand amounted to 797,976. To go sightseeing and spend holidays in Thailand has become fashionable for Chinese people. According to the statistics of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), China was the third largest generator of tourists for Thailand in 2002 (see table 1.1). Though the SARS outbreak in the region caused a decline of 28.77% in Chinese arrivals during January - September 2003, the arrivals picked up again quickly after the crisis faded. Moreover, now the TAT is conducting a campaign to try to attract as high as one million Chinese tourists at the first half of 2005. "We are doing this because we want to attract more Chinese tourists in the future," said the governor of TAT.

Table 1.1 Thailand's international tourist's arrivals in 2002 and 2003

Year	2002		Year	2003	
Country of Nationality			Country of Nationality		
ASEAN	2,474,523	22.9	ASEAN	2,504,231	25.0
Japan	1,239,421	11.5	Japan	1,042,349	10.4
China	797,976	7.4	U.K.	736,520	7.4
S. Korea	704,649	6.5	S. Korea	695,313	7.0
U.K.	704,416	6.5	China	606,635	6.1
Taiwan	674,366	6.2	U.S.A.	514,863	5.1
U.S.A.	555,353	5.1	Taiwan	501,573	5.0
Germany	411,049	3.8	Hong Kong	411,242	4.1
Australia	351,508	3.3	Germany	386,532	3.9
Hong Kong	335,816	3.1	Australia	291,872	2.9
India	280,641	2.6	India	253,752	2.5
France	271,395	2.5	France	237,690	2.4
Sweden	215,894	2.0	Sweden	204,002	2.0
Netherlands	150,138	1.4	Netherlands	138,839	1.4
Canada	135,668	1.3	Canada	137,963	1.4
Italy	129,293	1.2	Switzerland	107,896	1.1
Switzerland	118,827	1.1	Italy	97,526	1.0
Israel	98,691	0.9	Russia	89,329	0.9
Denmark	90,480	0.8	Denmark	82,828	0.8
Norway	74,607	0.7	Norway	71,885	0.7
New Zealand	73,710	0.7	Israel	69,837	0.7
Russia	70,692	0.7	New Zealand	69,387	0.7
Others	839,954	7.8	Others	752,389	7.5
Total	10,799,067	100.0	Total	10,004,453	100.0
Overseas Thai	73,909	—	Overseas Thai	77,656	—
Total	10,872,976	—	Total	10,082,109	—

Source: Immigration Bureau, Police Department, Thailand

1.1.3 Introduction of Destination Branding

Destination branding as a strategic marketing activity has increased significantly over the last quarter century (Ward, 1998). The reason for this is that in the highly

4

competitive and dynamic global tourism environment, there is a need to develop a clear identity, or 'brand' based on reality, while also reflecting the core strengths and 'personality' of its product. Brands have been considered a marketer's major tool for creating product differentiation because product features are easily copied (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). As Ritchie and Crouch (2000) said, a destination brand is a name, symbol, logo, work mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination. More often than not, it is the brand strategy that will determine who is successful in today's competitive business environment. A strong and clear state brand can increase consumer confidence in its attractions and consumers predisposition to purchase them (Ahmed, 1991).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The new economic order in the world today has transformed economic development into a market challenge. Nations compete with other nations and strive to devise sources of competitive advantage (Porter, 1989). Thus, today there are more reasons why nations must manage and control their branding. In the tourism industry, the need to attract tourists requires that countries or destinations adopt strategic marketing management tools and conscious branding. But very few destinations notice this trend and still use dated marketing methods to promote themselves. As a result, they lost the opportunities to possess a powerful and distinctive international brand that will benefit their future development.

Moreover, Thailand is now one of the main tourism destinations for Chinese tourists. During the year of 2002, the number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand amounted

5

to 797,976. China ranked as the third largest tourism generator to Thailand, after Japan and Malaysia (TAT, 2002). More potential tourists from China expressed their interests in visiting Thailand in the near future. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the destination choice behavior of Chinese tourists, which is influenced by the branding strategy of Thailand since various academics supported the theory that the brand is one of the basic motives for the consumers' choice of a particular product. Furthermore, in spite of the significance of the Chinese travel market to the Thai tourism industry, only a limited number of studies on their behaviour, especially destination choice behaviour, have been conducted.

1.3 Research Objectives

To respond to the research problems, the following two major objectives were developed:

1. To study the roles of Thailand destination branding on Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand;

2. To derive recommendations and suggestions for destination marketers and tour operators to formulate more effective promotional strategies and marketing plans.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The focus of this research is to aim at identifying the role of branding Thailand on Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand, in other words, studying the relationship between the brand of Thailand as a tourism destination and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand. The target population of this study is limited to those Chinese tourists who have not visited Thailand.

6

1.5 Limitation of the Study

First, tourism destinations are probably one of the most difficult products to market, involving large numbers of stakeholders and a destination marketing manager has little control over the destination brand. So it is relatively difficult to conduct a comprehensive study in this field.

Second, the target population of this study is limited to those Chinese tourists who have not visited Thailand. Other kinds of tourists were excluded from the domain of this research. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be inferred to all tourists of Thailand.

Third, this research is limited in terms of time, so the findings cannot be generalized for all times, because respondents could always change their minds in each period of time or be influenced by the internal and external factors.

Finally, the researcher contacted to the field worker by email, which means that the researcher could not follow up the whole process of data collection. Moreover, the data were collected only from four cities in China, which may result in geographical bias to some degrees.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Destination branding is the most powerful marketing weapon available to differentiate destinations themselves from their competitors. Because of this, this proposed study overcomes some shortcomings of previous studies and fully uses the destination branding theory to predict the propensity of Chinese tourists who are vital for

Thailand tourism industry. Moreover, this destination branding research of Thailand can contribute to help organize tourism products and formulate suitable destination marketing and management strategies. In conclusion, it can help to improve the efficiency of marketing and promotion efforts of Thailand.

1.7 Definition of Terms

A brand: is a name, symbol, design, or some combination which identifies the product of a particular organization as having a substantial, differentiated advantage (Aaker, 1991).

A destination brand: is a name, symbol, logo, work mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination (Ritchie and Crouch, 2000).

Brand associations: are anything linked in memory to a brand and these associations are part of brand equity (Aaker, 1991).

Brand equity: is a set of assets or liabilities linked to a brand's name and symbol that adds or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers (Aaker, 1991).

Brand identity: is a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain (Aaker, 1996).

8

Brand personality: can be defined as the set of human characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker, 1996).

Destination: is a place with some form of actual or perceived boundary, either physical, political, or even market-created boundaries (Kotler er al, 2002).

Propensity: behavioural intention or inclination (Gyehee, Joseph and Gong, 2002).

9

Chapter II   Review of Related Literature and Studies

2.1 Definition of Brand

Brand plays an especially powerful role in markets characterized by a high degree of uncertainty or mystery (Kotler, 1997). A strong brand is differentiated from others, has several strong advantages when compared to others, and has an attractive appeal to consumers. To the consumer, a brand identifies the source of the product, which in turn, assigns responsibility to the product maker, and provides a promise or bond with the maker of the product (Lassar *et al.*, 1995). A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values which match their needs most closely. Furthermore, its success results from being able to sustain these added values in the face of competition (De Chernatony and McDonald, 1998). Ambler and Styles (1997) define a brand as the promise of the bundle of attributes that someone buys. The attributes that make up a brand may be real or illusory, rational or emotional, tangible or invisible. Moreover, the American Marketing Association defines a brand as 'name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition'. Brands differentiate products and represent a promise of value. Brands incite belief, evoke emotion and prompt behaviours (Kotler, 1997). Brands have social and emotional value to users, and they have personality and speak for the users. Another definition for a brand has been offered by Professor Peter Doyle of Warwick University: "A name, symbol, design, or some combination which identifies the product of a particular organization as having a substantial, differentiated advantage" (Aaker, 1991).

10

2.2 Destination Branding

Since service and facilities are no longer differentiators, in this highly competitive and dynamic global tourism environment, there is a need for destinations to develop a clear identity, or 'brand' based on reality, while also reflecting the core strengths and 'personality' (Crockett and Wood, 2000). Aaker (1991) defined a destination brand as a 'distinguishing name or symbol intended to identify the destination and to differentiate it from competitive destinations'. After that, Ritchie and Crouch (2000) developed the notion which describes a destination brand as a name, symbol, logo, work mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience. So destination branding is perhaps the most powerful marketing weapon available to contemporary destination marketers confronted by tourists who are increasingly seeking lifestyle fulfillment and experience rather than recognizing differentiation in the more tangible elements of the destination product such as accommodation and attractions (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002). Indeed, destination branding has become the basis for survival within a globally competitive marketplace dominated by a handful of leading destinations which attract over two-thirds of the worldwide tourism market (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002).

Now that destination branding is a powerful marketing tool for destinations to differentiate themselves from competitors, more and more tourism destinations begin to adapt it. And some destinations have done a good job in this field. One of the most examples comes from West Australia. During the development of Brand West

11

Australia (Brand WA), a brand strategy group representing Australian community was set up to handle the overall process. Based on intensive branding researches, it followed the theory by Aaker to develop Brand WA. This theory, which will be used in this study, included the brand as a product, an organization (place), a person and a symbol. After extensive researches, the Brand WA as a tourism destination was established to state that West Australia can offer most of the attributes that tourists rank as high motivators, such as the ability to relax and recharge, a fresh environment and unspoilt natural scenery. And the core personality elements of branding West Australia were found to be fresh, natural, free and spirited (Crockett and Wood, 2000). A brand symbol reflecting all these core advantages was also delivered.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

This endorsement provides West Australian tourism with high levels of recall and enquiry, as well as millions of dollars in free publicity. Moreover, another famous tourism country, New Zealand, also benefits from destination branding. With the help of its '100% Pure New Zealand' branding campaign, tourism and inward investment offerings were shot there. Now New Zealand's tourism brand ranks fourth overall. It undoubtedly contributes to the considerable brand power of the country.

But destination branding is more complex than product branding and therefore presents a significant challenge for the destination marketer (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002). The reason for this is that the place product can be assembled uniquely by each visitor from their experiences of a chosen set of individual contributory elements (Jonathan, 2004). As a result, the destination marketer may not have full control over the product experience. Moreover, the same place can offer historical buildings,

shopping facilities, sports facilities and entertainment venues. These may all be consumed by the same consumer group such as residents or individually by different consumers with special interests (Jonathan, 2004). Therefore, the same destination product can be consumed simultaneously by different consumers' segments. Kotler et al. (1996) suggested that the branding task consists of three steps: identifying a set of possible competitive advantages upon which to build a strong brand, selecting the right competitive advantages, and effectively communicating and delivering it to a carefully selected target market. In order to achieve a successful destination brand which can differentiate itself from competitors, destination marketers firstly have to identify the specific and clear target group before developing any campaigns. In other words, once created, brands need to be communicated and positioned for the relevant audience in the marketplace. So the target group of this study will be focused on Chinese tourists.

2.3 Brand Equity and Brand Association

2.3.1 Brand Equity

Branding theory has been developed for years. It was largely used by various academics when they conducted researches. It was noticed that nearly all academics used the concept of brand equity when doing researches of branding. Brand equity has been described frequently as the value a brand name adds to a product. The idea of using a name or symbol to enhance a product's value has been brought to the forefront in recent years. Aaker (1991) defined brand equity as a set of assets or liabilities linked to a brand's name and symbol that adds or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers. He also illustrated that brand equity could be classified into four major assets which are brand

13

awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand association. But Cheng-Hsui Chen (2001) proposed that brand association is the core asset for building strong brand equity, compared to three other assets of Aaker's, namely brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality.

Several reasons for this were addressed by Cheng-Hsui Chen (2001). This academic argued that first, brand awareness is a necessary asset but not sufficient for building strong brand equity. For example, a brand could be well known because it has bad quality. A strong brand, however, must have higher awareness than a weaker brand. Second, the other brand equity dimensions enhance brand loyalty. The perceived quality, the association, and the well known name can provide reasons to buy and affect user satisfaction, which result in brand loyalty. Brand loyalty is sometimes excluded from the conceptualization of brand equity, because consumers may be in the habit of buying a particular brand without really thinking about why (Keller, 1998). Finally, the perceived quality is one kind of brand association. The concept of brand knowledge also focuses on the association network. Managing brand equity emphasized that brand equity is supported in great part by the associations that consumers make with a brand (Aaker, 1996). Therefore, Cheng-Hsui Chen (2001) proposed that a deeper understanding of brand association becomes more critical when building strong brands.

2.3.2 Brand Associations

Brand associations represent the basis for purchase decision and for brand loyalty. Associations come in all forms and may reflect characteristics of the product or aspects independent of the product itself (Cheng-Hsui Chen, 2001). Brand

14

associations are important to marketers and to consumers. Marketers use brand associations to differentiate, position, and extend brands, to create positive attitudes and feelings toward brands, and to suggest attributes or benefits of purchasing or using a specific brand. Consumers use brand associations to help process, organize, and retrieve information in memory and to aid them in making purchase decisions (Aaker, 1991).

According to the definition of Keller (1998), brand associations are regarded as informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory that contains the meaning of the brand for consumers. This academic argued that brand associations could be classified into three major categories: attributes, benefits and attitudes. Attributes are those descriptive features that characterize a product or service, what a consumer thinks the product or service is or has and what is involved with its purchase or consumption. Benefits are the personal values consumers attach to product or service attributes-that is, what consumers think the product or service can do for them. Brand attitudes are defined as consumers' overall evaluations of a brand (Keller, 1998). He agreed that brand identity is made up of these different types of brand associations. Another famous academic in brand research, Aaker (1991), defined brand associations as anything linked in memory to a brand and these associations are part of brand equity. They might include product attributes, a celebrity spokesperson, or a particular symbol. Moreover, the most important thing that Aaker (1996) wanted to address was that brand associations are driven by the brand identity-what the organization wants the brand to stand for in the consumer's mind. Therefore, he agreed that a key to building strong brands is to develop and implement a brand identity.

2.4 Brand Identity

As a person's identity serves to provide direction, purpose, and meaning for that person, a brand identity similarly provides direction, purpose, and meaning for the brand. Aaker (1996) asserted that brand identity is a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers. Brand identity is central to a brand's strategic vision and the driver of one of the four principle dimensions of brand equity: associations, which are the heart and soul of the brand (DeChernatony and McDonald, 1998).

2.4.1 Brand Identity and Brand Image

2.4.1.1 Destination Brand Image and Its Formation

A destination's image has been recognised as a complex and important concept in the destination-selection process. In the last three decades tourism researchers as well as industry practitioners and destination marketers have been very interested in measuring a destination's image (Konecnik, 2002). As a result, much work has been done in the area of analysing the image of destinations. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is a considerable literature on destination brand images particularly in the area of leisure tourism marketing (Walmsley and Young, 1998). Studies in this area have focused upon the attributes forming destination images. Several studies have sought to identify the brand image attributes of specific tourism destinations (Etchner and Ritchie, 1993).

For image formation, Gunn (1972, as cited in Jenkins, 1999) developed a very useful seven-stage theory which involves a constant building and modification of images

16

(see Figure 2.1). This theory illustrated that images are conceived as being made up of organic or naïve non-tourist information about the destination, induced or promoted information and modified induced images which are the result of personal experience of the destination. So stage theory implies that the images held by potential visitors, non-visitors and returned visitors will differ (Gunn, 1972, as cited in Jenkins, 1999). Many empirical studies have also found that people change their image about a destination after they visit. Assessing the image of American tourists toward Korea prior to and after visiting, Chon (1992) found that the tourists have a better image about Korea after they have been there. In other words, tourists will have better understanding about destinations after visiting.
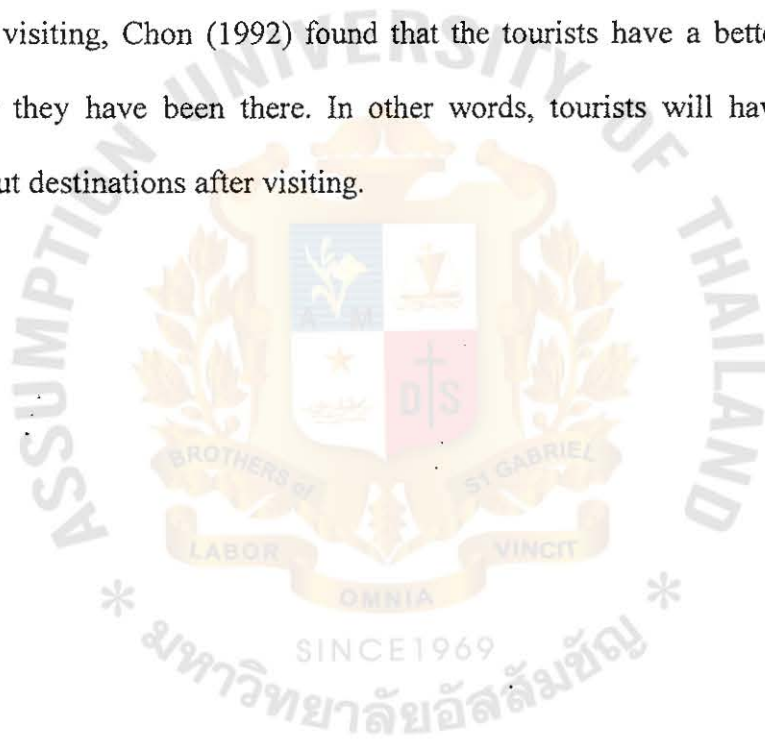
Figure 2.1 Stage-theories of destination image

1. Accumulation of mental images of a place through life	**Organic Image**
2. Modification of images through researching information prior to the decision to travel	**Induced Image**
3. Decision to travel based on image efficiency, anticipated experience but kept within time, money and other constraints	
4. Travel to attraction may condition the image (e.g. road sign, landscape, and guides)	**Modified-Induced Image**
5. Participation or experience at the destination, activities, accommodation and other services all influence the image	
6. Return travel allows reflection and evaluation, including discussing experience with fellow travellers	
7. New accumulation occurs after the visit because the process is circular, the end image may be the same or different to the original one	

Source: Gunn, 1972

2.4.1.2 Difference between Brand Identity and Brand Image

Though knowledge of the brand image provides useful and even necessary background information when developing a brand identity, image formation is not a branding (Konecnik, 2002). Image building is one step closer, but there still remains a critical missing link: the brand identity. Common misunderstandings and confusions in the terminology between brand identity and brand image should be known.

Aaker (1996) argued that creating a brand identity is more than finding out what customers say they want. It must also reflect the soul and vision of the brand, what it hopes to achieve. While the brand image is usually passive and looks to the past, brand identity should be active and look to the future, reflecting the associations that are aspired for the brand. While the brand image tends to be tactical, brand identity should be strategic, reflecting a business strategy that will lead to a sustainable advantage (Aaker, 1996). So a key role of marketing is to develop a destination as a positive brand.

The marketing of many destinations does not begin from a zero base. It frequently begins with a set of negative or positive attributes established over a long period of time. Such things can be understood as brand images hold by consumers. They are passive and look back to the past. According to the stage theory of image, they are considered as organic images. But, nowadays, destination managers want to erase the past negative images of their destinations and then build up strong destination brands that are crucial to survive. The negative things are replaced by induced images which are formed by exposure to a destination's marketing programme whose role is to

change the extant organic images and build up a strong destination brand. This can be done by destination branding.

2.4.2 Components of Brand Identity

Aaker (1996) developed a model suggesting that a brand identity encompasses many variables which all influence the brand's value proposition, credibility, brand-customer relationships and ultimately the brand's positioning. These include the brand as:

1. a product (place), such as attributes, quality/value;

2. an organization (place), such as attributes, innovation;

3. a person, such as personality, brand-customer relationship;

4. a symbol, such as visual imagery.

Many destination marketers and strategists used this model to develop their strategies when they branded their own destinations. One of the most famous examples mentioned in previous part is the destination branding campaign-Brand WA developed by the West Australian Tourism Commission (WATC) during 1996-2000 (Crockett and Wood, 2000). In developing Brand WA, a research was conducted among overseas visitors and Western Australians. This research analyzed global tourism trends, consumer behavior and the decision-making processes of travel consumers, and aligned these against visitor perceptions of Western Australia, its services and attractions. The major issue probed included the physical attributes that tourists ranked as motivators for their holidays, and the core personality elements of Western Australia as a tourist destination (Crockett and Wood, 2000).

2.4.2.1 Physical Attributes

Since the physical attributes of a destination are the only relevant bases for customer decisions and competitive dynamics, they would not be overlooked when analyzing the brand identity. Physical attributes will almost always be an important part of a brand identity because they are directly linked to brand choice decisions and the use experience (Aaker, 1996).

Most researchers have done their studies for measuring destination attributes. One of the most famous examples comes from Echtner and Ritchie (1991) who summarized the attributes studied by previous researchers into a functional / psychological axis with a number of studies measuring the attributes, and presented users with a more complete overview of the attribute dimension of tourist destination (see Figure 2.2). Echtner and Ritchie (1991) divided attributes of destination into two characteristics by using the functional/psychological model. The functional characteristics of a tourist destination can be directly observable or measurable, such as price, climate and transportation. Psychological characteristics are the less tangible attributes of destination or the difficult-to-measure psychological characteristics, such as hospitality and quality of service.

Figure2.2: The most common attributes used by previous researchers

	Number of studies measuring the attributes
Functional	
Scenery/natural attractions	13
Costs/price levels	9
Climate	8
Tourist sites/activities	8
Nightlife and entertainment	8
Sports facilities/activities	8
National parks/wilderness activities	7
Local infrastructure/transportation	7
Architecture/buildings	7
Historic sites/museums	6
Beaches	6
Shopping facilities	5
Accommodation facilities	5
Cities	4
Exhibits and festivals	2
Facilities for information and tours	1
Crowdedness	4
Cleanliness	4
Personal safety	4
Economic development	3
Accessibility	2
Degree of urbanization	1
Extent of commercialisation	1
Political stability	1
Hospitality/friendliness	11
Different customs	7
Different cuisine	7
Restful/relaxing	5
Atmosphere	4
Opportunity for adventure	3
Opportunity for increase knowledge	2
Family-oriented	1
Quality of service	1
Fame/reputation	1
Psychological	

Source: Echtner and Ritchie, 1991

2.4.2.2 Brand Personality

A brand personality can be defined as the set of human characteristics associated with

a brand (Aaker, 1996). A distinctive brand personality can help create a set of unique

and favorable associations in consumer memory and thus build and enhance brand equity (Keller, 1993). Indeed, a well-established brand personality can result in consumers having stronger emotional ties to the brand and greater trust and loyalty (Johnson et al., 2000), thus providing an enduring basis for differentiation (Aaker and Fournier, 1995) which is very difficult to be copied. As such, marketing practitioners have become increasingly aware of the importance of building "a clear and distinctive brand personality" (Yaverbaum, 2001).

Brand Personality as the Essence of Branding

According to the model by Aaker, the brand personality belongs to one part of the brand identity. When destination marketers misunderstand the concept of brand identity, only focusing on the attributes, they usually generate less than optimal strategies and sometimes damaging blunders because in building a meaningful destination brand, the essence is to create an emotional relationship between the destination and potential visitors (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002). Aaker (1996) illustrated that the brand-as-person perspective of his model suggests that a brand identity is richer and more interesting than one based on product attributes. A brand personality can create a stronger brand in several ways. First, it can help create a self-expressive benefit that becomes a vehicle for the customer to express his or her own personality. Second, just as human personalities affect relationships between people, brand personality can be the basis of a relationship between the customer and the brand. Third, a brand personality may help communicate a product attribute and thus contribute to a functional benefit (Aaker, 1996). Brand personality supports the identification of the consumer with his/her brand and thus increases the personal meaning of a brand for an individual (Ambler and Styles, 1997). The reason why

23

consumers perceive brands as having personalities is part of a wider process of building or re-affirming their own self-concept (Aaker, 1999). Self-concept is defined as "the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object" (Rosenberg, 1979) and research has suggested that individuals tend to relate brands to self-concepts (De Chernatony and McWilliam, 1989; Morgan 1993, as cited in Aaker, 1996). Individuals will accept brands with images similar to their perceived self-concept and reject brands with images dissimilar to their self-concept (Sirgy, 1982). Brands, therefore, have a personality that users value beyond functional utility (De Chernatony and McWilliam, 1989) and consumers will use brands as symbolic devices to explain and express their own particular personality (Aaker, 1999).

Measurement and Structure of Brand Personality

In contrast to "physical attributes," which tend to serve a utilitarian function for consumers, brand personality tends to serve a symbolic or self-expressive function (Keller 1993). But it is very difficult to use limited words to depict the personality which covers large scope of items. As a result, there was no very practical method to measure the personality. Fortunately, an academic, Goldberg, in psychology study conducted a Bigfive model several years ago. The BigFive theory or five-factor model is widely accepted. The five dimensions are often labelled OCEAN which is the abbreviation of Openness to new experiences, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism. Researchers agreed that the five dimensions can cover and depict nearly all traits related to human personality. They have been developed to reduce the length of questionnaires and to avoid respondents' fatigue.

This method enables a psychologist to form a quick evaluation of an individual (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003).

Until recently, measuring brand personalities was difficult due to the lack of a reliable, valid and generalizable scale. Recognizing the importance of brand personality to marketers and studying the Bigfive model in human personality, Aaker developed a framework intended to capture the key dimensions of brand personality. She proposed the framework as a standard, universal way to measure brand personality. Aaker employed a rigorous set of procedures to develop and evaluate her brand personality scale. She began by assembling a list of traits used to measure the human personality in psychology and marketing studies. She then conducted a qualitative study in which she asked respondents to identify all of the traits that readily came to mind when thinking about specific brands. Those procedures generated a preliminary list of 309 discrete traits, which she reduced to 114 based on respondents' ratings of how descriptive the traits are of brands in general. And then Aaker explored brand personality on the basis of 114 adjectives (or traits) across various brands that cover various product categories (Siguaw, Mattila and Austin, 1999). As a result, Aaker's research suggested that consumers perceive that brands have five distinct personality dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. They can explain nearly all (93 percent) of the observed differences among brands (Aaker, 1997). Most recent works on brand personality research are based on Aaker's global definition of the concept of brand personality as 'the set of human characteristics associated to a brand'. Most of the research papers on brand personality are now based on Aaker's scale (See Figure 2.3). It can be a practical tool which strategists can use to gain insights into the relationship

between the consumer and the brand. However, some cultural researches have shown that ruggedness, defined as Western and tough, is discouraged in East Asian cultures and tends not to exist (Buell, 2000). So this research will use this famous brand personality scale excluding the dimension of ruggedness since the target population and the destination come from traditional eastern countries, namely China and Thailand.

Figure 2.3 A Brand Personality Scale

```
                        ┌──────────────────┐
                        │ Brand Personality │
                        └──────────────────┘
   ┌──────────┬─────────────┬────────────┬────────────────┬────────────┐
┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌───────────┐
│ Sincerity │ │Excitement│ │Competence│ │Sophistication│ │ Ruggedness│
└──────────┘ └──────────┘ └──────────┘ └──────────────┘ └───────────┘
```
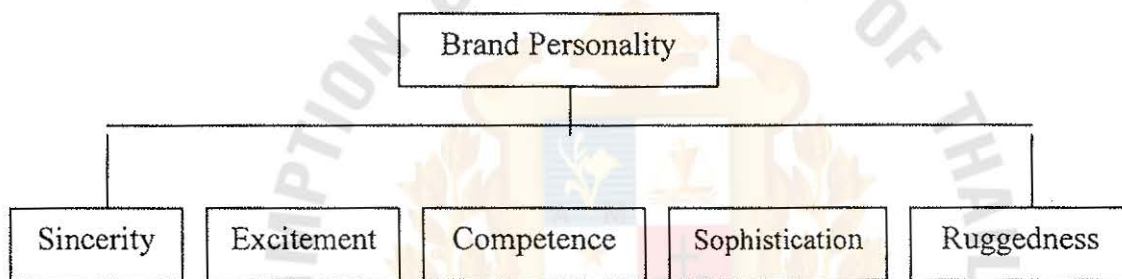
Source: Aaker, 1997

Sincerity

According to the Oxford Dictionary (1997), sincerity can be understood as the honest and genuine feelings or behaviors. It means that all the things are developed as really promised and believed. Aaker (1997) used this dimension to try to capture the idea of warmth and acceptance. The prominent traits of the brand are sincere, down-to-earth and original. Chinese are very sensitive to sincerity. They cultivate a sense of compassion, honesty, truthfulness and trustworthiness as they grow up. It is noted that the meaning of sincerity is deeply embedded in a Chinese cultural context (Pang, 1998). The meaning of sincerity can best be explained in a Chinese idiom, which reads, 'What is said must be done, and what is done must be brought to fruition.'

26

Sincerity carries a strong moral connotation in the Chinese sense. It is the guiding principle of conscience. Only a person who is consistent in both words and actions and who demonstrates good intention in his or her deeds will be considered as possessing the virtue of sincerity (Pang, 1998).

Excitement

Excitement is the state of strong emotions or feelings caused by eagerness, happiness, nervousness (Aaker, 1997). Aaker (1997) explained that excitement should include the notions of sociability, energy and activity. This dimension is characterised as more extrovert personality than the sincerity dimension. The central traits are bold, provocative, lively, powerful, imaginative and modern. Brands in this dimension are more extrovert than introvert (Aaker, 1997).

Competence

Aaker's scale holds 'competence' as a major factor or trait among the five identified. Competence refers to a know-how (in the case of brands), or to an ability to carry out something properly (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). Competence also refers to the ability and flexibility to deal with the different tensions (G. Canen and A. Canen, 2004). It involves knowledge, skills and attitudes (to be willing to know and to do), and is the capacity of destinations to overcome obstacles and accomplish their aims (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). Moreover, Mansfield (2004) argued that competence is an underlying characteristic that results in effective or superior performance. Particular sectors and industries often have an implicit concept of what competent performance means. Consequently, "competence" is often taken to imply a minimum level of performance across a very narrow range of activities. The concept can also

mean the ability to meet "best practice" requirements (Mansfield, 2004). The prominent traits of this dimension can be understood as competence, intelligence, success and reliability (Aaker, 1997).

Sophistication

Sophistication involves having or showing much worldly experience and knowledge of fashionable life (Aaker, 1997). It is used to differentiate oneself from others. This dimension has obvious ego-orientation. Its traits are high status, upper class and glamour.

2.4.2.3 Brand Symbol

A symbol can be a powerful influence on brand personality because it can be controlled and can have extremely strong associations. Brand symbol is a necessary part of brand identity according to Aaker's (1996) proposition. A strong symbol can provide cohesion and structure to an identity and make it much easier to gain recognition and recall. Its presence can be a key ingredient of brand development and its absence can be a substantial handicap. Elevating symbols to the status of being part of the identity reflects their potential power (Aaker, 1996).

Moreover this academic proposed that two types of symbols can be highlighted: visual imagery or logo and metaphors. Those symbols involving visual imagery or logo can be memorable and powerful. Each strong visual image captures much of its respective brand's identity because connections between the symbol and the identity elements have been built up. And what is more, brand symbols are more meaningful if

they involve a metaphor, with the symbol or a symbol characteristic representing a functional, emotional, or self-expressive benefit (Aaker, 1996).

2.5 Destination Choice

The need to study the destination-choice process has become more important in recent years as a result of the rapid growth of both travel demand and the tourism industry. The particular topic of the tourist's decision-making process has been investigated in several papers and monographs in the past two decades (Um and Crompton, 1991). The process of destination selection is a crucial part of the study of tourism. Not only is it important for the study of tourism, but it is perhaps the most important decision that any traveler must take. Naturally a destination must have something to attract travelers to it. Customers are usually pulled toward a destination with offerings to suit their needs and desires. Therefore, it is crucial for marketing professionals to make the destination's offerings known to customers. Simultaneously, travellers will often research a destination on their own before making a purchase decision (Pizam and Mansfeld, 1999).

2.5.1 Models for destination choice

Many models of destination choice have been developed by assorted researchers in this field. Crompton (1977, as cited in Pizam and Mansfeld, 1999) developed a system model of the tourist's destination choice process in two steps. First, there is the generic decision of whether to have a holiday. If the answer is yes, then a second decision follows: where to go? He suggests that destination choice should be conceptualized as the result of the interaction of perceived constraints (such as time, money, and skills) and destination images. After broadening Crompton's

29

conceptualization, Um and Crompton (1991, as cited in Pizam and Mansfeld, 1999) developed a more complete framework. The model is based on three sets of variables:

1. External inputs represent influences from both the social and marketing environment. They are classified into significative (destination attributes), symbolic (promotional messages), and social stimuli.

2. Internal inputs derive from the vacationer's socio-psychological characteristics (personal characteristics, motives, values, and attributes).

3. Cognitive constructs represent the "integration of the internal and external inputs, into the awareness set of destinations and the evoked set of destinations" (Um and Crompton, 1991).

There is thus a cognitive evolution which Um and Crompton materialize in five sets of processes, which are represented by arrows in Figure 2.4:

1. The formation of beliefs about destination attributes (through passive information catching or incidental learning).

2. The initiation of the destination choice process after the generic decision to go on holiday has been made (include the consideration of situational constraints).

3. The evolution of an evoked set from the awareness set of destinations.

4. The formation of beliefs about evoked destinations attributes (through active information search).

5. The selection of a specific travel destination from the evoked set.

Figure 2.4: Um and Crompton's model of destination choice process

External Inputs   Internal Inputs

```
┌─────────────────────┐                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Stimuli display   │   ┌──────────┐     │  Socio-psychological set│
│                     │   │Awareness │     │                         │
│                     │──▶│   set    │     │   ● Personal            │
│  ● Significative    │   └────┬─────┘     │      characteristics    │
│                     │        │           │                         │
│  ● Symbolic         │        ▼           │   ● Motives             │
│                     │   ┌──────────┐◀────│                         │
│  ● Social           │──▶│Evoked set│     │   ● Values              │
│                     │   └────┬─────┘     │                         │
└─────────────────────┘        │           └─────────────────────────┘
                               ▼
                          ┌──────────┐
                          │  Travel  │
                          │Destination│
                          └──────────┘
```
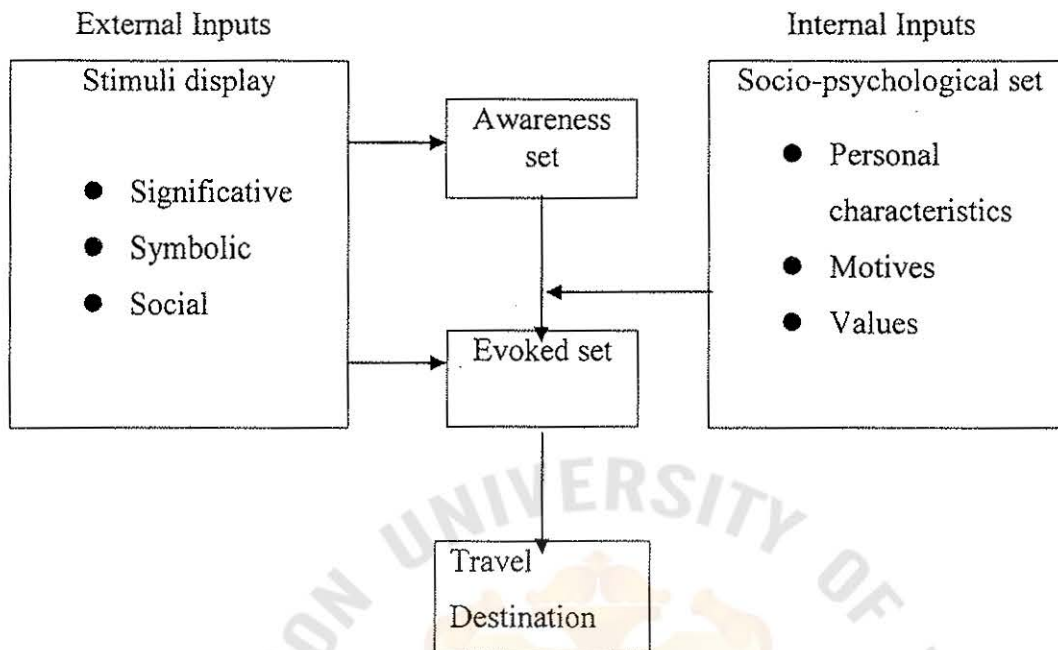
Source: Um and Crompton, 1991

2.5.1.1 External Inputs

In the Um and Crompton' model, the researchers pointed out that external inputs represent influences from both the social and marketing environment. They are viewed as the sum of social interactions and marketing communications to which a potential traveller is exposed. The external inputs not only include the characteristics of the destination but also various marketing stimuli (Pizam and Mansfeld, 1999). Potential tourists frequently have limited knowledge about a destination. This knowledge often is confined to symbolic information acquired either from media or from their social groups. From this information, tourists formulate images of alternative destinations (Pizam and Mansfeld, 1999). For this reason, a substantial number of studies concerned with destination choice have focused upon identifying the dominant attributes of destination and exploring their role in the selection of a travel destination (e.g. Mayo, 1973; Hunt, 1975; Crompton, 1979; Gartner, 1989;

31

Fakeye and Crompton, 1991, as cited in Pizam and Mansfeld, 1999). And according to Woodside and Lysonski's (1989) traveler destination choice model, marketing variables were presented as a force which influences the traveler's choice of destination. The role of marketing variables is also emphasized in Fakeye and Crompton's model which illustrated that the travelers make the decision of destination from the marketing mix.

2.5.1.2 Internal Inputs

Most destination selection models have incorporated socio-demographic variables as conventional consumer characteristics influencing perception and choice of objects, products and tourism destination (Woodside and Lysonski, 1989; Um and Crompton, 1991). The consumer behavior models of Pizam and Mansfeld (1999) also recognized the socio-demographic characteristics of consumers as determinants of consumer selection by including them as antecedents to cognitive processes. Engel et al. (1973) developed a model of consumer space preference to analyze consumer movements. Engel's model was also accepted as a general framework of the decision making process in a variety of settings. In this model, socio-demographic variables such as age, education, income, gender, and occupation were depicted as determinants of an individual's perception and selection.

2.5.2 Travel Propensity

In predicting tourists' future behaviour, especially in terms of their destination choice, it is known that their propensity, which can be understood as the behavioural intention, is one of the most relevant and strongest attitudinal indicators of future behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Urban & Hauser, 1980; Butterfield, Deal, & Kubursi, 1998,

as cited in Gyehee, Joseph and Gong, 2002). Therefore, in identifying a future business potential, measuring the propensity of the tourists may provide more reliable information than past consumption behaviour (Reibstein, 1978; Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Baloglu, 1999, as cited in Gyehee, Joseph and Gong, 2002). The propensity can be regarded as the result from the evolution of the evoked set in the destination choice model proposed in the previous part. The concept of the evoked set is defined as the "Travel of which the consumer is aware and has some likelihood greater than zero of visiting" (Um and Crompton, 1991). The challenge for marketers is to move their product from the awareness set to the evoked set. Since this research is to study the roles of Thailand destination branding which could be understood as an effective tool of marketing, the propensity of visiting Thailand is believed to be a sustainable tool for identifying the future business potential.

2.6 Destination Branding and Destination Choice

Nowadays, the brand becomes one of the basic motives for the consumers' choice of a particular product. The importance of the product brand shall be seen primarily in its impact on consumers' choice and their loyalty through identifying and differentiating quality and origin, as well as creating additional values (Vranesevic and Stancec, 2003). After their study, these two academics concluded that in the process of making a purchasing decision when choosing an alternative, consumers will first perceive the brand as "a sign of quality" and then other evaluation criteria. Consumers treat a brand as a useful heuristic, or as proxy for quality determining attributes, and would think a brand is more important and helpful when the quality determining attributes are not available. Thus, a brand has greater impact on choices in a search product

33

where less total quality information on components is available for facilitating consumer choices (Kotler, 1997).

Can a country be a brand? Shimp and Saeed (1993) applied the term 'country equity', referring to the emotional value resulting from consumers' association of a brand with a country. Previous researches have supported that consumers are more willing to buy products from industrialized nations as a result of country equity (Wang and Lamb, 1983; Cordell, 1993; Agbonifoh and Elimimiam, 1999, as cited in Morgan and Pritchard, 2002). Every tourist destination in the world has a "brand image". When consumers decide on a destination for a holiday or a business conference, several "brands" compete for their attention. A strong brand is differentiated from others, has several strong advantages when compared to others, and has an attractive appeal to consumers. In tourism, while factors such as cost of travel, convenience, and quality of facilities are important, the strongest motivator is "brand". A destination brand puts a destination on the consumer's "shopping list" and creates an emotional appeal, which enhances that destination's chances of being chosen over others (Keller, 1998). Images are likely to influence people's decision related to purchasing or traveling (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). Findings consistently support that consumers pervasively use country-of-origin information as an indicator of quality. In most studies country of origin is used as an independent variable, while attitudes towards a product or a country's product serve as the dependent measure (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). Thus, today there are more reasons why nations must manage and control their branding. The need to attract more tourists requires that countries adopt strategic marketing management tools and conscious branding (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002).

Chapter III   Research Framework

This chapter will focus on the frameworks of the research. The researcher relates the theories, which are drawn from the literature review to develop the conceptual framework. Chapter three consists of three sections: diagram of framework, definition of variables, and hypotheses which are statements depicting relationships between the dependent and independent variables.

3.1 Conceptual Framework

3.1.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework provides a fundamental understanding of the basic processes underlying the problem situation (Maholtra, 2002).

The conceptual framework is created to illustrate the relationship between independent and dependent variables. In this study, it will illustrate the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of Chinese tourists, Thailand destination brand and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand.

3.1.2 Diagram of Conceptual Framework

```
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│   Socio-Demographic         │
│         Factors             │
│   Gender                    │
│   Age                       │
│   Education                 │
│   Occupation                │
│   Income                    │
└─────────────────────────────┘
                                          ┌──────────────────────┐
                                          │  Chinese tourists'    │
                                     ───▶  │  propensity to travel │
                                          │  to Thailand          │
┌─────────────────────────────┐          └──────────────────────┘
│   Destination Branding      │
│   Physical Attributes of the│
│   destination               │
│                             │
│   Brand Personality         │
│   1. sincerity              │
│   2. excitement             │
│   3. competence             │
│   4. sophistication         │
│                             │
│   Brand Symbol              │
│   1. visual imagery or logo │
│   2. metaphor               │
└─────────────────────────────┘
```

36
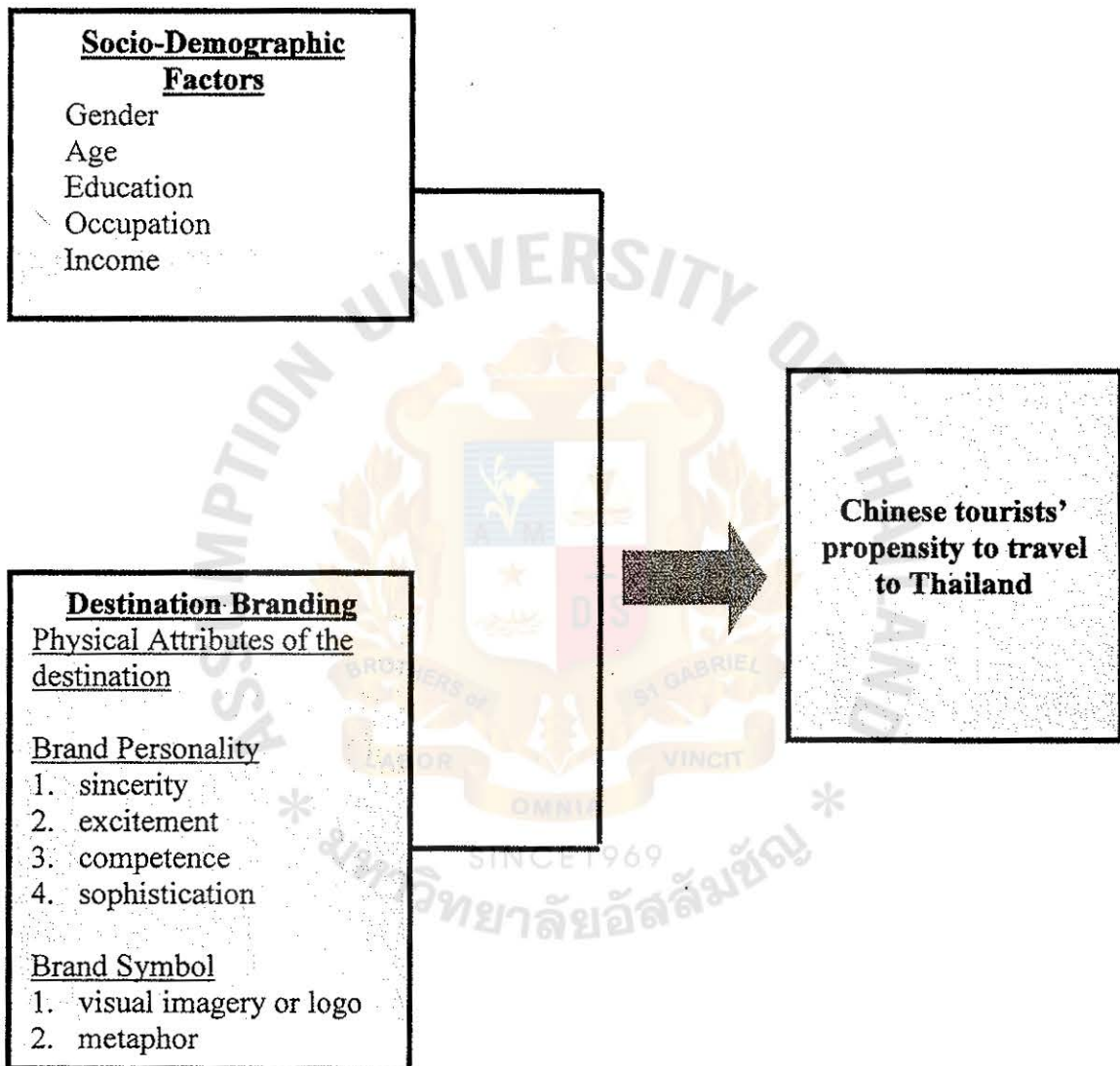
3.2 Research Variables

3.2.1 Independent Variables

Independent variable refers to a symbol or concept that the researcher can manipulate and that is hypothesized to cause or influence the dependent variable (McDaniel and Gates 1998). In the case of this study, Thailand destination brand and socio-demographic characteristics of Chinese tourists are regarded as independent variables.

Definition of Independent Variables

A destination brand: is a name, symbol, logo, work mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination (Ritchie and Crouch, 2000).

Though Thailand was behind the time in the process of developing a clear and strong destination brand, it is trying to catch up with the trend to hold its competitive advantages. Under this environment, a branding campaign 'Happiness on Earth' has been launched recently. It is to develop and promote tourism industry of the country towards quality standard and sustainable tourism which can be competed in the world tourism market and leading the way to become the Tourism Capital of Asia. In responding the theme of branding campaign, there are four clusters attributes promoted by the destination branding campaign-'Happiness on Earth'. The first cluster is beach and seaside. The second cluster is national parks, nature, forest and mountain. The third cluster is history and culture that are popular in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Sukhothai, Kanchanaburi and Ayutthaya. The last cluster is special

37

interest such as shopping and festivals. A new logo was also being launched to go with this branding campaign. Featuring a half-circle representing the earth, it is emblazoned with a five-colored flower suggesting an image of uniqueness and fun.

<u>Physical attributes of the brand</u>

Physical attributes of the brand refer to knowledge about the attributes of an object or a destination. 34 items of attributes in Chapter II (figure 2.2) are listed as the most common attributes studied in the previous researches. But they may not be ones that are suitable for Thailand or what the destination brand manager of Thailand wants to promote. Since this study is involved in the destination brand of Thailand, specific attributes of Thailand have to be identified firstly. According to the marketing plan of TAT, there are four clusters attributes promoted by the destination brand development strategy-'Happiness on Earth'. The first cluster is beach and seaside. The second cluster is national parks, nature, forest and mountain. The third cluster is history and culture that are popular in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Sukhothai, Kanchanaburi and Ayutthaya. The last cluster is special interest such as shopping and festivals. According to this information, the researchers decided that the attributes used in this study will be natural attractions, beaches, national parks, historic and cultural sites, shopping facilities, festivals and local infrastructure.

<u>Brand personality</u>

A brand personality can be defined as the set of human characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker, 1996).). Indeed, a well-established brand personality can result in consumers having stronger emotional ties to the brand and greater trust and loyalty (Johnson et al., 2000). In building a meaningful destination brand, the essence is to create an emotional relationship between the destination and potential visitors

(Morgan and Pritchard, 2002). The Brand Personality Scale (BPS) developed by Aaker (1996) will be used to both measure and structure brand personality. It is intended to capture the key dimensions of brand personality. These dimensions were summarized into five personality factors, namely sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. But, ruggedness is discouraged in East Asian cultures and tends not to exist in this study. Aaker (1996) stated that this scale is reliable, valid, and generalizable, so this study will use it to measure and structure the brand personality of Thailand.

Brand symbol

Brand symbol is a necessary part of brand identity according to Aaker's (1996) proposition. A symbol can be a powerful influence on brand personality. Academics proposed that two types of symbols can be highlighted: visual imagery and metaphor. These days the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is promoting a new campaign which tries to brand Thailand as 'Happiness on earth'. TAT governor, Jutamas Siriwan, said the goal of the campaign, which replaces the now four-year-old 'Amazing Thailand' campaign, was to highlight the quality of the country's products and services. A new logo is being launched to go with the new slogan. Featuring a half-circle representing the earth, it is emblazoned with a five-colored flower suggesting an image of uniqueness and fun. In support of the campaign, the TAT will be encouraging Thailand tourism operators to maintain high standards in their products.

Socio-demographic factors can be considered as conventional consumer characteristics influencing perception and choice of objects, products and tourism

39

destination (Friedmann and Lessig, 1986; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989; Stabler, 1990; Um and Crompton, 1991, as cited in Gyehee, Joseph and Gong, 2002). Engel et.al (1973) developed a model of consumer space preference to analyze consumer movements. Engel's model was also accepted as a general framework of the decision making process in a variety of settings such as spatial decision making (Woodside and Lysonski, 1989). In Engel's model, socio-demographic variables such as age, education, income, gender, and occupation were depicted as determinants of an individual's perception and selection.

3.2.2 Dependent Variable

Dependent variable refers to a symbol or concept expected to be explained or caused by the independent variable (McDaniel and Gates 1998). In this research, there is only one dependent variable which is Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand.

Definition of Dependent Variable

Travelling **propensity** refers to behavioural intention or inclination for traveling. In predicting tourists' future behavior, especially in terms of their destination choice, it is known that their propensity, which can be understood as the behavioral intention, is one of the most relevant and strongest attitudinal indicators of future behavior (Gyehee, Joseph and Gong, 2002).

3.3 Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis statements are conjectural statements of the relationship between two or more variables that carry clear implication for testing the stated relations (Zikmund, 2000).

40

In this research, based on the objectives and conceptual framework of the study, there are 8 hypotheses that need to be tested.

H1o: There is no significant relationship between physical attributes of Thailand destination brand and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand.

H1a: There is significant relationship between physical attributes of Thailand destination brand and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand.

H2o: There is no significant relationship between the brand personality of Thailand as a destination and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand.

H2a: There is significant relationship between the brand personality of Thailand as a destination and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand.

H3o: There is no significant relationship between the brand symbol of Thailand and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand.

H3a: There is significant relationship between the brand symbol of Thailand and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand.

H4o: There is no significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among age groups.

H4a: There is significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among age groups.

H5o: There is no significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among education groups.

H5a: There is significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among education groups.

H6o: There is no significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among occupation groups.

H6a: There is significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among occupation groups.

H7o: There is no significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among income groups.

H7a: There is significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among income groups.

H8o: There is no significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand between gender groups.

H8a: There is significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand between gender groups.

3.4 Operationalization of Variables

Table 3.1 Operationalization of Variables

Variables	Operationalization	Scale	Q
Travel propensity	Ask respondents' opinions towards their behavioural intention	Interval scale	
	Wish to go		Q1
	Travel in the foreseeable future		Q2
Physical attributes of Thailand	Ask respondents to evaluate the offering of each attribute of Thailand	Interval scale	
	Natural attractions		Q3
	Beaches		Q4
	National parks		Q5
	Historic and cultural sites		Q6
	Shopping facilities		Q7
	Quality of local infrastructure		Q8
	Festivals		Q9
Brand personality	Ask respondents' opinions towards the brand personality of Thailand.	Interval scale	
	Sincerity		Q10-12
	Excitement		Q13-15
	Competence		Q16-18
	Sophistication		Q19-20
Brand symbol	Ask respondents' opinions towards the brand symbol of Thailand	Interval scale	
	Visual imagery or logo		Q21
	Metaphor		Q22

Age	Ask the approximate age of respondents	Ratio scale	Q23
Gender	Ask to choose either female or male	Nominal scale	Q24
Education	Ask the education level of respondents	Ordinal scale	Q25
Income	Ask the approximate income of respondents	Interval scale	Q26
Occupation	Ask the occupation of respondents	Nominal scale	Q27

Chapter IV   Research Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of methodology which will be adopted in this study.

4.1 Methods of Research Used

Once the concept, variables, and hypothesis have been formulated and stated, the researchers need to consider the research design. The research design used here is a descriptive design. Descriptive research designs are used to describe the characteristics of certain groups or to estimate the proportion of people in a specified population who behave in a certain way as well as to make specific predictions or relations and interactions among variables. Since the relationship between destination branding of Thailand and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand will be tested, the descriptive research design will be adopted in this research.

There are two major types of descriptive research designs which are surveys and case studies. Surveys that use self-completion questionnaires will be used in this study. Self-completion questionnaires require minimal administration as the participant does most of the work associated with the questionnaire. The advantages of self-completion questionnaire include the participants can complete the questionnaire at their own pace, if left with the respondent; the questionnaire can be completed at a time convenient to the respondent (Jennings, 2001).

4.2 Respondents and Sampling Procedures

4.2.1 Target Population

A population comprises all the study subjects (tourists, visitors, hosts, family, friends, employees, managers) or study units (attractions, transport providers, accommodation facilities) that are the focus of the research project (Ticehurst and Veal, 1999). The target population is the units in the population that the researcher wishes to target for study (Neuman, 2000). The target population being studied in this research will be those Chinese tourists who have not visited Thailand. The reason for this decision is that when Um and Crompton proposed the destination choice model in 1991, they also figured out that only when consumers have limited experience with the preferred destination, may they engage in external information search. In other words, for first-time visitors, external inputs such as marketing efforts play a much more important role in moving proposed products from the awareness set to the evoked set. Since this research is to study the roles of branding Thailand which could be understood as an external input, the target population is focused on those Chinese tourists who have not visited Thailand. It is important to understand their perception towards Thailand destination brand, namely attributes being promoted, brand personality and symbol. Ganesh and Gillett (1996) pointed out that marketing nowadays is not a battle of products; it is a battle of perceptions. Without prior actual experience, consumers often make decisions based purely upon their perceptions, regardless of their accuracy or inaccuracy. Especially for branding field, consumers have certain perception towards the 'brands'. For example, they may never use the product with a famous brand before they purchase it.

46

4.2.2 Sampling Procedure

For this study, the researcher will use the non-probability sampling. In non-probability sampling the probability of any particular member of the population being chosen is unknown. The selection of sampling units in non-probability sampling is quite arbitrary, as researchers rely heavily on personal judgment. It should be noted that there are no appropriate statistical techniques for measuring random sampling error from a non-probability sample. Nevertheless, there are occasions when non-probability samples are best suited for the researcher's purpose (Zikmund, 2000). The non-probability sampling is more suitable for this research because the respondent's chance of being included in the sample is unknown.

There are a number of non-random sampling approaches: convenience sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, expert sampling, and quota sampling (Neuman, 2000). For this study, convenience sampling will be used. Convenience sampling refers to the selection because of their proximity to the researcher and ease with which the researcher can access the participants (Jennings, 2001). Convenience sampling is appealing because it seems simple and meets all necessary requirements of non-probability samples, using this approach is less time consuming, and it is possible to accomplish with a limited budget (Zikmund, 2000). Therefore, this method will be applied in this research to collect information from the tourists who are available to provide information.

4.2.3 Sample Size

Sample size can be determined either a) from tables, when population is known b) from formulas, when either population is known or population is not known c) from reference of at least 3 studies quoting same sample sizes. When using the formulas to determine the sample size, the researcher must make a judgment about confidence level and the maximum allowance for random sampling error (Zikmund, 2000). The formulas proposed by Zikmund is

$$n = Z^2 p\, q/\, E^2$$

Where

n = number of items in sample

Z^2 = square of the confidence interval in standard error units

p = estimate the true proportion of success

q = (1-p), or estimated proportion of failures

E^2 = square of the maximum allowance for error between the true proportion and sample proportion.

In this study, the researcher will set the confidence level at 95%. So the score of Z will be 1.96. And the maximum allowance error will be estimated at 5%. When the score of p will be determined, there are two methods according to Zikmund's proposition. The first method is that past information or relevant experiences may be available to provide an educated estimate of p. The second one is that, when the past information or relevant experiences are not available, the researcher can try to propose a score of p that will never underestimate the sample size needed. It means that the researcher has to choose a score of p that will make pq or p (1-p) as large as possible. Moreover, Levine, Krehbiel and Berenson (2000) proposed that the score of

48

pq or p (1-p) achieves its maximum result when the score of p is equal to 0.5. So for this study, the sample size n is equal to $(1.96)^2 (0.5) (0.5)/ (0.05)^2$, namely 384.

Furthermore, table 4.1 proposed by Gary Anderson (1996) shows that, when the population is greater than 1,000,000, the used sample size does not change. In this study, even though the exact number of population was not known, the population would be greater than 1,000,000 since China has a large population, and the number of Chinese tourists travelling to Thailand in 2002 was 797,976. So based on the analysis above, the researcher decides that the sample size for this study is **384**.

Table 4.1 Theoretical sample sizes for different sizes of population and a 95% level of certainty

Population	Required Sample for Tolerable Error			
	5%	4%	3%	2%
100	79	85	91	96
500	217	272	340	413
1,000	277	375	516	705
5,000	356	535	897	1,622
50,000	381	593	1,044	2,290
100,000	382	596	1,055	2,344
1,000,000	384	599	1,065	2,344
25,000,000	384	600	1,067	2,400

Source: Gary Anderson, 1996

4.3 Research Instrument/Questionnaire

The questionnaire is constructed as an instrument to be used in this study. It is a structured sequence of questions designed to draw out facts and opinions and which provides a vehicle for recording the data (Zikmund, 2000). The main advantages of this kind of questionnaire are that it can be collected in a complete form within a short

49

relationship between traveling propensity and quality of local infrastructure. One of the most important issues that Chinese tourists bury in their minds is the serious traffic jams in Bangkok.

7. Relationship between traveling propensity and festivals

According to the statistics shown in table 5.6, the researcher decided to accept the null hypotheses and reject the alternative hypotheses because the significant value of traveling propensity and festivals is greater than 0.05. It means that there is no relationship between traveling propensity and festivals.

Explanation of this result

There are assorted festivals in Thailand every year. During the period of festivals, more tourists come to Thailand. But the statistics indicates that there is no relationship between traveling propensity and festivals. The reason for this may be that the number of festivals for Chinese tourists is limited. For example, the Pattaya music festival is very famous. But Chinese tourists are not familiar with or interested in it. So it can not act as a tool to attract Chinese tourists.

Hypotheses 2

H2o: There is no significant relationship between the brand personality of Thailand as a destination and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand.

H2a: There is significant relationship between the brand personality of Thailand as a destination and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand.

Table 5.7 Pearson correlation of traveling propensity and brand personality

Correlations

		tsinceri	texc	Tcompete	Tsophis
tpropen	Pearson Correlation	.699(**)	.190(*)	.218(**)	.222(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	385	385	385	385

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

1. Relationship between traveling propensity and the sincerity scale of brand personality

Based on the statistics shown in table 5.7, the researcher decided to reject the null hypotheses and accept the alternative hypotheses because the significant value of traveling propensity and the sincerity scale of brand personality is less than 0.05. Moreover the statistics also shows that there is a strong positive relationship between traveling propensity and the sincerity scale of brand personality since the Pearson correlation coefficient shown in table 5.6 is 0.699.

Explanation of this result

As the researcher discussed in the previous chapter, Chinese are very sensitive to the sincerity. They also hope that others treat them sincerely, so there is no doubt that there is a strong positive relationship between traveling propensity and the sincerity scale of brand personality.

2. Relationship between traveling propensity and the excitement scale of brand personality

The statistics of table 5.7 indicates that the significant value of traveling propensity and the excitement scale of brand personality is less than 0.05, which means that the null hypotheses was rejected and the alternative hypotheses was accepted. The

Pearson correlation coefficient shown in table 5.7 is 0.190, which indicates that there is a weak positive relationship between traveling propensity and the excitement scale of brand personality.

Explanation of this result

One possible reason for this result may be that on one hand a number of exciting things or activities are available in Thailand, but on the other hand Thailand is a traditional eastern and Buddhist country even though western culture was well embedded in Thai culture. These may generate the result that there is a weak positive relationship between traveling propensity and the excitement scale of brand personality.

3. Relationship between traveling propensity and the competence scale of brand personality

From table 5.7, the significant value of traveling propensity and the competence scale of brand personality is less than 0.05. So the researcher decided to reject the null hypotheses and accept the alternative hypotheses. The statistics also shows that there is a weak positive relationship between traveling propensity and the competence scale of brand personality since the Pearson correlation coefficient shown in table 5.7 is 0.218.

Explanation of this result

In the point of view of Chinese tourists, they can get service at the international standard. Thailand is competent in this field. But sometimes they feel that crisis can not be managed well in Thailand. One example is the tsunami happened at the end of

last year. There was no any alarm before it happened. If there had been any alarm, this disaster would have been minimized. This may be the result that there is a weak positive relationship between traveling propensity and the competence scale of brand personality.

4. Relationship between traveling propensity and the sophistication scale of brand personality

The researcher decided to reject the null hypotheses and accept the alternative hypotheses because the significant value of traveling propensity and the sophistication scale of brand personality in table 5.7 is less than 0.05. Furthermore, the Pearson correlation coefficient shown in table 5.7 is 0.222, which indicates that there is a weak positive relationship between traveling propensity and the sophistication scale of brand personality.

Explanation of this result

Even though china has made great progress in its economy in recent years, traveling abroad is still considered as a relatively 'expensive' decision which can make a difference. But there is a trend that more Chinese will have ability to travel abroad, and traveling to Thailand will become much cheaper. This may explain why there is a weak positive relationship between traveling propensity and the sophistication scale of brand personality.

Hypotheses 3

H3o: There is no significant relationship between the brand symbol of Thailand and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand.

H3a: There is significant relationship between the brand symbol of Thailand and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand.

Table 5.8 Pearson correlation of traveling propensity and brand symbol

Correlations

		TPROPEN	like it or not	happiness on earth
TPROPEN	Pearson Correlation	1	.073	.048
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.151	.349
	N	385	385	385

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From table 5.8, the researcher found that both the significance value of traveling propensity and brand logo, and the significance of traveling propensity and brand metaphor are greater than 0.05, which indicates that the null hypothesis was accepted and the alternative hypothesis was rejected. In other words, there are no relationship between the traveling propensity and Thailand brand logo as well as brand metaphor.

Explanation of this result

This brand symbol is the latest one launched by TAT (Tourism Authority of Thailand). Tourists may not be familiar with it. They are sometimes confused by assorted brand symbols launched by TAT that was tried to rebuild the brand of Thailand. Tourists may also think that this brand symbol would not perfectly express the identity of Thailand.

Hypotheses 4

H4o: There is no significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among age groups.

H4a: There is significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among age groups.

Table 5.9 ANOVA of age groups

ANOVA

TPROPEN

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	13.532	4	3.383	10.080	.000
Within Groups	127.529	380	.336		
Total	141.061	384			

The analysis of variance from Table 5.9 indicates that the significance value of traveling propensity and age groups is lower than 0.05, which means that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. In other words, there is significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among age groups.

Hypotheses 5

H5o: There is no significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among education groups.

H5a: There is significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among education groups.

70

Table 5.10 ANOVA of education groups

ANOVA

TPROPEN

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.846	3	1.949	5.491	.001
Within Groups	135.215	381	.355		
Total	141.061	384			

The statistics in table 5.10 shows that the significance value of traveling propensity and education groups is less than 0.05. So the researcher decided to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. It is concluded that there is significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among education groups.

Hypotheses 6

H6o: There is no significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among occupation groups.

H6a: There is significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among occupation groups.

Table 5.11 ANOVA of occupation groups

ANOVA

TPROPEN

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	23.941	6	3.990	12.878	.000
Within Groups	117.120	378	.310		
Total	141.061	384			

According to the statistics of table 5.11, the researcher decided to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis because the significance of traveling propensity and occupation groups is less than 0.05. This result explains that there is significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among occupation groups.

Hypotheses 7

H7o: There is no significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among income groups.

H7a: There is significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among income groups.

Table 5.12 ANOVA of income groups

ANOVA

TPROPEN

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	17.215	3	5.738	17.653	.000
Within Groups	123.846	381	.325		
Total	141.061	384			

Table 5.12 indicates that the significance value of traveling propensity and income groups is less than 0.05. So the researcher concluded that there is significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among income groups, which means that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

72

Hypotheses 8

H8o: There is no significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand between gender groups.

H8a: There is significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand between gender groups.

Table 5.13 Independent samples t-test of gender groups

Group Statistics

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
TPROPEN	female	102	3.7108	.48460	.04798
	male	283	3.9028	.63742	.03789

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
TPROPEN	Equal variances assumed	7.036	.008	-2.767	383	.006	-.1920	.06940	-.32849	-.05560
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.141	233.69	.002	-.1920	.06114	-.31250	-.07159

According to the statistics of table 5.13, the significance value of traveling propensity and gender groups is less than 0.05. So the researcher concluded that there is significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand between gender groups, which means that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Chapter VI   Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

There are three major sections in this chapter. The first section explains summary of findings based from the previous chapter. In the second section the conclusions are discussed. The third section gives the appropriate recommendations based on the findings.

6.1 Summary of Findings

6.1.1 Summary of Respondents' Characteristics

Among 385 respondents, there are 283 males (73.5%) and 102 females (26.5%). The majority of respondents are those Chinese whose ages range from 21 to 30 (39.2%). Most of respondents hold bachelor degrees (41.6%) or diploma/certificates (27.5%). Moreover, 41.6% of respondents stated that they are enterprise employees making up the largest group of the respondents, followed by the group whose occupation were government officers (22.6%). 192 respondents earn monthly income ranging from 1001 to 3000 RMB. They are the largest group of respondents (49.9%), followed by the group earning monthly incomes ranging from 3001 to 5000 RMB (21.6%).

6.1.2 Summary of Hypotheses Testing

In this study, there were totally 8 hypotheses that were tested. Table 9.1 shows the results of test of these hypotheses.

Table 9.1 Results of hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Statistics Test	Result
H1o: There is no significant relationship between physical attributes of Thailand destination brand and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand.		
National attractions		Reject Ho
Beaches		Reject Ho
National parks	Pearson Correlation	Reject Ho
Historic and cultural sites		Reject Ho
Shopping facilities		Reject Ho
Quality of local infrastructure		Reject Ho
Festivals		Accept Ho
H2o: There is no significant relationship between the brand personality of Thailand as a destination and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand.		
Sincerity		Reject Ho
Excitement	Pearson Correlation	Reject Ho
Competence		Reject Ho
Sophistication		Reject Ho
H3o: There is no significant relationship between the brand symbol of Thailand and Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand.		
Logo	Pearson Correlation	Accept Ho
Metaphor		Accept Ho
H4o: There is no significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among age groups.	One-way ANOVA	Reject Ho
H5o: There is no significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among education groups.	One-way ANOVA	Reject Ho
H6o: There is no significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among occupation groups.	One-way ANOVA	Reject Ho
H7o: There is no significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand among income groups.	One-way ANOVA	Reject Ho
H8o: There is no significant difference of Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand between gender groups.	Independent T-test	Reject Ho

From the results of these hypotheses testing, the researcher found that there are positive relationships between Chinese tourists' traveling propensity and physical

75

attributes as well as brand personality of Thailand except the attribute "festivals". But there is no relationship between Chinese tourist's traveling propensity and brand symbol launched by Thailand. Moreover, the results also indicate that different socio-demographic groups have different traveling propensity to travel to Thailand.

6.2 Conclusion

There is a need to develop a clear identity, or 'brand' based on reality for every destination in the highly competitive and dynamic global tourism environment today. The reason is that destination branding can be regarded as a strategic marketing activity that will differentiate a destination from its competitors. As Kotler and Gertner supported in 2002, brands have been considered a marketer's major tool for creating product differentiation because product features are easily copied. This study provides critical analysis of brand strength and weakness of Thailand in the perspective of Chinese tourists because of the significance of the Chinese travel market to the Thai tourism industry.

But a number of destination marketers did not fully understand the theories of branding. As a result, ineffective destination branding was generated. This study, however, fully uses the theories of branding to come up with the critical analysis about the destination branding of Thailand. Based on branding theories developed by famous academics in this field, when conducting the destination branding, destination marketers have to not only focus on the attributes and brand symbol (most of destination marketers did it) but also try to develop an appropriate brand personality which can create an emotional relationship between the destination and potential visitors. According to the theories of branding and choice behavior, a research

76

framework was set up to investigate the roles of Thailand destination branding on Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand. Based on this framework, the research hypotheses were established to test whether there are significant relationships between Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand and destination brand of Thailand which includes physical attributes, brand personality and brand symbol, and whether different socio-demographic groups hold different propensities to travel to Thailand. Data were analyzed by using Pearson Correlation, One-way AVOVA, and Independent T-test.

Physical attributes of Thailand and traveling propensity

The result of data analysis reveals that most of attributes promoted in Thailand destination branding have positive relationships with Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand. It indicates that this perspective of branding Thailand may differentiate itself from others in attracting Chinese tourists. But some attributes, such as festivals, should be improved or developed more intensively since the result showed that there was no relationship between them.

Brand personality of Thailand and traveling propensity

Data analysis indicates that there is a positive relationship between Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand and brand personality of Thailand. It reveals that in point of view of Chinese tourists, Thailand is considered as a destination where people are kind and friendly, service can be delivered at the international level and some exciting things are available. All these may generate an emotional tie between Chinese tourists and the destination "Thailand".

77

Brand symbol of Thailand and traveling propensity

Data analysis reveals that there is no positive relationship between Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand and brand symbol of Thailand. One possible reason for this may be that Chinese tourists are not familiar with this newly launched brand symbol. They may get confused by assorted brand symbols launched before such as Amazing Thailand or Unseen Thailand.

Socio-demographic groups and traveling propensity

The result of data analysis indicates that different socio-demographics hold various propensities to travel to Thailand. The majority of the respondents are males whose ages mostly range from 21 to 40, and have relatively average monthly incomes.

All these findings reveal that the Thailand destination brand being developed now plays a relative important role in affecting Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand since most of relationships were confirmed. But the destination marketers in Thailand have to elaborate the destination brand being built and develop it in a sustainable and consistent way. These useful findings can contribute to help organize tourism products and formulate suitable destination marketing and management strategies for Chinese market, and to build up a strong and consistent destination brand of Thailand that will benefit its future healthy development.

6.3 Recommendations

Thailand is a famous tourism destination whose reputation was admitted by the world. In today's tourism market, Thailand has to convert this positive reputation into a strong and sustainable destination brand to survive. In the process of building a strong

destination brand, Thailand did a good job but not a perfect one that will be sure to benefit its future. Moreover, with the rapid growth of the Chinese economy, more Chinese tourists will go abroad for traveling. In order to get benefit from this trend, Thailand has to perfect its branding development which can differentiate itself from other competitors.

According to these research findings, the researcher makes some valuable recommendations as follows:

Recommendations for attributes development of Thailand

Based on the results of data analysis, positive relationships between some attributes and traveling propensity were confirmed. The destination marketers of Thailand may conclude that these attributes are those ones Chinese tourists are willing to experience. So they have to be sustained and emphasized much more carefully. For those attributes having weak relationships and no relationship with Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand, the destination marketers have to look for the reasons why it happened and try to find the solution to build a strong brand. For example, promoting festivals in Thailand has no relationship with Chinese traveling propensity. The reason for this may be that the number of festivals special for Chinese tourists is limited. So the destination marketers should set up more festivals suitable for Chinese tourists with further marketing research. Moreover, the quality of local infrastructures also had a weak positive relationship with Chinese traveling propensity, which indicates that the destination marketers have to make more efforts to elaborate or perfect them. In order to achieve this goal, the destination marketers have to cooperate with the government and its bodies, not working alone because building a powerful

destination brand is a long-term effort and involves assorted stakeholders of the destination.

Furthermore, today tour operators and travel agencies sell similar traveling routes or packages to Chinese tourists, which may result in inappropriate understanding of attributes from the 'real' Thailand. For example, Chinese tourists are always arranged to go to Pattaya instead of other well sustained places such as Phuket and Ko Samui when traveling around Thailand. They may think that others are similar with Pattaya. But it is a truth that beaches around Pattaya were worse than others. Therefore, this study also indicates that in the process of building a strong destination brand, the intermediaries such as travel agencies play an important role. So they have to be carefully controlled and managed by the destination marketers using the comprehensive and consistent strategy.

Recommendations for brand personality of Thailand

As discussed in previous chapters, a well-established brand personality can result in consumers having stronger emotional ties to the brand and greater trust and loyalty. It can be regarded as the essence of developing a strong destination brand. According to the result of hypotheses testing, all perspectives of Thailand brand personality have positive relationships with Chinese tourists' traveling propensity. But some perspectives hold a weak relationship with traveling propensity. So in the process of developing the destination brand of Thailand, the marketers should emphasize good perspectives and improve under covered perspectives to generate the core personality. For example, in the view of mostly Chinese tourists, they think that Thai people are very kind, sincere and friendly. And Chinese cultivate a sense of compassion,

honesty, truthfulness and trustworthiness as they grow up. According the psychology, people want to be with the group that holds the same identity with them. Therefore, Chinese tourists feel comfortable when traveling to Thailand, because they have some emotional ties with Thailand and think of Thailand as a 'smiling country'. Developing sustainable brand personality of Thailand, the destination marketers have to emphasize more on these strong personality or emotional ties.

Moreover, when mentioning the destination of Thailand, tourists are quite vague about the core personality of Thailand. This may be one possible reason why the researcher had to use a more comprehensive tool, a brand personality scale, to structure and measure the brand personality of Thailand. But when facing the tense competition in the future, the destination marketers have to elaborate its core personality to achieve the goal that tourists can recall the concrete personality or emotional ties with this destination when anyone mentions it. And what is more, it has to be ensured that all marketing strategies and visual communications reflect the core personality of the destination brand.

Recommendations for brand symbol of Thailand

A strong symbol can provide cohesion and structure to an identity and make it much easier to gain recognition and recall for consumers. But the data analysis in the previous chapter showed that there is no relationship between Chinese tourists' traveling propensity and Thailand brand symbol no matter what logo or metaphor. The reason for this result may be that Chinese tourists are not familiar with this newly launched brand symbol. It is a fact that the destination marketer of Thailand launched so many different symbols for various campaigns. This resulted in the confusion of

tourists. As mentioned before, building a strong destination brand is a long-term effort. So a sustainable and consistent destination brand symbol is needed. Because of this, the destination marketer of Thailand should develop a destination brand that can be sustained for a long time or ever. And under this brand symbol, the unique attributes and personality of Thailand can be really featured.

Recommendations for different socio-demographic groups

Since different socio-demographic groups hold various propensities to travel to Thailand, tour operators and travel agencies may organize different traveling routes or packages to meet assorted needs. For those tourists who are interested in seaside, they may be arranged to travel to Phuket or Ko Samui. For female tourists, a shopping trip is more favorable.

Recommendations for further research

Since the target population of this study is limited to those Chinese tourists who have not visited Thailand, other kinds of tourists were excluded from the domain of this research. Further study may select other kinds of tourists to investigate the destination brand of Thailand.

Moreover, branding a country is more complicated than branding a smaller region or a city. In order to generate more effective branding strategies, further study may focus on one specific region or city.

Lastly, this study only concluded that there is a relationship on Chinese tourists' propensity among different socio-demographic groups. Further study may be proposed to investigate how exactly they affect each other.

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www.westaustralia.com

Appendix A

Questionnaire

Dear tourists,

I am a student of Master of Arts in Tourism Management of Graduate School of Business of Assumption University of Thailand. This following questionnaire is used to investigate the Chinese tourists' propensity to travel to Thailand according to the destination branding of Thailand. All the personal information will be used to the research only.

The questionnaire will not take you more than 10 minutes to complete it. Please answer the questions below by placing a check mark in the appropriate boxes.

Thank you in advance!

SECTION I: OPINIONS ABOUT TRAVELING PROPENSITY

What do you think about the statements mentioned below by ticking the appropriate number?

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Statement	5	4	3	2	1
1. Thailand is one of tourism destinations that I always wish to visit for.					
2. I am interested in visiting Thailand in the foreseeable future.					

SECTION II: OPINIONS ABOUT ATTRIBUTES PROMOTED

What do you think about Thailand with respect to each of the attributes mentioned below, by ticking the appropriate number?

1=very poor

2=poor

3=neutral

4=good

5=very good

Attributes of Thailand	5	4	3	2	1
3. Natural attractions					
4. Beaches					
5. National parks					
6. Historic and cultural sites					
7. Shopping facilities					
8. Quality of local Infrastructure					
9. Festivals					

SECTION III: OPINIONS ABOUT BRAND PERSONALITY OF THAILAND

Please express your opinion about the following statements by ticking the appropriate number.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=neutral

4=agree

5=strongly agree

Scale	No.	Statement	5	4	3	2	1
Sincerity	10	I will not be cheated in Thailand.					
	11	Thai people are very friendly and helpful.					
	12	Traveling experience is same as promised.					
Excitement	13	There are a variety of exciting activities that I can participate.					
	14	Thailand is a modern country.					
	15	I can experience the latest fashion in Thailand.					
Competence	16	Thailand can deliver the service at the international level.					
	17	Thailand can manage crisis well such as tsunami.					
	18	Thailand is a leading tourism destination in Asia.					
Sophistication	19	Most of upper-class people travel to Thailand.					
	20	Traveling to Thailand can differentiate myself from others.					

SECTION IV: OPINIONS ABOUT BRAND SYMBOL OF THAILAND

21. What do you think about the following brand symbol of Thailand? (Tick the appropriate number)

- ☐ 1=I don't like it at all!
- ☐ 2=I don't like it!
- ☐ 3=Fair!
- ☐ 4=I like it!
- ☐ 5=I like it very much!

22. 'Happiness on Earth' can rightly depict Thailand. (Tick the appropriate number)

- ☐ 1=strongly disagree
- ☐ 2=disagree
- ☐ 3=neutral
- ☐ 4=agree
- ☐ 5=strongly agree

SECTION V: PERSONAL INFORMATION

23. What is your approximate age?

☐1. 20 or below   ☐2. 21-30   ☐ 3. 31-40

☐4. 41-50   ☐5. 51 or above

24. What is your gender?

☐ 1. Female   ☐2. Male

25. What is your education level?

☐ 1. Up to high school   ☐2. Diploma Certificate   ☐3. Bachelor Degree

☐ 4. Master degree and above

26. What is your occupation?

☐ 1. Business owner   ☐ 2. Government officer   ☐3. Teacher

☐ 4. Enterprise employee   ☐ 5. Unemployed   ☐6. Student

☐ 7. Other_____

27. What is your approximate income per month in RMB?

☐ 1. 1000 or less   ☐2. 1001-3000

☐ 3. 3001-5000   ☐4. More than 5000

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

Appendix B

问卷调查

亲爱的游客,

我是一名来自泰国爱博大学(ABAC)旅游管理硕士班的学生。此问卷调查是针对关于中国游客来泰国旅游倾向性的研究。它是根据泰国国际品牌展开的。问卷调查中所涉及的个人资料将仅用于此研究中!

谢谢!!!

第一部分:游客来泰国旅游倾向性的看法

对于以下陈述,请在相应的空格上打勾!

1. 强烈不赞同
2. 不赞同
3. 一般
4. 赞同
5. 强烈赞同

陈述	5	4	3	2	1
1. 泰国总是我想去度假的地方!					
2. 在不久的将来我打算去泰国旅游!					

第二部分：对泰国的看法

您对泰国的以下方面怎么看？请在相应的空格上打勾！

1= 非常不好

2= 不好

3= 一般

4= 好

5= 非常好

	5	4	3	2	1
3．自然风光					
4．海滩					
5．自然公园					
6．历史遗迹					
7．购物场所					
8．基础设施					
9．节日					

第三部分：对泰国的感情

请您表达对以下观点的看法！请在相应的空格上打勾！

1= 强烈不赞同

2= 不赞同

3= 一般

4= 赞同

5= 强烈赞同

范围	No.	观点	5	4	3	2	1
真诚	10	我不会在泰国被骗.					
	11	当地人很友好且乐于助人.					
	12	旅游经历和许诺的一样.					
兴奋	13	我能参加许多令人激动的活动.					
	14	泰国是一个很现代的国家.					
	15	在泰国我能看到很前沿的时尚.					
能力	16	我能得到国际水准的服务.					
	17	泰国能很好地处理危机.(海啸)					
	18	泰国是一个很有竞争力的旅游目的地.					
经验	19	大多数的上流人士来泰国旅游.					
	20	来泰国旅游使我感到我不同于其他人.					

第四部分：对泰国商标的看法

21. 您对以下的商标怎么看？请在相应的空格上打勾！

Thailand
HAPPINESS ON EARTH

☐1= 我非常不喜欢!

☐2= 我不喜欢!

☐3= 一般!

☐4= 我喜欢!

☐5= 我非常喜欢!

22. "欢乐泰国" 能很好地描绘泰国！请在相应的数字上画圈！

☐1. 强烈不赞同

☐2. 不赞同

☐3. 一般

☐4. 赞同

☐5. 强烈赞同

第五部分：个人信息

23. 您的年龄?

☐ 1.20 或 以下   ☐ 2.21-30   ☐ 3.31-40

☐ 4.41-50   ☐ 5.51 或 以上

24. 您的性别?

☐ 1. 女性   ☐ 2. 男性

25. 您的教育程度?

☐ 1. 高中或以下   ☐ 2. 大专   ☐ 3. 本科

☐ 4. 硕士或以上

26. 您的职业?

☐ 1. 生意人   ☐ 2.公务员   ☐ 3. 教师

☐ 4. 企业雇员   ☐ 5. 待业   ☐ 6. 学生

☐ 7. 其他_____

27. 您每月的收入大约是多少?

☐ 1. 1000 或 更少 ☐ 2. 1001-3000

☐ 3. 3001-5000 ☐ 4. 多于 5000

谢谢您的合作!!!

Appendix C

1. Reliability for traveling propensity to travel to Thailand

Reliability

****** Method 1 (space saver) will be used for this analysis ******

—

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS - SCALE (ALPHA)

Reliability Coefficients

N of Cases =   30.0   N of Items = 2

Alpha =   .6799

2. Reliability for attributes of Thailand

Reliability

****** Method 1 (space saver) will be used for this analysis ******

—

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS - SCALE (ALPHA)

Reliability Coefficients

N of Cases =   30.0   N of Items = 7

Alpha =   .8148

3. Reliability for sincerity scale

Reliability

****** Method 1 (space saver) will be used for this analysis ******
_

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS - SCALE (ALPHA)

Reliability Coefficients

N of Cases =   30.0   N of Items = 3

Alpha =   .6881

4. Reliability for excitement scale

Reliability

****** Method 1 (space saver) will be used for this analysis ******
_

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS - SCALE (ALPHA)

Reliability Coefficients

N of Cases =   30.0   N of Items = 3

Alpha =   .7644

5. Reliability for competence scale

Reliability

****** Method 1 (space saver) will be used for this analysis ******
_

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS - SCALE (ALPHA)

Reliability Coefficients

N of Cases =   30.0   N of Items = 3

Alpha =   .7901

6. Reliability for sophistication scale

Reliability

****** Method 1 (space saver) will be used for this analysis ******

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS - SCALE (ALPHA)

Reliability Coefficients

N of Cases =   30.0   N of Items = 2

Alpha =   .6548

Appendix D

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20 or below	7	1.8	1.8	1.8
	21-30	151	39.2	39.2	41.0
	31-40	111	28.8	28.8	69.9
	41-50	67	17.4	17.4	87.3
	51 or above	49	12.7	12.7	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

age

age
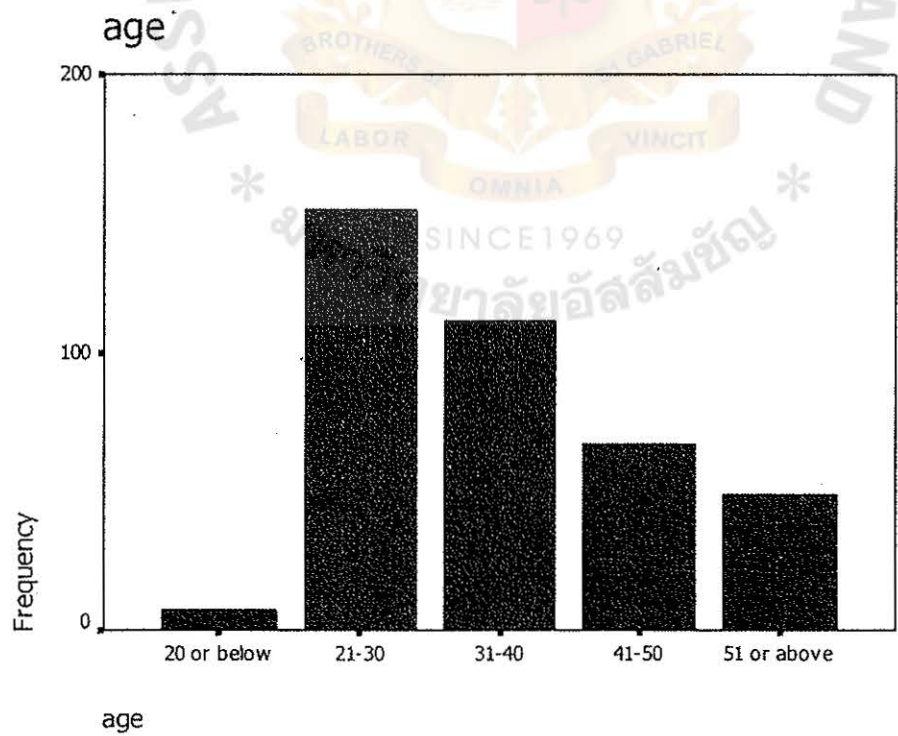
Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	female	102	26.5	26.5	26.5
	male	283	73.5	73.5	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

gender

gender
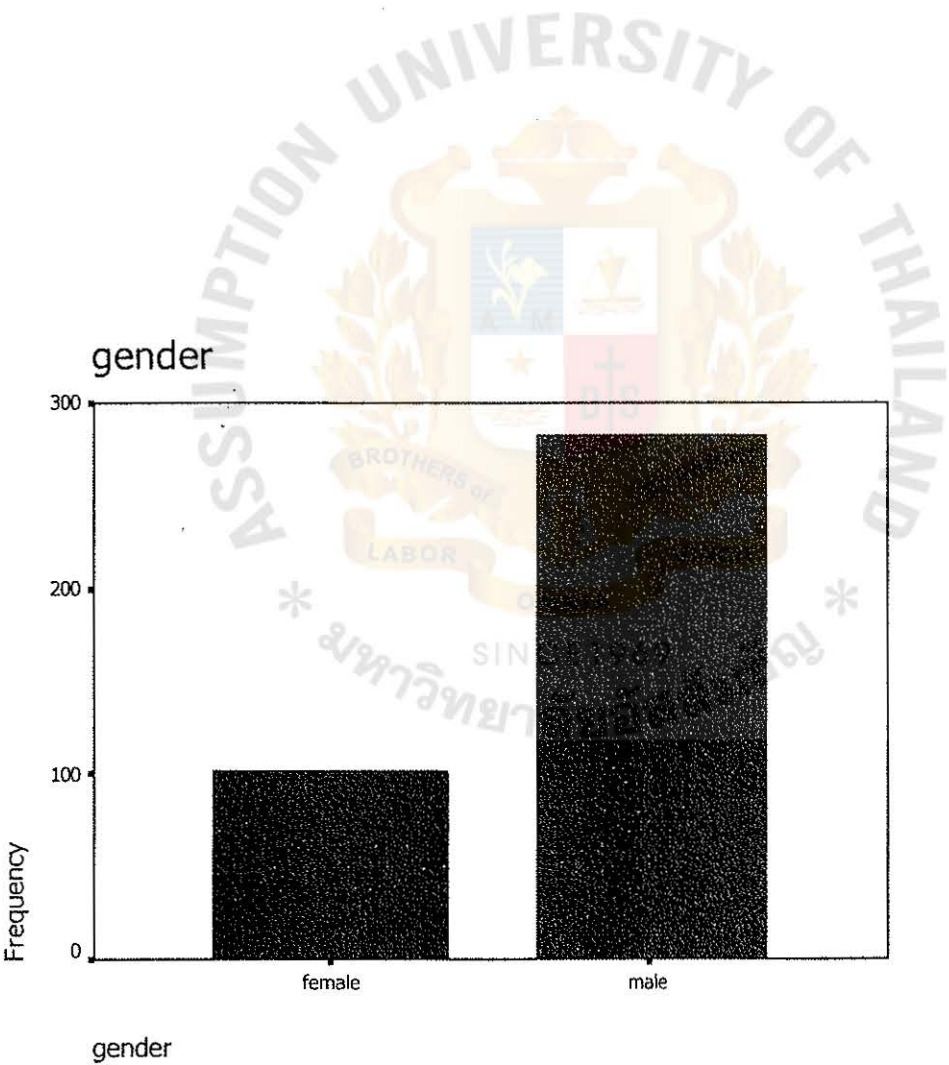
Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	up to high school	43	11.2	11.2	11.2
	diploma/certificate	106	27.5	27.5	38.7
	bacherlor degree	160	41.6	41.6	80.3
	master degree and above	76	19.7	19.7	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

education
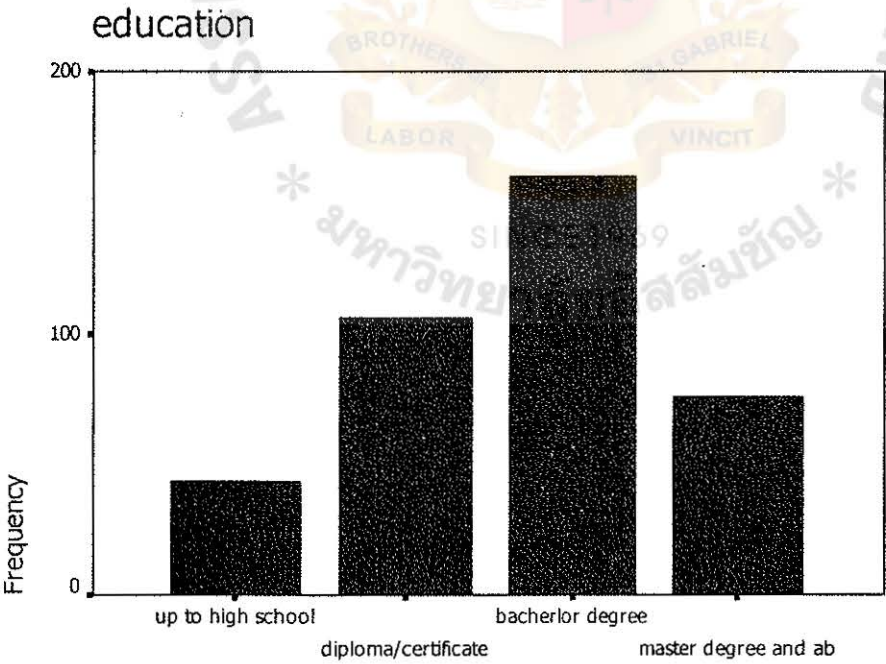
Occupation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	business owner	19	4.9	4.9	4.9
	government officer	87	22.6	22.6	27.5
	teacher	34	8.8	8.8	36.4
	enterprise employee	160	41.6	41.6	77.9
	unemployed	16	4.2	4.2	82.1
	student	61	15.8	15.8	97.9
	others	8	2.1	2.1	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

occupation

occupation
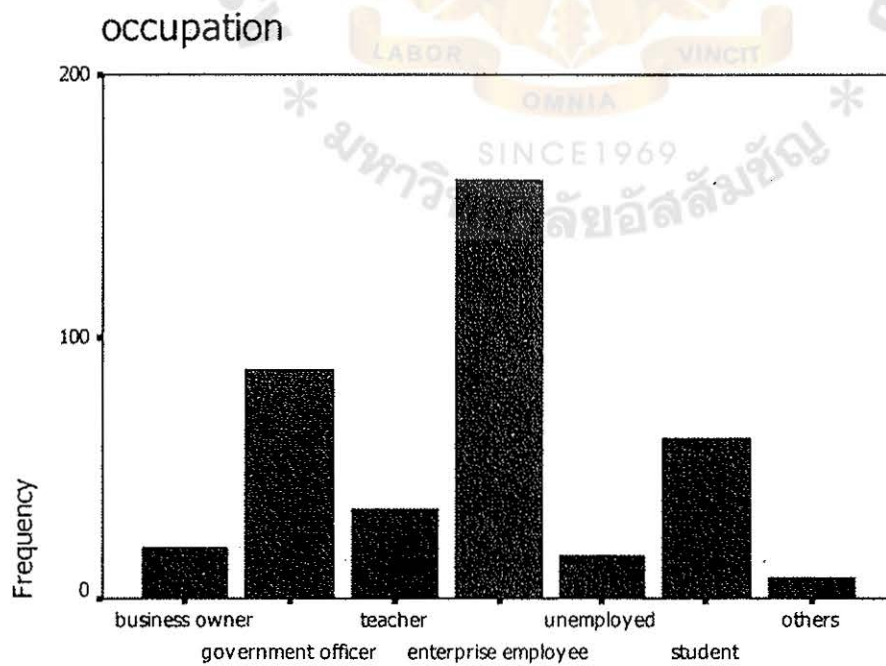
Income

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1000 or less	70	18.2	18.2	18.2
	1001-3000	192	49.9	49.9	68.1
	3001-5000	83	21.6	21.6	89.6
	more than 5000	40	10.4	10.4	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

income

income
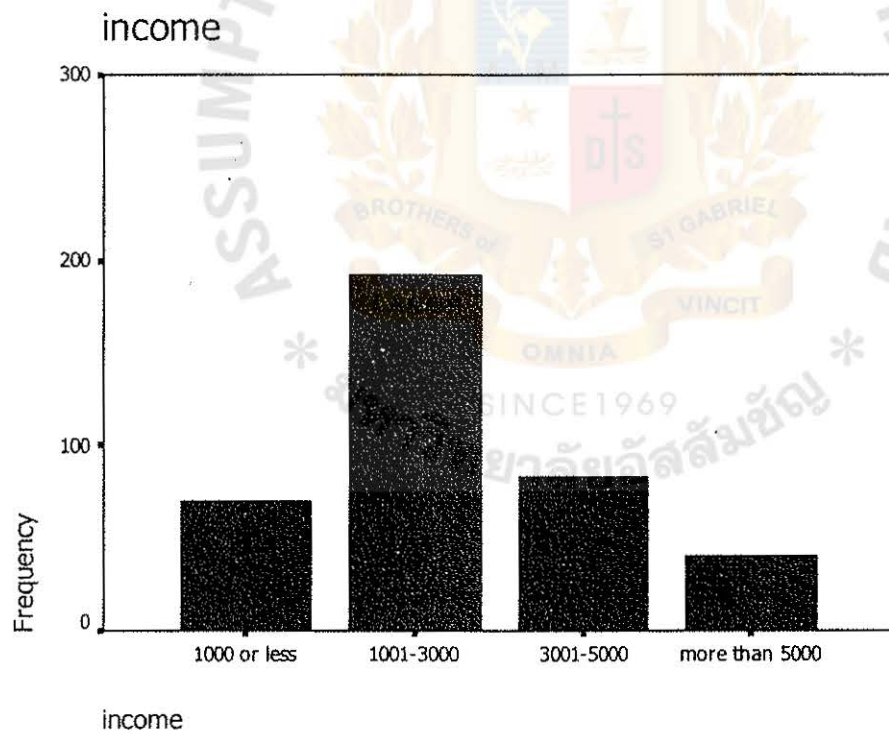
Correlations

		natural attractions	beaches	national parks	historic and cultural sites	shopping facilities	quality of local infrastructure	festivals
tpropen	Pearson Correlation	.436(**)	.304(**)	.405(**)	.202(**)	.679(**)	.163(**)	.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001	.505
	N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Correlations

		tsinceri	texc	tcompete	tsophis
tpropen	Pearson Correlation	.699(**)	.190(*)	.218(**)	.222(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	385	385	385	385

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Correlations

		TPROPEN	like it or not	happiness on earth
TPROPEN	Pearson Correlation	1	.073	.048
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.151	.349
	N	385	385	385

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

ANOVA

TPROPEN

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	13.532	4	3.383	10.080	.000
Within Groups	127.529	380	.336		
Total	141.061	384			

ANOVA

TPROPEN

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.846	3	1.949	5.491	.001
Within Groups	135.215	381	.355		
Total	141.061	384			

ANOVA

TPROPEN

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	23.941	6	3.990	12.878	.000
Within Groups	117.120	378	.310		
Total	141.061	384			

ANOVA

TPROPEN

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	17.215	3	5.738	17.653	.000
Within Groups	123.846	381	.325		
Total	141.061	384			

Group Statistics

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
TPROPEN	female	102	3.7108	.48460	.04798
	male	283	3.9028	.63742	.03789

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
TPROPEN	Equal variances assumed	7.036	.008	-2.767	383	.006	-.1920	.06940	-.32849	-.05560
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.141	233.69	.002	-.1920	.06114	-.31250	-.07159