

Abstract of a thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Marketing

**Country Branding, Consumption Values, and Purchase Decision
Confidence: A Case Study of Tourists to Thailand**

by
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The tourist's purchase decision process in travelling abroad is complex. With global competition, tourists have an opportunity to choose from many countries. There are many factors influencing tourists' travel destination choices, and affecting the confidence in their purchase decisions. These factors relate to consumption values, travel information sources, and country image. There is a lack of research simultaneously investigating these three factors together. Moreover, the research into how consumption values influence tourists' travel decisions is limited, and would benefit from deeper investigation.

This research seeks to examine the factors affecting tourists' travel destination choices, and the factors influencing their purchase decision confidence. Furthermore, the research investigates whether the pattern of consumption values and travel information sources used differ based on socio-economic characteristics and purposes of trip. To understand the importance of consumption values to tourists, the concept of consumption values theorised by Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991) was adapted.

A quantitative approach was used with a self-administered survey questionnaire distributed to tourists arriving at Suvarnabhumi Airport, the International Airport of Thailand. The valid sample size was 1,707 respondents from seven world regions (East Asia, Europe, North America, Oceania, the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa).

The results showed that functional and emotional values were the main factors motivating tourists to travel abroad. They searched for travel information from various sources, mainly

from the internet, previous experience, word-of-mouth recommendations, and travel guidebooks. They also evaluated country image, and had few constraints on travelling to their selected country.

Furthermore, the results indicated that five consumption values (functional, emotional, social, conditional, and epistemic) had slight positive relationships with the usefulness of a variety of travel information sources. The findings also indicated that functional and emotional values positively related to tourists' purchase decision confidence. Images focusing on relaxation, infrastructure, convenience, and the attractions of a country also significantly influenced their confidence. In addition, five travel information sources (previous experience, brochures/pamphlets, the internet, friends/family/relatives, and travel guidebooks) were found to significantly affect confidence. Some socio-economic characteristics and purposes of trip had statistically significant differences in consumption values and the usefulness of information sources; however, there were only small mean differences.

This research contributes to the theoretical and practical implications of destination marketing by extending knowledge on the relationships between consumption values, travel information sources, country image, socio-economic characteristics, purposes of trip, and purchase decision confidence. It also provides an understanding of how consumption values relate to tourists making their travel decisions, and supports the idea of how a country could build an effective brand to attract tourists. The findings of this study provide useful information for destination and tourism marketers in planning an effective marketing strategy, and in promoting a country brand to attract tourists.

Keywords: Country branding, consumption values, travel information sources, country image, purchase decision confidence, socio-economic characteristics, purposes of trip, Thailand.