

## ABSTRACT

A successful destination branding not only attracts new customers, but also maintains the existing customers. When the existing customers become loyal to the products and services, they continue to utilize the products and even recommend or share their positive experiences to others like friends and family. Therefore, customer loyalty is very important to any organizations and industries including tourism industry because it might bring new customers as well as repeat purchase in products and services. Hence, this study aims to investigate Myanmar tourists' loyalty toward Thailand as a destination brand as well as their opinion toward brand variables (such as brand awareness, brand image, brand quality, and brand value).

This study is based on non-probability convenience and judgment sampling with 384 respondents of Myanmar tourists who visited Thailand during October and November 2015. The questionnaires were distributed at the air ticket check-in areas of Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueng International airports in Bangkok. The data were gathered from secondary sources such as the books, articles in the journals, online news, tourism reports, and self-administrated five-point Likert Scale questionnaire. The data were analyzed by descriptive and inferential analyses. The Pearson's correlation was used to achieve favorable hypotheses testing.

The result of the study showed that majority of 384 Myanmar tourists were female (58.9%) and age 18-28 years old (54.9%). Most of those respondents were self-employed (37.2%) and holding bachelor degree. Moreover, in terms of frequency of visiting Thailand, over half or 61.2 % out of 384 respondents had visited Thailand three times and more than three times. The majority of them were visiting Thailand for leisure (including shopping only, visiting temples, visiting friends and family, sight seeing and taking a trip to the beach), it accounted for 57.0%. The findings of the hypotheses indicated that there is a moderate positively significant relationship between brand awareness and brand loyalty. In terms of opinion, the majority of Myanmar tourists have awareness of Thailand as a destination since most of them know/ hear about Thailand before visiting. Additionally, there is a strong positively significant relationship between

brand image and brand loyalty, brand quality and brand loyalty, and brand value and brand loyalty. In Myanmar respondents' point of view, they have a positive image of Thailand as a destination brand. Also they believed that Thailand has high level of brand quality as majority of them expressed Thailand was the best destination choice for visiting. Besides, they believed Thailand provides value for money. Finally, the most influent information source besides friends and family, was social media (e.g. facebook) and followed by TV, movie, travel agents, and Youtube.

It is suggested that tourism related organizations such as national tourism organizations, tour operators and travel agents, hotels should know more about Myanmar tourists to develop appropriate marketing strategy as well as products and services to meet their expectation.

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

