

**A Study on the Promotion of Tourism between Japan and Thailand: Before- and After-Travel  
Images of Sapporo and Its Hot springs in the Viewpoints of Thai Tourists**

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**ABSTRACT**

In order to effectively promote tourism between Japan and Thailand, it is important to understand the destination images as perceived by international visitors. To date, no studies have been found which focus solely on the destination image of Thai tourists visiting Sapporo, Hokkaido in Japan, in particular its hot spring sites. This exploratory study assessed the before- and after-travel images of Sapporo, Hokkaido in Japan and its hot spring sites in the viewpoints of prospective and present Thai tourists. Their travel satisfaction assessment was also conducted as a section in the after-travel image assessment. The sample in the study includes two sample groups: Thai tourists departing to Sapporo, Hokkaido and Thai tourists after their trips in Sapporo, Hokkaido. The quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used for the image assessment, both questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The study identified the target market group profile of Thai tourists for Sapporo and its hot spring sites. Also it proposed how to improve the destinations as Thai tourists' perceptions, how to attract more new prospective Thai tourists and how to find the right marketing strategies and activities to approach them. There were recommendations provided for Sapporo's tourism managers and marketers, hot springs spa resort owners and managers, Thai outbound travel agents and further research in these areas.

**Background to the Research**

Since September 2002, the Japanese and Thai governments started exploring a possible bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 2001/2002. And in December 2003, they jointly announced the collaboration action plans. In that FTA, it covers all issues including tourism that can lead to the economic growth of the both countries. The main