

# The International Tourists' Perception Toward Thailand And Myanmar

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## Abstract

This study aims 1) to describe the image of Thailand and Myanmar from the perspective of tourists who visit Thailand, 2) to evaluate differences of Thailand destination image comparing it with the destination image of Myanmar based on their perceptions and 3) to identify the image differences across tourists from different demographic profiles. The study aims to gain and understanding on the current images of these two countries by collecting questionnaires from international tourists who have been to both countries or have heard about Myanmar and are planning to visit in future. Research data were collected from 300 questionnaires which were distributed at Suvarnabhumi International Airport, Bangkok the Riverfront Asiatique and temple of the Reclining Buddha that is one of the most famous Buddhist temples in Bangkok. The research shows that there is a significant difference by occupation about accommodation in Myanmar and Thailand. The paper wishes to help in a strategic marketing and promotion of the destinations, and to facilitate information for students in their studies.

**Keywords:** Destination Image, Thailand, Myanmar



## Introduction

Thailand and Myanmar have started off with a turbulent history. There were four wars between both countries between the 16th to 18th centuries. From 20th to 21st century, there have been many conflicts between these two neighboring countries. Myanmar - Thailand relations depend on current and historical issues. Their current conflicts are minor, as with many other neighboring territories, where there has been continuous concern with border disputes. However, both countries continue to have good diplomatic relations with a representative embassy located in each country. Current relations between the two countries focus mainly on economic issues and trade. Both countries are members of ASEAN and Asia-Pacific with common goal to increase cooperation between themselves and other ASEAN countries as well as develop harmony among all members. Thailand and Myanmar put a lot of effort on promoting its leisure travel and business travel. Thailand has become one of the top five destination in Asia. But Myanmar still is not considered as a favorable destination. Thailand and Myanmar have the same rich culture, nature, religious, cuisine at reasonable prices and a good value for money. The authors would like to know the differences in image between these two countries. In term of export income earnings, Tourism is crucial as it brings revenue and job opportunities to the country. It brings in foreign tourists who are willing to pay for products and services in the host country. They are willing to pay for food, accommodation, and other specialties at slightly higher prices than what the locals would normally pay. As tourists are on their vacation, they have potential spending power and are willing to pay more for a good

time. When the destination has a good image with positive perception, tourists will continue to visit the destination. Positive destination image and perception will in return create popularities of the destination through word of mouth and create a travel fashion. The more the tourist travel to a country, the more job opportunities and income. As tourism continues to grow rapidly, many countries are paying special attention on developing and promoting the industry. According to UNWTO (7 May 2012) tourism is the key sector to generate export revenue. According to UNWTO (15 June 2012), in 2015, the number of tourists were 805 million and the revenue generated was 640 US\$. The projected figure for 2020 will be around one billion and 560 million tourists with expected revenue of 1.550 billion US\$. As tourism continues to grow and destinations are becoming more accessible globalization doesn't improve tourism of transportation technology, and ease of visa restriction, tourist destinations are becoming more and more competitive. Destination image is, therefore, an important consideration when a tourist is making a travel decision. It can differentiate their destination in this highly competitive market (Yilmaz, Lçigen, EkinandUtku, 2009 and Arturo, Mar and David, 2010). Examining travelers' perceptions of a destination image can help to identify which factors contribute to the success of a marketing strategy of a particular destination, consequently allowing the destination to improve its product image in the target market (Tavitiyaman, 2013, Ibrahim & Gill, 2005).

Thailand has put a lot of efforts on promoting its leisure travel and business travel. It is becoming more and more popular and is one of the top five tourist destinations in Asia. It is well known

for its rich culture, nature, cuisine at reasonable prices and a good value for money. According to Rittichainuwat, Qu and Brown (2001), the tourism authority (TAT) has also attempted to position Thailand as a shopping paradise, which puts it more directly in competition with Singapore and Hong Kong. The shopping-paradise image was highlighted under the “Amazing Thailand Grand Sales” destination promotion project. These positive images have attracted 24.7 million visitors in 2014. The ASEAN countries had over 6 million arrivals (Immigration Bureau, Police Department 2015). While Thailand enjoys a positive image, at the same time, there are some negative images that prevent tourists from choosing the country as a holiday destination.

Meanwhile, Myanmar is emerging as a new mystical destination rich in history and culture, overflowing with old-world charm and a way of life rapidly disappearing in the rest of the world today. From its sublime landscapes and rich history, to its serene people and a highly devoted Buddhist culture, offering the visitor a veritable treasure trove of wonders and delights unmatched in the world today. Myanmar has still a lot to discover such as exotic culture and heritage, ecology system and ancient buildings are still untouched, unspoiled and mysterious. Myanmar has just opened itself to international tourist. Myanmar Tourism Law was passed in 1990 and the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, set up in 1992, attracted 1.13 million visitors and generated USD 1.79 million in 2014. As Myanmar are contented and cheerful even in the face of adversities and known for their simple hospitality and friendliness. According to Wikipedia, tourism in Myanmar is slowly developing sector. Although Myanmar possess great tourist potential and attractions in many fields, much

of industry remains to be developed. Also, the number of visitors to Myanmar is comparatively small compared to neighbor countries. However as Thailand is classified as a developing countries, most people still perceive developing countries as risky destinations exposed to crime, disease, natural disaster, political instability and terrorism compared to developed countries. Law (2006) investigated that there are three risk factors (infectious diseases, terrorist attacks, and natural disasters) that influence the perception of international travelers in making travel decisions. People have different ideas about different countries. Chen, Hua and Wang (2013) and Kim and Chalip (2004) identified the most common travel constraints of risk and financial considerations to Asian destinations. The study of Chon, Singh, and Mikula (1993), found that Thailand’s positive tourism image began to decline due to the negative images of the sex industry and AIDS. Rittichainuwat et al., (2001) also found negative images of Thailand associated with prostitution, AIDS, crowding, a gap between the rich and the poor, and traffic jams. Certain news about Thailand that has been released has negatively hit the Thai tourism industry. Thai ministers have tried to tempt tourists back as reported by Tom Vater (15 Jan 2015) who stated that shortly after the military coup in May 2014, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has picked up on the theme and its new 2015 ‘Discover Thainess campaign launched with a parade in Bangkok’s downtown area. TAT reported that as a consequence of the coup, visitor numbers were down 6.6 % from the previous year. Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul, Minister of Tourism and Sports, attributes the drop in tourist arrivals to political unrest in the first half of last year, prior to the coup, and to fall of the ruble, which



has significantly reduced the number of Russian visitors. Moreover, Thailand's tourism industry has also been hit by safety concerns. The high profile murder of two British backpackers on the island of Ko Tao and its subsequent controversial police investigation coupled with insensitive comments about female tourists in bikinis by the Prime Minister was widely reported by the international press. More recently, the incidence of police harassing foreigners in central Bangkok has created more critical headlines.

Before people travel, they consider and compare the risk and the attractiveness attributes of a destination. Therefore, there is a need for research to evaluate a destination image. between Thailand and Myanmar, and its impact to the destination and travel decision making. This paper will explore the importance of a destination image and its role followed by research methodology and analysis of the destination image of Thailand and Myanmar.

## Purposes

The purposes of this research are as follows: 1) To aid the Thai and Myanmar tourism industry to create better products and services to serve the international tourists and 2) To examine and understand how international tourists perceive about the image of Thailand and Myanmar.

## Benefit of Research

This study will depict the strengths and weaknesses of two destinations in different categories, in order to provide better service and to meet needs and wants of international tourists, ensuring they will be satisfied and would consider revisiting both destinations. This study will be useful for tour operators, guides, the government and marketers

alike as it will provide a better understanding of destination image, intention and behavior of tourists. The result findings will be able to provide a targeted promotional program by tourism marketers of both Thailand and Myanmar.

## Literature Review

The questionnaire was derived from Ritti-chainuwat, Qu and Brown, (2001).

## Destination Image

People get their knowledge of a destination from commercial, public and personal experiences. This could be from travel advertisements, TV programs and documentaries, word of mouth from friends and relatives. They then interpret the information based on their experience, knowledge and their own personal judgement. Destination image could determine success or failure of the destination as the tourist decision-making process is based on their preference of the product, in this context, a tourism destination. This means if the reputation, image or feeling of a destination is positive, a tourist may consider it as their holiday destination choice. In contrast, negative perceptions may create a distortion of the destination which results in a tourist not considering the country as their holiday destinations. Pearce (1982), and Woodside and Lysonski (1990) demonstrate that there is an obvious relationship between positive perceptions of destinations and positive purchase decisions. So image will be used by marketers to differentiate a tourist destination by emphasizing its strength.

Fakeye and Crompton (1991) mention that the destination image in tourists' perception study that there are six main items of destination image:

nature; safety and accessibility; climate and culture; quality and price; environment and shopping; nightlife and emotion. Destination image includes experiences, beliefs, ideas, recollection, and impressions of the destination that are all about emotional qualities (Di Marino, 2007; Crompton, 1979; Reilly, 1990). Perception of destination affects the tourists' willingness to select the destination site (Zhang, 2012; Tascai and Gartner, 2007). People interpret image differently as influenced by their personal profile, and have different responses to stimuli. Personal interpretation to stimuli may vary according to different demographic groups.

## Demographics

Marketers use demographics to classify people into different segments with regards to age, occupation, income educational level and country of residence. These are important factors that affect the perception of a destination image by tourists. Po-Ju and Deborah (1999) discovered that tourist destination image mainly depends on the behavior of tourists or potential tourists and socio-demographic and statistical variables. Attitude, behavior, social class and cultural differences highly influence the perception of the destination image (Lewis and Barbara, 1991; Mayo, 1981) Demographics have crucial effects on consumer behavior, including consumer interests, tastes, purchasing ability, political preferences and investment behavior (Zhang, 2012). People perceive image and risk in different ways, as is affected by their background and experience. Zhang (2012) stated that travelers who tend to choose destinations farther away from home have higher education and higher income levels. Less experienced tourists pay higher attention concerns on health, terrorism, and food

than experienced tourists. If tourism resources of certain destinations are equally attractive, tourists may decide to visit the destination that has the least negative consequences or risks (McLellan and Foushee, 1983; Erdem, 1998; Tavitiyaman&Qu, 2013). People receive the destination image in their black box and interpret it by their own characteristics and knowledge to generate their travel intention.

## Travel Intention

Travel intention means the willingness of traveling a destination caused by people's needs and wants, and revisit intention relates to the satisfaction from the previous trip. 'Destination image' positively influenced tourism behavioral intentions, especially the willingness to revisit (Lertputtarak, 2011; Castro, Armario, and Ruiz, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008). There are pull and push factors that associate to their needs when people are making a travel decision, the needs drive them to take action. Push factors drive people's desire to travel and pull factors attract people to travel somewhere (Rittichaniwat, Qu and Leong, 2003). The theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs shows that people have different needs at different times. There are five needs from low-to high in the five hierarchical measures. These include physiological needs, security needs, emotional (social) needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs. People travel to fulfill their needs for relaxation, socialization or education. Revisiting might not result from their needs, but also from high satisfaction with last experience. Consumer satisfaction shows that customer needs and expectations match degree of feeling. In the tourism industry context, satisfied consumers mean tourists who have a good



experience of the vacation, and the vacation meets their expectations. There is correlation between satisfaction and future intention behavior that has been well established in the satisfaction literature (Tavitiyaman and Qu, 2013; Hui, WanandHo, 2007; Lee, Yoon and Lee, 2007; Petrick and Backman, 2002; Wang and Hsu, 2010). Jang and Feng (2007) suggested that destination management should take special note of visitor satisfaction because satisfied travelers will return to experience the same satisfaction again within a short period of time. Most happy tourists tend to reuse the service or revisit the place. Satisfaction is highly related to the revisit intention. (Rittichainuwat, Qu and Mongkhonvanit., 2002)

## Tourist Behavior

Marketers and tour operators use information such as the number of visits, length of stay, travel arrangement, choice of accommodation, source of travel information, preference of tourist attractions, tourist motivation and possibility of revisit to create a desired package and promotion to attract customers (Rittichainuwat et al., 2001). The prediction of travel behavior plays an important role in tourism marketing, in order to create demand and assist tourists in decision-making (Vuuren, 2012; March and Woodside, 2006; Decrop, 2006; Mazanec et al., 2001; Holloway, 2004).

The positive image can enhance the attractiveness for a destination. On the other hand, negative image might decrease the intention of visiting a destination (Chan et al., 1999). Examining travelers' perceptions of a destination image can help in identifying the factors contributing to the success of a marketing strategy of a particular destination, consequently allowing the destination to improve

its product image in the target market (Ibrahim and Gill, 2005). The tourism industry, therefore, is trying to fulfill customer's needs and wants to create good impression and image in order to increase arrivals of both first time and repeat tourists.

This paper will explore the destination image study through questionnaire distribution. To be explained further is its methodology, research process, the population sample, data analysis and result interpretation.

## Methodology

### Instruments

The questionnaire is derived from Rittichainuwat, et al., (2001) and aims to collect information of foreign tourists' general feelings, perceived image and future behavior. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part determines the demographic profile of respondents; their tourist behavior includes revisit intention, as can be seen in their satisfaction and likelihood of recommending Thailand. The second part aims to collect tourists' perceived image of Myanmar and Thailand. A five-point Likert scale ranging from: 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4=agree and 5= strongly agree.

### Research Process

A self-completed questionnaire is developed in English language. Data from the study were collected during 27 February-6 March 2015. Out of 473 international visitors approached, 300 respondents completed the questionnaire, representing a 63.4% response rate. We were collected the questionnaires from international tourists because international tourists would have actual and more realistic image of the destination rather than

domestic tourists and the data were collected from those who have been to Myanmar or have already gained knowledge about Myanmar otherwise we didn't count their answers in our data collection. So that this experience will influence our research to get a real image on both countries. The non-completed questionnaires were not compensated. It took an average of ten minutes in filling out the questionnaire.

**Population and Sample**

The population of this study includes international tourists who were waiting for their flight at Bangkok International Airport. Questionnaires were also distributed to international tourists who were visiting the temple of Reclining Buddha and Bangkok the Riverfront Asiatique in Bangkok. All of

the respondents who participated in this study are adult tourists and are over eighteen years of age.

**Data Analysis**

SPSS was used to analyze the result data, includes frequency distribution, descriptive statistics, an independent sampling mean t-test and ANOVA. First, frequency distribution was used to describe tourist behavior and tourists' demographic profile. This is followed by descriptive statistics that to identify the destination image of Myanmar and Thailand. Finally, independent sampling mean t-test and ANOVA were run to identify any significant difference on the destination image of those two countries across demographic profile which includes age, gender, marital status, education level, occupation and number of visit.

**Table.1 Demographic Profile**

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	159	53
	Female	141	47
	Total	300	100
Marital Status	Single	188	62.9
	Married	111	37.1
	Total	300	100
Age Group	Less than 20 years old -29	154	51.3
	30-49 years old	102	34.0
	50 years old or older	44	14.7
	Total	300	100
Country of residence	Asian	134	45.2
	European	124	41.7
	Others	39	13.1
	Total	297	100
Occupation	Workers	196	65.7
	Non-workers	102	34.3
	Total	298	100
Education Level	Degree holder	259	86.7
	Non-degree holder	40	13.3
	Total	299	100

## Results

### Demographic Profile

Table1 shows the profile of 300 respondents. It indicates that 53 percent of respondents are male and 47 percent are female. As marital status, single

(62.9 percent) is higher than married couples (37.1 percent). It can be interpreted that single tourists have more free time and have more spending power on traveling than married couples. The respondents are classified into three age groups. The first group of less than 20 years old to 29 (51.3

**Table.2 Tourist Behavior**

		Frequency	Percent
Number of visit	One time	150	50.3
	2-3 times	78	26.2
	4-5 times	24	8.1
	More than 5 times	46	15.4
	Total	298	100
Purpose of the trip	Vacation/sightseeing	203	70.2
	Business	22	7.6
	Vacation and business	25	8.7
	Convention/exhibition	13	4.5
	Visiting Friends and Relatives	15	5.2
	En route to somewhere else	10	3.5
	Others	9	0.3
Total	289	100	
Travel with Tour group	Yes	55	18.3
	No	244	81.6
	Total	299	100
Travel with family	Yes	101	33.8
	No	198	66.2
	Total	299	100
Length of stay	3nights or fewer	105	35.2
	4 to 7 nights	69	23.2
	1 to 2 weeks	53	17.8
	More than 2 weeks	71	23.8
	Total	298	100
Revisit plan	Yes	275	92.9
	No	21	7.1
	Total	296	100
Revisit duration	Within one year	88	31.3
	1-2 years	81	28.8
	3-5 years	63	22.4
	More than 5 years	49	17.4
	Total	281	100
Recommendation	Yes	270	95.7
	No	12	4.3
	Total	282	100

percent) is the largest. This compliments the idea that Thailand is regarded as a good shopping destination for adults and teenagers. The second group is comprised of 30-49 years old (34 percent), and the third 50 years old and older (14.7 percent). The respondents came from different countries which

were divided into three groups including Asian (45.2 percent), European (41.7 percent) and others (13.1 percent). The Asian group were mostly from Japan, China and Myanmar and Europeans group were mainly from UK, France and Germany. From the demographic profile, most of tourists were highly

**Table 3 Mean Difference in Tourists' Perceptions between Thailand and Myanmar**

Thailand			
Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Beautiful architecture and buildings	299	4.48	.774
Numerous cultural/historical attractions	293	4.33	.743
Interesting customs and culture	298	4.32	.763
A variety of cuisine	294	4.32	.771
Easy access	294	4.23	.872
Scenic natural beauty	295	4.14	.893
A trip to Thailand worth value for money	294	4.12	.829
Availability of international standard accommodations	295	4.10	.916
Friendly and helpful local residents	299	4.08	.905
Exciting entertainment and nightlife	293	4.08	.882
Opportunity for adventure	289	3.97	.901
A variety of water activities	291	3.92	.969
Easy immigration procedures	295	3.83	1.134
Many fashionable brand-name products in malls/stores	292	3.81	1.041
Restful and relaxing atmosphere	294	3.75	.958
Good vacations place for children and family	284	3.74	.984
Good bargain shopping and value for money	292	3.74	1.043
A safe to travel	295	3.71	.819
Availability of tourist information center	291	3.70	.978
Few languages barrier	297	3.46	1.078
Pleasant climate	295	3.32	.963
High standards of sanitation and cleanliness	294	3.30	1.009
Stable political situation	295	3.18	1.005
Good golf courses	264	3.16	1.050
A lot of traffic jams	292	4.11	.994
Crowding in big cities	295	4.08	.894
Numerous massage parlors bars, night clubs and prostitution	295	4.02	.981
A large gap between rich and poor	296	4.01	.964
Heavy pollution	294	3.76	.879
A risky destination due to AIDS problems	283	3.25	1.076
Inefficient local transportation system	290	3.20	1.126

Perception scale: 1= strongly disagree 2= disagree 3=neutral 4=agree 5=strongly agree

educated with degree holder (86.7 percent) and non-degree holder (13.3 percent). Workers contribute to 65.7 percent while non-workers (student, housewife, retired and unemployed) comprise at 34.3 percent. Most were professionals and office workers.

## Tourist behavior

Table 2 shows the tourist behavior of 300 respondents while they were in Thailand. In this study, the percentage of respondents who are first time visitors (50.3 percent) and repeat visitors (49.7 percent) were not so much difference. Mainly the purpose of the trip was vacation/sightseeing

Myanmar			
Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Beautiful architecture and building	200	3.93	.985
Numerous cultural/ historical attractions	203	3.90	.949
Interesting customs and culture	210	3.84	.975
Scenic natural beauty	198	3.64	.981
Friendly and helpful local residents	206	3.60	.951
A trip to Myanmar worth value for money	196	3.54	.973
Restful and relaxing atmosphere	197	3.45	.911
Opportunity for adventure	194	3.42	1.016
A variety of cuisine	200	3.33	.988
Pleasant climate	201	3.31	.891
A safe place to travel	199	3.18	.968
Good vacation place for children and family	195	3.14	.979
Good bargain shopping and value for money in Myanmar	197	3.11	1.149
Availability of international standard accommodations	199	3.03	1.012
A variety of water activities	198	2.99	1.008
Easy immigration procedures	192	2.99	1.130
Easy access	198	2.98	1.083
Exciting entertainment and nightlife	199	2.86	1.000
Few language barriers	196	2.86	.977
Availability of tourist information centers	195	2.85	1.004
Stable political situation	200	2.78	.948
Good golf courses	187	2.73	1.039
High standard of sanitation and cleanliness	197	2.72	.963
Many fashionable brand-products in malls/stores	194	2.61	.922
A large gap between rich and poor	292	4.11	.994
A lot of traffic jams	199	3.77	1.051
Crowding in big cities	195	3.24	1.008
Heavy pollution	197	3.21	.998
Inefficient to local transportation systems	194	3.11	.924
A risky destination due to AIDS problems	195	3.05	1.064
Numerous massage parlors bars, night clubs, and prostitution	196	2.96	.973

Perception scale: 1= strongly disagree 2= disagree 3=neutral 4=agree 5=strongly agree

(70.2 percent) also for business (20.8 percent). 18.3 percent of respondents were travel with tour group and 81.6 percent of respondents were traveled by themselves. Furthermore, 33.8 percent of respondents were traveling with family. This is because Thailand is a great holiday destination that is suitable for family travel place for family. 66.2 percent were traveling by themselves and tend to be staying in Thailand longer than those traveling with their family. The lengths of staying in Thailand are classified into: 3 nights or less (35.2 percent), 4 to 7 nights (23.2 percent), 1 to 2 weeks (7.8 percent) and more than 2 weeks (23.8 percent). Most of the respondents (92.9 percent) wished to revisit and the rest didn't. The reason may be because they were long haul travelers and it takes a lot of consideration and other aspects to travel for that distance (long haul). Those who were planning to revisit wished to stay longer than their first time. They would like to revisit within one year (31.3 percent), 1-2 years (28.8 percent), 3-4 years (22.4 percent) and more than 5 years (17.4 percent). Thailand is a destination where 95.7 percent of the respondents would like to recommend to their friends and relatives, mainly for shopping and sightseeing, natural scenic natural beauty and also a taste of the local culture.

### Destination Image

Table 3 shows the ranking of tourists perceived views for the destination images of Thailand and Myanmar based on thirty one items. Thailand offers visitors the opportunity to experience fascinating beautiful architecture and buildings (M=4.48), historical attractions (M=4.33), unique culture (M=4.32) and foods (M=4.32). Thai temples' architecture, while sharing influences with other

Southeast Asian styles, is unique of its kind and contributes to Thailand's richest historical sites among Buddhist countries. Tourists visit Thailand not only shopping but also for food such as street foods and traditional food or cuisine. Thailand not only offers local food but tourists will find a variety of international cuisine. This offers dinner authentic taste as the food is prepared with the original method and ingredients. The results can be compared to previous research by Rittichainuwat et al. (2001). It was found that beautiful architecture and buildings (M=4.47) was the first ranked, followed by numerous cultural/historical attractions (M=4.33) and a variety of cuisine (M=4.32). These are the top dominant three images of Thailand. It could be concluded that in 14 years, Thailand's strength maintains the same in popularity.

Myanmar has the same image as Thailand. Both of them are well known for cultural, historical buildings and being a religious countries. The top images of Myanmar include beautiful architecture and buildings (M=3.39), numerous cultural/historical attractions (M=3.90) and an interesting customs and culture (M=3.84). Thailand weakness were political instability and not lack of good golf courses while Myanmar was perceived as not having a high standard of sanitation and cleanliness and not many fashionable brand-name products in malls/stores.

### Significant Difference by t-test

Table 4 shows the significant difference in image of Thailand and Myanmar across demographic groups which include gender and marital status. As for Thailand, there are significant differences between male and female in their views of beautiful architecture and building (Male M=4.39,



Female M=4.57), opportunity for adventure (Male M=4.07, Female M=3.85), a variety of water activities (Male M=4.03, Female M=3.79), many fashionable brand-name products in malls/stores (Male M=3.97, Female M=3.61), good golf courses (Male M=3.32, Female M=2.98), stable political situation (Male M=3.19, Female M=3.16) and a large gap between the rich and the poor (Male M=4.01, Female M=4.01). Destination image of Myanmar has significant differences in good bargain shopping & value for money between male (M=3.3) and female (M=2.9).

Table 5, in terms of marital status, respondents who were single score higher than married respondents regarding opportunity for adventure (Single M=4.05, Married M=3.81) and crowding in big cities (Single M= 4.18, Married M=3.90) in higher likelihood than married respondents did. In contrast, married perceived that many fashionable brand-name products in malls/stores (Single M= 3.97, Married M=3.05), good golf courses (Single M=3.05, Married M=3.37), availability of international standard accommodations (Single M=3.99, Married M=4.30), easy access (Single M=4.20, Married M=4.28), easy immigration procedures (S M=3.74, Married M=3.95), availability of tourist information center (Single M=3.63, Married M=3.78), and high standards of sanitation and cleanliness (Single M=3.18, Married M=3.50). In these attributes, respondents who are married score higher than those who are single. As for Myanmar, married respondents perceived better image compare to single respondents in friend and helpful local residents (Single M= 3.47, M Married=3.83), many fashionable brand-products in malls/stores (Single M= 2.48, Married M=2.87), good golf courses (Single M= 2.55, Married M=3.05), availability of international standard accommoda-

tions (Single M=2.92, Married M= 3.24), easy access (Single M= 2.85, Married M=3.18), easy immigration procedures (Single M=2.79, Married M=3.31), availability of tourist information centers (Single M=2.71, Married M=3.05), Few language barriers (Single M=2.67, M M=3.18), high standard of sanitation and cleanliness (Single M=2.57, Married M=3.02), stable political situation (Single M=3.65, Married M=3.03), a safe place to travel (Single M=3.01, Married M=3.51) and a lot of traffic jam (Single M=3.12, Married M=3.46). From this reading it is realized that single respondents tend to give lower ranking compared to married respondents for both destinations.

Table 6 shows the significant differences of image of Thailand and Myanmar across occupation. The researchers divide all respondents into worker and non-worker. There are twelve differences in image of Thailand which include pleasant climate (Worker M=3.88, Non-worker M=3.30), scenic natural beauty (Worker M=3.59, Non-worker M=3.03), a variety of water activities (Worker M=3.83, Non-worker M=3.28), many fashionable brand-name products in malls/stores (Worker M=3.46, Non-worker M=3.04), good golf courses (Worker M=3.46, Non-worker M=3.00), availability of international accommodations, easy access, easy immigration procedures, availability of tourist information centers, few language barriers, high standards of sanitation and cleanliness and safe place to travel (Worker M=3.67, Non-worker M=3.21). It is found that non-workers score less on those attributes.

Myanmar has fifteen differences that include friendly and helpful local residents (Worker M=3.76, Non-worker M=3.30), pleasant climate (Worker M=3.43, Non-worker M=3.11), a variety of water activities (Worker M=3.13, Non-worker M=2.76), many fashionable brand-name prod-

**Table 4 /5 Significant Differences of image of Thailand and Myanmar by gender and marital status**

Gender			Mean	t-value
<b>Thailand</b>				
Beautiful architecture and buildings	Male		4.4	-2.1
	Female		4.6	
Opportunity for adventure	Male		4.1	2.0
	Female		3.9	
A variety of water activities	Male		4.0	2.0
	Female		3.8	
Many fashionable brand-name products in malls/stores	Male		4.0	2.9
	Female		3.6	
Good bargain shopping and value for money	Male		3.9	2.1
	Female		3.6	
Good golf courses	Male		3.3	2.6
	Female		3.0	
Exciting entertainment and nightlife	Male		4.2	2.9
	Female		3.9	
Few languages barrier	Male		3.6	2.1
	Female		3.3	
<b>Myanmar</b>				
Good bargain shopping and value for money		Male	3.3	2.1
		Female	2.9	
<b>Marital status</b>				
<b>Thailand</b>				
Opportunity for adventure	Single	184	4.1	2.3
	Married	104	3.8	
Many fashionable brand-name products in malls/stores	Single	186	3.7	-2.1
	Married	105	4.0	
Good bargain shopping and value for money	Single	185	3.6	-2.4
	Married	106	3.9	
Good golf courses	Single	170	3.1	-2.3
	Married	93	3.4	
Exciting entertainment and nightlife	Single	186	4.2	2.0
	Married	106	3.9	
Availability of international standard accommodations	Single	186	4.0	-2.6
	Married	108	4.3	
High standards of sanitation and cleanliness	Single	185	3.2	-2.6
	Married	108	3.5	
Crowding in big cities	Single	184	4.2	2.7
	Married	110	3.9	



Myanmar				
Friendly and helpful local residents	Single	136	3.5	-2.5
	Married	69	3.8	
Many fashionable brand-products in malls/stores	Single	131	2.5	-3.0
	Married	62	2.9	
Good golf courses in Myanmar	Single	121	2.6	-3.2
	Married	65	3.1	
Availability of international standard accommodations	Single	132	2.9	-2.3
	Married	66	3.2	
Easy immigration procedures	Single	126	2.8	-3.0
	Married	65	3.3	
Availability of tourist information centers i	Single	129	2.7	-2.2
	Married	65	3.1	
Few language barriers	Single	129	2.7	-3.8
	Married	66	3.2	
High standard of sanitation and cleanliness	Single	130	2.6	-3.3
	Married	66	3.0	
Stable political situation	Single	131	2.6	-2.9
	Married	68	3.0	
A safe place to travel	Single	131	3.0	-3.5
	Married	67	3.5	
A lot of traffic jam	Single	131	3.1	-2.2
	Married	63	3.5	

Perception scale: 1= strongly disagree 2= disagree 3=neutral 4=agree 5=strongly agree

ucts in malls/stores(Worker M=2.77, Non-worker M=2.36), good bargain shopping and value for money(Worker M=3.27, Non-worker M=2.82), good golf courses(Worker M=2.99, Non-worker M=2.30) and good vacation place for children and family (Worker M=3.32, Non-worker M=2.89), availability of international standard accommodations(Worker M=3.16, Non-worker M=2.86), easy access(Worker M=3.12, Non-worker M=2.76), easy immigration procedures(Worker M=3.20, Non-worker M=2.67), availability of tourist information centers(Worker M=2.99, Non-worker M=2.61), few language barriers (Worker M=3.06, Non-worker M=2.57), high standard of sanitation and cleanliness(Worker M=2.96, Non-worker M=2.37), stable political

situation (Worker M=2.94, Non-worker M=2.53) and a safe place to travel (Worker M=3.40, Non-worker M=2.86). Again, as in the results concerning Thailand, the non-worker group also scores less for the destination of Myanmar.

Table 7 differentiates the views of non-degree holders and degree holders. Thailand has differences in the following attributes friendliness of locals(Non-degree holder M=4.58, Degree holder M=4.00), pleasant climate(Non-degree holder M=3.64, Degree holder M=3.27), few language barriers(Non-degree holder M=3.78, Degree holder M=3.40), a safe place to travel(Non-degree holder M=4.05, Degree holder M=3.64) and a trip worth value of money(Non-degree holder M=4.40, Degree

**Table 6 Significant differences of image of Thailand and Myanmar by occupations**

Occupation		N	Mean	t-value
<b>Thailand</b>				
Pleasant climate	Worker	191	3.5	3.4
	Non-worker	102	3.1	
Scenic natural beauty	Worker	191	4.2	2.1
	Non-worker	102	4.0	
Opportunity for adventure	Worker	187	4.1	2.0
	Non-worker	100	3.8	
A variety of water activities	Worker	188	4.0	2.6
	Non-worker	101	3.7	
Many fashionable brand-name products in malls/stores	Worker	188	4.0	3.4
	Non-worker	102	3.5	
Good bargain shopping and value for money	Worker	189	3.9	3.8
	Non-worker	101	3.4	
Good golf courses	Worker	171	3.4	4.0
	Non-worker	91	2.8	
Availability of international standard accommodations	Worker	191	4.3	5.6
	Non-worker	102	3.7	
Easy access	Worker	191	4.3	2.2
	Non-worker	101	4.1	
Easy immigration procedures	Worker	191	3.9	2.4
	Non-worker	102	3.6	
Availability of tourist information center	Worker	191	3.8	2.4
	Non-worker	98	3.5	
Few languages barrier	Worker	193	3.6	2.9
	Non-worker	102	3.2	
High standards of sanitation and cleanliness	Worker	190	3.5	5.3
	Non-worker	102	2.9	
A safe to travel	Worker	191	3.8	3.2
	Non-worker	102	3.5	
<b>Myanmar</b>				
Friendly and helpful local residents	Worker	126	3.8	3.3
	Non-worker	79	3.3	
Pleasant climate	Worker	124	3.4	2.5
	Non-worker	76	3.1	
A variety of water activities	Worker	121	3.1	2.6
	Non-worker	76	2.8	
Many fashionable brand-products in malls/stores	Worker	118	2.8	2.9
	Non-worker	75	2.4	
Good bargain shopping and value for money	Worker	120	3.3	2.7
	Non-worker	76	2.8	
Good golf courses	Worker	116	3.0	4.4
	Non-worker	70	2.3	
Good vacation place for children and family	Worker	118	3.3	3.1
	Non-worker	76	2.9	
Easy access	Worker	121	3.1	2.3
	Non-worker	76	2.8	
Easy immigration procedures	Worker	116	3.2	3.4
	Non-worker	75	2.7	
Availability of tourist information centers	Worker	120	3.0	2.6
	Non-worker	74	2.6	
Few language barriers	Worker	119	3.1	3.4
	Non-worker	76	2.6	
High standard of sanitation and cleanliness	Worker	121	3.0	4.0
	Non-worker	75	2.4	
Stable political situation	Worker	123	2.9	2.9
	Non-worker	76	2.5	
A safe place to travel	Worker	122	3.4	4.0
	Non-worker	76	2.9	
A trip to Myanmar worth value for money	Worker	121	3.7	2.0
	Non-worker	74	3.4	

Perception scale: 1= strongly disagree 2= disagree 3=neutral 4=agree 5=strongly agree

**Table 7 Significant Differences of image of Thailand and Myanmar by education level**

Gender				
Thailand		N	Mean	t-value
Friendly and helpful local residents	Non degree holder	40	4.6	3.8
	Degree holder	258	4.0	
Pleasant climate	Non degree holder	39	3.6	2.3
	Degree holder	255	3.3	
Availability of tourist information center	Non degree holder	38	4.0	2.2
	Degree holder	252	3.7	
Few languages barrier	Non degree holder	40	3.8	2.0
	Degree holder	256	3.4	
A safe place to travel	Non degree holder	39	4.1	3.5
	Degree holder	255	3.7	
A trip to Thailand worth value for money)	Non degree holder	40	4.4	2.3
	Degree holder	253	4.1	
Myanmar				
Good bargain shopping and value for money	Non degree holder	26	3.6	2.3
	Degree holder	171	3.0	
Exciting entertainment and nightlife	Non degree holder	26	3.2	2.1
	Degree holder	173	2.8	

Perception scale: 1= strongly disagree 2= disagree 3=neutral 4=agree 5=strongly agree

holder M=4.07). As for Myanmar, non-degree holder gave higher opinions than degree holders on good bargain shopping and value for money(Non-degree holder M=3.58, Degree holder M=3.04) and exciting entertainment and nightlife(Non-degree holder M=3.23, Degree holder M=2.80).

Table 8 compares different images of Thailand between first time and repeat visitors. There are eight significant differences including numerous cultural/historical attractions (First time M=4.49, Repeat M=4.17), beautiful architecture and buildings (First time M=4.59, Repeat M=4.36), pleasant climate(First time M=3.16, Repeat M=3.50), many fashionable brand-name products in malls/stores (First time M=3.59, Repeat M=4.02), good golf courses (First time M=2.85, Repeat M=3.47), good vacation places for children and family (First time M=3.54, Repeat M=3.93), availability of internation-

al standard accommodations (First time M=3.95, Repeat M=4.28), few language barriers(First time M=3.31, Repeat M=3.61), high standards of sanitation and cleanliness(First time M=3.13, Repeat M=3.47) and numerous massage parlors bars, night clubs and prostitution (First time M=3.91, Repeat M=4.15). Repeat tourists have better image in many categories compared with first time visitors. This could be because repeat tourists have already gained experience and have prior knowledge of the destination, unlike first timers. We can say that repeat tourists have a more realistic and actual image.

### ANOVA Analysis

Table 9 shows that there are differences in image of Thailand between different age groups: Group 1(Less than 20 years old -29), Group 2 (30-49 years old) and Group 3 (50years old or older).

**Table 8 Significant differences of image of Thailand between first time visitors and repeat visitors**

		N	Mean	t-value
Numerous cultural/historical attractions	First time	148	4.5	3.6
	Repeat Tourist	144	4.2	
Beautiful architecture and buildings	First time	149	4.6	2.5
	Repeat Tourist	148	4.4	
Pleasant climate	First time	147	3.2	-3.1
	Repeat Tourist	147	3.5	
Many fashionable brand-name products in malls/stores	First time	148	3.6	-3.6
	Repeat Tourist	142	4.0	
Good bargain shopping and value for money	First time	146	3.6	-2.5
	Repeat Tourist	145	3.9	
Good golf courses	First time	132	2.8	-5.1
	Repeat Tourist	130	3.5	
Good vacations place for children and family	First time	141	3.5	-3.5
	Repeat Tourist	141	3.9	
Availability of international standard accommodations	First time	147	3.9	-3.3
	Repeat Tourist	146	4.3	
Easy access (many flights from your country to Thailand)	First time	147	4.1	-2.7
	Repeat Tourist	146	4.4	
Few languages barrier	First time	148	3.3	-2.5
	Repeat Tourist	147	3.6	
High standards of sanitation and cleanliness	First time	146	3.1	-3.0
	Repeat Tourist	146	3.5	
A safe to travel	First time	146	3.7	0.0
	Repeat Tourist	147	3.7	
A trip to Thailand worth value for money	First time	146	4.1	0.2
	Repeat Tourist	147	4.1	
Numerous massage parlors bars, night clubs and prostitution	First time	146	3.9	-2.2
	Repeat Tourist	147	4.2	

Perception scale: 1= strongly disagree 2= disagree 3=neutral 4=agree 5=strongly agree

**Table 9 Significant differences of image of Thailand by age groups**

Variable	Mean			F Ratio	F-Probability	Significant Difference Between Group
	Group1	Group2	Group3			
Interesting customs and culture	4.4	4.2	4.5	4.5	.011	Group 1 and Group 2 Group 2 and Group 3
Numerous cultural/historical attractions	4.4	4.2	4.5	4.9	.008	Group 1 and Group 2 Group 2 and Group 3
Good golf courses	2.9	3.6	3.3	12.9	.000	Group 1 and Group 2
Exciting entertainment and nightlife	4.2	4.1	3.8	3.9	.021	Group 1 and Group 3
Crowding in big cities	4.3	3.9	3.9	8.1	.000	Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3

Perception scale: 1= strongly disagree 2= disagree 3=neutral 4=agree 5=strongly agree

Group 1= Less than 20 years old -29

Group 2 =30-49 years old

Group 3=50years old or older

The groups perceive differently regarding interesting customs and culture ( $F=4.5, p \leq .012$ ), numerous cultural/historical attractions ( $F=4.9, p \leq .008$ ). Respondents who were in less than 20 to 29 years old perceived differently from people in 30-49 years old group. The differences also concern good golf courses ( $F=12.6, p \leq .000$ ) and exciting entertainment and nightlife ( $F=3.9, p \leq .023$ ). Group 1 perceived more favorably than others in crowding in big cities ( $F=7.8, p \leq .001$ ).

Table 10 shows the significant difference in the image of Thailand across regions. The researchers divide respondents' regions into three categories, Asian, European, and other. It is found that there are differences between Asian and European perception on interesting customs and culture ( $F=7.1, p \leq .001$ ), pleasant climate ( $F=6.5, p \leq .002$ ), a trip to Thailand worth value of money ( $F=6.3, p \leq .002$ ) and inefficient local transportation system ( $F=4.8, p \leq .009$ ). Asian respondents are found to have a different opinion from Europe and others regarding good vacation places for children and family ( $F=5.4, p \leq .005$ ) and a risky destination due to AIDS problems ( $F=7.6, p \leq .001$ ).

## Conclusion

This study investigates the destination image across Myanmar and Thailand from international tourists who traveled to Thailand from February to March 2015. The study finds that travel intention is closely related to and greatly affected by the destination image. The purpose of this study is to inform the developing tourist destinations image namely Myanmar and Thailand by using five point scores from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This study identifies the destination image across these two countries by asking the tourists in Bangkok's major attractions and airport using thirty-three questions resulting in positive and negative statements. There are more male samples and most of the samples are single. They are predominantly Asian which coincides with the increasing number of Chinese tourists. Most are university graduates with an average length of stay of 3 nights. They are mainly FIT tourists who are on their vacation. From this study, the high rating of the willingness to recommend Thailand to others demonstrates that most of the respondents are satisfied with their trip in Thailand and most have a future plan

**Table 10 Significant differences of image of Thailand by regions**

Variable	Mean			F Ratio	F-Probability	Significant Difference Between Group
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3			
Interesting customs and culture	4.2	4.5	4.2	7.0	.001	Group 1 and Group 2
Pleasant climate	3.1	3.6	3.3	6.6	.002	Group 1 and Group 2
Good vacations place for children and family	3.9	3.6	3.5	5.2	.006	Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3
A trip to Thailand worth value for money	3.9	4.3	4.3	6.2	.002	Group 1 and Group 2
Inefficient local transportation system	3.4	2.9	3.3	4.8	.008	Group 1 and Group 2
A risky destination due to AIDS problems	3.5	3.1	2.8	7.6	.001	Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3

Perception scale: 1= strongly disagree 2= disagree 3=neutral 4=agree 5=strongly agree

Group 1= Asian Group 2= European Group 3= Others

to revisit the country within 1-2 years. The respondents agree that both countries have beautiful architecture, while the political stability issue is still a concern. This might deter people from travelling to the two countries due to safety problems. The tourists search for information regarding safety, price and tourist attraction before travelling. Both destinations, Thailand and Myanmar, attract tourists with their beautiful architecture, culture/history, and food.

Overall the result has a good feedback. The respondents are satisfied with their trip in Thailand. This means that Thailand can still retain its current tourists and will be promoted by the tourists' positive word-of-mouth. Those tourists who are repeaters mention that they are not afraid of anything in Thailand because they already acquainted with the country. Developing and maintaining a positive image in the traveler's mind is also critical because negative and positive destination images could make a difference between success and failure to a destination (Deslandes, 2006), as well as revisit intention (Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Rittichainuwat et al., 2003). Travel agency, tour operator and marketer can exploit these data to promote and differentiate a destination effectively and investigate more about those groups tended to rank low point in order to change their perceptions.

For instance, there is a significant difference by occupation about accommodation in Myanmar and Thailand. Those who work give a higher ranking than non-workers. It could be interpreted that spending power and affordability of high quality accommodation is related to the earnings of those who work. With opportunities for adventure, male respondents are more favorable than female. This might be caused by the characteristic and interest

of the typical male who is more attracted to adventure activities. Male tourists are inclined to look for more adventure in the destination. There are many significant differences of images between first time and repeat visitors. First time visitors tend to score lower for the destinations. The reason may be the feeling of insecurity and unfamiliarity of the newly explored destination.

ANOVA by age groups and regions also shows respondents who are Asian have lowest scores in positive image categories and expect higher quality of transportation than respondents from other regions.

As the data were only collected in major attractions in Bangkok and Suvarnabhumi International Airport, that the result are limited within the region. Many of the respondents may not have visited Myanmar and most of them answered the questionnaire by their perspectives or only answered image of Thailand. This study only has 300 self-completed questionnaires. Thus, the results may not be generalized to respondents the whole population.

## Recommendation

The results show that there are weaknesses to be carefully managed. This study recommends that Thailand and Myanmar's destinations image should be improved to enhance the positive attributes and do away with the negatives. International tourism is a highly competitive, dynamic and trend-leading market. McCartney, 2005; Godfrey and Clarke, 2000; Lahav et al., 2013 stated that to cultivate a positive destination image, maintain market share and attract tourism, places must allocate resources for various marketing tools such as advertising, public relations, sales promotion and



social media . The results indicated that perception of destination image is very important with respect to destination satisfaction. Destination satisfaction is a very important in revisiting intention and willingness to recommend to others. Perception and satisfaction, therefore, are the first important factors to attract tourists and to build the positive image as they expected by the tourists. The image of destination can be improved by changing a negative image into a positive one and these positive images can be promoted revisiting and recommendation to friends and relatives. Thailand's weakness images are a lot of traffic jams and unstable political situation. Unstable political situations can affect the country's image more than other attributes as tourists are more concerned about their safety and security than other destination attributes. Thailand, however, is blessed with rich culture and intricate historic architecture. Political instability could deter tourists from coming to a destination as it would be considered unsafe and therefore not to be recommended to friends and relatives. It is found that the respondents' perceived image of Myanmar is much lower than that of Thailand. Myanmar has to correct its image regarding their political situation, standard of sanitation and cleanliness, and to develop fashionable brand-name products in malls and stores. Thailand stands as one of the best shopping destinations in Asia while Myanmar still has to catch up to develop this image. To maintain a dominant position in the market, it is suggested that Thailand and Myanmar should improve their destination images and keep the tourists' positive perception of the destination to meet a higher

satisfaction level. This will result in the tourists' revisiting intention and willingness to recommend Thailand and Myanmar to their friends and relatives. It is suggested that the government should develop the country's infrastructure such as sky trains associating not only the tourist's attraction but also different local area. Usage of films and documentaries can also turn negative images to positive ones. The government should run a press release session to confirm the safety and security issues within the country so the inbound travel industry will feel more confident in promoting the destination.

As for Myanmar, most of the respondents had little previous information and understanding of the destination and some has no knowledge at all. The ministry that promotes tourism in Myanmar should run more public relations for the country. This could be in the form of invitations of the travel press, documentaries, invitations of travel agents for a FAM (familiarization trip), and participation in travel exhibitions worldwide. This research wishes to reflect the destination image situations of Thailand and Myanmar hoping to provide opportunities for improvement by tourism marketers in both countries.

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