

# A Comparative Study Of Image Between Thailand, Vietnam and Laos.

EmonSaechau and Thwe Moe Yu  
International Program in Service Industry Management,  
Siam University  
E-mail: saechauemon@hotmail.com,  
janeyesweet5555@gmail.com

## Abstract

This study aims 1) to describe the image of Vietnam, Laos and Thailand from the perspective of tourists who visit Thailand and 2) to evaluate any differences in destination image of Thailand between first time visitors and repeat visitors as well as 3) to identify the image difference across tourists with different demographic profiles. It increases the understanding of current perception in those South-East countries by conducting survey to international tourists. The research data was collected from 203 questionnaires which were distributed at Grand Palace and temple of the Reclining Buddha in Bangkok. The results based on surveys of international tourists while traveling and staying in Bangkok in January 2015. The result of this study can be considered as reference material for governments and tour operators to make a strategic marketing plan and promotion in an effective way.

**Keywords:** Destination image, tourist behavior, travel intention, travel constraint

## Introduction

Tourism is one of the rapid grow industry, in many countries have paid special attention to developing and promoting tourism. At present, it is a key sector to generate revenue. According to UNWTO (World Tourism Organization), over the decades, tourism has experienced continuing growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. International tourist arrival grew by 5% in 2013 to 1.087 billion In 2013, international tourism generated US\$ 1.4 trillion in export earning. UNWTO forecasts a growth in international tourist arrivals of between 4% and 4.5% in 2014. Destination image is a vital consideration when tourists are making a travel decision. It can differentiate destination in this highly competitive markets (Arturo M, Mar G and David MC, 2010 and Yilmaz, Lçigen, Ekin, Utku, 2009 and Arturo, Mar and David, 2010). Examining travelers' perceptions of a destination image can help to identify which factor contributes 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 promotes itself as Amazing Thailand and unseen Thailand, Vietnam can well be described as bustling but the adjective that was most often applied to Laos is forgotten, this is changing fast. Moreover, tourism has been the biggest growth sector in Laos with ever rising in visitor numbers under its new tourism slogan 'Simply beautiful'. Visitors who are dawn by the laid-back lifestyle and the opportunity to watch the sunset on the Mekong, will simply explain the attraction by revealing that the true meaning of "Lao PDR" is Lao-Please Don't Rush.

When it comes to holiday destinations in Southeast Asia, there is simply no place like Central Coast of Vietnam. It is a nature lover's paradise where boundless adventure offers. We can find stunning white-sand beaches, International beachfront resort and rich traditional cuisines. Son Dong, a cave which is belongs to the PhongNha-Ke Bang grotto system in central QuangBinh Province in Vietnam has been discovered to be the world's biggest cave.

Thailand put a lot of efforts into promoting its leisure travel and business travel. It has been getting more and more famous and is one of the top five tourist destinations in Asia. It is well known for its high variety of ailtures culture, natures, cuisine, hospitalites, and world class accommodation at reasonable prices it's a good value for money convention package to MICE segments. These positive images have attracted 24.7 million visitors in 2014. The ASEAN countries occupied over 6 million arrivals (Immigration Bureau, Police Department 2015). At the same time, there are some negative images that prevent tourist from arrival.

Lao PDR has become the member of World Tourism Organization (WTO) by accession in 1971. Laos Official Tourism Website stated that the Visit Laos from 1990 to 2000 Year had begun which reflected to the huge increase of tourists. there were 737,208 tourists in 2000 and earned the revenue of 113,898,285 US. It welcomed 4.15 million foreign visitors in 2014, up 10 percent from 2013, according to statistics released by the Lao Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism. The statistics showed that Thai visitors have topped the charts with over 2 million, and followed by Vietnamese with 1.1 million.



Vietnam National Administration of Tourism announced that International visitors to Viet Nam in 2014, reached 7,874,312, increased 4.0% over the same period last year that in 2013 it reached 7,572,352. Those are the evidence that these three countries has rapid growth rate in tourism. Vietnam and Laos have just promoted themselves to international, based on special geographical factor, it is convenient for tourists traveling them after visiting neighboring countries, such as Thailand.

However, most people still perceived developing countries as a risky destination that has higher risk in 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 consideration to different countries. Chen P.J, Hua N & Wang Y (2013) and Kim and Chalip (2004) identified the most common travel constraints are risk and financial considerations to Asian destinations. For example, 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, Qu, and Brown (2001) found some negative images of Thailand associated with prostitution, AIDS, crowding, a gap between rich and the poor, and traffic jams.

There is some news about Thailand that highly released over the world and hit Thai tourism so bad. Thai ministers try to tempt tourist back , reported by Tom Vater (15 Jan 2015) 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 downtown. TAT reported last week that visitor numbers were down 6.6 per cent from the previous year. Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul, minister of tourism and sports, attributes the drop in tourist arrivals from political unrest in the first half of last year, prior to the coup, and to the fall of the ruble, which has significantly reduced the number of Russian visitors. Moreover, Thailand 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, frequent incidences of police harassing foreigners in central Bangkok have created more critical headlines.”

When people travel a destination, they will consider the risk, therefore, there is a need for research to evaluate image of Vietnam, Laos and Thailand whether it has any impacts to destination or travel decision making.

## Purposes

This study is 1) to describe the destination image of Vietnam, Laos and Thailand from the perspective of tourists who visit Thailand, 2) to evaluate any differences in destination image of Thailand between first time visitors and repeat visitors as well as 3) to identify the image difference across tourists with different demographic profiles (age group and education level).

## Literature Reviews Destination Image

There are four sources of information that

people get their knowledge of a destination from commercial, experiential, public and personal, for example, advertisement, TV and word of mouth etc. Then, they interpret the information base on their experience, knowledge and characteristic. It can be wrong or right as well as getting better or worse. Destination image determines the success or failure of the destination because tourist decision-making process will base on their preference of the product (place). Pearce (1982), and Woodside and Lysonski (1990) demonstrate that there is an obvious relationship between positive perceptions of destinations and positive purchase decisions. That means if the reputation, image or feeling of the destination is positive, they might consider it as one of their travel destination choices. In contrast, the negative perception might create a distortion of the destination that means people would not put the place as consideration. So image will be used by marketer to differentiate their destination by emphasizing the strength. According to Rittichainuwat et al., (2001), the top three images of Thailand were beautiful architecture and buildings, interesting customs and culture image and numerous cultural and historical attractions that really attracted tourists travelling to Thailand.

Po-Ju & Deborah (1999) found 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 will highly influence the perception of the destination image (Lewis & Barbara, 1991; Mayo, 1981)

Destination image includes experiences, beliefs, ideas, recollection, and impressions of the destination that is all about emotional qualities

(E Di Marino, 2007; Crompton, 1979; Reilly, 1990). Fakeye & Crompton (1991) mention that the destination image in tourists' perception found that there are 6 main items of destination image: nature; safe and accessibility; climate and culture; quality and price; environment and shopping; nightlife and emotion. Perception of destination affects the tourists' willingness to select the destination site (Zhang X, 2012; Tascai & Gartner, 2007). The positive image can enhance the attractiveness for a destination. On the other hand, negative image might decrease the intention of visiting a destination.

Jang and Feng (2007) "suggest that destination management should take special note of visitor satisfaction because satisfied travelers will come back to experience the same satisfaction again within a short period." So tourism industry is trying to fulfill customer's needs and wants to create good impression and image in order to increase tourist arrivals to both first time and repeat tourists.

People perceive image and risk in different way which is affected by their background and experience. Zhang (2012) stated that travelers who tend to choose destination farther away from home have higher education and higher income level. Less experienced tourists pay high attention on health, terrorism, and food concerns than experienced tourists do. Religiosity also influences perceived risks. Proreligious individuals tended to be more conservative and dogmatic (He, Park, Roehl, 2013; Delener, 1990).

## Methodology

The questionnaire was derived from Rittichainuwat, Qu, Laws, Muttamara and Mouton, (2014) and aims to collect information of foreign tourists' general feelings, perceived image and



future behavior in closed-ended form questions. The questionnaire consisted of four parts. The first part gathered tourist behavior. Second part asked about their revisit intention, we can see their satisfaction from their intention and likelihood of recommending Thailand. Part three aims to collect tourists' perceived image of Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. The ranking scales were: 1=very poor, 2= poor, 3= average, 4=good and 5= very good. Last section included demographic profile of respondents.

## Benefit of Research

This study shows the strengths and weaknesses of those destinations by letting tourists using 5-point scale to score images of Vietnam, Laos and Thailand 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 like to revisit. This study is useful for tour operators, guide, the government and marketer to have a better understanding of destination image, intention and behavior of tourists so that can effectively market destination product and do promotion.

## Research Process

A self-completed questionnaire developed in English. Data from the study were collected in January 2015, by the researchers. The researchers asked more than three hundred international visitors but only 205 of them were willing to do the questionnaire. Out of 205 questionnaires, only 203 questionnaires were picked up to conduct the analysis in case three of them were Thai, who cannot speak English, their surveys were considered as invalid. No compensation was

provided to the respondents. The questionnaire took tourists ten minutes to fill in. The chosen tourist refused to participate or in a hurry, the next convenient tourist was approached.

## Population and Sample

The study surveyed to international tourists who visit major attraction in Thailand. This is a convenience sample of 203 tourists who can speak English. All of the respondents are adult and only few tourists who are older than eighteen years old participated in this study. The respondent rate is 76.89%.

## Instruments

The self-completed questionnaire survey was conducted to international tourists. Respondents were asked about the destination image of three Southeast countries in fourteen categories, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand in term of shopping, culture, nature, climate, accommodation, overall service quality, meeting facilities, friendliness of people, price ease of access, transportation, safety and overall image.

## Data Analysis

SPSS was used to analyze the questionnaire data which includes frequency distribution, descriptive statistics, an independent sampling mean t-test and ANOVA were used to analyze data. First, frequency distribution was used to describe tourist behavior and tourists' demographic profile. Second, descriptive statistics was used to identify the destination image of Vietnam, Laos and Thailand from the highest to lowest ranking. Third, independent sampling mean t-test was attributed to identify any difference between two groups in

term of gender and marital status. The last ANOVA was run to identify any significant difference on the destination image of those three countries across demographic profile which includes age, education level, occupation and number of visit.

## Results Demographic

Table 1 indicates the demographic profile of the respondents. 45.3 percent of the tourists were male and 54.7 per cent were female. The respondents were classified into four age groups from less than 20 to 29 years old (49.3 percent), 30-39 years old (25.6 percent), 40-49 years old (13.3 percent) and 50years old or older (11.8 percent). For marital status, 56.7 percent were single and 43.3 per cent were married.

The respondents came from 34 countries over the world. Most of them are from Asia (39.4 per cent) and Europe (49.8 percent). And the greater Chinese (19.8 percent) shared the highest percentage of the respondents. This is one of the sign that China has become the largest market for Thai tourism. For occupation, 77.8 percent indicated they were working that 30 percent were professional. 22.2 percent were non-worker that 18.2 percent were students. In term of education level, most of them were highly educated that were degree holder (85.6 percent), and 14.4 percent were non-degree holder.

## Tourist Behavior

Table2 shows the behavior of tourists in this study, more than half (65.5 per cent) of the tourists were first time visitors and another half (35.5 per cent) were repeat visitors. Since the survey

**Table 1 Demographic Profile**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Gender	Male	92	45.3
	Female	111	54.7
	Total	203	100
Age Group	Less than 20 years old to 29	100	49.3
	30-39 years old	52	25.6
	40-49 years old	27	13.3
	50 years old or above	24	11.8
	Total	203	100
Marital Status	Single	115	56.7
	Married	88	43.3
	Total	203	100
Continent of Residence	Asia	80	39.4
	Europe	101	49.8
	Other	22	10.8
	Total	203	100
Occupation	Worker	158	77.8
	Non-worker	45	22.2
	Total	203	100
Education Level	Non-degree holder	29	14.4
	Degree holder	173	85.6
	Total	202	100

was conducted at major tourist attraction, Grand Palace and the temple of the Reclining Buddha, the majority of tourist were leisure tourists that they were on vacation (88.7 per cent) and visiting friends and relatives (3.9 per cent). Meanwhile, business tourists (6.9 per cent) also participated in this study when they visit the major attractions in Bangkok.

Moreover, the respondents can be split into three groups based on their length of stay: 55.1 percent stayed within a week, 16.3 percent

stayed within one to two weeks and 28.6 percent stayed more than two weeks. The tourists looked for information about tourist attractions (40.4 percent), price (24.6 percent), safety (20.2 percent), and others (14.8 percent) that includes climate and friendliness of people and food.

The attractiveness of destination attraction advertisement is very important that the better the promotion of the destination, the higher the interest of the consumer. Most of the respondents

**Table 2 Tourist Behavior**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Number of Visit	One time	133	65.5
	2-3 times	48	23.6
	4-5 times	4	2.0
	More than 5 times	18	8.9
	Total	203	100
Purpose of the Trip	Vacation/Sightseeing	180	88.7
	Business	14	6.9
	Visiting friends and relatives	8	3.9
	En route to somewhere	1	0.5
	Total	203	100
Length of Stay	Within one week	112	55.1
	1-2 weeks	1	16.3
	More than 2 weeks	58	28.6
	Total	203	100
Type of Information	Price	50	24.6
	Safety	41	20.2
	Tourist Attraction	82	40.4
	Other	30	14.8
	Total	203	100
Revisit Plan	Yes	186	93.0
	No	14	7.0
	Total	200	100
When to revisit	Within one year	38	20.7
	1-2 years	73	39.7
	3-5 years	45	24.5
	More than 5 years	28	15.2
	Total	184	100
Recommendation	Yes	193	97.0
	No	6	3.0
	Total	199	100

(93 percent) want to repeat visit Thailand whereas nearly all (97 percent) would like to recommend Thailand to their friends and relatives. And they plan to revisit within one to two years (60.4 percent). This implies that most tourists in this study were satisfied with their trip in Thailand because of the high percentage of revisit intention and willingness to recommend.

### Destination Image

The level of agreement of respondent is about the destination image of Vietnam, Laos and Thailand in thirteen items and overall image. Table 3 shows that Vietnam’s nature (M=3.94, SD=0.977), price (M=3.78, SD= 1.02) and cuisine(M=3.70, SD= 0.802) got top ranking. For Laos, nature (M=3.96, SD= 0.94), friendliness of people (M=3.79, SD= 0.878) and price (M=3.72, SD= 0.933) are the top three good impressions. Vietnam and Laos have the same image that people think these countries both having strength of natural scenery and value for money. However, both of them have no imagethat

got good (M=4) from the respondents averagely.

Thailand got high rate for cultural or historical (M=4.38, SD=0.652), friendliness of people (M=4.34, SD=0.796) and cuisine (M=4.22, SD= 0.759). Three of them both got rated higher than four (Good) and even the lowest one safety still got (M=3.86) that showing us that Thailand has better image and reputation as compared to Vietnam and Laos. From the data, Vietnamese and Thai food are also well known that both got high ranking. The table also shows the weaknesses of these countries. The lowest ranking of Vietnam is shopping, Laos is meeting facilities and Thailand is safety and security.

S= Single, M= Married; F=Female, M=Male

Table 4 shows the significant difference in image of Vietnam, Laos and Thailand across demographic which includes gender and marital status. For Vietnam, there is no significant difference between male and female. Destination image of Laos has significant difference in price between male (M=4.04) and female (M=3.42) that male

**Table 3 Mean Difference in Tourists’ Perceptions between Vietnam, Laos and Thailand**

Vietnam			Laos			Thailand		
Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Natural</b>	<b>3.94</b>	<b>.977</b>	<b>Natural scenery</b>	<b>3.96</b>	<b>.940</b>	<b>Cultural/historical</b>	<b>4.38</b>	<b>.652</b>
<b>Price</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>1.02</b>	<b>Friendliness of people</b>	<b>3.79</b>	<b>.878</b>	<b>Friendliness of people</b>	<b>4.34</b>	<b>.796</b>
<b>Cuisine</b>	<b>3.70</b>	<b>.802</b>	<b>Price</b>	<b>3.72</b>	<b>.993</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.27</b>	<b>.684</b>
Friendliness of people	3.67	1.01	Climate	3.65	.854	<b>Cuisine</b>	<b>4.22</b>	<b>.759</b>
Cultural/ historical	3.64	.941	Cultural/historical	3.61	.836	Hotel/resort	4.12	.826
Climate	3.55	.921	Overall	3.52	.886	Natural scenery	4.10	.845
Overall	3.53	.739	Safety and security	3.46	.863	Price	4.10	.817
Overall service quality	3.45	.738	Cuisine	3.36	.790	Shopping	4.06	.814
Hotel/ resort	3.42	.876	Overall service quality	3.22	.771	Overall service quality	4.05	.795
Ease of access	3.41	1.02	Hotel/resort	3.13	.768	Ease of access	4.04	.863
Safety	3.33	.904	Ease of access	3.08	.907	Climate	4.04	.845
Transportation	3.26	.861	Transportation	3.07	.789	Transportation	3.92	.897
Convention/exhibition facilities	3.20	.913	Shopping	2.88	.940	Convention/ exhibition facilities	3.86	.898
<b>Shopping</b>	<b>3.16</b>	<b>.961</b>	<b>Convention/exhibition facilities</b>	<b>2.87</b>	<b>.878</b>	<b>Safety/security</b>	<b>3.86</b>	<b>.847</b>



perceived higher value for money in traveling to Laos than female did. That shows mostly, women are more concern about the cost and spending value when they are traveling. Thailand has

significant difference in cultural element between men (M=4.27) and women (M=4.46). In term of marital status, single respondents perceived natural (S M=3.77,

**Table 4 Significant differences of image of Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand by Gender and Marital status.**

Gender		N	Mean	t-value
<b>Laos</b>				
Price	Male	45	4.04	3.2
	Female	48	3.42	
<b>Thailand</b>				
Cultural	Male	92	4.27	-2.2
	Female	111	4.46	
<b>Marital status</b>				
<b>Vietnam</b>				
Natural	Single	70	3.77	-2.7
	Married	29	4.35	
Climate	Single	70	3.43	-2.1
	Married	28	3.86	
Overall	Single	70	3.44	-2.5
	Married	26	3.46	
<b>Laos</b>				
Climate	Single	67	3.52	-2.5
	Married	30	3.93	
Friendliness of people	Single	67	3.69	-2.2
	Married	27	4.04	
Price	Single	67	3.54	-3.4
	Married	26	4.19	
Ease of Access	Single	68	2.94	-2.5
	Married	27	3.44	
Transportation	Single	68	2.93	-3.0
	Married	27	3.44	
Safety	Single	67	3.34	-2.1
	Married	27	3.74	
<b>Thailand</b>				
Natural	Single	114	3.99	-2.2
	Married	87	4.25	
Price	Single	115	3.99	-2.6
	Married	88	4.25	
Safety/security	Single	114	3.72	-2.5
	Married	86	4.02	
Overall	Single	115	4.17	-2.6
	Married	87	4.41	

MM=4.35), climate (S M= 3.43, M M=3.89) and general image (S M= 3.44, M M=3.46) in Vietnam lower than married. For Laos, there are differences

in climate (S M= 3.52, M M=3.93), friendliness of people (S M= 3.69, M M=4.04), price (S M= 3.54, M M=4.19), ease of access (S M=2.94, M M= 3.44),

**Table 5 Significant differences of image of Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand by education levels and occupations**

		N	Mean	t-value
<b>Education Level</b>				
<b>Laos</b>				
Transportation	Non Degree Holder	8	3.63	2.1
	Degree Holder	87	3.02	
<b>Thailand</b>				
Natural Scenery	Non Degree Holder	28	4.43	2.2
	Degree Holder	172	4.05	
<b>Occupation</b>				
<b>Vietnam</b>				
Cuisine	Worker	68	3.88	3.5
	Non-worker	30	3.30	
Hotel/ resort	Worker	68	3.59	3.0
	Non-worker	29	3.03	
Friendliness of people	Worker	67	3.83	2.6
	Non-worker	29	3.28	
Transportation	Worker	67	3.46	1.7
	Non-worker	29	3.04	
Safety	Worker	67	3.46	2.3
	Non-worker	28	3.00	
Overall	Worker	67	3.67	2.9
	Non-worker	29	3.21	
<b>Laos</b>				
Climate	Worker	68	3.78	2.3
	Non-worker	29	3.35	
Hotel/resort	Worker	69	3.25	2.3
	Non-worker	29	2.86	
Price	Worker	65	3.86	2.1
	Non-worker	28	3.39	
Safety and security	Worker	67	3.58	2.3
	Non-worker	27	3.15	
<b>Thailand</b>				
Cuisine	Worker	159	4.32	3.6
	Non-worker	44	3.86	
Hotel/resort	Worker	159	4.18	2.1
	Non-worker	43	3.88	
Friendliness of people	Worker	159	4.43	3.1
	Non-worker	44	4.02	



transportation (S M= 2.93, M M=3.44) and safety (S M=3.34, M M=3.74). For Thailand, married respondents perceived better image in natural (S M=3.99, M M=4.25), price (S M= 3.99, M M=4.25), safety (S M= 3.72, M M=4.02) and general image (S M= 4.17, M M=4.41) than single. We can find that single respondents tended to give lower ranking compared to married respondents in both differences.

W=Worker, NW=Non worker

Table 5 shows the significant differences of image of Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand across education level and occupation. For education level, Laos has difference in transportation between non-degree holders (M=3.63) and degree holders (M=3.02). For Thailand, non-degree holder (M=4.43) gave higher ranking to natural scenery than degree holder (M=4.05) did. These imply higher education has higher expectation in transportation quality and natural scenery. For occupation, the researchers divided all respondents into worker and non-worker. There are six differences in image

of Vietnam which include cuisine (W M=3.88, NW M=3.30), accommodation (W M=3.59, NW M=3.03), friendliness of people (worker M=3.83, non-worker M=3.28), transportation (W M=3.46, NW M=3.04), safety (W M=3.46, NW M=3.00) and general image (W M=3.67, NW M=3.21). Laos has four differences that include climate (W M=3.78, NW M=3.35), accommodation (W M=3.25, NW M=2.86), price (W M=3.86, NW M=3.39) and safety (W M=3.58, NW M=3.15). Climate (W M=4.32, NW M=3.86), accommodation (W M=4.18, NW M=3.88) and price (W M=4.43, NW M=4.02) are the significant differences of image of Thailand. Workers tended to rate higher ranking than non-worker did. Three countries also have significant difference in accommodation, the reason might be different people have different abilities to afford an accommodation. Usually, workers have higher money power to have a better lodging than non-workers.

F=First time, R= Repeat Tourists

Table 6 compared different images of

**Table 6 Significant differences of image of Thailand between first time visitors and repeat visitors**

Number of visit		N	Mean	t-value
Shopping	First time	130	3.94	-2.9
	Repeat Tourist	68	4.28	
Cuisine	First time	133	4.14	-2.1
	Repeat Tourist	70	4.37	
Hotel/resort	First time	132	3.98	-3.4
	Repeat Tourist	70	4.39	
Overall service quality	First time	132	3.90	-3.9
	Repeat Tourist	69	4.35	
Friendliness of people	First time	133	4.23	-3.1
	Repeat Tourist	70	4.56	
Transportation	First time	132	3.81	-2.3
	Repeat Tourist	70	4.11	
Safety/security	First time	131	3.76	-2.5
	Repeat Tourist	69	4.04	
Overall	First time	132	4.17	-3.1
	Repeat Tourist	70	4.47	

Thailand between first time and repeat visitors. There are eight significant differences including shopping (F M=3.94, R M=4.28), cuisine (F M=4.14, R M=4.37), accommodation(F M=3.98, R M=4.39), overall service quality (F M=3.90, R M=4.35), friendliness of people (F M=4.23, R M=4.56), transportation (F M=3.81, R M=4.11), safety (F M =3.76, R M=4.04) and general image (F M=4.17, R M= 4.47). Repeat tourists had better image compared with first time visitors. The biggest difference is overall service quality that was assumed repeat tourists know more about Thailand and had be served experience before, so they understood some inconvenience and dissatisfaction might be caused by misunderstanding.

### ANOVA Analysis

Table 7 shows that there are differences in image of price between different age groups. There are significant differences in the image of overall

service (F=3.2, p≤ 0.02), friendliness of people (F=3.8, p≤ 0.02), safety (F=2.8, p≤ 0.05) and general image (F=2.9, p≤ 0.04) between respondents who were in less than 20 years old to 29 and respondents in 50 years old or older.

Table 8 shows the significant difference of image of Thailand by regions. The researcher divided respondents’ region into three categories: Asian, European, and other. There are three differences between Asian and European in cultural/ historical (F=5.2, P≤0.01), natural scenery (F=3.1, P≤0.05) and friendliness of people (F=7.6, P≤0.01). There are differences in climate (F=27.8, P≤0.001) between Asian, European and other.

### Conclusion

This study has investigated the destination image across Vietnam, Laos and Thailand from international tourist perceptive who traveled Thailand in January 2015. The researchers would

**Table 7 Significant differences of image of Thailand by age groups**

Variable	Mean				F Ratio	F-Probability	Significant Difference Between Group
	Group1	Group2	Group3	Group4			
Overall Service Quality	3.93	4.02	4.27	4.42	3.2	0.02**	Group 1 and Group 4
Friendliness Of People	4.18	4.40	4.52	4.71	3.8	0.01***	Group 1 and Group 4
Safety	3.71	3.90	4.00	4.22	2.8	0.04*	Group 1 and Group 4
Overall	4.15	4.31	4.42	4.54	2.9	0.04*	Group 1 and Group 4

\*=P≤0.05 \*\*=P≤0.02 \*\*\*=P≤0.01

Perception scale: 1= very poor 2=poor 3=average 4=good 5=very good

Group 1= Less than 20 years old -29      Group 2 =30-39 years old

Group 3=40-49 years old      Group 4=50years old or older

like to emphasize that the destination image is highly related to the travel intention which can affect tourists' perceptions of a destination. The purpose of this study is to highlight the developing tourism destinations image including Vietnam, Laos and Thailand by using five likelihood scores 1.very poor 2.poor 3.average 4.good and 5.very good to identify the destination image across three countries by asking the tourist in Thai major attractions in fourteen categories. Data were analyzed by frequency distribution, descriptive statistics, an independent sampling mean t-test and ANOVA. Demographic refers to gender, age, education levels and occupation that also affect the selection of destination and perceived destination image in different ways.

For instance, t-test shows that there is a significant difference by occupation about accommodation in Vietnam, Laos and Thailand that worker gave higher ranking than non-workers, it might be caused by the spending power to afford a high quality accommodation. There are lots of

significant difference of image by marital status, occupation and between first time and repeat visitors. Single, non-worker and first time visitor tended to rank lower point to those destinations. ANOVA by age groups and regions also shows respondents who were in less than 20 to 29 years old and Asian had lowest ranking in most of the image categories than others.

Moreover, from this study, high rate of willing to recommend Thailand to others shows that most of the respondents were satisfied with their trip in Thailand and almost all have a future plan to revisit to Thailand. As a traveler, the person is always looking for the information about safety, price and tourist attraction before travelling. And tourist attraction has the highest frequency compared to others. The advertisement of the destination attraction is usually searched by people who want to travel. By asking respondents, most of the Chinese thought it is dangerous that if Chinese people travel to Vietnam because it had against Chinese activities before. Safety is a high concern.

**Table 8 Significant differences of image of Thailand by age regions**

Variable	Mean			F Ratio	F-Probability	Significant Difference Between Group
	Group1	Group2	Group3			
Cultural/historical	4.23	4.52	4.27	5.2	.006***	Group 1 and Group 2
Natural scenery	3.93	4.22	4.23	3.1	.049*	Group 1 and Group 2
Climate	3.56	4.40	4.14	27.8	.000***	Group 1 , Group 2 and Group 3
Friendliness of people	4.09	4.54	4.41	7.6	.001***	Group 1 and Group 2

\*=P≤0.05    \*\*=P≤0.02    \*\*\*=P≤0.01

Perception scale: 1= very poor    2=poor    3=average    4=good    5=very good

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

For Laos, the negative image of food safety and hotel quality are most concern. For Thailand, political instability is one of the travel barriers so that the safety of Thailand got the lowest ranking in tourists' perspectives. Fortunately, there is a good sign that those respondents felt satisfied with their trip, Thailand still can retain current tourists and be advertised by positive word-of-mouth in the future. And repeat tourists said that they were not afraid of it because they are familiar to Thailand. 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.

## Recommendation

Since the satisfaction greatly affects the travel intention, and the revisit intention is vital to tourism industry. Geva and Goldman (1991) found in their study on the relationship of satisfaction in guided tours to positive word-of-mouth communication that there were minimal correlations between consumers' intent to use the same tour company again and their recommendations of the company. The government and tourism industry relevance should pay special attention on improving the quality of service and enhancing attractiveness to fulfill people' needs, wants, expectations and need for freshness.

The image of a destination can be improved and enhanced by recognizing its weakness. Vietnam needs to enhance its image of shopping that is important for tourism because it can help the country generate extensive revenue. Laos should improve their facilities and image to promote itself as a MICE destination because MICE is a trend for

a country to attract not only businessperson and investor to do business there, but also do travelling. All respondents answered the image of Thailand, therefore, we can make accuratesummary that real visiting tourists thought that Thailand has rich cultural and historical elements and unique food that can attract arrivals. However, the perceived risk caused by several incidents recently, tourists perceived Thailand as a risky destination that deter them from traveling to Thailand and the data also shows safety and security is the lowest ranking image. Here, film producing not only can strengthen the positive image, but also can eliminate the negative image, such as perceived risk, for instance, using TV program to telling the truth in a positive and educational way. Showing how was the government solving the problem and improving tourists' safety and security by including those negative facts and incidents in order to regain their confidence.

The marketer should highly emphasize the strengths and freshness, for example create new activities in a well-known attraction, and promote unseen destination and market foodies. Also, they can also use film to promote the culture, language, Thai only features in order to educate and increase people interest in Thailand. Moreover, the government should focus on developing trendy tourism, such as sport tourism which can be Thai boxing, golf or other game activities to promote niche market.

## Limitations of the Study

The data only collected in major attractions in Bangkok that the result might be limited in region, and many of the respondents have not been to Vietnam and Laos, most of them answered



the questionnaire by their perspectives and only answered image of Thailand. This study only has 203 self-completed questionnaires that might not totally reflect the destination image.

director of International program Service Industry Management, Siam University, Dr. Rittichaiuwat Ngamsom Bongkosh, Professor Hanqin Qiu Zhang and Ms. Daisy Fan who demonstrated the research writing method and created questionnaire.

## Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to thank for the

## References

- Arturo M, Mar, G and David, M, C (2010). **Tourism marketing Information and Destination Image Management.** African Journal of Business Management 4(5)722-728
- Adarsh, B (2011). **Foreign Tourists' Perception Towards Personal Safety And Potential Crime While Visiting Bangkok.** An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research, 19(1)89-101
- Björk P & Kauppinen, R, H (2011). **The Impact of Perceived Risk on Information Search: A Study of Finnish Tourists.** Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, 11(3)306-323
- Charlotte, M, E and Brent, J, R (2003). **The Meaning and Measurement of Destination Image.** The Journal of Tourism Studies, 14(1)37-48
- Chen P.J, Hua, N and Wang, Y (2013). **Mediating Perceived Travel Constraints: The Role of Destination Image.** Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 30( 3)201-221
- Cheng, Z (2012). **A Structural Analysis of The Motivation, Familiarity, Constraints, Image, And Travel Intention Of Chinese Non-visitors To Thailand.** Assumption University of Thailand-GSB E-Journal, 5(2) Retrieved February 3, 2015, from <http://www.assumptionjournal.au.edu/index.php/AU-GSB/article/view/478>
- Choibamroong, T (2014). **Knowledge of Tourists' Behavior: A Key Success Factor for Managers in Tourism Business, Retrieved February 3, 2015,** from <http://pdfzone.co/view?=aHR0cDovL3d3dy5idS5hYy50aC9rbm93bGVkZ2VjZW50ZXlvZXBhcGVyL2phbl9qdW5lMjAwNi9UZWFyZGNoYWkucGRm>
- Marino, E, D (2007). **The Strategic Dimension of Destination Image. An Analysis of the French Riviera Image From The Italian Tourists' Perceptions.** Journal of Travel and Tourist Marketing, 9(4)47-67
- Hadyn, I, Saloomah, T and Wanthanee, W (2013). **The Impact of Political Instability on Tourism: Case of Thailand.** Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes, 5(1)92-103
- He L, Park K & Wesley S. Roehl (2013) **Religion and perceived travel risks.** Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 30(8)839-857
- International visitors to VietNam in January 2015. (n.d.). Retrieved February 3, 2015, from <http://www.vietnamtourism.com/en/index.php/news>
- Mohammad B. A. M, Al, H and Som P. M. (2010). **An Analysis of Push and Pull Travel Motivations of Foreign Tourists to Jordan.** International Journal of Business and Management, 5 (12)41-50

- Rajesh R (2013). **Impact of Tourist Perceptions, Destination Image and Tourist Satisfaction on Destination Loyalty: A Conceptual Model.** *Revista de Turismoy Patrimonio Cultura*, 11(3) 67-78
- Rittichainuwat, N, B, Qu H & Mongkhonvanit,C (2008). **A Study of the Impact of Travel Inhibitors on the Likelihood of Travelers' Revisiting Thailand.** *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 21(1)77-87.
- Rittichainuwat N, B, Qu, H. and Brown,T,J (2001). **Understanding the Motivation of Travelers on Repeat Visit to Thailand.** *Journal of Vocation Marketing*, 42(10)82-95
- Sanitmatcharo P. (2006). **A Study of Tourist Behavior: A case Study of Independent European Travelers in Bangkok.** *LEARN Journal : Language Education And Acquisition Research Network*, 3(2)110-125
- Sergio D,F,L (2011). **Destination Image: Origins, Developments and Implications.** *Revista de Turismoy Patrimonio Cultura*, 9(2)305-315
- Tavitiyaman, P and Qu, H (2013). **Destination Image and Behavior Intention of Travelers to Thailand: the Moderating Effect of Perceived Risk,** *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 30(3)169-185
- Tourism – an economic and social phenomenon.** (2014, January 1). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <http://www2.unwto.org/content/why-tourism>
- Tourism Documents** (2015, January Retrieved February 3, 2015, from [http://www.tourismlaos.org/show.php?Cont\\_ID=43](http://www.tourismlaos.org/show.php?Cont_ID=43)
- Vater, T. (n d) **Thailand ministers try to tempt tourists back.** Retrieved January 15, 2015, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/asia/thailand/11347888/Thailand-ministers-try-to-tempt-tourists-back.html>
- Visitor Statistics.(n.d.). Retrieved February 3, 2015, from <http://www.tourism.go.th/home/listcontent/11/221/276>
- Vuuren C, V andSlabbert, E (2012) **Travel Motivations and Behaviour of Tourists to a South African Resort.** *Book of Proceedings*, 1(1)295-304
- Zhang, X,L (2012). **The Factors Effecting Chinese Tourist Revisit Thailand Destination.** Retrieved February 3, 2015, from <http://eprints.utcc.ac.th/id/eprint/1341>

