

The Influence of Travel Motivation, Information Sources and Tourism Crisis on Tourists' Destination Image

Paitoon Chetthamrongchai*

Department of Marketing, Faculty of Business Administration, Kasetsart University, Bangkok, Thailand

Abstract

The objective of this research paper is to develop a destination image theoretical model by using tourists' travel motivation, information and crisis perception. The present study thus serves to develop a competitive position, destination marketers need to evaluate the tourists' travel motivation, information and crisis perception, which is crucial to the cultivation of the travellers' image of their destinations. Evidence shows that the model identifies the influence of travel motivation, tourist destination image, sources of information and crises in tourism. Those findings indicate that an attitude towards Thailand's travel motivation, travel motivation, crises, information sources in the normal situation, and in an unusual occurrence, tended to influence on Thailand's destination image. The outcomes of the study have significant managerial implications for destination marketing managers.

Keywords: Destination image; Travel motivation; Information sources; Tourism crisis; Tourism Thailand

Introduction

The tourism industry has played important roles in the economic growth of Thailand. It has been the major generator of the foreign exchange earnings through tourist expenditure on goods and services and foreign investment in tourism facilities. The increasing number of international tourists has stimulated exports, investment, and job creation. The direct contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP in 2014 was THB 1,037.3 bn (8.6% of GDP) and is expected to grow by 6.7% pa to THB 2,045.0 bn (11.7% of GDP) by 2025 [1]. In order to develop a competitive position, the creation and transmission of a favourable image to the potential tourist in target markets is vital. Studies have thus indicated that destination image plays a significant role in the competitiveness of destinations. O'Leary and Deegan [2] note that there is an increasing need for destinations to create unique identities to make them distinct, since image can be the deciding factor when other tourist choice variables, such as price, are perceived to be equal. Govers and Go [3] suggest that temporary strengthening, or increased exposure, of a destination provided by press coverage of events or other component elements of the destination image can improve competitiveness by affecting tourist choice. Destination image can also assist destination marketers to understand and therefore segment their target markets: a destination such as Lanzarote, offering sunshine and beaches, should accordingly direct its marketing to potential tourists seeking "rest, relaxation, stress relief and escape from daily routine" [4]. Numerous elements of destination image lie outside the control or even the sphere of influence of destination managers and marketers so that short-term change can be difficult to effect. Nevertheless, it is important that the destination marketer understands the existing image of his or her destination and the impact of tourist experience on that image, so that those factors that can be controlled in, and by, the destination are managed most effectively [5]. This paper centres on Thailand alone because Thailand as a destination has a distinct and established image and research on destination choice should always be destination-specific. However, most previous researches do not consider much about the influence of travel motivation, information sources and tourism crisis on destination image. This study presents the measurement model and identifies the influences of various variables on destination image.

Literature Review

Destination image

Tourists' perception of a destination's image as a preferred destination choice for travel is crucial. As a traveler is deciding a travel destination among alternative choices, the subjective judgment he/she makes about the alternatives available to him/her depends on a number of factors, among which the most important of these is the image about each alternative [6,7]. Destination Image is recognised as an important factor in tourist destination choice behaviour [2,3,8-16] as well as playing a part in tourist satisfaction, and with it the intention to recommend or return [17,18]. Image is an important representation of how tourists feel about a destination [6,19]. According to Crompton [20], image refers to an individual's beliefs, thoughts and impressions about a location, and provides tourists with a certain feeling of anticipation [21]. It also represents their expectations of a destination, which can motivate them to make a visit [22]. Destination image can be linked to travel-related behavior, specifically whether tourists will revisit a destination and whether they might recommend the destination to others [23]. Destination image measures typically assess what people know about a place, how they feel about it, and how they plan to act on those thoughts and feelings [24]. As Jang and Feng [25] suggest, the motivations behind the tourists' decisions during the selection or decision process concerning their next holiday destination needs to be evaluated. Studies have thus indicated that destination image plays a significant role in the competitiveness of destinations. O'Leary and Deegan [2] note that there is an increasing need for destinations to create unique identities to make them distinct. Destination image can also assist destination marketers to understand and therefore segment

*Corresponding author: Paitoon Chetthamrongchai, Department of Marketing, Faculty of Business Administration, Kasetsart University, Bangkok, Thailand, Tel: +66 2 579 0113; E-mail: fbusptc@ku.ac.th

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their target markets. It also provides the stakeholders on the supply side with the important information to project positive attributes to the potential tourists, and to guarantee high quality experiences to tourists' expectations. In particular, these efforts will help create positive word-of-mouth, which is an important source of organic information utilized in the formation of destination image [9].

Travel motivation

Tourist motivation is viewed by many authors as one of the key elements in understanding tourist decision-making behaviour. Why do people travel? The answer to this basic question has occupied the minds of tourist researchers for many years, for example: Dann, [10]; Crompton, [20]; Uysal and Jurovski [26]; Pearce, [27]; Yoon and Uysal, [28]. Tourist motivation can be defined "as the global integrating network of biological and cultural forces which gives value and direction to travel choices, behavior and experience" [29]. Motivation has also been referred to as psychological/biological/social needs and wants, including internal (or emotional) and external forces. These forces describe how individuals are pushed by motivation variables into making travel decisions and how they are pulled or attracted by destination attributes. Uysal and Hagan [30] stated that "push" factors are defined as origin-related and refer to the intangible, intrinsic desires of the individual traveller, such as the desire to escape, rest and relaxation, adventure, health and prestige. "Pull" factors are defined as mainly relating to the attractiveness of a given destination and tangible characteristics such as beaches, accommodation and recreation facilities and cultural and historic resources.

The literature review developed by Crompton [20] suggests that following the line of theorisation considerable progress has been made to use "push" and "pull" factors as a bedrock for understanding tourist behaviour [31,32]. Several studies have examined the tourist motive as a force field analysis of "push" and "pull" factors. "Push" factors are those that drive a tourist to travel and "pull" factors are those which attract a tourist to travel to a destination [26]. However, development of Iso-Ahola [33] motivational construct is somewhat restrained. His study attempted to fill this gap and to create a platform for future derivative works such as market segmentation, mapping of tourist activity, and so on.

Information sources

Information sources have been used as marketing communication tools to reach tourists and as a means of controlling destination image in positive ways to target groups. Many researchers studied the effects of information sources on perception. The work of Beerli and Martin [34], based image on nine secondary information sources, including: induced sources (tourist brochures issued by the destination's public authorities, tour operator brochures, mass-media advertising campaigns, travel agency staff, and the internet); organic sources (friends and family members who were either requested or who volunteered to give information about a destination); and autonomous sources (guidebooks, news, articles, reports, documentaries and programmes on destinations in the media). Beerli and Martin [34] found induced sources had little effect on perceived image. However, a major drawback of their study is that they examined post-visit image, as opposed to pre-visit. It is naturally not surprising that if a tourist has just spent one or two weeks at a destination, the perceived image of the place has by then been constructed chiefly from experiential and organic data. Lacking those things prior to a visit, secondary sources of information will logically have a much higher impact. However, Beerli and Martin [34] acknowledged this limitation in their research,

when, at the end of their paper, they made clear that their study "made it impossible to measure the pre-visit image of the destination, which would have made it feasible to measure the extent to which secondary information sources influence the formation of the pre-visit image and the way in which primary information sources could alter this image". This is perhaps an opportune moment to restate that it is the particular intention of this research study to measure the influence of induced agents prior to visiting. This is something that has not previously been undertaken in destination image research.

Moreover, image formation can be defined as the development of a mental notion founded on limited impressions derived from a single information source. With tourist destination image, this information originates from numerous and diverse sources [9]. First, induced information includes promotional material (brochures, posters), as well as the opinions of tour operators and travel agents. Self-information obtained from mass media and popular culture then plays its part. Finally, organic information drawn from friends, relatives, and personal experience also becomes relevant. A person will hold an image of an unvisited destination derived from different information sources, but clearly the most accurate, comprehensive, and personal image is formed when a place is actually visited [17].

Information sources therefore affect destination image. The tourist will make a decision whether to travel to a particular destination after building an image based upon those sources. Immense advantages would flow from institutions, travel agents, and tourist businesses making proper use of available sources, and in the right situation, in the promotion of a destination. Information about a concrete destination, which is occasionally demanded by tourists, is a particularly important means of promotion for the tourism industry. Sources of information on a destination greatly influence tourist decision-making, and tourist behaviour determines how the search for information is undertaken and how that information will be used [35-37].

Crisis and disaster in tourism

With tourism now being "big business", based upon more than one billion international tourists, any crisis will have a much stronger negative impact compared with the past and will affect a greater part of any population [38]. Indian Ocean tsunami, SARS, swine flu pandemic, 9/11, 2001 and the volcanic ash cloud are examples of large scale crises that have had huge impact on the global tourism industry and on travelling at least at a short term.

The World Tourism Organization has defined a tourism crisis as "any unexpected event that affects traveller confidence in a destination and interferes with its ability to continue operating normally". Sonmez and Graefe [39] defined a tourism crisis as "any occurrence which can threaten the normal operations and conduct of tourism related businesses, damage a tourist destination's overall reputation for safety, attractiveness and comfort by negatively affecting visitors perceptions of that destination and, interrupt the continuity of business operations for the local travel and tourism industry, by the reduction in tourist arrivals and expenditures".

The review of the literature has shown that while there are differences in concept, contextualisation and perception with regard to crises, two important themes pervade the literature. The first is that any crisis matter has become imperative in order to provide greater understanding of the effects of crises on tourism and on the hospitality management sector. The bridging of theoretical streams and the provision of empirical evidence can therefore be useful in the

management of post-crisis effects in general and on tourism and the tourism/hospitality sector in particular.

Tourism crisis in Thailand from 2000-2014

During the past decades, the tourism industry has played important roles in the growth of Thailand's economy. It has been the major generator of the foreign exchange earnings through tourist expenditure on goods and services and foreign investment in tourism facilities. The increasing number of international tourists has stimulated export, investment, and job creation. However, the Thai tourism industry was facing a serious downturn due to a combination of unfavorable factors such as the worldwide economic recession, natural disaster, outbreak, political instability and more recently, the crisis of legitimacy of the Thai state. These factors are frequently found both inside and outside the country, and they are linked to each other. Figure 1 shows the situation of tourism crisis in Thailand from 2002-2014 that the SARS epidemic of 2002 reduced inbound tourism to Thailand, as did the Tsunami of 2004. Thai tourism flatlined between 2006 and 2010, perhaps due to the well-publicized riots, but also to the world recession of that period. Since that time, tourism has grown substantially. Riots and political uncertainty in 2010, major flooding of a large part of Thailand and northern Bangkok end 2011, and political demonstrations end 2013 and ongoing into 2014. Anti-government demonstrations occupied most of the first half of 2014, and were followed by declaration of martial law, and a military (bloodless) Coup d'Etat on 22 May 2014 (Figure 1).

Model Development

Most previous studies were not considered interrelationships among travel motivation and destination image and other factors as a single integrated concept in their theoretical models and empirical studies. Figure 2 presents the measurement model and identifies the influencing of travel motivation, information and crisis on destination image. The model was designed and developed based upon a review of the theories of travel motivation, tourist destination image, sources of information and crises in tourism (Figure 2).

Research Methodology

In order to develop a competitive position, therefore this paper was examined the influence of travel motivation, information sources and tourism crisis on tourists' destination Image. The sample for this study included international travellers who visited Thailand during August to September, 2015. The target population was drawn from the top five inbound tourist markets of Chiangmai, Pataya, Phuket, and Bangkok, which accounted for more than 70-80 per cent of January 2014 tourist arrivals in Thailand (Department of Tourism, 2014). 400 questionnaires were distributed among group tours or individual tours. Cronbach's alpha (0.925) indicated high validity of the questionnaire. The collected data were analysed by employing the LIEREL programme and Structural equation modelling (SEM). The measurement scales were then tested for reliability and validity before testing the conceptual model and hypothesised relationships.

Data analysis

Table 1 shows sample distributions and respondent profiles. The result showed slightly more males (50.50%) than females (49.50%). About 43.75% of participating tourists were between 21 and 30, with 27.50% of participants aged between 31 and 40. The result showed the dominant age group of respondents to be mainly younger adults aged between 21 and 40, approximately 70% of the total, followed by the 41 to 50 age group, representing 14.00%. The smallest group, at 3.25%, comprised those of 60 or over. The vast majority of the respondents (58.75%) were employed. Bangkok (33%) and southern (25.52%) emerged as the respondents visiting places in Thailand. The majority (53.75%) of the respondents were as the repeat traveler. Whereas, rest and relaxation and pleasure were quoted as the major purpose of the trip (57%) (Table 1).

The proposed structural model for path analysis is presented in Figure 1. The relevant paths of analysis in this study were: Thailand's travel motivation → Thailand's destination image; Travel motivation → Thailand's destination image; Tourism crises → Thailand's destination image; Information sources in the normal situation → Thailand's

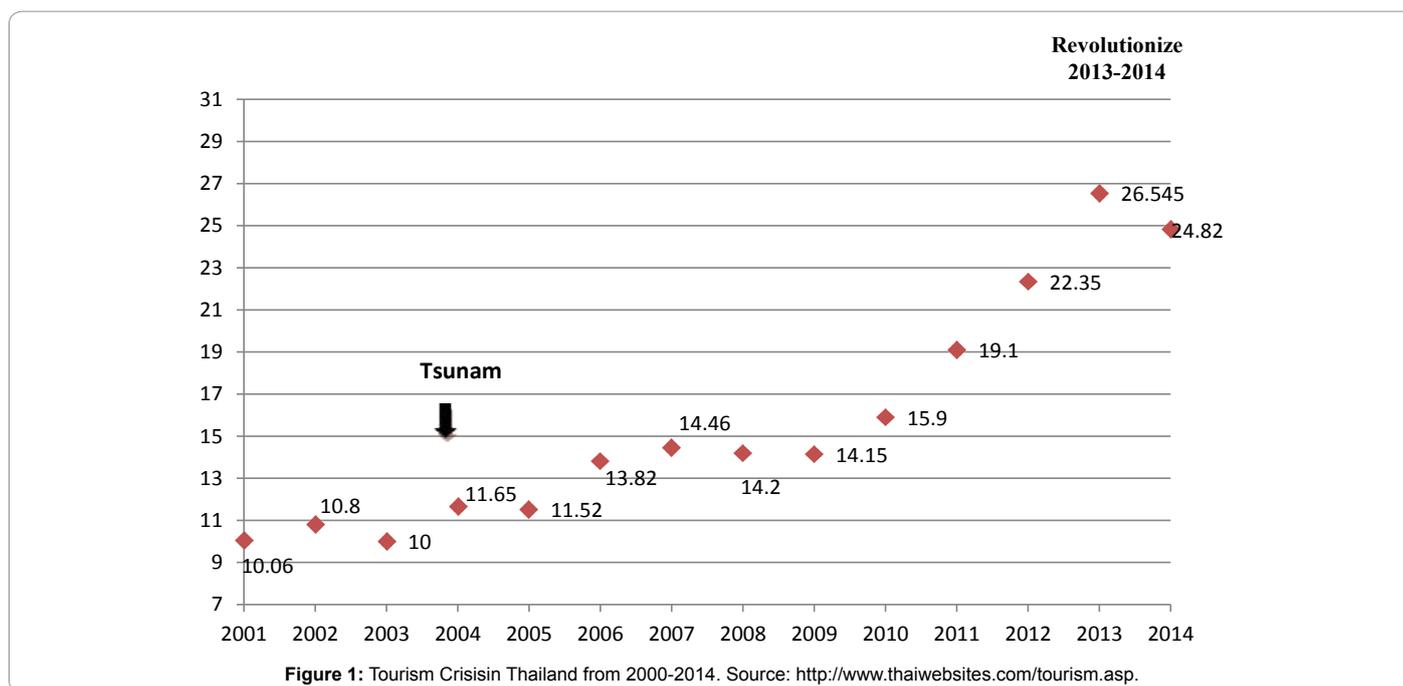


Figure 1: Tourism Crisis in Thailand from 2000-2014. Source: <http://www.thaiwebsites.com/tourism.asp>.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	198	49.5
Male	202	50.5
Marital status		
Single	243	60.75
Married	132	33
Separated/divorced/widow(er)	25	6.25
Age		
Under 20	21	5.25
21-30	175	43.75
31-40	110	27.5
41-50	56	14
51-60	25	6.25
Over 60	13	3.25
Employment status		
Employed	235	58.75
Self-employed	52	13
Unemployed	33	8.25
Retired	15	3.75
Student/pupil	65	16.25
Monthly income		
Less than 1000 USD	77	19.25
1,001-2,000 USD	76	19
2,001-3,000 USD	82	20.5
3,001-4,000 USD	57	14.25
4,001-5,000 USD	50	12.5
More than 5,000 USD	58	14.5
Education		
Primary school or lower	12	3
Secondary, high school	108	27
Undergraduate	120	30
Postgraduate	160	40
First time or repeat traveler		
First time	185	46.25
Repeat	215	53.75
Places in Thailand visited		
Bangkok	365	33.55
Northern Thailand	170	15.63
Southern Thailand	245	22.52
North-eastern Thailand	60	5.51
Eastern Thailand	140	12.87
Central Thailand	108	9.93
Reasons for visiting Thailand		
Rest and relaxation	290	33.18
Visiting relatives and friends	93	10.64
Business	38	4.35
Culture	160	18.31
Pleasure	210	24.03
Sport and recreation	20	2.29
Health	46	5.26
Attending a conference or seminar	17	1.95

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents.

destination image; information sources in an unusual occurrence → Thailand's destination image; and Travel motivation → Thailand's travel motivation.

In this study, According to Tucker and Lewis [40]; Bentler and Bonett [41]; Gerbing and Anderson [42]; Bollen and Long [43]; Jöreskog and Sörbom [44]; Jaccard and Wan [45]; Holmes-Smith,

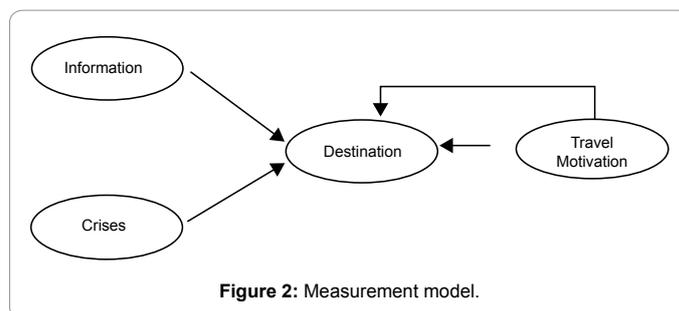


Figure 2: Measurement model.

et al., [46]; Hair, et al. [47], all goodness of fit indices indicated that the overall measurement model was acceptable in that the proposed model fitted the collected data with the sample size of 400: $X^2=353.86$, $df=191$, $p<0.001$; $GFI=0.91$; $RMSEA=0.049$; $CFI=0.96$; $NFI=0.92$. An examination of the standardised path coefficients among variables showed that all the paths had statistically significant effects on behavioural intentions [travel motivation=0.13*; $p<0.05$], Thailand's travel motivation ($y_{12}=0.16^*$; $p<0.05$), crises ($y_{13}=0.50^{**}$; $p<0.01$), information sources in the normal situation ($y_{14}=0.28^{**}$; $p<0.01$), and information sources in an unusual occurrence ($y_{15}=0.65^{**}$; $p<0.01$). Those findings would indicate that an attitude towards Thailand's travel motivation, travel motivation, crises, information sources in the normal situation, and in an unusual occurrence [48-51], tended to influence on Thailand's destination image. Therefore, it could present that this model describes the relationships of all those factors (Thailand's travel motivation, travel motivation, crises, information sources in the normal situation and the unusual occurrence) that influence Thailand's destination image. These findings provided marginally significant support a proposed model (Figure 3).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Structural equation modelling (SEM) indicates that a positive attitude towards Thailand's travel motivation, travel motivation, crises, information sources in the normal situation and in the unusual occurrence, tend to have a correspondingly positive effect on Thailand's destination image. The result of goodness of fit indices indicated that the overall measurement model was acceptable as the proposed model. The examination of the standardised path coefficients among variables also showed that all paths had statistically significant effects. Those findings would indicate that this model describes the relationships of all of those factors (Thailand's travel motivation, travel motivation, crises, information sources in the normal situation, and in the unusual occurrence) in influencing Thailand's destination image.

An integrative travel motivation and destination image model presents that a positive and highly significant relationship was found to exist between the constructs used in the model. The empirical results of this study provide strong support for the relationships between the constructs in the measurement model. It appears that the relationships between all those factors (Thailand's travel motivation, travel motivation, crises, information sources in the normal situation and in an unusual occurrence) exert an influence on Thailand's destination image, and that a positive attitude towards travel motivation represents a factor having an influential effect on Thailand's travel motivation. The greater the perception present in relation to Thailand's travel motivation, the greater the likelihood that the particular individual will revisit Thailand. It was also found that a positive attitude towards travel motivation was an influential factor that directly and indirectly affected Thailand's travel motivation. Thailand's travel motivation

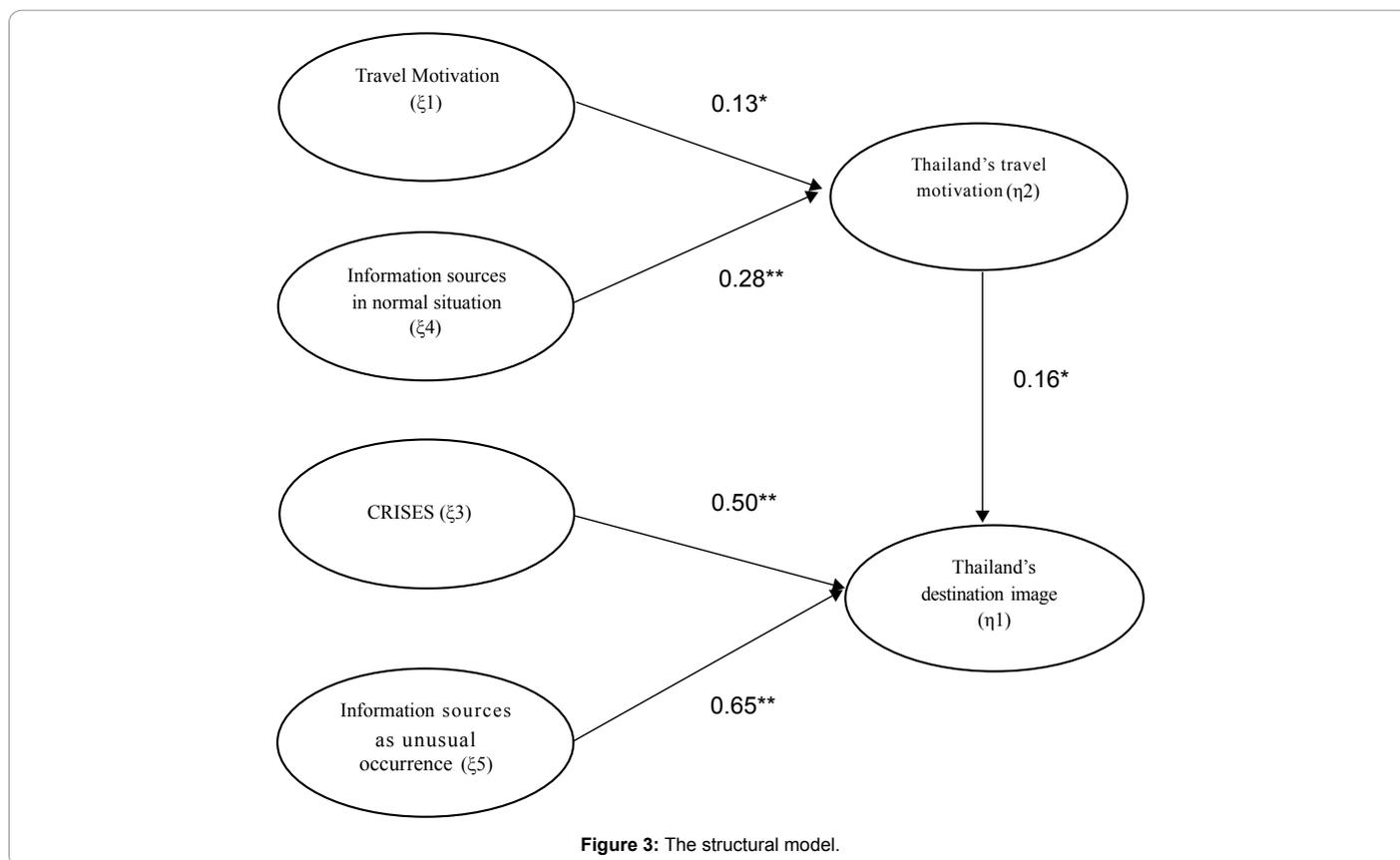


Figure 3: The structural model.

directly influences Thailand's destination image. Information sources in the normal and unusual occurrence situations also have an influence on Thailand's destination image. Tourism crises were also found to affect directly and significantly Thailand's destination image. Thai government can take measures to boost the tourism sector during crises, while safety and security are slowly being restored, and once the situation is normalized. Those measures should be aimed at four key stakeholders that influence whether a tourist decides to visit a destination: the tourists themselves, the media, tourism businesses, and governments of potential tourists.

Limitations and Future Research

The evidence from the empirical results of this study provide strong support for the extent of the relationship between perceived image of tourist destination, tourist motivation, the accumulated experience of vacation travel, and socio-demographic characteristics, and has demonstrated a relationships between both the aforementioned and actual tourist behavior. These interrelationships have not previously been considered in a single model. It would be of interest to examine the model of different destinations to validate this model and to compare and contrast results.

In order to provide a comprehensive picture of the destination personality construct, future research could use qualitative research in the form of focus groups or projective techniques to elicit destination-specific personality characteristics. Moreover, a deeper analysis of the influence of cultural values on the extent of the relationship between perceived image of tourist destination and tourist motivation is needed in tourism research.

This research has focused on examining the extent of the relationship

between perceived image of tourist destination, tourist motivation, but as there is no study on perceived risk, satisfaction, tourist loyalty and so on, this model may lead us to facilitate understanding the role of such independent variables on variances in respect of destination image. Moreover, medical tourism has a considerable future in Thailand and its advantages and disadvantages should be examined, together with marketing strategies to promote it.

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