



Marketing Strategies in Ecotourism: The Case of Thailand and Botswana

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness and importance of marketing strategies in ecotourism through an exploration of the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and tourists' motivations, perceptions on importance level of destination image attributes and factors influencing destination choice. It is of utmost importance for Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO) to understand why people travel and factors influencing their behavioral intentions in selecting a destination as these can help them better tailor their offerings to particular tourists' needs. The study makes a further analysis of the readiness of the supply side of the ecotourism sector. The position the study adopts is that of a comparative analysis between two developing nations of Thailand and Botswana. The study areas have been chosen because they constitute vast resources of biodiversity and have a wealth of ecotourism attractions. Both countries have developing and emerging economies and have, in the last decade, come to consider ecotourism as a viable economic sector and a major contributor to economic development.

A mixed method approach was employed using a self-administered questionnaire and interview research tools which were specifically designed to address the needs of this study.

Descriptive statistics in frequencies and percentages, mean and standard deviations, Independent sample t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test analysis have been employed for the quantitative data and content analysis applied for interviews and the reviewed literature from secondary data sources. The results of the study showed that travel motivations differ across various socio-demographic variables and that ecotourists attach different levels of importance to various destination image attributes and to certain aspects of factors influencing

destination choice. The results further showed that even though the two countries have attractive ecotourism policies, environmental guidelines and certifications most were not fully implemented in practice thereby contributing to environmental degradation that is against the ideals and principles of ecotourism. The key outcome of the study is the development of ecotourism marketing strategy guidelines for stakeholders after intensive analysis of the demand and supply side of the ecotourism sector.

Furthermore, implications of the findings on marketing research and suggestions for further research are discussed.

Keywords: Marketing strategies, ecotourism, travel motivations, destination image attributes, destination choice, Thailand, Botswana.

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Travel and tourism has become a global industry and it is widely considered to be one of the fastest growing industries in the world. It's total economic contribution in 2011 was expected to account for US\$ 5,987 billion, a 9.1% of global GDP with employment creation of over 258 million jobs worldwide (WTTC, 2011). It is the 21st century industry that has become a major contributor to the gross national product globally with the marketing of tourist destinations and its products becoming a widely recognized practice for both public and private sector organizations.

Ceballos-Lascurain (1987) as cited in Boo (1990) describes ecotourism as travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objectives of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals as well as any existing cultural manifestations found in these areas. According to the Commonwealth Department of Tourism (1994), ecotourism refers to “nature-based tourism that involves interpretation and education, and is managed to be ecologically sustainable (recognizing that the ‘natural environment’ includes cultural components and that ‘ecologically sustainable involves an appropriate return to the community and long term conservation of the resource). Ecotourism is widely considered as a subset of Alternative Tourism which places more emphasis on the natural environment as the main motivation for travel (Cater, 1994).

Marketing strategy, on the other hand, is a long-term course of action designed to optimize allocation of the scarce resources at the disposal of a firm in delivering superior customer experiences and promote the interests of other stakeholders. Scarce resources include monetary capital, human capital, technology and time.

There is a growing demand in the ecotourism and nature-based tourism in the international market so there is need for ecotourism operators and marketers especially in the selected countries of study, to incorporate conservational and educational components as well as destination specific promotional opportunities on a wide range of services provided so as to satisfy the market demand.

Thailand and Botswana are not exceptional as tourism in both countries has proven to be a major source of employment, foreign exchange earner and a viable alternative to other industries like manufacturing. Ecotourism embraces some forms of consumptive tourism which can prove to be beneficial to the economy, environment and local economies. However, it has to some extent, contributed negatively to environmental conservation causing some degradation. As developing countries, the two have well-defined tourism policy documents and frameworks to support the industry, though these do not fit seamlessly into focused competitive strategy that provides for their unique positioning into the global market (WTTC, 2010). Hence, the need for effective and efficient marketing strategies.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The problem that this study examines is that of inadequate marketing strategies in the ecotourism sector in both Thailand and Botswana. The two countries have a wealth of traditional and cultural attractions, heritage sites and varied artifacts that have been contributing to the appeal of their destinations. However, it is only recently that they have been discovered as major marketing tools to attract travelers seeking a personally rewarding and rich tourist experience of learning the past and present heritage of the host country. An application of well integrated and effective ecotourism marketing strategies becomes crucial in enhancing awareness of the unique abundant natural resources available in these tourism destinations.

Many ecotourism businesses in both countries are working towards incorporating sustainability into their daily operations and in their products. However, these ecotourism entrepreneurs end up failing to reach the market place due to lack marketing expertise and knowledge of the ecotourism industry's distribution channels. They are mostly small businesses which suffer from poor targeting, market segmentation and positioning as well as low consumer product knowledge. In Botswana, most of these are Community Based Ecotourism projects under the Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBRNM) Establishment

In Botswana, tourism is regulated by the Tourism Policy (1990), Tourism Master Plan (2000) and the Botswana National Ecotourism Strategy (2002)

that led to the publication of Ecotourism Best Practice Manual (2008). All these ensure consistency with the country's conservation goals of minimal social, cultural and environmental impact and citizenship and community empowerment are one of the principles shaping tourism and ecotourism development in Botswana. However, this has contributed to a perception in the market place that Botswana is an expensive tourism destination. Tourist attractions, in the country, offer programs that emphasize on personal experience of the natural or cultural resource with niche-oriented activities that advocate for low volume of visitor traffic. As opposed to the passive mass tourism that emphasizes interpretation. The country should, therefore, take urgent steps to defend its market share to reverse the declining market trend from further impacting on employment and economic growth.

Botswana's practices and current frameworks are using a supply driven approach that does not fit well as a competitive strategy and that does not give due recognition to trends, market scope and variations in market segments. Botswana's central location in Southern Africa places it at the centre of the Southern African tourism circuit. The northern part of the country especially the Chobe/Kasane areas where there are abundant game reserves, national parks and the Okavango delta have a tourism advantage being located at the meeting point of four Southern African countries namely Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This gives visitors an opportunity that is unique and that enables them to experience some of Africa's most exceptional natural attractions within a short period of time.

Botswana is perceived as a high cost, expensive destination as a result of the Pula currency relative to other currencies and the perception could have a detrimental impact on the tourism growth of the country. The Government has invested very little resources to destination marketing and this task has been largely left to the private sector. Since they are priced at the upper end of the price spectrum and are largely priced in USD and other foreign currencies their marketing initiatives tend to reinforce this exclusive, high cost perception. This perceived "expensive image" can be addressed by promoting a wider spectrum of tourism experiences through the application of effective marketing strategies.

On the other hand, in Thailand, ecotourism development is given high consideration and support by the Thai government due to the increase in demand for it

that is greater than the supply. It is of utmost importance to study destination image and images as they are generally accepted as pull motivational factors for the success of a tourist destination. An understanding of visitor characteristics and how they influence pull motivational actors is critical in this study. Push and pull factors play an important role in shaping the motivations of tourists and in helping them decide on a tourism destination (Goossens, 2000 and Hanqin and Lam 1999). The most critical issue of most Community Based Ecotourism (CBET) programs in Thailand is the lack of systematic and efficient marketing. Most failed CBET projects are as a result of ineffective and weak marketing strategies. Most rural communities are inexperienced and their attempts to operate independently of the tourism industry have consequently failed. The major reason for failure has been their inability to access the extensive promotion and marketing systems upon which tourism depends. Ecotourism businesses that fail to implement effective marketing strategies in order to satisfy changing customer demands, expectations and needs cannot generate potential sales and tend to have low levels of marketing effectiveness (Hanchett, 2007; Park, 2009).

The review of literature shows that there are few ecotourism studies addressing the examination of marketing strategies in the ecotourism sector in both the case of Thailand and Botswana (Mbaiwa, 2008; Keitumetse, 2009; Sangpikul, 2010). Jamal and Getz (1996) have noted that, though emphasis has been placed on the importance of tourism destination planning and marketing, little attention has been paid to the implementation of marketing strategies and marketing effectiveness.

The extensive review of literature (Ridge and Perry, 1998; Huang and Hsu, 2005 Chhabra, 2008; Tsotsou and Ratten, 2010) further shows that there are few studies of a comparative nature in ecotourism especially in respect to developing countries such as Thailand and Botswana. The institutional and historical peculiarities of each country provide an excellent basis for comparison given advances in the economy, the governance indicators and the autonomous bureaucracy. This study seeks to inform our understanding of the role that marketing strategies play in the new growth and niche sector of ecotourism by examining the implications of image perceptions and destination decision making attributes on these marketing strategies.

1.3 Ecotourism in Developing Countries

Nature Reserves, national parks, wildlife and its habitats including unspoilt natural landscapes in developing countries are becoming increasingly popular attractions for international tourism. Many of these rich, nature-oriented tourism destinations are in the developing world and tend to attract large numbers of ecotourists. For example, the tropical forests of Costa Rica, the beaches of Thailand, India and Sri Lanka and the mountains of Madagascar and Nepal, coral reefs in Caribbean countries as well as the abundant flora and fauna in Africa, like mountain gorillas in Rwanda are some of the preferred attractions.

Eco-tourists and nature tourists contribute towards employment creation and income generation for households and communities in and around national parks and other protected areas. Ecotourism enterprises, tour operators, lodges and privately-owned ecotourism-businesses, crafts industries and transportation services, also generate revenues and foreign exchange. Governments in developing countries can use this income for nature conservation purposes.

An overview of ecotourism trends in Southeast Asia is provided below to shed more light on its importance for the region and why the need for marketing strategies in the sector.

1.3.1 Ecotourism Trends in Southeast Asia

The Asia Pacific region in terms of cultural and traditional tourism and it is reputable for a diversity in tourism resources and tourism attraction sites that contribute towards the cultural, social, natural heritage conservation enabling sustainability of the environment. Southeast Asia enjoys a position as one of the fastest growing tourism destinations in the world. The exotic and long history of cultural wealth in Thailand serves as its competitive advantage. The same trend applies in other Southeast Asian countries. Rodenburg (1989) maintains that in Bali; Indonesia, international tourism of all scales provides an ever-growing amount of net foreign exchange earnings.

The ecotourism potential in Myanmar is ‘considerable and possibly on par with that of Thailand’ whereas in The Republic of the Philippines, the

ecotourism potential is hampered by 80% loss of its forests and only 5% of coral reefs remaining unaffected by dynamic fishing (Weaver, 1998). In Malaysia, tourism receipts of USD 10.4 million were recorded in 2006 (UNWTO, 2008). A study conducted in India; Goa by Wilson (1997) shows that as a beach holiday destination, India welcomes backpackers since their needs can easily be satisfied and this has resulted in an industry characterized by a number a locally owned enterprises providing a wide distribution of benefits for the local community. Japan's GDP forecast for 2012 is low on account of the Tsunami whereas the annual GDP for China is expected to remain at a high of 8.2%.

This will help support growth in other Asia Pacific economies, especially those affected by the Eurozone debt crisis (WTTC, 2011). The total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP, including its wider economic impacts, is forecast to rise to 7.5% pa THB 1,509.6 billion (14.3% of GDP) in 2011 (WTTC, 2011). Thailand, with its high potential in the tourism industry, is considered a leading ecotourism nation in Southeast Asia. Figure 1.1 below shows the map of Thailand depicting areas of study.



Figure 1.1 Map of Thailand

Source: www.worldatlas.com

1.3.2 Ecotourism overview in Thailand

Tourism should be promoted in Thailand so that it can play a vital role in the development of the quality of life in all regions in line with the country's governmental policy. Naipinit and Maneenetr (2009), suggest that proactive marketing strategies should be developed and promoted to increase new markets and open niche markets in order to attract quality tourists.

The World Tourism Organization has ranked Thailand as the world's 21st most popular destination and the 17th most revenue generating country. It is the third largest economy in South East Asia after China and Hong Kong and it achieves a GDP growth of 7%. However, Kaosa Ard (1997) points out that the country ranks first in the Asia Pacific region in terms of cultural and traditional

tourism and it is reputable for a diversity in tourism resources and tourism attraction sites that contribute towards the cultural, social, natural heritage conservation enabling sustainability of the environment.

Campbell (1994) reports that approximately 20% of all foreign tourists to Thailand (in 1990) visited nature tourism sites. Thailand's protected areas, with activities such as hill-trekking, especially in the Northern part of the country are the most visited by foreign tourists from Europe, North America and Australia. However, the majority of international visitors to Thailand are 'Holiday/leisure' tourists rather than visiting friends and relatives (VFR) or for business and conventions.

Conference Proceedings for the 2nd International Conference on "The Implementation of Ecotourism" report that the Tourism Authority of Thailand as the agency directly responsible for tourism development in the country, formulated an ecotourism national policy during the period 1996-1997 and a budget of Baht 66 million was made available for ecotourism development projects and awareness campaigns across the country (TAT, 1997). This was done in an effort to further promote ecotourism in the country. Thailand is considered a leading ecotourism nation in Southeast Asia given its high potential in the tourism industry. Table 1.1 shows international tourist arrivals by gender from the Asia-Pacific Region which is one of the key markets for Thailand.

Table 1.1 Tourist Arrivals by Gender in Thailand

Country of Residence	Gender	
	Male	Female
East Asia	5,084,892	2,896,313
ASEAN	2,371,144	1,384,410
Brunei	8,615	3,815
Cambodia	69,398	39,378
Indonesia	148,602	85,317
Laos	311,044	210,018
Malaysia	995,323	556,636

Table 1.1 (Continued)

Country of Residence	Gender	
	Male	Female
Myanmar	50,291	24,892
Philippines	106,670	92,203
Singapore	538,354	260,746
Vietnam	142,847	111,405
China	628,904	374,237
Hong Kong	251,269	196,788
Japan	927,646	321,054
Korea	625,979	449,537
Taiwan	266,567	160,466
Others	13,383	9,821

Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand (2007)

The ecotourism sector has, for the past decade, increasingly gained popularity and the country has become a favoured destination with its abundance of natural resources. These attractive sites like landscapes, ancient buildings and traditions as well as the various activities like bird watching, rock climbing, mountain biking and trekking, scuba diving, kayaking enjoy a higher potential for tourism. Sangpikul (2008; 2010), noted that the attractiveness of a specific destination depends on which attributes best respond to the needs, wants, desires of respective respondents. The author's study on US senior travelers identified differences in the degree of importance of destination image attributes among respondents showing that a group of travelers from same nationality can be attracted to a destination by dissimilar destination attributes. 'Cultural and historical attractions' were the most significant attributes for the US senior travelers to Thailand. Some of the main attractions and destination attributes enjoyed by ecotourists are as shown in figure 1.2.



Figure 1.2 Thailand Ecotourism attractions

Source: www.seacanoes.net

This shows that features that attract different groups of tourists to a destination can greatly vary from one to another. Furthermore, he conducted another study to examine how ecotourism business is marketed through the internet by focusing specifically on Thai ecotourism businesses. The sample group involved travel businesses listed in the Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association (TEATA). Content analysis was employed as a qualitative data analysis method in order to examine marketing and ecotourism web-based content promoted in the internet.

However, though the study is important, it concentrated on travel business members and did not take into perspective other businesses in other sectors including those not listed as members in the TEATA website. Furthermore, it explores only a selected and defined marketing strategy. An exploratory study, that

this research addresses on marketing strategies and ecotourism, will address this gap since it involves a critical analysis of the subject matter through questionnaires and interviews with relevant stakeholders. As noted by Bryman and Bell, (2003), interviews are an effective solution to address specific areas of interest in qualitative research.

In Thailand, the future of ecotourism is dependent upon being able to implement sustainable development practices and attract a share of the international market. Thailand's tourism policy is linked to the marketing plan and strategies and the country endeavors to aggressively promote the tourism industry such that it contributes towards job creation and income generation for the country for the development of quality of life in all regions (Tourism Authority Thailand, 2011). Tourism Authority of Thailand, as a result, has recently released its strategic plan with ambitious targets. At the TAT Annual Marketing. Action Plan, the Tourism Authority of Thailand Governor, Suraphon Svestasreni, highlighted a target of 19.5 million international travelers at the end of 2012. The number is approximately 3 million more than the previous year. This would represent a growth of almost 20% compared to 2010. Total income from tourism should then reach US\$24.85 billion. Domestic tourism will also grow from over 80 to 93 million trips during the same period of time, up by over 16%. It would then generate some THB 453 billion, the equivalent of US\$14.5 billion (Tourism Authority Thailand, 2010). However, there is need for the Thai government to maintain balance between the growing demand and supply sides.

According to World Travel and Tourism Corporation (WTTC 2011), the total contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP in Thailand is forecast to rise by 7.5% pa from THB 1,509.6 billion (14.3% of GDP) in 2011 to THB 3,113.96 billion (18.1%) by 2021. As regards employment, the total contribution of Travel and Tourism is forecast to rise by 4.0% per annum, from 4,523,000 jobs (11.5% of total employment) in 2011 to 6,711, 000 jobs (15.5%) by 2021.

In the Sub Saharan Africa, the rich culture and abundant natural resources as well as the various tourist attractions offer the continent a great opportunity as a preferred destination of choice.

1.3.3 Ecotourism Trends in Sub-Saharan Africa

In an attempt to discuss the development of tourism in Botswana, a consideration is taken to explore the current situation of Travel and Tourism in the Sub-Saharan Africa. The region has an abundance of natural resources including precious minerals such as diamonds and gold as well as unspoilt landscapes that are necessary for the promotion of ecotourism. South Africa boasts of national parks with a variety of wildlife species. Botswana prides itself with national parks and has one of the largest inland wetlands in the world; the Okavango Delta as the country's ecotourism attraction. In East Africa, Kenya has an array of wildlife species and ecotourism is a large component of the Kenyan tourism industry.

Tanzania has attractive geographical features such as Mount Kilimanjaro. Zambia's protected areas with their natural qualities only accommodate modest tourist numbers as a result of inadequate funding. West Africa has a number of beaches culminating in a tropical weather and the potential for ecotourism is high. In Malawi, ecotourism development is impeded by its low international profile, less abundant game populations and the risk of some infectious diseases (Weaver, 1998). Namibia, on the other hand, has a strong focus on natural attractions especially nature reserves, flora and fauna. These tourism attractions position Africa as a tourist destination for international tourists. Sharpley (2003) highlights that tourism in the developing world serves as the main source of income and that gross receipts from tourism have grown in value than all other visible exports put together. He further highlights that 30% of international tourists tend to make developing countries their destination of choice.

However, many countries in Africa and in the sub Saharan region, specifically, still remain poor as a result of a number of external forces including declining world prices of key exports, civil wars and political instability and diseases contributing significantly. African governments, therefore, increasingly advocate tourism development and expansion as a way to boost their economies and promote national and local development. They consider tourism as a good opportunity to increase their revenues. Tourism policy in most African countries is an integral part of the government and national policy. In Namibia, the government policy supports sustainable development through ecotourism. The Ministry of Environment and

Tourism has a community-based tourism development policy that was developed in 1995 in recognition of ecotourism being a means to promote socio-economic development especially in rural areas. The ecotourism situation in Botswana is discussed below.

1.3.4 Ecotourism overview in Botswana

Botswana is situated in the southern part of Africa bordered by South Africa in the South and South-East, Namibia to the west and Zimbabwe to the North and North-East. The population is 2,065, 398. The country has transformed to be a middle-income country with a per capita GDP of \$ 13, 100 in 2010 and it is the second revenue earner after diamond mining. It is flat with 70% of the land surface covered by the Kalahari desert with semi-arid hot summers and warm winters.

Nature-based tourism in Botswana has well conserved wilderness and wildlife products and supporting management plans and programs. This rich abundance of wildlife and wildlife assets, world-class wilderness of the Kalahari desert, less-crowded national parks, unique cultures and traditions and rich varieties of flora and fauna are well established and recognized with a niche of dedicated customers. Botswana's wildlife, that is concentrated in the Northern part of the country, is regarded one of the best in Southern Africa in respect to numbers and variety. The country is the third leading wildlife-viewing destination in Africa after Kenya and South Africa 'given its extensive unmodified natural resource base' (Lillywhite and Lillywhite, 1992 as cited by Weaver, 1998). Furthermore, literature highlights that Botswana has 17.6% of its territory as protected land, one of the highest in Africa. The tourism product of Botswana is highly dependent on its abundant wildlife and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) played a leading role in the development and management of tourism over the past decades as it administers the National Parks of Botswana. Northern Botswana (Chobe area and the Okavango Delta), has been selected as the ideal study area. Figure 1.2 below shows the Map of Botswana.



Figure 1.3 Map of Botswana

Source: www.worldatlas.com

According to the Department of Tourism, there were an estimated 2.1 billion tourists (overnight visitor) arrivals in Botswana in 2010. It is estimated that the growth of tourist arrivals since 1994 has averaged 10.1% per annum as shown in Figure 1.3.



Figure 1.4 Tourist and Day Visitor Arrivals (1994-2010)

Source: Department of Tourism

Table 1.2 shows international Tourist Arrivals by country of residence and the majority come from within the region of Africa, followed by Europeans. However, those Visiting Friends and Relatives comprise the majority in terms of purpose of visit.

Table 1.2 Tourist Arrivals by Country of Residence - 2008

Country of Residence	Leisure	VFR	Business	Other	Total
Africa Total Africa	267,866	963,565	140,129	561,084	1,932,644
Americas Total Americas	31,467	3,009	1,185	2,781	38,442
East Asia/Pacific Total EAP	22,024	2,917	1,744	1,708	28,393
Europe Total Europe	66,740	7,278	2,846	9,209	86,073
Other	2,584	7,528	897	4,357	15,366
Total	390,681	984,297	146,801	597,139	2,100,918

Source: Department of Tourism (2009)

The Government of Botswana's position on tourism is contained in the Tourism Policy, Government Paper No. 2 of 1990. According to Kalikawe (2001) the general objective of the policy is to ensure sustainable social and economic benefits for Botswana from their tourism resources, scenic beauty, wildlife and unique ecological, geological and cultural characteristics. In terms of specific objectives, the policy supports foreign exchange earnings and government revenues; employment generation mainly in rural areas contributing to minimal rural-urban migration and generally promoting rural development. Botswana is one of the most popular travel destinations in Southern Africa and it is home to one of Africa's great wildernesses, invaluable resources and some of its most striking beauty. In the Northern part of the country is the Okavango Delta, the world's largest inland wetland, the Chobe and Moremi National Parks which have different species of wildlife. According to Mbaiwa (2002), The Okavango Delta is one of Botswana's leading tourist destination areas with its rich wildlife resources scenic beauty. Tourism is referred to as Botswana's future engine of economic growth. It is the second largest economic sector and contributes as much as 4.5% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Kalikawe (2001) further maintains that the Department of Tourism is looking further into diversifying the tourism product from being purely wildlife based to include other attractions such as native folklore, heritage and conventions.

Mbaiwa (2003) conducted a study that discusses the socio-economic and environmental impacts of tourism development in the Okavango Delta located within Ngamiland District in northwestern Botswana. He maintains that the Okavango Delta has, for the past two decades, attracted tourists from various countries such as those of North America, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa with its scenic beauty and the wide diversity of wildlife. Consequently, the growth of tourism in the Okavango Delta resulted in the establishment of tourist facilities in the area. However, the findings of the study show significant negative social and environmental impacts resulting from tourism development. An integrated land-use policy involving all stakeholders in the formulation, implementation and monitoring is proposed in the study to ensure that the carrying capacity levels of tourist activities are not exceeded and for sustainability of tourism in the Okavango Delta.

Tourism serves as a major part of the Botswana economy and policy documents like the Botswana Tourism Policy, Botswana National Ecotourism Strategy, Botswana National Policy on Culture support the principles of conservation, sustainability and community participation. One of the Botswana National Ecotourism Strategy's core objectives is to promote marketing initiatives which support the sustainable development diversification of the tourism industry in the country. Tourism in Botswana is demand-driven and not so much market-driven. The implementation of an aggressive marketing approach that is more market-driven will help address the prevailing problem of the country's low performance as a tourism destination.

However, Table 1.3 shows the total contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP and Employment. As a labor intensive industry, it contributes towards employment creation. Figure 1.5 shows Foreign Visitors and Domestic Spending in Botswana in 2010. The percentage for foreign visitor spending is higher at 70% compared to that of domestic spending which stands at 30%. This is reflective of lack of barriers in the tourism trade, as noted by Sharpley and Telfer (2008) who maintain that tourism generating countries would hardly place limitations on their citizens' right to travel overseas and on their expenditure.

Table 1.3 Travel and tourism contribution to GDP and Employment 2010

Total Contribution to GDP (US\$)	Total Contribution to Employment
8,336.6 million	46, 000 jobs

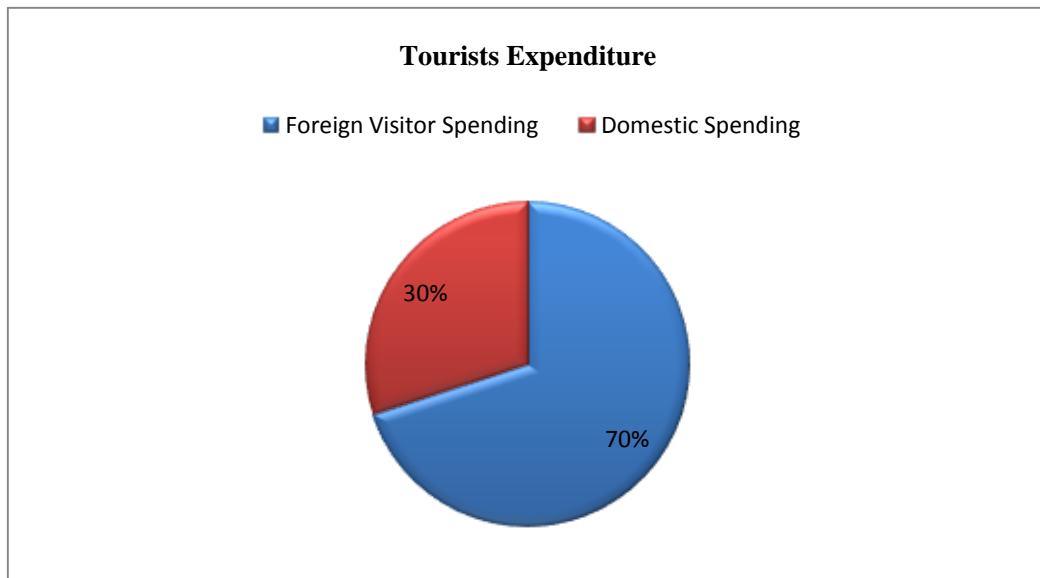


Figure 1.5: Foreign Visitors and Domestic Spending

Source: Department of Tourism (2010)

Botswana's tourism development is concentrated on wildlife and the wilderness experience and the country is the third most popular tourist destination in Southern Africa, after South Africa and Zimbabwe. Tourism development is regulated by government through the Department of Tourism and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks. The tourism industry is mainly run by the private sector with a large component of expatriates. Figure 1.6 below shows some of the ecotourism attractions in the country.



Figure 1.6 Botswana wildlife

Source: Botswana Tourism Organization, 2011

There are great efforts to incorporate the local community based organizations and local individuals through training and tourism awareness creation. Further efforts are geared towards diversifying the tourism product into cultural, historical and other manmade attractions. The Okavango Delta, in the Northern part of the country is the largest inland delta in the world and it is a Ramsar site. Chobe National Park, on the other hand, boasts of one of the largest elephant densities in the world and a wide variety of game.

The country's brand, namely, "Botswana, Your Destination, Our Pride" serves to further market Botswana and its tourism resources to the international world. However, Keitumetse (2009) argues that 'natural resources management approaches in most parts of Africa are more often addressed within a narrow approach that isolates cultural and heritage resources as well as cultural landscapes. This is largely due to a lack of reconciliation of local conservation needs with international conservation ideologies that originate elsewhere.' In view of this, the author maintains that the Botswana National Ecotourism Strategy tends to lack operational guidelines for implementation.

The future viability of ecotourism is dependent on Thailand and Botswana being able to implement sustainable development practices and attract a share of the international tourism market. Tourism destination marketers in Thailand and Botswana, need to employ several effective promotional and marketing strategies for increased investment returns, sustainable growth and global competitiveness in the tourism sector. In both countries, tourism is encouraged and promoted as part of an overall development strategy. Table 1.4 below shows that Thailand and Botswana follow the path towards economic development as per reflected economic drivers. The adult literacy rate for the two countries stand at 92.6% and 81.2% respectively with the per capita GDP of \$ 9,700 for Thailand and 16, 300 for Botswana. In order to achieve economic growth, the governments in both countries, have identified ecotourism as a development priority through implementation of sound policy frameworks.

Table 1.4 Key Economic Country Data

Data	Thailand	Botswana
Area	513, 120 km ²	582, 000 km ²
Population	67, 091, 089 million	2, 098, 018 million (July 2012 est.)
Capital City	Bangkok	Gaborone
Political System	Parliamentary Monarchy	Democracy
Currency	Baht	Pula
Inflation	4.1%	7.8% (2011 est.)
Unemployment Rate	1%	7.5%
Population below poverty line	9.6% (2006 est.)	30.3% (2003 est.)
Taxes and other revenues	19.2% of GDP	31.3% of GDP (2011 est.)
Literacy - (Total population)	92.6%	81.2%
GDP - Per Capita (PPP)	\$ 9, 700	\$ 16, 300 (2011 est.)
GDP - Growth rate	1.5%	6.2% (2011 est.)
GDP - Composition by sector	Agriculture 12.2%	Agriculture 2.1%
	Industry 45.3%	Industry 45%
	Services 42.5%	Services 52.9% (2011 est.)

Source: Central Intelligence Agency (2011)

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to examine the marketing strategies in the ecotourism sector through an exploration of the demand and supply theory.

1.4.1 Objectives

1. Examine the relationship between socio-demographic factors and tourism travel motivations, perception importance levels on destination image attributes and destination selection by international tourists.
2. Determine key ecotourism destination market segments that are in line with the increasing demands and opportunities in the ecotourism market place.
3. Examine key marketing strategies in the ecotourism sector of Thailand and Botswana.
4. Propose marketing strategy guidelines for Thailand and Botswana.

1.5 Research Questions

The objectives of this research study are to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between socio-demographic factors and tourism travel motivations, perception on importance levels of destination image attributes and destination selection by international tourists.
2. Which are the key ecotourism destination market segments that are in line with increasing demands and opportunities in the ecotourism industry market place?
3. What are the key marketing strategies employed by ecotourism businesses in attracting international tourists to their ecotourism destinations?
4. What marketing strategy guidelines are suitable for recommendation to Thailand and Botswana?

By addressing these research questions and comparing the results to the reviewed previous literature, tourism marketers will have a better understanding of the various options of marketing strategies and their impact and effectiveness in the ecotourism sector. This will enable ecotourism managers and marketers to better understand best practice marketing methodologies to employ for enhanced profitability. Furthermore, they will have a better insight of their customers and be in

a position to meet and exceed their needs, wants and expectations. Objective number two (2) has been adapted from a study by Ryan and Pan (2007) that reports on visitor motivations and satisfaction at Pirongia Forest Park in New Zealand. Oppermann (1996) highlights that few tourism destinations are working towards understanding their current visitors so as to effectively market to them since marketing research suggests that it is less expensive to re-attract previous customers than to acquire new ones.

1.6 Significance of Study

The study has practical implications and will contribute to the body of Marketing literature as it has significance in strategic decision making and planning in managerial marketing. It is hoped that the results of the study will provide suggestions to ecotourism organizations and marketing personnel for improving their current marketing strategies in line with the demands and needs of customers. By examining different ways in which ecotourism is represented in the destination country by travel companies, tour operators and mass media, in contrast to how tourists perceive ecotourism and its effects, it is hoped the research would stimulate discussions and reflections on effects of globalization that promote ecotourism as a sustainable pursuit. It is expected that the outcome of the research would increase understanding about the type of tourist that chooses this kind of educational alternative form of tourism and enable Destination Marketing Organizations segment their products and services for the right target market.

The results of the study will provide insights into significance of the relationship between push and pull factors in ecotourism marketing. This is the first study that explores ecotourism marketing strategies on a comparative analysis from the standpoint of developing countries; in this case Thailand and Botswana. Furthermore, the results of the study will not only help maximize local benefits from ecotourism but will also address ecotourism marketing challenges in other parts of the world. Finally, it is hoped that the results of the study and experiences of the various stakeholders in both the tourism demand and supply side, would be circulated and shared with a broader audience.

1.7 Scope of Study

1.7.1 Study Area

Southern Thailand and Northern Botswana have been selected as the study areas given their high concentration and abundance of cultural, traditional experiences, fauna and flora and beautiful sceneries as tourism attractions. Both destinations offer a marketing profile with wild natural environments and scenic landscapes. The selected study areas in Southern Thailand are Phuket and Songkhla Provinces, Ngamiland and Chobe districts in Northern Botswana. These are preferred tourist destinations for international tourists.

Northern Botswana comprise of the Ngamiland and Chobe Districts and boasts of an array of national parks, nature reserves and the Okavango Delta which is the largest inland wetland in the world that serves as one of the best tourist attractions in the Sub-Saharan Africa.

1.7.2 Study Population

Key informants and sample population are divided into three sample groups as follows:

- 1) International tourists who visited Southern Thailand during the time of study:
- 2) Tourism Government officials at Tourism Authority Thailand (TAT), the Botswana Tourism Authority and Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism (MEWT):
- 3) National and international ecotourism company owners, managers and marketing personnel:

1.7.3 Research Area

This study examines key marketing strategies in the ecotourism sector through an exploration of push and pull factors to determine their effectiveness and significance through a comparative analysis of Thailand and Botswana. Marketing literature suggests that a balance between push factors (internal motives)

and pull factors (destination attributes) may cause a traveler to select one destination over the other (You et al., 2000)

1.8 Research Limitations

The financial and time constraints of the researcher limited the study to two geographical areas of Southern Thailand and Northern Botswana and to the focus on one aspect of the tourism sector being ecotourism in the examination of marketing strategies and their effectiveness and significance in ecotourism. This leaves room for future research in other tourism sectors and other specialized fields outside marketing.

The semi-structured survey instrument was self-administered to ecotourists travelling during the period of the study in Phuket and Songkhla; Southern Thailand. Other provinces in Thailand were not covered as part of the study. Telephone interviews were administered on national and international ecotourism business owners, managers and marketing personnel as well as government officials and agencies in both countries.

This means that those ecotourism government officials whose telephone numbers are unknown did not participate in the study. Furthermore, as a result of financial and time constraints, international tourists in Botswana did not participate in the survey. The researcher applied generalizability and assumed that the same demographic characteristics, travel patterns and perceptions international tourists in Southern Thailand also apply in the case of Northern Botswana. The nature of the survey instrument renders the respondents' ability to question the interpretation of items on the questionnaire limited, thereby leaving validity of the responses open to question.

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter one covers the introduction and highlights the global tourism and ecotourism trends, a synopsis of the problem statement, aim and objectives of the study, research questions and study significance are given as important concepts in this study.

Chapter two is an elaborate discussion of literature review on tourism and ecotourism theories and concepts. An overview of ecotourism in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa is presented. Furthermore, push and pull motivations and marketing theories and concepts are discussed with a view to providing more insight into the nature and significance of marketing strategies in the ecotourism sector. Chapter three addresses the methodology and conceptual research framework employed throughout the study. Chapter four is a discussion of main results of the study, followed by chapter five with conclusions, discussions and recommendations inclusive of study limitations and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

It is through the review of literature that important research questions to be addressed within the field are identified and discussed to explore marketing strategies in ecotourism through an examination of the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of international tourists and their perceived levels of importance on destination image attributes. Further analysis will be made on the influence of socio-demographic characteristics on destination choice as these have implications for marketing in the ecotourism sector. This chapter addresses review of literature on theories and concepts on Tourism, Sustainable Tourism Development, Ecotourism, Marketing and Marketing Strategies.

2.1 Tourism Theories and Concepts

The definition of terms frequently used in this study is given so as to address ambiguity and confusion since different readers understand meanings of concepts differently.

2.1.1 Tourism:

Tourism is defined as the theories and practices for being a tourist and involves travelling and visiting places for leisure-related purposes. Tourism comprises the ideas and opinions that people hold which shape their decisions about undertaking trips and where to go, what to do or not to do, about how to relate to others, tourists, locals and service personnel. It is all the behavioral manifestations of those ideas (Leiper, 2004)

The definition of tourism as proposed by McIntosh and Goeldner, (1995:10) is ‘the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, business suppliers, host governments and host communities in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors’. Ryan, (1995) proposes a definition of tourism as a study of the demand for and supply of

accommodation and supportive services for those staying away from home and the resultant patterns of expenditure, income creation and employment. Goeldner and Ritchie, (2008) view tourism as the methods, activities and results arising from interaction with tourists, local community, tourism providers and host governments that are involved in the process of attracting and hosting visitors.

2.1.2 Sustainable Tourism Development:

Wall (1997) maintains that if tourism must contribute to sustainable development, it must be economically viable, ecologically sensitive and culturally appropriate. It is the development of tourism industry without degradation to the environment. Furthermore, Brohman, (1996) defines sustainable tourism as tourism that does not degrade or alter the environment in which it exists to an extent that it prohibits the successful development and well-being of other activities and processes, but that which is developed and maintained in an area at such a scale that it remains viable over an indefinite period.

2.1.3 Ecotourism:

According to The International Ecotourism Society (TIES, 2003), ecotourism is a form of tourism intended as a low impact and often small-scale alternative to standard commercial tourism and one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry. It is defined as ‘responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people’. Its purpose is to benefit the local community and host countries through ecologically and culturally sensitive travel as it involves travel to destinations where flora, fauna and cultural heritage are the primary attractions. Furthermore, it fosters respect for different cultures, appreciation for natural habitats, economic and political empowerment of local communities.

Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism (WTO, 2002) points out that ecotourism embraces the three pillars of sustainability, sustainable tourism and addressing the economic, social, and environmental impacts of tourists. It further embraces specific principles as follows:

- 1) Contributes actively to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage
- 2) Includes local and indigenous communities in its planning development and operation thereby contributing to their well-being
- 3) Interprets the natural and cultural heritage of the destination to visitors.

To ensure quality ecotourism delivery for destinations and ecotourism enterprises, aspects of these specific principles have to be effectively monitored. The academic definition of ecotourism tends to be narrowly focused to low impact on the natural and socio-cultural environment due to the fact that many of the definitions were formulated by environmentalists who place much emphasis on conservation than profit and monetary gains. Ecotourism embodies the principles of sustainability, environmental sensitivity and respect for local people and cultures. Honey (1999) maintains that ecotourism gained importance when it was discovered that most tourists left the locations polluted and financially no better off than before they were 'discovered'.

According to Cristina (2004), ecotourism involves visiting natural areas with the objectives of learning, studying or participating in the activities that do not bring negative effects to the environment whilst protecting and empowering the local community socially and economically. (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987) describes ecotourism as travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objectives of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals as well as any existing cultural manifestations.

Black and Crabtree (2007) as cited in (Buckley, 2009) define ecotourism as 'a force within the industry that, in its very essence, aims to minimize tourism's negative impacts whilst maximizing tourism's positive impacts'. It represents a relatively large internal intervention in the global tourism industry.

Butler, (1992) maintains that conservation must be included in a definition of ecotourism. He further highlights that ecotourism has the potential to foster conservation of natural resources by increasing awareness by people in the importance of the natural resources. In addition to emphasis on the concept of sustainability and environmental benefit of ecotourism, some scholars give more

attention to its economic impact (Goeldner, 2000; Walpole and Goodwin, 2000) and benefit to well-being of local communities. Weaver, (2006) provides a discussion of 'hard' versus 'soft' ecotourism. The former pertains to travelers with a strong environmental commitment either alone or in small groups, to remote undisturbed locations with minimal impact. The latter refers to more conventional tourists with a moderate environmental commitment seeking natural experiences that have a high level of comfort and minimal challenge.

Sirikaya, et al (1999) maintain that ecotourism still lacks credibility in the eyes of many decision makers. The field has difficulty in deciding what activities and services constitute an ecotourism experience as evidenced by spatial and regional complexities in ecotourism research.

Ecotourism has different definitions and has become a topic of great interest in tourism literature without a broadly accepted definition (Lindberg et al., 1996 and Wight, 1993). Buckley (2009) highlights that some authors refer to it as community and responsible tourism (Spenceley, 2008) or nature-based tourism (Newsome et al., 2002) or sustainable tourism (Weaver, 2006) or soft and rural tourism, adventure tourism, green tourism or wilderness and protected area management (Boo, 1990; Eagles, 1992; Hendee & Dawson, 2002) or eco-certification (Black & Crabtree, 2007; Font & Buckley, 2001). The definitions share common concepts since they are an alternative to mass tourism.

2.1.3.1 Nature-based Tourism:

It refers to any activity that relies on experiences directly related to natural attractions including ecotourism, adventure tourism, wildlife tourism and natural retreats. It covers a wide range of attractions and experiences. It is any sustainable tourism activity or experience that relates to the natural environment and has a range of interdependent niche or specialist areas.

2.1.3.2 Cultural Heritage Tourism:

Fullerton et al. (2009) cites Chhabra et al. (2003) in explaining that, from the demand side, heritage tourism is representative of the desire of visitors to experience and consume culture. In terms of supply, it is widely seen by

government and private businesses as an economic tool. Richards, 1993; Swarbrooke, 1999; Mc Gettigan and Burns, 2001) highlight that cultural tourism is a form of tourism that involves the consumption of cultural resources. As a result, it is not only about visiting sites and monuments but it also involves consuming the way of life of areas visited (Richards, 2001).

McKercher et al. (2004) proposes that popularity is not necessarily an indicator of successful heritage tourism because it can result in undesirable social, experiential and physical degradation impacts. However, they note that in order for cultural attractions to be appealing to warrant visitation, they must be unique, interesting, valuable to tourists and the local heritage community.

(Azarya et al. 2004; Russel & Stabile, 2003; Schilcher, 2007) maintain that tourism often helps bring developing nations and even local communities into a global economy as well as being sustainable source of revenue for indigenous and rural communities. Middleton (1988:8) differentiates between a demand side and a supply side to tourism. He is of the opinion that, seen from the demand side, travel and tourism, as a total market, comprises three main sectors: International tourism, domestic tourism and excursionism.

Positive aspects of Ecotourism as highlighted by Kontogeorgopoulos (2004) should be based on:

- 1) concern for adventure and leisure that provides education and environmental awareness.
- 2) Contribution to environmental protection and maintenance of cleanliness
- 3) Contribution to wildlife conservation efforts
- 4) Economic sustainable, low-impact, and non- consumptive
- 5) Restrict the number of tourists visit to a site at a time
- 6) Ethically managed i.e. non- consumptive with well paid employees with health insurance cover and provision of training and tourism certification.

In conclusion, for ecotourism to be regarded as a truly sustainable form of tourism, it must aspire for both environmental preservation and poverty alleviation.

One who travels specifically for the purpose of studying features of the natural environment, stays seven days or more and prepares in advance for the experience by learning about the culture, customs and natural features of the area to be visited (The Ecotourism Society, 1995). Ecotourists foster a positive attitude towards natural environment and their actions enhance eco-system health. They are motivated to preserve the environment and so they generate little or no negative environmental impact. However, Wall (1994) noted that ecotourists often visit environmentally fragile areas like the alpine and arid areas and that their visitation normally occurs during sensitive periods, such as during breeding or hatching periods.

2.1.4 Ecotourism attributes/Resources:

They are, but not limited, to wildlife; Lifestyle, language and culture; Rich cultural heritage; Traditional songs, dance and music; Art, drama and poetry; Handicrafts, folklore, rock paintings; Unique natural and unspoilt landscapes; Remoteness including hills, vegetation and flora; Unique architecture; Temples, conservation sites and trusts.

2.1.5 Environmental Protection & Carrying Capacity

Environmental protection and carrying capacity are key components in environmental development. Carrying capacity refers to a point beyond which further levels of visitation would lead to an unacceptable deterioration in the physical environment and visitor experience. Fennel, (2001) defines it as the amount of use a particular area can absorb over time before there is an unacceptable impact to either other users or the resource base. The environment is valued as a resource that should be protected against extinction. Sum and Hills (1998) define sustainable environment as optimizing carrying capacity while allowing long term extraction of resources.

When tourism takes place in protected areas, environmental management strategies are necessary to maintain and preserve the areas' natural value and resources. The ideals and principles of ecotourism appear on paper but implementation is hardly practiced. Interest is more in increasing tourist receipts and

this has a detrimental effect on environmental conservation contributing to air and water pollution, littering and other negative impacts (Kentogeorgopoulos, 1999)

The key to successful management of such an area is to apply continuous monitoring to detect changes. In order to implement management strategies, visitors' opinion is considered to be essential. Studies reveal that visitors of protected areas tend to demand high- quality services, such as safety, appropriate information and guidance and they need to feel welcome and comfortable (Eagles et al., 2002). Moreover, Wight (2001), defines these visitors, as 'eco-tourists', and are usually highly-educated. This is similar to other studies where large majority are highly educated and travel mostly for leisure.

A high quality environment that attracts more tourists may contribute to its own degradation as a result of the consumption patterns of tourists. It is therefore important to maintain a balance so that the attraction of a destination is maintained. For sustainability of ecotourism, there is need to improve the current infrastructure for future development and take measures that are precautionary like limiting land use, identifying indicators for monitoring the development and establishing carrying capacity limits. The society, environment and infrastructure should be able to handle current population and withstand the influx of tourists especially during high seasons.

2.2 Travel Motivation

Travel motivation has a significant role to play in Tourism research and a number of studies have been undertaken to address the area (Crompton, 1979; Pittman, 1980; Kim et al, 2003). It is a variable that explains tourism behaviour and one of the most important because it is considered a compelling force behind all behaviour. An individual possesses a variety of needs that compete against each other, where the need with the strongest strength at a given moment is the one that results in a specific activity (Fox, 2006).

Yuan and Mc Donald (1990) used the concept of push and pull factors to examine motivations for overseas travel on the four countries of Japan, France, West Germany and the UK. The findings of their study indicated that individuals from

each of the four countries might travel for similar reasons (push). However, choosing particular destinations and the level of importance attached to the factors might differ among the countries.

The development of a sustainable management plan and efficient marketing strategies call for an exploration of motivating factors that lead to a decision to visit. It is one of the aspects that shape tourism behavior. In the tourism context, travel motivation is a driving force that pushes people to search for holiday experience to satisfy their need to escape, change of place, relaxation, social relationship, and self-development (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981, Pearce and Lee, 2005) whereas the attractiveness of destinations pulls people to visit a particular place (Turnbull and Uysal, 1995; Jamrozy and Uysal, 1994; You and O' Leary, 1999; Klenoshy, 2002). Push and pull factors are travel-motivation factors that are complementary to each other and in marketing literature, they are considered vital aspects in destination marketing (Matzler and Siller, 2003; Pike and Ryan, 2004; You and O'Leary, 2000).

Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and marketers should have the information that the most successful products are those which correspond best to various needs within a given target market segment and should give more marketing efforts to matching a destinations' major attributes to tourists' diverse psychological needs.

2.3 Destination Images

Jenkins O. H. (1999) citing Lawson and Baud Bovy (1977) defines image as 'the expression of all objective knowledge, impressions, prejudice, imaginations, and emotional thoughts an individual or group might have of a particular place'. However, Crompton (1979) defines destination image as an aggregate sum of beliefs, ideas, impressions and expectations that a tourist has about a destination area. The nature of destination image can be understood as a multi-item construct where multiple attributes are the elements of the final composite image (Gallarza, et al., 2002). Furthermore, Baloglu and McCleary, (1999) concluded that the overall impression of a destination is dependent upon each individual attribute.

In support, Chen and Kertetter (1999) highlight that destination image is a vital aspect in effective tourism development and destination marketing and related to the overall success of a tourism destination. Destination image plays an important role in destination selection as destinations with a strong positive image and are more recognizable and have a higher probability of being selected by tourists (Hunt, 1975; Pearce, 1982; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989). Tourism literature confirms that how tourists perceive a set of alternative travel destination images has an influence in their final decision on destination choice (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989; Um & Crompton, (1990). Stevens, (1992) study has identified destination attributes like beautiful scenery and different culture as more important than price when tourists are at the initial stage of selecting a vacation travel destination.

Woodside and Lysonski (1989) further point out that destinations constantly compete among themselves to obtain a set of potential visitors as this will increase the probability of their selection as tourist destination. Destination image has therefore been used by DMOs as a marketing and promotional tool in attracting tourists to their countries.

2.4 Strategic Marketing

Strategic marketing is a process of strategy development that takes into account changing business environment and the need to deliver superior customer value. It is market driven and focused more on organizational performance as opposed to increase in sales. The competitive environment of modern day business appears to necessitate the successful implementation of Marketing, if a firm is to advance in its chosen segments (Kwaku et al. 2001). Marketing can be considered as a strategic science that focuses upon the needs of specific groups of customers and adjusts the organization's controllable variables in order to satisfy the needs, desires and demands of a target market. The most dominant paradigm of the field is the four P's model in which consumer demands are satisfied by manipulating the four controllable variables of product, price, place and promotion.

Strategic marketing literature (Addis and Holbrook, 2001; Berry, 1995; Gilbert, 1996 et al.) suggests that firms are moving towards a relational marketing

focus and that service firms are predominantly relational. This calls for a shift away from the contemporary marketing towards marketing strategies that are more aligned to customer needs and expectations and market driven. (Go, 2000; Morrison and King, 2002) indicate that there is a huge potential for online commerce; e-commerce; e-marketing which has to be exploited by ecotourism marketers. Mass marketing is no longer perceived as an acceptable and appropriate approach given today's competitive market.

Developing an effective marketing strategy that is appealing to potential tourists is of utmost importance to destination marketers, tourism business owners and managers. Marketing strategies are processes that allow an organization to concentrate its limited resources on the greatest opportunities to increase sales and achieve competitive advantage. In today's global competitive market, marketing strategies and promotions are critical for business performance and success.

Although literature on ecotourism and how tourism companies market their services and products is available, it is inadequate as it does not fully address viable and successful marketing strategies. Identifying a sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) is crucial and can be achieved through viable marketing strategies. Tsiotsou and Ratten, (2010) highlight that tourism marketing is an interesting and exciting area of expertise that will continue to grow in the next decades.

March, (1994) discusses how marketing's contribution to travel and tourism has been undervalued by both policy makers and practitioners leading to a misunderstanding of the nature and value of the marketing discipline.

Hamilton Karla, (2003) examines the contemporary marketing practices of the accommodation sector in Western Canada and the presence of experience marketing as well as the relationship between marketing practices, technology, experience creation and performance.

Tsiotsou and Ratten, (2010) on the other hand, focus on the key themes most important for future research on the marketing of tourism services. They take a global perspective to compare different international research directions and maintain that due to changes in demographics, there tends to be an increase in the growing and aging global population and hence the need for different marketing strategies and

approaches to meet their demands. Tourism literature stresses the importance of relationship marketing as a viable marketing strategy in the ecotourism sector.

2.5 Marketing strategy

Marketing is the task of creating, promoting and delivering goods and services to consumers and businesses (Kotler, 2003). Strategy, on the other hand, is a decisive allocation of resources in the form of capital, technology and people in a particular direction. At a more operational level, marketing strategy involves the allocation of resources to develop and sell products or services that consumers will perceive to provide more value. It is shaped by the overall business goals and defines the company's role in relationship to competition. Furthermore, it is a time-phased plan designed to achieve a market position so advantageous that competitors can retaliate only at prohibitively high costs. Crouch and Ritchie (2000) maintain that marketing strategies are destination management processes that are important for destination competitiveness.

Riege et al., (2000) examined how national travel and tourism authorities can market a country as a tourist destination by using Australia and New Zealand to target markets in Germany and the United Kingdom. In-depth- interviews were conducted with 41 experienced practitioners in the industry across the four countries and data analysis was through an intensive case study methodology. The authors propose a number of core strategies according to the position of an organization (i.e as to whether it is a leader or nicher) as well as the approach it has to its overseas market. Their findings concur with the reviewed literature where importance is placed on three-dimensional main approach to examining marketing and distribution strategies being:

- 1) The consumer-oriented approach
- 2) The competitor-oriented approach
- 3) The trade-oriented approach

Jamrozy (2007) illustrates how tourism marketing can be integrated into more sustainable marketing strategies by suggesting a shift away from economic profit towards sustainability. The study has adapted a living system theory to tourism

marketing that focuses on quality of life for all stakeholders. The results advocate for a triple line, triangular model that upholds the three dimensions of sustainability, economic viability and social equity and environmental protection. Hsu et al. (2005) highlight the significance of taking current tourism images into perspective when formulating marketing plans and strategies as it is these images that will contribute to tourists' decision and selection on where to travel, rather than factual information.

Jamal and Getz (1996) have noted that emphasis has been placed on the importance of tourism destination planning and marketing. However, little attention has been placed on the implementation of marketing strategies and marketing effectiveness. This study seeks to address that gap.

2.5.1 Marketing Strategies and Concepts

Kotler (2003) defines marketing concept as a process of achieving organizational goals by determining needs and wants of target markets and ensuring delivery of the desired satisfaction more effectively and efficiently than competitors do. For the purpose of this study, marketing concept and strategy will be used interchangeably.

2.5.1.1 Marketing Mix

These are a set of controllable, tactical marketing tools that the company blends to produce the response it wants in the target market. Kotler (1994) defines the 4p's as the original elements of the marketing mix that are presented as fundamental parts for structuring a marketing strategy. McCathy classified these tools into four broad groups that he called the four Ps of marketing: product, price, place and promotion. Morrison (2002) introduced the 8 Ps of hospitality and travel marketing; product, partnership, people, packaging, programming, place, promotion and pricing as well as how each is integrated in the marketing plan. Gronroos (1999) maintains that the marketing mix model, in almost all the western world, is widely considered the general marketing model.

The 8Ps are the parameters that the marketing manager can control given the internal and external constraints of the marketing environment. Ecotourism businesses should be in a position to manage the basic elements of the

marketing mix to attract new customers. The marketing mix also includes consideration for marketing factors specific to the tourism industry (i.e., programming, people, and partnership). Consideration for these factors allows you to provide greater definition of the ecotourism experience offered and market these experiences for business success. The marketing mix elements; 8 Ps of hospitality and travel marketing introduced by Morrison (2002) are discussed. For the purpose of this study, packaging will be integrated with product as one element and 7 Ps are presented as follows:

Product. Product refers to a combination of goods and services that are aimed at satisfying the needs of the target market.

Price. Pricing is considered one of the most important elements of the marketing mix as it contributes in generating turnover for the organization. It is the amount of money a customer pays for a product or service.

Place. It is concerned with how an organization will distribute the product or service to the end user.

Promotion. Activities that communicate the product's attractiveness to persuade customers to buy it. These include advertising, personal selling, public relations and sales promotion.

The marketing mix also includes consideration for marketing factors specific to the tourism industry and the four additional Ps: programming, people, packaging and partnership were suggested (Morrison, 2002).

People: Hospitality and Tourism is a people-oriented business and so consumers expect a distinctive experience from their participation. A trained and motivated workforce can make a big difference in the overall customer satisfaction.

Partnership: Ecotourism operations willing to expand or open a new business without resources to do so might find partnerships a viable option as interdependence between stakeholders is recognized. Options exist in delivering ecotourism opportunities and they depend on the size and structure of the ecotourism business. Private partnerships consist of ecotourism operators pooling resources to offer package deals. For example, a local farmer might provide unique

tour services of its pastures, undeveloped sites and local produce. The farmer would partner with a local restaurant or caterer to provide a barbecue at the end of the tour.

Programming; Programming focuses on the activities the organization implements to establish its uniqueness and inspire ecotourist participation in ecotourism offerings. Programming options include special activities, themed events or educational programs.

These marketing mix elements provide insight into a detailed consideration required for developing ecotourism marketing strategies.

2.5.1.2 Relationship Marketing

Kotler, (2003) maintains that relationship marketing has the aim of building mutually satisfying long-term relations with key parties like customers, suppliers and distributors in order to earn and retain their business. It helps build strong economic, technical and social ties among parties. In relationship marketing, variables such as loyalty, attachment, commitment and trust are crucial.

Hann et al., (2002) highlight that marketing capability attempts to capture a company's ability to market and sell products effectively and efficiently, and achieve marketing performance. To achieve competitive advantage, ecotourism businesses should make the most effective use of marketing capability and develop good relationship marketing resources and skills (Jaafar and Abdul Azizi, 2005; Chew et al., 2008). Organizations should focus on customer relations to be able to meet with customer demand (Hughes, 2003).

2.5.1.3 Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning

Marketing strategy is built on Segmentation, Targeting and positioning (STP). It is therefore important that destination stakeholders identify different needs and groups in the market place and target them so as to offer guaranteed satisfaction. In order to be able to differentiate their offerings, marketers must select and communicate an effective positioning. A positioning of the product offering will further enable the target market to recognize the company's distinctiveness and image.

McDonald, (1998) states that market segmentation consists of dividing customers or potential customers in a market into different groups

called segments, within which they have similar requirements that can be satisfied by a different mix of marketing strategies for each group.

Segmentation is a marketing strategy that helps destination stakeholders to effectively market a destination. The marketer cannot satisfy everyone in a market, so he decides which segments present the greatest opportunity as target markets and capitalizes on them. Ries and Trout, (1981) maintain that a good positioning helps rationalize the decision-making process by letting the customer link key attributes to that place. Market segmentation can be applied by destination stakeholders to understand the ways in which tourists to a destination can be most effectively classified. It is about channeling resources towards potential customers who are most likely to be persuaded to visit the destination and who fit the profile of the 'type' of customer the destination wants to attract. Mazanec (1992) addressed the value of characteristics such as geographic, demographic, psychographic, behavioral and lifestyle and indicate that a marketing strategy will fail if segments are not described using these characteristics. In the tourism industry, market segmentation has been applied to overcome the issues of tourist heterogeneity.

2.5.1.4 Differentiation and Cost Leadership

Differentiation is the process of adding a set of meaningful and valued differences to distinguish the company's offering from competitors' offering (Kotler, 2003). Furthermore, Porter (1980) identifies differentiation and cost leadership as two types of competitive advantage. Hence, different organizations view their environments in different ways, causing them to adopt different strategies.

Wu C. S. et al. (2010) undertook an empirical study that affirms that the differentiation strategy is the best competitive marketing strategy because it focuses on the allocation of specific and limited resources and capabilities toward sustainable competitive advantage. A questionnaire was administered on 11 tourist hotel managers and the findings of the study offer suggestions to marketing practitioners to increase their ability to concentrate on different aspects in their decision-making process so as to capture synergy.

2.5.1.5 Communication Strategy

According to Neilson Media, (2007) newspapers, televisions, magazines and radios are considered more trustworthy than online forms of advertising. Communicating effectively with customers and prospects is an essential marketing capability associated with customer value delivery (McKee et al. 1992). The marketing literature suggests that communications capabilities are built upon fundamental marketing activities such as advertising, social media participation, sponsorship, public relations, and corporate image management (Aaker 1996, 2008).

McKee et al. (1992) further highlights that communicating the benefits of the firm's new products and services to potential customers, reminding current users of the product about product benefits and availability, and reinforcing the purchase decision to reduce cognitive dissonance are essential skills that firms must have in order to possess a strong marketing communications capability.

2.5.1.6 Word of Mouth (WOM) Strategy

Balakrishnan, (2009) citing (Future Brands, 2006) maintain that tourists prefer word-of-mouth (WOM) to choose destinations and once chosen, web-based resources are used to narrow the itinerary. Word-of-mouth is considered an important strategy to build brand image.

2.5.1.7 Destination Branding

According to Tsiotsou and Ratten, (2010) branding is a strategy used to differentiate products and companies, and to build economic value for both the consumer and the brand owner. Destination Branding provides a framework for managing the image of a place and it is an important component of destination marketing (Ryan and Silvanto, 2009). It is a strategy that Morgan et al., (2003) emphasizes as a powerful weapon faced with increased competition, product parity and substitutability posing a challenge for contemporary marketing managers. Tourists perceive the destination as a brand comprising of a collection of suppliers and services. Before visiting they develop an image about destinations based on previous experience, word of mouth, press reports, advertising and common beliefs (Chon 1991, 1992; Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997).

Baker and Cameron, (2008) emphasize that branding is a critical success factor in the development of effective tourism strategies and plans.

(Ryan and Silvano, 2009: 306) note that “it is a venue’s reputation and acclaim – in other words, its brand - that has the power to attract visitors and the Dollars, Euros, Yen and other currencies they have to spend”. Kotler et al., 1999 concur with others and maintain that branding is an important component of effective destination marketing and serves to provide a solid framework for managing the image of a place.

2.6 Related Research

Henkel et al., (2006) point out that in the tourism industry, perception of a tourist destination are critical to its image. They maintain that image can either be a mental image of a product created by a marketing department or an association image of a product that is developed by the consumer. They caution tourism destinations to be careful about their image so the perception they have of themselves is not different from the way potential travelers perceive them. The study examines the perception of international visitors and Thai residents on the image of Thailand as a tourist destination. Both were surveyed to determine their perceptions of Thailand’s image and the results of the study found that for both Thai residents and international visitors, cultural sight-seeing, friendly people and food were significantly important when thinking of Thailand as a tourist destination. However, international tourists felt that night life and entertainment were significantly more important than as was perceived by Thai residents.

Chapman (1995) surveyed park visitors to state forests in New South Wales; Australia. He divided the visitors all of whom were assumed to be ecotourists into groups reflective of their primary motivation. About half of the surveyed park visitors were classified as motivated by nature involvement (54%), followed by personal development (19%), relaxation (19%) and social activity (8%). He attempts to categorise ecotourists based on mutually exclusive motivational factors. The results suggest that tourists, including ecotourists, travel for multiple overlapping reasons. McCartney et al., (2009) conducted a study to assess Macau as a destination image. They suggest the need for a strategic focus on alignment between attributes that attract and those that are promoted which could lead to maximum use of promotional resources which actually motivate travel.

Heung et al., (2001) conducted a study with 406 Japanese leisure travelers to Hong Kong in order to identify the relative importance of vacation motives as perceived by Japanese travelers and also to examine the significant differences in the vacation factors, socio-demographic variables and travelling characteristics. They highlight that understanding consumer travel decision-making and choice of destination helps in developing appropriate marketing strategies. The results of the study show that ‘enjoying holidays’ is the most important vacation motive. Furthermore, five vacation factors were derived: ‘benefits sought’, ‘attractions and climate’, ‘cosmopolitan city’, ‘exploration’ and ‘dream fulfilment’. A relationship between vacation factors among socio-demographic and travelling characteristics were identified.

Lindberg (1991) provides a typology of nature-based/ecotourist types as follows:

- 1) Hard-core – scientific researchers or members of tours specifically designed for education, environmental restoration or similar purposes
- 2) Dedicated – People who take trips specifically to see protected areas and want to understand local natural and cultural history
- 3) Mainstream – People who visit the Amazon, the Rwandan, Gorilla Park or other such destination primarily to take an unusual trip
- 4) Casual – People who partake of nature incidentally such as through a day trip during a broader vacation. He further highlights that actors in the ecotourism system are numerous involving:
 - i) Visitors
 - ii) Natural areas and their managers (Public and private)
 - iii) Businesses–local businesses, hotels and other accommodation providers and restaurants
 - iv) Government and its role of natural area management
 - v) Non-Governmental Organizations such as environmental and rural development NGOs.

Antoine and Gaston (1996) conducted a study to examine the emergence of the ‘soft ecotourism’ market and measure the extent of familiarity with ecotourism and the willingness of resort travelers to substitute partially or totally their

vacation with an ecotourism experience, education, income and age are positively associated with ecotourism. However, women and singles were found to be more in favor of a substitution to ecotourism. The study indicates that there is confusion as to what constitutes ecotourism and the authors suggest offering ecotourism education by tourism agencies to their potential clients.

Awatefe, (2004) studied resources and destinations in Nigeria considered important for tourism and compares foreign and domestic Nigerian tourists in product choice and travel motivations from a randomly selected group of 886 tourists, sampled in 7 destinations. Results revealed that nature/ecotourists and beach/water resorts as most valued by domestic tourists while foreign tourists attached higher significance to cultural/heritage and historic tourism. Chi-square results further revealed significant differences between domestic and foreign tourists in the structure of travel motivations and activities.

Matzler and Siller, (2003) found out that the youth travel market is an important market segment in terms of size and rates. However, youth travelers were found to differ in their travel motivations from other market segments and suggest that in order to attract and satisfy youth travelers, it is important to match their travel motivations with their perceptions of destinations. An analytical tool is presented that forms the basis for the formulation of marketing strategies.

2.7 Literature Review Summary

The review of literature shows that the concept of ecotourism, motivation push and pull factors and the role and significance of marketing strategies in the ecotourism sector have been studied in many countries, but with more focus on the hotel industry and cultural heritage sites. For those studies addressing motivation push and pull factors, marketing strategies, theories, and promotions of ecotourism enterprises, there is little focus on Thailand and Botswana. Table 2.1 is a summary of the literature review on marketing and ecotourism.

Table 2.1 Summary of Literature Review

Author	Purpose of study	Findings
Chhabra D. (2008)	Tests a sustainable marketing protocol for heritage tourism institutions (museums) in the U.S.A	Offers suggestions on how museum marketing plans could include sustainable elements and become part of a sustainable heritage paradigm
Gossling (2000)	Investigates sustainable development in Developing countries	Suggests that ecotourism causes minimum threat to the societies in which it is found and tends to support local communities by means of jobs and income
Egbali N. et al. (2011)	Investigating Challenges & Development of Rural Tourism – Case study of Rural Semnan Province, Iran	Rural tourism development is influenced by marketing and promotions, rural infrastructure and cultural factors
King, J (2006)	Examines ecotourism and sustainable tourism marketing	Concludes that DMOs should re-invent themselves by focusing more on preparing customer-focused holiday experiences through ‘Life-style marketing’
Mehmetoglu (2007)	Examines the relationship between trip motives and importance placed on nature in choosing a destination	Findings indicate that two trip motives of ‘Novelty and Learning’ and ‘everyday life’ significantly influence importance attributed to nature
Kontogeogopoulos (2004)	Determine the difference between conventional tourism and ecotourism in Thailand	Findings indicated that they are more of ‘symbolic partners’ than of ‘conflicting paradigms’

Author	Purpose of study	Findings
Henkel (2006)	Examine perceptions of international visitors and Thai residents	International visitors and Thai residents felt cultural sight-seeing, friendly people and food were significantly important when thinking of Thailand as a tourist destination
Chapman (1995)	Surveyed park visitors to State Forests in Australia in order to segment them	Findings enabled the classification of the ecotourists based on exclusive motivational factors
Hanqin & Lam (1999)	The study suggests that there is a significant relationship between travel motivations and social demographic factors.	The results indicate that the importance of push and pull factors in motivating Chinese travelers can be different from that found in other studies
Jenkins, O. H. (1999)	Argues that to provide valid image research, a preliminary phase of qualitative research is important in order to distil the constructs relevant to the population being studied	Proposes the use of construct elicitation techniques that include the visual aspect of image, such as photo-elicitation
Manwa A. H. (2007)	Suggests cultural tourism market as a complimentary attraction to domestic tourists in the case of Zimbabwe	Economic and social conditions in a country have a strong influence on growth of domestic tourism There is need for capacity building in frontline personnel through training programs in order to meet customer needs

Author	Purpose of study	Findings
McCartney et al. (2009)	The study analyzes image attributes that motivate travel to destinations	Suggests a focus on the alignment between attributes that attract and those promoted which in turn could lead to maximum use of promotional resources that motivates travel
Pan and Ryan (2007)	The study reports on visitor motivations and determinants of satisfaction at Pirongia Forest Park in New Zealand	Highlight the importance of exploring motivation factors that enhance decision to visit, subsequently leading to the development of an effective marketing strategy and sustainable management plan of a destination. Motivations are advocated for as suitable for segment differentiation.
Ridge and Perry (1998)	Focuses on national marketing strategies in international travel and tourism with reference to Germany and the United Kingdom	Developing balanced strategic marketing and distribution approaches positions a nation's travel and tourism market in overseas markets
Wu C. S. et al. (2010)	Competitive Marketing Strategies Decision-Making Based on Marketing Resources and Capabilities: Evidence from the Hospitality Industry in Taiwan	The empirical study affirms that the differentiation strategy is the best competitive marketing strategy because it focuses on the allocation of specific and limited resources and capabilities toward sustainable competitive advantage

Author	Purpose of study	Findings
Crompton (1979)	To highlight the two dimensions of ‘cognitive’ and ‘affective’ in destination image research	Destination image found to be a vital aspect in effective tourism development and destination marketing
Muri and Sagesser (2003)	To assess the potential of VFR as an independent travel group	Findings are that one third of the Swiss VFR travelers use commercial accommodation and less duration of holidays
You and O’Leary (2000)	Cross-cultural comparison of travel push and pull factors for United Kingdom and Japan	Travelers from United Kingdom and Japan have different travel motives and benefit-seeking patterns and this was found to have implications for Destination Marketing Organizations

This study will provide an empirical analysis of the ecotourism industry in Thailand and Botswana and the marketing strategies used and offer alternatives on best practice strategies that can be used by ecotourism business marketers to gain competitive advantage over their competitors in order to realize above-average returns while maintaining sustainability.

2.8 Study factors

The aim and objectives of this study were to examine key marketing strategies and determine their significance in the ecotourism sector. Implications of image perceptions and destination decision making attributes on marketing strategies have been discussed. The following study factors and variables were explored:

- Socio-demographic characteristics of tourists
- Travel motivations and characteristics
- Perceptions on importance levels of destination image attributes

- Factors influencing destination choice
- Examination of marketing strategies in ecotourism.
- Importance level of Marketing Mix elements: The eight (8) marketing mix elements (Product, price, place, people, promotion, partnership and programming).

2.9 Study Variables

Independent Variables:

- **Socio-demographic characteristics of tourists** such as gender, age marital status, nationality, level of education, occupation and monthly income.

Dependent Variables:

- **Travel motivations and characteristics** such as purpose of visit, travel party, total expenditure and frequency of visit
- **Perceptions on importance levels of destination image attributes:** Land of sun, sand and sea, friendly local people, pleasant weather and climate, beautiful landscapes and scenery, rich cultural heritage, accessibility, budget tourism destination, unique cuisine etc
- **Factors influencing destination choice:** Good cultural experiences, visiting national parks and nature reserves, affordable lodging, environmental conservation, Beach tourism and quality of public transport.
- **Outcome Variables:** Marketing strategies for Thailand and Botswana.

Conceptual Research Framework

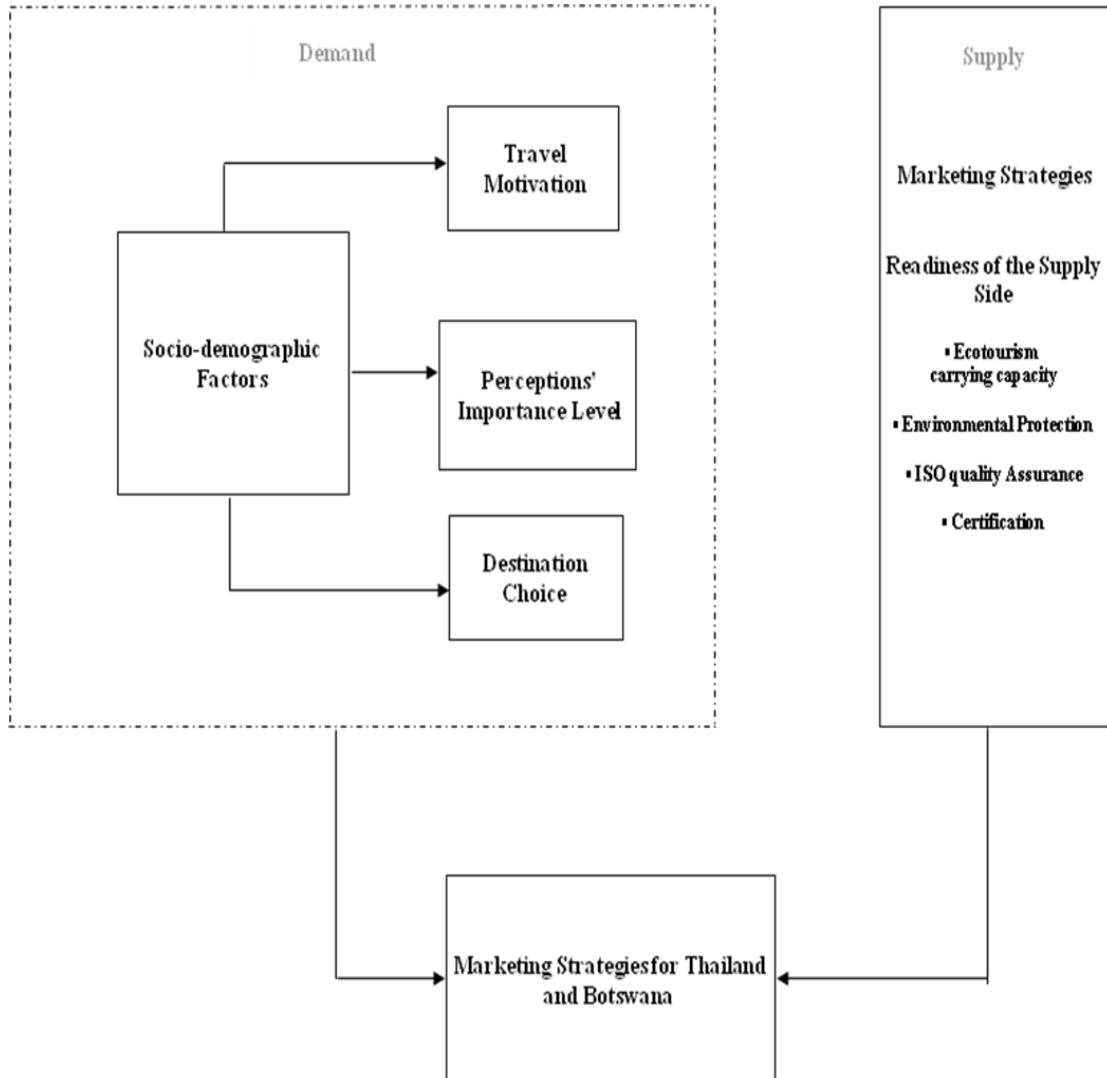


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Research Framework

The conceptual research framework applied in the study aims to examine the demand and supply factors in ecotourism by studying the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics, travel motivations, perceptions on importance level of tourism destination attributes. It is important that ecotourism marketers identify and explore tourists' motivations for travel that lead to a decision to visit and their perceptions of tourist attractions and attributes in order to be in a

position to employ effective and efficient marketing strategies and sustainable marketing plans.

The conceptual research framework further supports the contention that the relationship between factors has an influence on destination choice and play an important role in shaping a tourist's motivations, assisting them to make a destination choice (Keating and Kiz, 2008). The perceptions tourists hold of ecotourism attractions and destination image attributes influence their destination choice and these have implications for marketing and destination repositioning (McCartney et al. 2008). Oppermann (1996) noted that few tourism destinations are actively trying to understand their current visitors in order to find ways of effectively marketing to them. However, he further highlights that in marketing research, it is less expensive to re-attract previous customers than to acquire new ones.

Tourism destinations must be careful about their image and ensure the perception they have is aligned to that of their potential customers. Pan and Chris (2007) report on visitor motivations and satisfaction. However, they suggest that 'pull' factors are better predictors of overall satisfaction than motivational 'push' factors. Since ecotourists tend to choose destinations which are believed to fulfil their internal needs, measuring satisfaction will help destination marketers to adjust and provide the desired quality of products and services. However, the market readiness of the supply sector also is crucial. The framework addresses important aspects in the supply side like carrying capacity, environmental conservation issues, ISO standards and Certification to be in compliance with demand.

Marketing strategies, if well implemented, tend to have an influence on customer (visitor) satisfaction. The ecotourism sector has experienced a rapid growth as regards volume of sales and the conglomeration of attractions both in Thailand and Botswana. A critical examination of marketing strategies by businesses and tourists' perceptions, factors influencing destination choices will determine what appropriate measures to execute in order to satisfactorily meet customers' needs and realize sustainable growth in the ecotourism sector. The roles of government in the ecotourism sector in both countries will also be examined to determine the extent of their involvement in ecotourism marketing and development.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Discussions of a qualitative and quantitative methodology used in this study contribute towards the development of study objectives and form the basis for discussion in this document.

3.1 Mixed Methods Research

The exploratory and empirical methodological approach employed in this study combines various qualitative and quantitative sources of data collected over two month period of fieldwork from May to June 2012. Creswell, (2009) highlights three research designs being qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. He distinguishes them in terms of qualitative using words and open-ended questions against quantitative and its use of numbers and close-ended questions. The mixed methods research, in essence, is an approach that employs both qualitative and quantitative methods in a study.

3.2 Sample Group

Key informants and sample population are divided into three sample groups as follows:

1. International tourists who visited Southern Thailand (Phuket and Songkhla Provinces) during the time of study.
2. Tourism Government officials at Tourism Authority Thailand (TAT; Southern Office) and the Botswana Tourism Authority and the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism. The sample group was selected in order to share information on their understanding of marketing strategies employed in the ecotourism sector, ecotourism demand factors, preferred destination image attributes, role of government in ecotourism development and the related challenges and opportunities. A purposeful sampling procedure was used to select key informants in positions of authority from the Tourism Boards with a minimum of two years work

experience and whose senior management and administrative positions in their organizations allow them to speak freely. They were believed to have adequate knowledge on ecotourism development and marketing strategies in Southern Thailand and Northern Botswana.

Four senior officials were selected, two senior representatives in each country; two in Botswana and two in Thailand given their expertise and level of understanding. Patton, (1980) highlights that purposive sampling involves careful selection of subjects who can provide rich information required by the study. A formal invitation for participation in the survey was done through the IMBA Office.

3. Public and private ecotourism managers and marketing personnel. Convenience sampling employed on the basis that it was difficult to arrange with them bearing in mind their demanding and busy schedules. However, information was derived mostly from secondary data sources.

The table below shows a summary of the composition of the respondents as per the sample group information above.

Table 3.1 Sample Group Composition

Sample Group	Sample size	Sampling method	Data collection tools
1. International tourists visiting Southern Thailand during the time of study	399	Taro Yamane (1973)	Questionnaire
2. Tourism Government officials (TAT and BTO)	4	Purposive sampling	Interviews
3. Public and private ecotourism companies	2	Convenient sampling	Secondary data
Total:	405		

3.3 Sampling size and method

According to Thailand Tourism Authority (TAT) International Public Relations Division, Hat Yai District which is the main gateway to Songkhla Province, 1,39 million visitors are received per year inclusive of 0.79 million domestic visitors. Phuket receives 3 million visitors per year (Tourism Authority of Thailand, Phuket Office). Since the questionnaire survey was concerned with international tourists, domestic tourists were excluded as well as international tourists in Botswana as a result that perceptions and perspectives of the international tourists in Southern Thailand will be generalized and applied in the case of Botswana. The sample size employed is on the basis of the total number of tourists in Phuket given their large numbers. The study applied Taro Yamane (1973) formula that allows the error of sampling at 0.05 to determine the sample size as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} = \frac{250,000}{1 + 250,000 \times (0.05)^2} = 399.36$$

n = 399

The sample size, therefore, is 399.36

where: n = Size of the sample group

N = Size of the target population

e = the level of precision at the rate of ($\pm 5\%$).

Thus, the sample size was 400.

3.4 Research Methods

The method of data collection for this study is both Primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected by the researcher using in-depth interviews and self-administered questionnaires. Burns (2000) refers to secondary data as information collected from other sources that were not specifically created for the particular study in question, such as company websites, research reports or annual reports.

3.4.1 Primary Data

Primary data of this thesis was derived from two sources. The questionnaire survey of international tourists provides empirical data concerning factors that influence their choice of ecotourism destinations and motivations for travel as well as an examination of their perceptions of ecotourism attractions and marketing strategies. Telephone interviews were conducted with the relevant government officials like Tourism Authority Thailand (TAT) and the Botswana Tourism Organization (BTO) through the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism.

Questionnaires are used to measure how intensely people feel about issues in quantitative research (Silverman, 2002) and interviews, as noted by Bryman and Bell, (2003) are an effective solution to address specific areas of interest in qualitative research.

In this study, self-administered questionnaires with a mix of multiple choice questions were administered to international tourists. The questions focused more on respondents' demographic information and further examined key issues on ecotourism destination attributes, perspectives and suggestions on factors that determined choice of ecotourism destination and market segmentation, perceptions on the different marketing strategies used and their perceived levels of importance in ecotourism.

Telephone interviews were administered on national and government officials in both countries. These comprised of government officials at Tourism Authority of Thailand, the Botswana Tourism Authority and the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism. They were conducted in order to collect in-depth information about marketing strategy techniques, visitor education as well as promotion and pricing strategies used to attract international eco-tourists and to explore key issues arising from the questionnaires. Interviews have been chosen as a result of their reliability and potential to generate high response rate. These provide empirical information to analyze marketing strategies in the ecotourism sector for the cases of both Thailand and Botswana.

Furthermore, they provide in-depth information pertaining to participants' experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic. Often times, interviews

are coupled with other forms of data collection in order to provide the researcher with a well-rounded collection of information for analyses.

3.4.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data was examined to address ecotourism company officials, private tourism business owners and extensively reviewed literature from World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), World Tourism Organization (WTO) which provide tourism data from a global perspective. Country-specific ministries, and tourism institutions like Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Botswana Tourism Organization (BTO) and Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism also provided up-to-date invaluable information in the form of official reports; Government documents, research reports and other information related to ecotourism and ecotourism marketing. Additional data was collected mainly from internet sites and literature search and presented in the part of the introduction and forms part of theoretical framework.

3.4.3 Research Instruments

This research uses telephone interviews and a self-administered questionnaire in data collection. According to Creswell (2009), a mixed method is a concurrent triangular approach where qualitative and quantitative data is collected simultaneously, compared and analyzed to determine similarities and differences. The weight for both qualitative and quantitative is usually equal and their use help overcome shortcomings of the other thereby enhancing reliability, validity and generalizability (Burns, 2000). The questionnaire was developed after extensive review of ecotourism and market research literature (Oppermann, 1996; Pan and Ryan 2007; Meng et al. 2008; Mc Cartney et al. 2009) and it was adapted with some modifications to suit the objectives of the current study. Section 4 of the questionnaire was adapted with modifications from the study by Thongsumrit (2007) on Marketing Strategies for Spa Services in Thailand: The Case of Spa Services in Phuket.

The questionnaire for international tourists comprises of five sections as follows:

1. Travel patterns and motivations
2. Perceptions regarding tourism attributes in Southern Thailand
3. Factors that influenced the destination choice
4. Marketing mix variables and their importance level to tourists
5. Demographic information of Tourists

The interview guide has questions related to opinions and suggestions of government officials, ecotourism owners and marketing personnel on the supply factors in the ecotourism sector and it addressed objectives 3 and 4. The questionnaire addressed objective 1 and the demand factor of objective 2. It covers factors such as destination image attributes, perceptions and motivations, socio-demographic and trip characteristics which provided an understanding of tourist' travel decisions and factors influencing destination choice from both the demand and supply side.

3.5 Instruments Control

The following steps were taken to maintain data quality:

1. The questionnaire form was checked and verified by three experts to ensure that it covers the variables stated in the conceptual research framework.
2. The questionnaire was pre-tested with 30 international tourists before it is administered in order to determine its reliability.
3. Cronbach's Alpha was conducted for reliability analysis and internal consistency of the survey instrument.
4. The interview questions were pre-tested before they were officially administered to determine if there are flaws, limitations, or other weaknesses within the interview design. According to Kvale (2007), this allows the researcher to make necessary revisions prior to the implementation of the study. The pre-test should be conducted with participants that have similar interests as those that will participate in the implemented study.

3.6 Data Analysis

According to Shamoo and Resnik (2003), data analysis is the process of systematically applying statistical and or logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data. Since the study uses a mixed method approach, the two types of empirical materials were interpreted differently. For quantitative data, simple descriptive statistics were employed, which involves simple percentages, frequencies, mean and standard deviation to analyze the responses of the questionnaires. Furthermore, Independent sample T-tests and One Way Analysis of Variance (One Way ANOVA) to assess statistically significant differences between socio-demographic characteristics and tourism motivations, perception on importance levels of destination image attributes, destination choice and marketing mix variables. For qualitative data, the researcher extracted useful information by interpreting and summarizing the viewpoints of the interviewees according to the interview transcripts.

Content analysis was employed to analyze interviews in the qualitative dataset as well as written information including relevant tourism brochures in the secondary data in order to obtain more information about marketing strategies employed in the ecotourism sector. The researcher exercised care in ensuring that the three distinguishing characteristics of objectivity, systematization and quantification proposed by Kassarian, (1977) are employed in the analysis of data.

Primary data involving quantitative dataset was analyzed based on respondents' opinions using a five-point Likert scale as the response format with assigned values ranging from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5) and "Least Important" (1) to "Most Important" (5). According to Jaccard and Wan (1996), Likert scales are commonly used with internal procedures provided the scale item has, at least 5 and preferably 7 as this would allow for the retention of more data characteristics and greater versatility in analysis of statistics.

SPSS version 16.0 was used as an analysis tool to calculate descriptive statistics in numbers and percentages for the variables. Further analysis was employed using Independent sample T-tests and One Way Analysis of Variance (One Way ANOVA) to assess statistically significant differences between variables. For qualitative data, the researcher used content analysis.

3.7 Reliability and Validity

The questionnaire items were examined by three experts to ensure validity before being used in a pilot study. Content validity refers to the extent to which a measurement reflects the intended domain of content (Carmines and zeller, 1991). It is concerned with the question of what is being measured by the instrument.

Validity was further achieved by triangulation of data from many sources of evidence and having an interview protocol for all interviews. However, Du Plooy, (2002) argues that reliability and validity are closely related because a claim that a measure is valid implies that it is also reliable.

This study employed Cronbach's Alpha, one of the most commonly used reliability measures to test the reliability and internal consistency of several variables relating to tourism motivation; factors influencing choice of destination among tourists, importance levels on destination image perceptions and marketing strategies. The pilot test was done with 30 international tourists prior to official data collection.

Before the questionnaire was finalized, content and language revisions were made based on suggestions by pre-test experts, peers, and supervisors. The results of the computed alpha coefficient indicate that there is a perfect internal consistency with results ranging between .72 and .89. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) recommend the coefficient 0.70. The results showed that the questionnaire was reliable and valid as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Reliability Analysis

Factors	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
Perceptions on destination attributes	0.82	0.82	12
Factors influencing choice of destination	0.80	0.80	6
Marketing Mix	0.89	0.88	22

Table 3.2 (Continued)

Factors	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
Marketing Mix Clusters			
Product	0.72	0.71	6
Price	0.79	0.79	2
Place	0.89	0.89	2
Promotion	0.75	0.77	4
People	0.86	0.86	2

3.8 Measurement for Levels of Importance and Agreement

A five-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 'Least important' to 5 'Most important' was used to determine respondents' perceptions on level of importance for destination image attributes and Marketing Mix Elements.

Levels of importance were arranged into 5 levels with the interval of $5 - (1/5) = 0.80$. The intervals of mean scores and levels of importance were as follows:

5-point Likert Scale	Mean scores at interval of 0.80	Levels of Importance
5	Score 4.21 - 5.00	Most Important
4	Score 3.41 - 4.20	Important
3	Score 2.61 - 3.40	Neutral
2	Score 1.81 - 2.60	Unimportant
1	Score 1.00 - 1.80	Least Important

A five-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 'Strongly disagree' to 5 'Strongly agree' was used to determine respondents' level of agreement with factors that influenced their choice of Southern Thailand as a tourist destination.

Levels of Agreement were arranged into 5 levels with the interval of $5 - (1/5) = 0.80$. The intervals of mean scores and levels of agreement were as follows:

5-point Likert Scale	Mean scores at interval of 0.80	Levels of Importance
5	Score 4.21 - 5.00	Strongly Agree
4	Score 3.41 - 4.20	Agree
3	Score 2.61 - 3.40	Neutral
2	Score 1.81 - 2.60	Disagree
1	Score 1.00 - 1.80	Strongly Disagree

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings of the study obtained from a mixed method research employing both the quantitative and qualitative approach in examining marketing strategies in the ecotourism sector for Thailand and Botswana. The chapter has been divided into three sections including respondents' response rate, socio-demographic characteristics and presentation of results.

The questionnaire survey was conducted in Southern Thailand at Phuket and Songkla on 400 international tourists to examine the motivational factors influencing their selection of a tourist destination as a demand factor in ecotourism.

The questionnaire comprises of five sections with 18 questions. Section 1 has six questions on important travel characteristics of international tourists. Section 2 comprises of three questions on the perceptions on importance levels regarding destination image attributes (pull factors) in Southern Thailand. Section 3 has one question with six dimensions that seek to explore factors that influenced international tourists' decision to select Southern Thailand as a tourist destination.. Section 4 has one question with 22 marketing mix variables and their importance level to tourists. The questions in Section 5 are seven and they seek to explore the socio-demographic characteristics of international tourists.

The analysis of the qualitative data was derived from a semi-structured interview survey that was conducted with questions related to the opinions and suggestions of tourism board personnel and government official staff. Content analysis was applied on ecotourism business owners and marketing personnel in order to examine the supply factors in the ecotourism sector. Statistics were presented in terms of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Furthermore, analysis of the relationship between socio-demographic variables and other factors used T-test (Independent Sample Test) and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The data collection period was from April to May 2012.

The aim of this study was to examine the marketing strategies in the ecotourism sector and empirically analyze their effectiveness in the ecotourism sector through an exploration of the demand and supply theory. In order to fulfil the aim of the study, the following objectives were explored:

1. Explore the relationship between socio-demographic factors and tourism travel motivations, perception importance levels on destination image attributes and destination selection by international tourists.
2. Determine key ecotourism destination market segments that are in line with the increasing demands and opportunities in the ecotourism market place.
3. Examine key marketing strategies in the ecotourism sector of Thailand and Botswana.
4. Propose marketing strategy guidelines for Thailand and Botswana.

4.2 Response Rate

The study was conducted on international tourists who visited the study sites during the time of the survey. They were asked about their willingness to take part in the survey, and for those who complied, a pen and paper questionnaire was administered to them under the guidance of the main researcher. Four and forty six (446) questionnaires were distributed and only 400 were fully completed and considered suitable for research statistical analysis. 46 questionnaires could not be used as a result of missing values based on respondents' failure to complete some sections of the survey. The response rate was 89.69%.

4.3 Socio-Demographic profile of the international tourists

This section discusses information on socio-demographic variables of international tourists. Data presented in this chapter draws from Section Five of the questionnaire (see Appendix A). Table 4.1 reports the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and shows that 234 (58.5%) are male and 166 (41.5%) are female. A high percentage of the international tourists 146 (36.5%) are in the age range of 20-29 years followed by those between 30 and 39 years of age at 98

(24.5%). The most significant proportion of visitors to ecotourism attractions in Southern Thailand are aged in their twenties and late thirties. The middle-aged are not very well represented. However, they constitute a significant proportion.

Those over 60 years of age are a small percentage of 4.8% indicating that the senior travelers' propensity to travel to tourism destination in Southern Thailand is low as compared to that of the young and middle-aged travelers.

In terms of marital status, the majority of the respondents who visit Southern Thailand are single at 216 constituting 54.0% followed by married couples 165 at 41.3%. Widowers and divorcees constitute only a small percentage 4.8%. As expected, international tourists from the Asia Pacific region comprise the majority of respondents at 186; 46.5% as a result of proximity. For Europe, the pleasant weather and favorable climate position Thailand as a preferred destination of choice at 97 (24.3%) followed by the Oceania at 63 (15.8%). Europe and the Oceania are important sources of international visitors to ecotourism operations in Southern Thailand. These results reflect the inbound visitor markets reported by Thailand Tourism Authority (TAT, 2011)

The Americas and Africa constitute a small percentage at 31 (7.8%) and 23 (5.8 %) respectively. As regards educational achievement, visitors to Southern Thailand have a moderately high level of education with over half, 290 (72.5%) having attained Master Degree at 77 (19.3%), Bachelor Degree at 126 (31.5%) and Diploma qualification at 87 (21.8%). In terms of occupation, more than one third of the respondents are employees at 139 (34.8%) followed by business owners at 82 (20.5%). Government officers and students constitute a small percentage of travelers to Southern Thailand at 11.5% and 10.5% respectively.

The retired travelers and housewives constitute relatively lower numbers at 33 (8.3%). The majority of the respondents 125 (31.3%) had a monthly income between US\$ 1,001 and US\$ 3,000 followed by those earning Less than US\$ 1,000 at 70 (17.5%). Results further show that few respondents 66 (16.5%) earn a monthly income between US\$ 3,001 and US\$ 5,000 followed by those earning over US\$ 9,000 at 58 (14.5%).

The descriptive statistics indicate that the majority of international tourists travelling to Southern Thailand were single male respondents in the age range

between 20 – 29 years of age and most come from the Asia-Pacific region and Europe representing 46.5% and 24.3% respectively. They are mostly employees with the majority earning a monthly income level between US\$ 1, 001 and US\$ 3, 000.

The profile of the respondents shows diverse backgrounds giving rise to their different views on aspects and objectives of this study. People from different backgrounds and gender have different social experiences and expectations. In this study, there are more males compared to their female counterparts.

Table 4.1 Socio- demographic characteristics (N = 400)

Variable	Number (N = 400)	Percent (100)
Gender		
Male	234	58.5
Female	166	41.5
Age		
Below 20 years	22	5.5
20 -29 years	146	36.5
30 - 39 years	98	24.5
40 - 49 years	54	13.5
50 -59 years	61	15.3
Over 60 years	19	4.8
Marital Status		
Single	216	54.0
Married	165	41.3
Widowed	7	1.8
Divorced	12	3.0

Table 4.1 (Continued)

Variable	Number (N = 400)	Percent (100)
Nationality		
Asia Pacific	186	46.5
Africa	23	5.8
Americas	31	7.8
Europe	97	24.3
Oceania	63	15.8
Educational Level		
High School	103	25.8
Diploma	87	21.8
Bachelor Degree	126	31.5
Master Degree	77	19.3
PhD	7	1.8
Occupation		
Business Owner	82	20.5
House Wife	16	4.0
Government Officer	46	11.5
Student	42	10.5
Retired	17	4.3
Employee	139	34.8
Unemployed	15	3.8
Others	43	10.8
Monthly Income (USD)		
Less than 1, 000	70	17.5
1, 001 – 3, 000	125	31.3
3, 001 – 5, 000	66	16.5
5, 001 – 7, 000	38	9.5
7, 001 – 9, 000	43	10.8
Over 9, 000	58	14.5

4.4 Travel characteristics of the respondents.

1. **Purpose of visit** - The results indicate that the majority of the international tourists traveled for holiday and leisure at 319 (79.8%) followed by 29 (7.3%) who travelled in order to visit friends and relatives. 28 (7.0%) traveled for business and a small number of 9 (2.3%) travelled for ecotourism and culture. International tourists who travelled for official purposes constitute a small percentage of 1.3%.

2. **Travel Party** - The results show that the majority of international tourists 130 (32.5%) travelled with their family members followed by friends at 120 (30.0%) and as individuals travelling by themselves at 90 (22.5%). Few travelled for business purposes as Business Partners and Associates and Group Package Tours at 37 constituting (9.3%).

3. **Travel Motivation** – The majority of the respondents travelled for Holiday/Leisure and Relaxation at 189 (47.3%) followed by those travelling in order to explore a new place or attraction at 110 (27.5%). Most respondents 59 (14.8%) had a propensity to travel so as to experience a new culture and tradition. However, few respondents participated in nature and conservation at 6 (1.5%).

4. **Conservation Spending** – The majority of the respondents were willing to spend between 51- 100 US\$ at 146 (36.5%) and less than 50 US\$ on ecotourism conservation at 131 (32.8%). Only a few at 56 (14.0%) were willing to spend over 150 US\$.

5. **Length of stay** – Most of the tourists spent between 1 and 6 days in southern Thailand at 210 (52.6%) while 92 (23.0%) spent more than 11 days.

6. **Average Daily Expenditure** – The majority of the respondents had an average daily expenditure of less than 150 US\$ at 172 (43.0%) followed by those who spent between 151 – 200 US\$ at 104 (26.0%). 17.3% spent over 251 US\$.

7. **Source of Travel Information** – Internet was the most common source of travel information for the respondents at 213 (53.3%) followed by word of mouth (WOM) at 89 (22.3%). Few used Travel agents and Tour operators at 34 (8.5%). Magazines/Brochures and Travel and Tourism fairs were less frequently used at 20 (5.0%) and 30 (7.5%) respectively.

8. Frequency of visit – The majority of the international tourists had visited Southern Thailand before at 223 (55.8%) with 177 (44.3%) of them being first time visitors.

Overall, the results indicate very few international tourists travelled for ecotourism/nature and for official purposes. Of those travelling for Holiday/leisure, the majority come from the Asia Pacific region (46.5%) followed by Europe (24.3%) and Oceania (15.8%). Over half of these travelers have a minimum qualification at Diploma level. Furthermore, the majority are employees (34.8%) followed by business owners (20.5%) and government officers (11.5%). The majority of respondents are earning between US\$ 1,001 and US\$ 3, 000 (31.3%), followed by those earning less than US\$1, 000 at (17.5%) though there is a good balance in terms of representation on monthly income especially on those travelling for Holiday and leisure purposes. International tourists from the Asia Pacific constitute a large number (46.5%). The Americas and Africa constitute small numbers at (7.8%) and (5.8%) respectively. None of these two nationalities has undertaken travel for purposes of visiting friends and relatives. Most respondents have a propensity to travel for Holiday and leisure at nearly eighty percent (79.8%).

Table 4.2 shows the travel characteristics of the respondents.

Table 4.2 Travel characteristics

Variable	Frequency (N = 400)	Percent (100%)
Purpose of Visit		
Holiday/Leisure	319	79.8
Business	28	7.0
Ecotourism/Cultural Visit	9	2.3
Visiting Relatives/Friends	29	7.3
Official	5	1.3
Other	10	2.5

Table 4.2 (Continued)

Variable	Frequency (N = 400)	Percent (100%)
Travel Party		
By Yourself	90	22.5
Family	130	32.5
Friends	120	30.0
Business Partners/Associates	23	5.8
Group (Package Tour)	22	5.5
Others	15	3.8
Travel Motivation		
Exploring a new place or attraction	110	27.5
Experiencing a new culture and tradition	59	14.8
Holiday/Leisure and Relaxation	189	47.3
Learning new things and people	19	4.8
Participate in nature and conservation Activities	6	1.5
Looking for new experience and authenticity	17	4.3
Conservation Spending		
Less than 50 US\$	131	32.8
51 - 100 US\$	146	36.5
101 - 150 US\$	67	16.8
Over 150 US\$	56	14.0
Length of stay		
Less than 3 days	105	26.3
4 - 6 days	105	26.3
7 - 8 days	58	14.5
9 - 10 days	40	10.0
More than 11 days	92	23.0

Table 4.2 (Continued)

Variable	Frequency (N = 400)	Percent (100%)
Average Daily Expenditure		
less than 150 US\$	172	43.0
151 - 200 US\$	104	26.0
201 - 250 US\$	55	13.8
Over 251 US\$	69	17.3
Source of Travel Information		
Internet	213	53.3
Magazines/Brochures	20	5.0
Word of Mouth	89	22.3
Travel agent/tour Operator	34	8.5
Travel and Tourism fair	30	7.5
Others	14	3.5
Frequency of Visit		
Yes	223	55.8
No	177	44.3

4.5 Perceptions on levels of importance on Destination Image Attributes

International tourists' perceived importance on destination image attributes of Southern Thailand as a tourist destination were measured using a Five-Point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Least important to 5 = Most important.

Table 4.3 shows how the respondents rated importance levels of 12 destination image attributes in Southern Thailand; Phuket and Songkla. According to the scoring results, international tourists attach varying levels of importance to different destination image attributes. The mean score results are arranged in order of importance and they show that friendly people, with a mean score (mean = 4.42), Thailand as a land of sun, sea and sand (mean = 4.32), Beautiful landscapes and scenery (mean = 4.28) are the destination image attributes that tourists perceive as

most important when they select a destination. Pleasant weather and climate (mean = 4.20), Accessible; information on transport, restaurants, accommodation (mean = 4.10), Budget tourism destination (mean = 4.02), Unique cuisine (mean = 4.02), Rich cultural heritage (mean = 3.94), Beautiful architecture (mean = 3.57) and Perceive ecotourism as part of own heritage (mean = 3.53) were rated as important destination image attributes. Good place to do business (mean = 3.04) and Religious purpose (mean = 3.04), were found to be perceived as medium importance level destination attributes. Moreover, the total mean score on perceptions on levels of importance of destination image attributes was of importance level (mean = 3.87).

This information is crucial for Destination Marketing Organizations to enable them develop marketing strategies for the right target market. The results are important as they can guide in the development of marketing strategies for the different market segments.

Table 4.3 Mean Scores for Destination Image Attributes

perception on destination image attributes	Mean	SD
Land of sun, sea and sand	4.32	.76
Friendly local people	4.42	.70
Pleasant weather and climate	4.20	.76
Beautiful landscapes and scenery	4.28	.72
Rich cultural heritage	3.94	.90
Accessible (information on transport, restaurants, accommodation)	4.10	.75
Budget tourism destination	4.02	.89
Unique cuisine	4.02	.88
Good place to do business	3.04	1.30
Perceive ecotourism attractions as part of own heritage	3.53	1.04
Religious purposes	3.04	1.27
Beautiful architecture	3.57	1.06
Total	3.87	.55

4.6 Factors that influenced your choice of Southern Thailand as a tourist destination

The purpose of these questions is to examine the factors that influenced international tourists' decision in the choice of Southern Thailand as a tourist destination. A Five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree was used to determine the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the factors. **Table 4.4** shows the Levels of Agreement means in descending order indicating that the respondents were in full agreement with all the 6 factors as influential and important in determining their selection of Southern Thailand as a tourist destination. However, 'Beach Tourism' (mean = 4.14) was rated high and 'Visiting National Parks & Nature Reserves' (mean = 3.77) was rated low.

Table 4.4 Factors that influenced your choice of Southern Thailand as a tourist destination

	mean	SD
Good cultural experience	4.11	.75
Visiting National Parks & Nature Reserves	3.77	.90
Affordable lodging	4.03	.80
Environmental Conservation	3.78	.95
Beach Tourism	4.14	.84
Quality of Public transport	3.78	.97

4.7 Levels of importance of Marketing Mix variables and their influence on international tourists' destination choice

The Marketing mix variables were categorized into 7 Ps as discussed by Kotler et al., (2003) and (2008). Table 4.5 shows the results of the perceived levels of importance and the overall mean scores in descending order. The marketing mix elements of "People" (mean = 4.36), "Place & Physical Evidence" (mean = 4.31), and

“Price” (mean = 4.28) were found as the “most important” by international tourists in influencing their decision making in destination choice.

However, the marketing mix elements of “Product”, “Programming”, “Partnership” and “Promotion” were rated as “important”. The total mean score for the marketing mix variables was “important” level (mean = 4.08).

Table 4.5 Level of importance of Marketing Mix variables (N=400)

Marketing Mix Elements	mean	SD
Product (Packaging, Price, Promotion, Distribution)	4.00	.55
Price	4.28	.71
Place & Physical Evidence	4.31	.75
Promotion	3.83	.74
People	4.36	.69
Partnership	3.85	.81
Programming	3.94	.79
Total	4.08	.51

4.7.1 Product

The results (Table 4.6) show components of the Product element of the marketing mix variables. “Service Quality” was found the “most important” level influencing international tourists’ decision on destination choice. Product elements of “variety of Thai cuisine”, “attractive tour packages”, “variety of choice in tourism products”, “wildlife & nature reserves” and “historical sites and monuments” were found to be of “important” level. The total mean score for the product element of the marketing mix variables was “important” level (mean = 4.00).

Table 4.6 Level of importance of Marketing Mix variables (N=400) Product (Packaging, Price, Promotion, Distribution)

Product (Packaging, Price, Promotion, Distribution)	mean	SD
1. Service quality	4.34	.69
2. Attractive tour packages	3.98	.84
3. Variety of choice in tourism products	3.95	.77
4. Wildlife & Nature Reserves	3.94	.89
5. Historical sites & Monuments	3.76	.86
6. Variety of Thai Cuisine	4.02	.85
Total	4.00	.55

4.7.2 Price

The results (Table 4.7) show components of the Price element of the marketing mix variables. “Value for money” was found the “most important” level influencing international tourists’ decision on destination choice. The Price element of “availability of price range” was found to be of “important” level. The total mean score for the price element of the marketing mix variables was found “most important” level (mean = 4.28).

Table 4.7 Level of importance of Marketing Mix variables (N=400) Price

Price	mean	SD
1. Value for money	4.36	.76
2. Availability of price range	4.19	.78
Total	4.28	.71

4.7.3 Place & Physical Evidence

The results for Table 4.8 show components of the Place & Physical element of the marketing mix variables. Both were found the “most important” levels influencing international tourists’ decision on destination choice. The total mean score

for the place & physical element of the marketing mix variables was also found “most important” level (mean = 4.31).

Table 4.8 Level of importance of Marketing Mix variables (N=400) Place & Physical Evidence

Place & Physical Evidence	mean	SD
1. Guaranteed Safety & Security	4.35	.79
2. Sanitation & Cleanliness	4.27	.87
Total	4.31	.75

4.7.4 Promotion

The results (Table 4.9) show that all the components of the Promotion element of the marketing mix variable were found to be of “important” level influencing international tourists’ decision on destination choice. Moreover, the total mean score for the promotion element of the marketing mix variables was found at the level of “important” (mean = 3.83).

Table 4.9 Level of importance of Marketing Mix variables (N=400) Promotion

Promotion	mean	SD
1. Advertising (Tour package brochures, ecotourism products guide books, flyers, Pamphlets)	3.89	.91
2. Word of Mouth (Personal selling)	3.91	.89
3. Sales Promotions (Poster exhibitions)	3.64	.93
4. Website marketing (online sales, facebook marketing)	3.86	.96
Total	3.83	.74

4.7.5 People

The results show that the two components of the People element of the marketing mix variable; “Professionalism of staff” and “friendliness of staff” were

found to be of “most important” level in the influence on international tourists’ decision to make destination choices (Table 4.10). The total mean score for the people element of the marketing mix variables was also found at the level of “most important” (mean = 4.36).

Table 4.10 Level of importance of Marketing Mix variables (N=400) People

People	mean	SD
1. Professionalism of staff (Problem-solving ability)	4.28	.80
2. Friendliness of staff	4.45	.72
Total	4.36	.69

4.7.6 Partnership

Table 4.11 shows that the Partnership element of the marketing mix variables were found to be of “important” level in the influence on international tourists’ decision to make destination choices. The total mean score was “important level” (mean = 3.85) for the partnership element of the marketing mix variables.

Table 4.11 Level of importance of Marketing Mix variables (N=400) Partnership

Partnership	mean	SD
1. Networking between staff and customers, stakeholders	4.05	.89
2. Networking between staff and stakeholders	3.76	.98
3. Networking between customers and stakeholders	3.69	.97
4. Role of Tourism Boards	3.92	.92
Total	3.85	.81

4.7.7 Programming

The results show that the three components of the Programming element of the marketing mix variables were found to be of “important” level in the influence on international tourists’ decision to make destination choices (Table 4.12). The total mean score for the programming elements of the marketing mix variables was also found at the level of “important” (mean = 3.97).

Table 4.12 Level of importance of Marketing Mix variables (N=400) Programming

Programming	mean	SD
1. Guided tours for tourists	3.89	.89
2. Program itinerary for tour activities	3.98	.94
3. Environmental Conservation	3.94	.79
Total	3.97	.92

4.8 The relation of Socio-demographic characteristics and factors influencing destination choice

t-test and One Way ANOVA were applied at 0.05 significance level to find out the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and factors influencing destination choice.

4.8.1 The relation of factors influencing destination choice and Gender

Table 4.13 shows the results of a t-test analysis on the relationship between gender and factors influencing destination choice. No statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) was found between gender and all the six factors influencing destination choice. However, the results show that female tourists attach importance to good cultural experience (mean = 4.16), visiting national parks and nature reserves (mean = 3.83), affordable lodging (mean = 4.10) and environmental conservation (mean = 3.90) compared to their male counterparts. This has implications for marketing.

Table 4.13 The relation of factors influencing destination choice and gender

Factors Influencing Destination Choice	gender				t	p-value
	Male (n = 234)		Female (n = 166)			
	\bar{X}	S.D.	\bar{X}	S.D.		
Good cultural experience	4.07	.74	4.16	.75	-1.25	.610
Visiting National Parks & Nature Reserves	3.74	.88	3.83	.92	-.10	.841
Affordable Lodging	3.98	.80	4.10	.80	-1.45	.289
Environmental Conservation	3.70	.96	3.90	.92	-2.12	.274
Beach Tourism	4.15	.85	4.13	.83	.15	.676
Quality of Public Transport	3.69	.98	3.10	.93	-2.22	.153

Remark:

- 1) t- test was performed to determine statistically significant differences between groups
- 2) * indicates statistically significant differences between groups (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$)

4.8.2 The Relation of age and factors influencing destination choice

Table 4.14 shows the results of One Way ANOVA test analysis on the relationship between age and factors influencing destination choice. No statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) was found between age and any of the factors influencing destination image being “good cultural experience,” “visiting national parks & nature reserves,” “affordable lodging,” “beach tourism” and “quality of public transport”.

Table 4.14 The Relation of age and factors influencing destination choice

Destination Choice	Source	ANOVA				
		SS	df	MS	F	P
Good Cultural Experience	Between Groups	1.418	5	0.284	0.506	0.772
	Within Groups	220.959	394	0.561		
	Total	222.378	399			
Visiting National Parks and Nature Reserves	Between Groups	3.800	5	0.760	0.940	0.455
	Within Groups	318.497	394	0.808		
	Total	322.297	399			
Affordable Lodging	Between Groups	2.040	5	0.408	0.631	0.676
	Within Groups	254.658	394	0.646		
	Total	256.698	399			
Environmental Conservation	Between Groups	1.969	5	0.394	0.436	0.823
	Within Groups	355.541	394	0.902		
	Total	357.510	399			
Beach Tourism	Between Groups	1.683	5	0.337	0.473	0.797
	Within Groups	280.477	394	0.712		
	Total	282.160	399			
Quality of Public Transport	Between Groups	3.567	5	0.713	0.759	0.580
	Within Groups	370.511	394	0.940		
	Total	374.077	399			

Remark:

- 1) ANOVA test was performed to determine statistically significant differences between groups
- 2) *indicates statistically significant differences between groups (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$)

4.8.3 Factors influencing destination choice and marital status

Table 4.15 shows the results of One Way ANOVA test analysis on the relationship between marital status and factors influencing destination choice. There was no statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) found in good cultural experience, visiting national parks & nature reserves, affordable lodging, environmental conservation, beach tourism and quality of public transport.

Table 4.15 The Relation of marital status and factors influencing destination Choice

Destination Choice		ANOVA				
		Source	SS	df	MS	F
Good Cultural Experience	Between Groups	1.018	3	0.339	0.607	0.611
	Within Groups	221.360	396	0.559		
	Total	222.378	399			
Visiting National Parks and Nature Reserves	Between Groups	4.149	3	1.383	1.721	0.162
	Within Groups	318.148	396	0.803		
	Total	322.298	399			
Affordable Lodging	Between Groups	.345	3	0.115	0.178	0.912
	Within Groups	256.353	396	0.647		
	Total	256.697	399			
Environmental Conservation	Between Groups	4.637	3	1.546	1.734	0.159
	Within Groups	352.873	396	0.891		
	Total	357.510	399			
Beach Tourism	Between Groups	2.181	3	0.727	1.028	0.380
	Within Groups	279.979	396	0.707		
	Total	282.160	399			

Table 4.15 (Continued)**Marital Status**

Destination Choice	Source	ANOVA				
		SS	df	MS	F	P
Quality of Public Transport	Between Groups	5.968	3	1.989	2.140	0.095
	Within Groups	368.109	396	0.930		

Remark:

- 1) ANOVA test was performed to determine statistically significant differences between groups
- 2) * indicates statistically significant differences between groups (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$)

4.8.4 Factors influencing destination choice and nationality

Table 4.16 shows the level of agreement to factors influencing destination choice among international tourists from different nationalities. The majority of the respondents from the Asia Pacific region agree with the statement that good cultural experience has had an influence on their selection of destination choice. All the other nationalities disagree with the statement except tourists from Europe who consider good cultural experience not to have had any influence in their selection of destination choice.

The majority of respondents from the Asia Pacific have rated visiting national parks and nature reserves as an important factor that has contributed to their selection of destination. A high percentage of tourists from the Oceania, on the other hand, strongly disagree with the statement. Furthermore, tourists from the Oceania consider affordable lodging an important factor in their choice of destination followed by the Europeans. The Americans and Africans strongly disagree with environmental conservation having any influence with their selection of destination. Tourists from the Asia Pacific have the same affluence towards factors influencing destination choice as they either agree or disagree with each of the six factors. In all of the six factors, the majority have either selected 'Neither agree nor disagree' to the statements. For Beach tourism, the Americans have rated it higher than those from the Asian Pacific. Africans strongly disagree with quality of public transport factor as

having an influence in their selection of a tourist destination. Understanding why people travel and what factors influence their behavioral intention in choosing a holiday destination are important for tourism planners and marketers.

Table 4.16 shows the results of One Way ANOVA test analysis on the relationship between nationality and factors influencing destination choice. Statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) was found in “good cultural experience,” “visiting national parks & nature reserves,” “affordable lodging,” “environmental conservation” and “quality of public transport”. International tourists from different nationalities were found to attach different degrees of importance to the above-mentioned criteria. However, no statistically significant relationship was found with ‘beach tourism’.

Table 4.16 The Relation between nationality and factors influencing destination choice

Nationality		ANOVA				
		Source	SS	df	MS	F
Good Cultural Experience	Between Groups	11.342	4	2.836	5.307	0.000*
	Within Groups	211.035	395	0.534		
	Total	222.377	399			
Visiting National Parks and Nature Reserves	Between Groups	17.528	4	4.382	5.680	0.000*
	Within Groups	304.769	395	0.772		
	Total	322.298	399			
Affordable Lodging	Between Groups	12.668	4	3.167	5.126	0.000*
	Within Groups	244.030	395	0.618		
	Total	256.698	399			

Table 4.16 (Continued)

Nationality		ANOVA				
		Source	SS	df	MS	F
Environmental Conservation	Between Groups	37.095	4	9.274	11.433	0.000**
	Within Groups	320.415	395	0.811		
	Total	357.510	399			
Beach Tourism	Between Groups	5.154	4	1.288	1.837	0.121
	Within Groups	277.006	395	0.701		
	Total	282.160	399			
Quality of Public Transport	Between Groups	45.583	4	11.396	13.703	0.000**
	Within Groups	328.495	395	0.832		
	Total	374.077	399			

Remark:

- 1) ANOVA test was performed to determine statistically significant differences between groups
- 2) * indicates statistically significant differences between groups (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$)

4.8.5 The relation of level of education and factors influencing destination choice

Table 4.17 shows the results of One Way ANOVA test analysis on the relationship between education and factors influencing destination choice. Statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) was found in “quality of public transport”. International tourists with different educational qualifications were found to attach different degrees of importance to “education”. No statistically significant relationship was found between education and the importance attached to “good cultural experience,” “visiting National parks & nature reserves,” “affordable lodging” “environmental conservation” and ‘beach tourism;’.

Table 4.17 The relation of level of education and factors influencing destination choice**Level of Education**

		ANOVA				
Destination Choice	Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Good Cultural Experience	Between Groups	1.802	4	0.451	0.807	0.521
	Within Groups	220.575	395	0.558		
	Total	222.378	399			
Visiting National Parks and Nature Reserves	Between Groups	4.653	4	1.163	1.447	0.218
	Within Groups	317.644	395	0.804		
	Total	322.297	399			
Affordable Lodging	Between Groups	5.208	4	1.302	2.045	0.087
	Within Groups	251.489	395	0.637		
	Total	256.698	399			
Environmental Conservation	Between Groups	2.405	4	0.601	0.669	0.614
	Within Groups	355.105	395	0.899		
	Total	357.510	399			
Beach Tourism	Between Groups	1.621	4	0.405	0.571	0.684
	Within Groups	280.539	395	0.710		
	Total	282.160	399			
Quality of Public Transport	Between Groups	11.790	4	2.948	3.214	0.013*
	Within Groups	362.287	395	0.917		
	Total	374.078	399			

Remark:

- 1) ANOVA test was performed to determine statistically significant differences between Groups
- 2) * indicates statistically significant differences between groups (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$)

4.8.6 The Relation of Occupation and factors influencing destination choice

Table 4.18 shows the results of One Way ANOVA test analysis on the relationship between occupation and factors influencing destination choice. Statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) was found in “quality of public transport”. International tourists with varying income levels were found to attach different degrees of importance to the “quality of public transport”. No statistically significant relationship was found between occupation and the importance attached to ‘good cultural experience’, ‘visiting national parks and nature reserves’, ‘affordable lodging’, ‘environmental education’ and ‘beach tourism’.

Table 4.18 ANOVA test on Occupation and factors influencing destination choice

Occupation

Destination Choice	Source	ANOVA				
		SS	df	MS	F	P
Good Cultural Experience	Between Groups	2.128	7	0.304	0.541	0.803
	Within Groups	220.249	392	0.562		
	Total	222.378	399			
Visiting National Parks and Nature Reserves	Between Groups	3.796	7	0.542	0.667	0.700
	Within Groups	318.501	392	0.813		
	Total	322.298	399			
Affordable Lodging	Between Groups	5.829	7	0.833	1.301	0.248
	Within Groups	250.868	392	0.640		
	Total	256.698	399			
Environmental Conservation	Between Groups	7.663	7	1.095	1.227	0.287
	Within Groups	349.847	392	0.892		
	Total	357.510	399			

Table 4.18 (Continued)

Destination Choice	Source	ANOVA				
		SS	df	MS	F	P
Beach Tourism	Between Groups	3.591	7	0.513	0.722	0.654
	Within Groups	278.569	392	0.711		
	Total	282.160	399			
Quality of Public Transport	Between Groups	18.701	7	2.672	2.947	0.005*
	Within Groups	355.377	392	0.907		
	Total	374.078	399			

Remark:

- 1) ANOVA test was performed to determine statistically significant differences between groups
- 2) * indicates statistically significant differences between groups (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$)

4.8.7 The Relation of monthly income and factors influencing destination choice

Table 4.19 shows the results of One Way ANOVA test analysis on the relationship between monthly income and factors influencing destination choice. Statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) was found in “visiting national parks & nature reserves.” International tourists from different nationalities were found to attach different degrees of importance to the above-mentioned criteria. No statistically significant relationship was found between monthly income and the importance attached to other destination choice factors.

Table 4.19 The relation of Monthly income and factors influencing destination choice**Monthly Income**

		ANOVA					
Destination Choice	Source	SS	df	MS	F	P	
Good Experience	Cultural						
	Between Groups	6.109	5	1.222	2.226	0.051	
	Within Groups	216.269	394	0.549			
	Total	222.378	399				
Visiting National Parks and Nature Reserves	Between Groups	9.016	5	1.803	2.268	0.047*	
	Within Groups	313.282	394	0.795			
	Total	322.298	399				
Affordable Lodging	Between Groups	4.172	5	0.834	1.302	0.262	
	Within Groups	252.525	394	0.641			
	Total	256.697	399				
Environmental Conservation	Between Groups	6.762	5	1.352	1.519	0.183	
	Within Groups	350.748	394	0.890			
	Total	357.510	399				
Beach Tourism	Between Groups	4.015	5	0.803	1.137	0.340	
	Within Groups	278.145	394	0.706			
	Total	282.160	399				
Quality of Public Transport	Between Groups	5.009	5	1.002	1.070	0.377	
	Within Groups	369.068	394	0.937			
	Total	374.078	399				

Remark:

- 1) ANOVA test was performed to determine statistically significant differences between groups
- 2) * indicates statistically significant differences between groups (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$)

4.9 The relation of marketing mix elements and socio-demographic characteristics

4.9.1 The relation of marketing mix elements and Gender

t-test and One-Way ANOVA were applied at significance level of 0.05 in order to determine the relationship between marketing mix elements and socio-demographic variables.

The results from the T-test (Table 4.20) indicate that female international tourists gave high importance level to “product”, “promotion”, “people” and “programming” marketing mix elements than their male counterparts with p-values of less than 0.05. Moreover, the total average for all marketing mix variables shows a high importance level for female tourists and both gender groups are more interested in “programming”. For female tourists, partnership is the least interesting marketing mix variable (mean = 3.92) whereas for the male tourists, “promotion” is the least interesting (mean = 3.74).

Table 4.20 The Relation of importance level of marketing mix elements and gender

Marketing mix elements	gender				t	p-value
	Male (n =234)		Female (n = 166)			
	\bar{X}	S.D.	\bar{X}	S.D.		
Product	3.92	.55	4.11	.54	-3.37	.001**
Price	4.29	.72	4.25	.70	.52	.602
Place and physical evidence	4.26	.77	4.38	.73	-1.59	.112
Promotion	3.74	.76	3.96	.69	-2.98	.003**
People	4.30	.72	4.45	.63	-2.15	.032*
Partnership	3.81	.84	3.92	.77	-1.37	.169
Programming	3.84	.78	4.09	.79	-3.09	.002**
Total	4.02	.51	4.17	.49	-2.80	.005**

Remark:

- 1) T-test was performed to determine statistically significant differences between groups
- 2) * indicates statistically significant differences between groups (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$)

4.9.2 The Relation of importance level of marketing mix elements and Age

The results from One-Way ANOVA test (Table 4.21) show that there were statistically significant differences in the levels of importance between marketing mix variables and the age for international tourists. Statistically significant differences were found in the “place & physical evidence,” “people,” and “partnership” factors.

Table 4.21 The Relation of importance level of marketing mix elements and Age

Marketing mix elements	Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Product	Between Groups	1.046	5	.209	.692	.630
	Within Groups	119.203	394	.303		
	Total	120.249	399			
Price	Between Groups	2.943	5	.589	1.172	.322
	Within Groups	197.807	394	.502		
	Total	200.750	399			
Place and physical evidence	Between Groups	9.264	5	1.853	3.353	.006**
	Within Groups	217.735	394	.553		
	Total	226.999	399			
Promotion	Between Groups	2.987	5	.597	1.102	.359
	Within Groups	213.586	394	.542		
	Total	216.574	399			
People	Between Groups	5.453	5	1.091	2.353	.040*
	Within Groups	182.596	394	.463		
	Total	188.049	399			
Partnership	Between Groups	8.762	5	1.752	2.711	.020*
	Within Groups	254.682	394	.646		
	Total	263.444	399			
Programming	Between Groups	3.708	5	.742	1.182	.317
	Within Groups	247.156	394	.627		
	Total	250.864	399			

Table 4.21 (Continued)

Marketing mix elements	Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Total	Between Groups	2.713	5	.543	2.146	.059
	Within Groups	99.609	394	.253		
	Total	102.323	399			

Remark:

- 1) ANOVA test was performed to determine statistically significant differences between groups
- 2) * indicates statistically significant differences between groups (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$)

4.9.3 The Relation of importance level of marketing mix elements and Marital Status

Marital Status

The results from One-Way ANOVA test (Table 4.22) show that there is a relationship between importance level of marketing mix variables and marital status among international tourists. The marital status of the international tourists is found to have a relationship with the “promotion” and “partnership” factors.

Table 4.22 The Relation of importance level of marketing mix elements and marital status

Marketing mix elements	Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Product	Between Groups	1.990	3	.663	2.221	.085
	Within Groups	118.260	396	.299		
	Total	120.249	399			
Price	Between Groups	.401	3	.134	.264	.851
	Within Groups	200.349	396	.506		
	Total	200.750	399			
Place and physical evidence	Between Groups	2.549	3	.850	1.499	.214
	Within Groups	224.451	396	.567		
	Total	226.999	399			

Table 4.22 (Continued)

Marketing mix elements	Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Promotion	Between Groups	6.444	3	2.148	4.048	.007**
	Within Groups	210.129	396	.531		
	Total	216.574	399			
People	Between Groups	.772	3	.257	.544	.652
	Within Groups	187.278	396	.473		
	Total	188.049	399			
Partnership	Between Groups	5.223	3	1.741	2.670	.047*
	Within Groups	258.221	396	.652		
	Total	263.444	399			
Programming	Between Groups	2.136	3	.712	1.134	.335
	Within Groups	248.728	396	.628		
	Total	250.864	399			
Total	Between Groups	1.654	3	.551	2.169	.091
	Within Groups	100.669	396	.254		
	Between Groups	102.323	399			

Remark:

- 1) ANOVA test was performed to determine statistically significant differences between groups
- 2) * indicates statistically significant differences between groups (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$)

4.9.4 The Relation of importance level of marketing mix elements and Nationality

Nationality

The results from One-Way ANOVA test (Table 4.23) show that there were statistically significant differences in the levels of importance between marketing mix variables and international tourists' nationality. Statistically significant differences were found in the "product," "place & physical evidence," promotion," "people," "partnership" and "programming" factors. No statistically significant

difference was found with “price.” Moreover, the average total was statistically significant at less than 0.05

Table 4.23 Relation of importance level of marketing mix elements and Nationality

Marketing mix elements	Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Product	Between Groups	8.179	4	2.045	7.207	.000**
	Within Groups	112.070	395	.284		
	Total	120.249	399			
Price	Between Groups	2.349	4	.587	1.169	.324
	Within Groups	198.401	395	.502		
	Total	200.750	399			
Place and physical evidence	Between Groups	9.217	4	2.304	4.179	.003**
	Within Groups	217.782	395	.551		
	Total	226.999	399			
Promotion	Between Groups	20.865	4	5.216	10.528	.000**
	Within Groups	195.708	395	.495		
	Total	216.574	399			
People	Between Groups	5.353	4	1.338	2.893	.022*
	Within Groups	182.696	395	.463		
	Total	188.049	399			
Partnership	Between Groups	36.958	4	9.240	16.114	.000**
	Within Groups	226.486	395	.573		
	Total	263.444	399			
Programming	Between Groups	18.814	4	4.704	8.006	.000**
	Within Groups	232.050	395	.587		
	Total	250.864	399			
Total	Between Groups	9.172	4	2.293	9.723	.000**
	Within Groups	93.151	395	.236		
	Between Groups	102.323	399			

Remark:

- 1) ANOVA test was performed to determine statistically significant differences between groups
- 2) * indicates statistically significant differences between groups (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$)

4.9.5 The Relation of importance level of marketing mix elements and education

Education

The results from Table 4.24 show One-Way ANOVA test. There were no statistically significant differences in the levels of importance between the 7 marketing mix variables and the educational level for international tourists.

Table 4.24 Relation of importance level of marketing mix elements and education

Marketing mix elements	Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Product	Between Groups	1.688	4	.422	1.406	.231
	Within Groups	118.561	395	.300		
	Total	120.249	399			
Price	Between Groups	1.694	4	.423	.840	.500
	Within Groups	199.056	395	.504		
	Total	200.750	399			
Place and physical evidence	Between Groups	3.713	4	.928	1.642	.163
	Within Groups	223.287	395	.565		
	Total	226.999	399			
Promotion	Between Groups	4.362	4	1.090	2.030	.090
	Within Groups	212.212	395	.537		
	Total	216.574	399			
People	Between Groups	.685	4	.171	.361	.836
	Within Groups	187.364	395	.474		
	Total	188.049	399			
Partnership	Between Groups	.775	4	.194	.291	.884
	Within Groups	262.669	395	.665		
	Total	263.444	399			
Programming	Between Groups	1.783	4	.446	.707	.588
	Within Groups	249.081	395	.631		
	Total	250.864	399			

Table 4.24 (Continued)

Marketing mix elements	Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Total	Between Groups	1.161	4	.290	1.133	.341
	Within Groups	101.162	395	.256		
	Between Groups	102.323	399			

Remark:

- 1) ANOVA test was performed to determine statistically significant differences between groups
- 2) * indicates statistically significant differences between groups (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$)

4.9.6 The Relation of importance level of marketing mix elements and Occupation

Occupation

The results from One-Way ANOVA test (Table 4.25) show that there was a relationship between importance level of marketing mix variables and the occupation of international tourists. The statistically significant difference was found in the “promotion” factor at less than 0.05 significance level.

Table 4.25 Relation of importance level of marketing mix elements and occupation

Marketing mix elements	Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Product	Between Groups	2.563	7	.366	1.220	.291
	Within Groups	117.686	392	.300		
	Total	120.249	399			
Price	Between Groups	5.265	7	.752	1.508	.163
	Within Groups	195.485	392	.499		
	Total	200.750	399			
Place and physical evidence	Between Groups	3.991	7	.570	1.002	.429
	Within Groups	223.008	392	.569		
	Total	226.999	399			

Table 4.25 (continued)

Marketing mix elements	Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Promotion	Between Groups	8.469	7	1.210	2.279	.028*
	Within Groups	208.105	392	.531		
	Total	216.574	399			
People	Between Groups	2.892	7	.413	.875	.527
	Within Groups	185.158	392	.472		
	Total	188.049	399			
Partnership	Between Groups	7.818	7	1.117	1.713	.104
	Within Groups	255.626	392	.652		
	Total	263.444	399			
Programming	Between Groups	6.298	7	.900	1.442	.187
	Within Groups	244.566	392	.624		
	Total	250.864	399			
Total	Between Groups	2.140	7	.306	1.196	.304
	Within Groups	100.182	392	.256		
	Between Groups	102.323	399			

Remark:

- 1 ANOVA test was performed to determine statistically significant differences between groups
- 2) * indicates statistically significant differences between groups (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$)

4.9.7 The Relation of importance level of marketing mix elements and Monthly Income

Monthly Income

The results from One-Way ANOVA test (Table 4.26) show that there were statistically significant differences in the levels of importance between marketing mix variables and monthly income for international tourists. Statistically significant differences were found in the “product,” “place & physical evidence,” “promotion,” “people,” “partnership” and “programming” factors. No statistically

significant difference was found with “price.” Moreover, the average total was statistically significant at less than 0.05

Table 4.26 Relation of importance level of marketing mix elements and monthly income

Marketing mix elements	Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Product	Between Groups	6.075	5	1.215	4.193	.001**
	Within Groups	114.174	394	.290		
	Total	120.249	399			
Price	Between Groups	4.517	5	.903	1.814	.109
	Within Groups	196.233	394	.498		
	Total	200.750	399			
Place and physical evidence	Between Groups	6.494	5	1.299	2.321	.043*
	Within Groups	220.506	394	.560		
	Total	226.999	399			
Promotion	Between Groups	9.167	5	1.833	3.483	.004**
	Within Groups	207.406	394	.526		
	Total	216.574	399			
People	Between Groups	10.967	5	2.193	4.880	.000**
	Within Groups	177.083	394	.449		
	Total	188.049	399			
Partnership	Between Groups	10.726	5	2.145	3.345	.006**
	Within Groups	252.718	394	.641		
	Total	263.444	399			
Programming	Between Groups	8.616	5	1.723	2.803	.017*
	Within Groups	242.248	394	.615		
	Total	250.864	399			
Total	Between Groups	5.972	5	1.194	4.885	.000**
	Within Groups	96.350	394	.245		
	Between Groups	102.323	399			

Remark:

- 1) ANOVA test was performed to determine statistically significant differences between groups
- 2) * indicates statistically significant differences between groups (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$)

4.10 Interview Results

Interviews were conducted with senior officials in the Tourism Boards for Thailand and Botswana and with the government officials. An analysis of the interview transcripts was applied during data collection to consistently compare responses and confirm emerging themes. The themes identified through content analysis were as follows:

- 1) Predominant eco/tourism attractions and or destination image attributes
- 2) Prevailing ecotourism marketing strategies
- 3) Tourist generating countries
- 4) Readiness of the supply side

4.10.1 Predominant eco/tourism attractions

Interview results with the various stakeholders in Southern Thailand identified beautiful beaches with activities such as scuba diving, snorkeling, sea kayaking, canoeing which offer spectacular views of sea caves, lagoons and marine life were reported as the main attractions for both domestic and international tourists. Outdoor activities in the beaches involving swimming and sun bathing were preferred mostly by European visitors who enjoy the three 'S'; sun, sea and sand. The management of Thailand Tourism Authority (TAT) highlighted that historical buildings, architecture and cultural attractions do not appeal to foreign visitors even though marketing initiatives are done to promote the attractions. The majority of domestic tourists and those from the Asian Pacific region predominantly visit these attractions.

Ecotourism/community-based/nature-based tourism has got great potential and there is need for further collaboration with stakeholders and intensified marketing efforts in order for this niche area to be fully tapped. As the organization responsible for marketing this niche product, the need for all stakeholders to be involved in effective marketing was emphasized in order to attract more foreign visitors. However, it was reported that the TAT training division at the Headquarters in Bangkok are responsible for ecotourism marketing and training and have yearly activities meant to promote ecotourism. Other attractions reported

included the scenic beautiful landscapes, flora and fauna and marine reserves. The same attractions were observed in the brochures for private companies like Sea Canoe that operates an eco-friendly sea kayaking business in Southern Thailand.

The survey results show that the majority of respondents rated as most important, friendly local people (mean = 4.42), land of sun, sand and sea (mean = 4.32), beautiful landscapes and scenery as important (mean = 4.28)) and pleasant weather and climate as important (4.20) destination image attributes. However, the Assistant Director Tourism, Authority of Thailand (Hatyai office) emphasized the importance of temples and the effort by his office to promote the famous Buddhist temples around Songkhla Province as well as the famous Monks like 'Lung Pu Tuad'.

He reiterated:

'Malaysians and Singaporeans are fond of the Monks. Old Buddhist temples have a variety of architecture with different designs and paintings inside and outside. These reflect the historical background and culture predominant in Southern Thailand' (Assistant Director, Hatyai Office, personal communication, May 22, 2012).

Local and floating markets where there is a variety of local traditional cuisine which appeal to different Asian communities, the old town of Songkhla and various festivals were reported as the main attractions especially for domestic tourists and visitors from within the Asia Pacific like Malaysia and Singapore. The Chinese were said to enjoy water sports, entertainment and up-market hotels which they use mainly as business tourists. These results confirm that how tourists perceive a set of alternative travel destination images has an influence in their final decision on destination choice

In Botswana, the Marketing and Promotions Officer at the Botswana Tourism Organization (BTO) confirmed that the country boasts of a wide array of wildlife species, nature reserves, national parks, flora and fauna as main tourist attractions. She emphasized that The Okavango Delta is one of Botswana's leading tourist destination areas with its rich wildlife resources and scenic beauty and that the organization works collaboratively with the Department of Tourism to make the

attraction known worldwide. Emphasis was placed on the need by the organization to strengthen efforts in the promotion of Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) as local communities especially in the Northern part of the country derive their livelihood from natural resources and hence participate in tourism to conserve wildlife and other natural resources. Ecotourism, in Botswana, embraces some forms of consumptive tourism which can be of benefit to the country's economy, environment and local communities. The two countries with Southern Thailand and Northern Botswana as ecotourist destinations have great potential for further development as fully-fledged ecotourism destinations given the vast and diversity of natural and cultural resources and attractions.

4.10.2 Prevailing Ecotourism marketing strategies

The Director of Tourism Authority Thailand (TAT) Phuket Office emphasized that the marketing of Southern Thailand as a tourist destination is done through the 25 countries representing Thailand around the world and representatives from (TAT) attend Travel shows like the world Travel Mart, ITB in Berlin, WTM in London and the Moscow Travel Show. The importance of marketing was emphasized. However, the TAT management highlighted that no vacancy prevailed for a marketing officer solely responsible for the marketing activities of the regional offices except at the headquarters in Bangkok.

Production of educational materials, promotional pamphlets, flyers, and Emagazine are some of the efforts the organization undertakes to market their products and services. As regards the Emagazine, she highlighted that it is produced every two months and meant to target the youth market as the organization has discovered that they have great potential as a niche segment. It can be accessed at www.phuketemagazine.com. The director further indicated that cross-regional promotions and advertising are carried out to intensify domestic tourism and as a result 90 million man-trip domestic tourists are received every year in Thailand. Liaison with airlines and hotels was another strategy used by the organization. Currently, about 200 flights per week between Bangkok and Phuket serve as a promotional strategy to attract more visitors. She further highlighted that Tourism Authority Thailand has found the internet to be the most effective marketing tool.

The Director further highlighted that the organization awards prizes every two years to companies and hotels that practice environmental conservation and uphold ecotourism principles through the Training Division in Bangkok, TAT Office. Eg, Green hotels and Nature/ Community-Based ecotourism projects. Other yearly activities highlighted were those involving environmental conservation projects with tour operators and other stakeholders who protect coral reefs, practice low impact to environment, low pollution in the beaches and environmental awareness seminars and workshops for public and private sector as well as students. The 2012 marketing strategies for Tourism Authority Thailand emphasized the need to intensify on the niche markets of Ecotourism, Health and Wellness, Honeymoon and Golf. The four niche markets were emphasized at the ‘Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+2012)’ Trade show that was held in June 22, 2012.

4.10.3 Tourist Generating Countries

The Tourism Authority Thailand (TAT) management reported that the United Kingdom, Germany, U.S.A, France and Russia are the main international markets. Regionally, Europe holds the largest share of international tourism receipts in 2011 whereas in the Asia Pacific Region, East Asia recorded the largest increase in receipts in 2011 followed by South Asia. Malaysia, China, South Korea, Japan, India were the largest sources of visitor arrivals. Marketing efforts were to be intensified for India due to its high economic value and huge population.

The Director further reported that Indian travelers to the kingdom have reached 919, 000 between January and December, 2011 generating tourism revenue of 21, 842.64 million Baht for Thailand. They were said to come for honeymoon in international chain hotels. Indonesia with its large population was another target market to be tapped. In the case of Botswana, the main tourist generating regions are Africa, Europe and the Americas. The information is supported by the survey results on socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in Table 4.1.

4.10.4 Readiness of the Supply Side

The results of interviews showed that there was a mismatch between the supply and demand. Tourism Authority Thailand (TAT), public and private companies highlighted that they were not ready to accommodate the demand posed on them by tourists. For example, the Tourism Authority Thailand (TAT) director reported that as a result of lack of readiness to accommodate ecotourists, they were not able to meet their demand by offering fully-fledged ecotourism attractions and activities despite the high demand from the sector.

1) Carrying capacity – It is referred to as the amount of use a particular area can absorb over time before there is an unacceptable impact to either other users or the resource base. The results of the study show that even though TAT and private companies have well articulated policies on environmental conservation, they are more interested in revenue maximization without much regard for minimization of environmental impact. The ideals and principles of ecotourism appear on paper but implementation is hardly practiced. Interest is more in increasing tourist receipts and this has a detrimental effect on environmental conservation contributing to air and water pollution, littering and other negative impacts.

Botswana, on the other hand, practices low volume high quality and as result environmental conservation is priority. A balance is maintained between sustainability and economic gain and this has contributed to the Okavango Delta's Award as Ramsar Site in 2010.

2) Certifications and Eco-labeling - Global Accreditation body like Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC) has endorsed a growing number of certification programs and networks which include Eco-certification in Australia, Green Globe 21, Green Seal USA, Green Deal Guatemala, Smart Voyager in Ecuador and Sustainable Tourism International in the USA. Both Thailand and Botswana have certification programs that guide implementation of quality, environmental protection and social responsibility. For example, Sea Canoe is one of the ecotour private companies in Southern Thailand that has won about five awards for environmental conservation but the daily activities with tourists which include sea kayaking, canoeing, snorkeling and boat rides indicate that the company does not practice ecotourism ideals and principles 100%. Genuine ecotourism does not exist.

The management of TAT Confirmed that there are policies and certifications in place in Thailand. For example, the Policy and Strategy on Tourism and Environmental Awareness, Policy and Strategy on Marketing Promotion and Tour Guiding and on Educational Provision and Creating Environmental Awareness. In Botswana, the Marketing officer explained that there are certification levels that use a three-tiered structure designed to encourage operators to improve their performance. The simplest to obtain is 'Green' followed by 'Green+' and finally the 'Ecotourism level'.

3) **Quality Assurance and Standards** – In order to ensure quality, control mechanisms need to be put in place. Few of the environmental accreditations and ecolabels are as follows:

(i) Green Globe 21, an example of a large scale and trustworthy ecolabel covering the entire tourism industry (Synergy, 2000; Buckley, 2002). Sea Canoe Co. Ltd in Southern Thailand indicated that the company was awarded this ecolabel for their environmental conservation efforts.

(ii) Green Leaf, an ecolabel integrated with Green Leaf and limited to regional scale like Pacific Asia Travel Association (Buckley, 2002)

(iii) Blue Flag, a foundation for environmental education in Europe (Buckley, 2002)

Even though ecotourism was invented as a positive term, the malpractice of governments, tour operators and private businesses for financial gain has to a certain extent contributed to the confusion in the various meanings and definitions. Standardization, accreditation and ecolabeling can only serve as assets in marketing if malpractices and green-washing could be stopped.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Discussions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The data was collected from three population groups including international tourists, government senior officials in the tourism sector and ecotourism business owners in Southern Thailand and Northern Botswana. A quantitative and qualitative mixed methodology approach was employed in this study. The questionnaire survey was conducted on international tourists and telephone interviews on government senior officials in the tourism sector. For private and public ecotourism business owners, content analysis was employed on secondary data sources from an extensive review of literature, internet, academic journals and books.

5.1.1 Conclusion on socio-demographic characteristics of international tourists

The questionnaire survey was conducted in Southern Thailand at Phuket and Songkhla on 400 international tourists from April to May 2012 to examine the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of international tourists and motivational factors, perceptions on importance level of destination attributes and factors influencing their selection of a tourist destination as demand factors in ecotourism. Understanding why people travel and what factors influence their behavioral intentions in choosing a holiday destination is important for destination marketing officers. People visit because they are pushed by their internal motives and pulled by external forces of a destination.

The results of the study show socio-demographic variables of international tourists with 234 (58.5%) male and 166 (41.5%) female. A high percentage of the international tourists 146 (36.5%) are in the age range of 20-29 years followed by those between 30 and 39 years of age at 98 (24.5%). Those over 60 years of age are a small percentage of 4.8% indicating that the senior travelers' propensity to travel to tourism destination in Southern Thailand is low as compared to that of middle-aged travelers.

The majority of the respondents who visit Southern Thailand are single at 216 (54.0%) followed by married couples 165 (41.3%). Widowers and divorcees constitute only a small percentage 4.8%. As expected, international tourists from the Asia Pacific region comprise the majority of respondents at 186 (46.5%) as a result of proximity. For Europe, the pleasant weather and climate position Thailand as a preferred destination of choice at 97 (24.3%) followed by the Oceania at 63 (15.8%). The Americas and Africa constitute a small percentage at 31 (7.8%) and 23 (5.8%) respectively. In terms of educational achievement, visitors to Southern Thailand have a moderately high level of education with over half, 290 (72.6%) having attained Master Degree at 77 (19.3%), Bachelor Degree at 126 (31.5%) and Diploma qualification at 87 (21.8%). More than one third of the respondents are employees 139 (34.8%) followed by business owners 82 (20.5%). Government officers and students constitute a small percentage of travelers to Southern Thailand at 11.5% and 10.5% respectively.

The retired travelers and housewives constitute relatively low numbers at 33 (8.3%). The majority of respondents (125; 31.3%) had a monthly income between US\$ 1,001 and US\$ 3,000 followed by those earning Less than US\$ 1,000 at 70 (17.5%). 16.5% earn a monthly income between US\$ 3,001 and US\$ 5,000 followed by those earning over US\$ 9,000 at 14.5%.

The descriptive statistics indicate that the majority of international tourists travelling to Southern Thailand were single male respondents in the age range between 20 – 29 years of age and most come from the Asia-Pacific region and Europe representing 46.5 % and 24.3% respectively. They are employees with the majority earning a monthly income level between US\$ 1, 001 and US\$ 3,000.

The market potential for Botswana shows that for visitor arrivals, the majority come in the category of Visiting friends and relatives (VFR) followed by those coming for holiday. The VFR is the most significant purpose of visit segment. It is estimated that 90% of visitors to Botswana come primarily for wildlife and wilderness based tourism. South Africa is the largest single source market from within the region. International significant markets comprise of Europe who are predominantly holiday tourists, U.K, Germany, U.S.A and Australia. (Botswana Tourism Master Plan, 2000 and Department of Tourism, 2011)

5.1.2 Socio-demographic factors and trip characteristic

Crompton (1979) pointed out that travel motivations are the reasons for travel and are believed to explain why tourists prefer one travel type and make the decision to choose one destination over another. In this study, the majority of the tourists traveled for holiday and leisure followed by those who travelled in order to visit friends and relatives. Few of the respondents traveled for business and a small number travelled for ecotourism, culture and for official purposes. Most of these travelers have a high school qualification, Bachelor degree and Diploma. Furthermore, the majority are employees. The majority of respondents are earning between US\$ 1,001 and US\$ 3,000, followed by those earning less than US\$ 1,000.

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents shows that the majority are male as compared to female. A high percentage of the international tourists are in the age range of 20 - 29 years followed by those between 30 - 39 years of age. Those over 60 years of age are few indicating that the senior travelers' propensity to travel to tourism destination in Southern Thailand is low as compared to that of the young and middle-aged travelers.

The majority of the respondents who visit Southern Thailand are single followed by married couples. As expected, international tourists from the Asia Pacific region comprise the bulk of respondents as a result of proximity. For Europe, the pleasant weather and climate position Thailand as a preferred destination of choice followed by the Oceania. The Americas and Africa constitute a small numbers. In terms of educational achievement, visitors to Southern Thailand have a moderately high level of education with over half having attained Master Degree, Bachelor Degree and Diploma qualifications. More than one third of the respondents are employees followed by business owners. Retired officers and the unemployed constitute a small percentage of travelers to Southern Thailand respectively.

The majority of respondents earn a monthly income between US\$ 1,001 and US\$ 3,000 followed by those earning Less than US\$ 1,000. The descriptive statistics indicate that the majority of international tourists travelling to Southern Thailand were single male respondent in the age range between 20 – 29 years of age and most come from the Asia-Pacific region and Europe representing 40.7 % and 26.8% respectively. They are employees with the majority earning a

monthly income level between US\$ 1, 001 and US\$ 3, 000. Respondents have a propensity to travel for Holiday and leisure. Other studies showed that age, income, education were important predictors of a person's desire to travel (Zimmer et al. 1995). Their study also revealed that travelers with higher educational level and more disposable income were likely to travel further from their home.

The results on the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of international tourists and frequency of visit indicate that the majority are first time visitors between 20 – 29 years of age and single. A high percentage of repeat visitors are in the age range between 50 – 59 years followed by those between 40 – 49 years of age. The majority are from Africa followed by the Americas mostly unemployed with a minimum of a high school qualification. Repeat visitors are mostly from the Asia Pacific with an income level of over US\$ 9, 000.

5.1.3 Socio demographic characteristics and perceptions on levels of importance on destination image attributes

International tourists' perceived importance on destination image attributes of Southern Thailand as a tourist destination were measured using a Five-Point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Least important to 5 = Most important.

The results of the study shows how the respondents rated importance levels of 12 destination image attributes in Southern Thailand; Phuket and Songkla. According to the scoring results, international tourists attach varying levels of importance to different destination image attributes. The mean score results are arranged in order of importance and they show that friendly people, with a mean score (mean = 4.42), Thailand as a land of sun, sea and sand (mean = 4.32), Beautiful landscapes and scenery (mean = 4.28) are the destination image attributes that tourists perceive as most important when they select a destination. Pleasant weather and climate (mean = 4.20), Accessible; information on transport, restaurants, accommodation (mean = 4.10), Budget tourism destination (mean = 4.02), Unique cuisine (mean = 4.02), Rich cultural heritage (mean = 3.94), Beautiful architecture (mean = 3.57) and Perceive ecotourism as part of own heritage (mean = 3.53) were rated as important destination image attributes. Good place to do business (mean = 3.04) and Religious purpose (mean = 3.04), were found to be perceived as medium

importance level destination attributes. Moreover, the total mean score on perceptions on levels of importance of destination image attributes was of importance level (mean = 3.87). This information is crucial for Destination Marketing Organizations to enable them develop marketing strategies for the right target market. The results are supported by Chen and Kertetter whose study highlight that destination image is a vital aspect in effective tourism development and destination marketing and related to the overall success of a tourism destination. Other studies on travel research confirm that destination image plays an important role in destination selection as destinations with a strong positive image and are more recognizable and have a higher probability of being selected by tourists (Hunt, 1975; Pearce, 1982; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989). The results are important as they can guide in the development of marketing strategies for the different market segments.

Destination attributes perceived as most important by females were found to be 'perceive ecotourism attractions as part of own heritage' and 'beautiful architecture'. The majority of those in the age group 20 – 29 years of age perceived most destination image attributes as either most important or important. Tourists from the Asia Pacific are in the majority in their high perception of most destination image attributes followed by Europeans. Nationality serves as a discriminant variable that can be used to assess tourist segments confirmed by other studies which emphasize that tourists' perceptions of destination may vary according to their countries of origin (Kozak, 2001). Knowledge of visitors' perceptions of environmental impacts is an important element in the management and provision of quality recreation opportunities in a national park (Cressford, 2000).

The main attractions for Botswana are wildlife and the wilderness and they are considered one of the best in Africa. The Okavango Delta is the most famous and popular attraction that was nominated the best tourism spot in the world and won the 2010 World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2010). Botswana's safari, flora and fauna, national parks and nature reserves and camping serve as the main attractions (Department of Tourism 2011).

5.1.4 Socio demographic characteristic and factors influencing destination choice

The results of the study show that the respondents were in full agreement with all the 6 factors as influential and important in determining their selection of Southern Thailand as a tourist destination. However, ‘Beach Tourism’ (mean = 4.14) was rated high and ‘Visiting National Parks & Nature Reserves’ (mean = 3.77) was rated low. The majority of the respondents are male and they agree with the statement that good cultural experience has had an influence on their selection of destination choice. Most of respondents from the Asia Pacific have rated visiting national parks and nature reserves as an important factor that has contributed to their selection of destination choice. For both gender groups, they tend to agree with most of the statements on the six destination choice variables. Europeans and the Americas tend to choose a destination for its pleasant weather and climate and beautiful landscapes and scenery as they are perceived as either most important or important.

The results of One Way ANOVA test analysis on the relationship between Gender and factors influencing destination choice indicate no statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$). No statistically significant relationship was found between gender, age, marital status and the importance attached to good cultural experience, visiting national parks & nature reserves, affordable lodging, environmental conservation, beach tourism and quality of public transport. However, a statistically significant relationship was found between the socio-demographic characteristic of nationality with factors influencing destination choice. The results of One Way ANOVA test analysis on the relationship between nationality and factors influencing destination choice show statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) in “good cultural experience, “visiting national parks & nature reserves,” “affordable lodging,” “environmental conservation” and “quality of public transport”. International tourists from different nationalities were found to attach different degrees of importance to the above-mentioned criteria. However, no statistically significant relationship was found with ‘beach tourism’.

Americans and Africans strongly disagree with environmental conservation having any influence with their selection of destination. Tourists from the Asia Pacific have the same affluence towards factors influencing destination

choice as they neither agree nor disagree with each of the six factors. In all of the six factors, the majority have either selected 'Neither agree nor disagree' to the statements. For Beach tourism, the Americans have rated it higher than those from the Asian Pacific. Africans strongly disagree with quality of public transport factor as having an influence in their selection of a tourist destination. The results of the study are similar to that of Yuan and Mc Donald who used the concept of push and pull factors to examine motivations for overseas travel on the four countries of Japan, France, West Germany and the UK and the findings of their study indicated that individuals from each of the four countries might travel for similar reasons (push). However, choosing particular destinations and the level of importance attached to the factors might differ among the countries. Tourism marketers can capitalise on these factors and develop promotional packages to cater for the different types of travellers based on their vacation motives and socio-demographic factors.

Understanding why people travel and what factors influence their behavioral intention in choosing a holiday destination are important for tourism planners and marketers.

5.1.5 Socio-demographic characteristics and marketing mix elements

The information below is an analysis of the importance level of marketing mix elements to the socio-demographic variables. It shows the extent to which respondents of different gender groups (males and females) consider the importance level of each of the marketing mix variables.

The majority of respondents consider service quality to be most important. The male tourists consider the service quality to be important whereas the female tourists consider it as most important. The results indicate none of the gender groups (males and females) considers service quality as least important. Furthermore, the male consider an attractive tour package as important whereas their female counterparts consider it to be most important. A small number of tourists rated attractive tour packages as least important. The results on importance level of variety of choices in tourism product by gender indicate the highest percentage of the males and females considers a variety of choices in tourism product as important.

Regarding the rating for importance level of guided tour for tourist by age groups, the results show that the highest number of tourist in all the age groups perceive guided tours as important. However, the same number of tourists less than 20 yrs rated guided tours as most important and important. The results show that the highest number of tourist in all the age groups perceives program itinerary for guided tours as important.

The results further show that the majority of tourists in all the age groups perceive professionalism of staff as important. The study has found out that there were statistically significant differences between respondents from different nationalities in terms of their travel motivations. The importance of the twenty-one marketing mix elements was assessed and the majority of respondents rated the following marketing mix variables as important and more important; Service quality, value for money, availability of price range, safety and security, cleanliness, professionalism, of staff, friendliness of staff, networking between staff and customers and the role of tourism boards.

This suggests that the destination marketers should package their marketing strategies on the basis of this information, highlighting on the perceived levels of importance of marketing mix variables. The results below a summary of the importance level of marketing mix variables:

Product: The overall importance level of the product elements for international tourists decision making in destination choice for Southern Thailand was at ‘important level’. Service quality was at the ‘most important level’ in influencing respondents’ decision making in destination choice.

Price: Value for money was the ‘most important’ level of the price element. among international tourists. Availability of price range was at ‘important’ level. The overall importance level for the price element was ‘most important’ indicating that price was a determining factor in influencing destination choice among international tourists.

Place: A tourist destination with guaranteed safety and security and good sanitation and cleanliness was considered at ‘most important level’ in influencing destination choice. The overall importance level for the place element to

international tourists' decision making in destination choice was at 'most important' level.

Promotion: Advertising using tour package brochures and ecotourism guidebooks, word of mouth, sales promotions and website marketing were all at 'important level' in determining destination choice for Southern Thailand among international tourists. However, 'Word of Mouth' had the highest mean score of (mean = 3.91) indicating that international tourists placed more importance on this respective promotion marketing mix element.

People: International tourists regarded professionalism and friendliness of staff as 'most important' in their choice of Southern Thailand as tourist destination. Moreover, the overall importance level of the people element was at 'most important level'.

Partnership: Networking between staff, customers and stakeholders had the highest mean score (mean = 4.05) among the partnership marketing mix elements. All the partnership marketing mix elements were rated at 'important level'.

Programming: International tourists considered guided tours, program itinerary for tour activities and environmental conservation at 'important level'. The overall importance level for the programming element to international tourists' decision making in destination choice was at 'important' level.

The results of the study show that visitors to ecotourism operations and destinations comprise of diverse visitor types. This suggests that within the ecotourism market, there is a diversity of visitor types and it would be interesting to further explore impacts associated with their visitor behavior in developing eco/tourism products. This diversity of visitors is what Duffus and Dearden (1990) describe as 'specialists' and 'generalists' or 'experts' and 'novices'. It is would be of importance, therefore, for the diversity that is represented within the ecotourism market and the impacts associated with visitor behavior to be considered in future product development and research. In order to create effective marketing strategies for products and services in the ecotourism sector, a better understanding of consumers is important.

5.2 Discussions

The purpose of the study was to examine the effectiveness of marketing strategies used to market Southern Thailand and Northern Botswana. An in-depth review of literature and use of qualitative and quantitative methods have enabled consideration of the discussions which follow.

The discussions are based on the following research objectives:

1. Examine the relationship between socio-demographic factors and tourism travel motivations, perceptions on importance levels on destination image attributes and destination selection by international tourists.
2. Determine key destination market segments that are in line with increasing demands and opportunities in the ecotourism industry market place.
3. Examine key marketing strategies employed by ecotourism businesses in attracting international tourists to their ecotourism destinations.
4. Propose marketing strategy guidelines suitable for recommendation to Thailand and Botswana

The first and second objective will be addressed in this section. The third and fourth objectives will be covered under recommendations.

5.2.1 Objective 1: To examine the relationship between socio-demographic factors and tourism travel motivations, perceptions on importance levels of destination image attributes and destination selection by international tourists.

In order to examine the relationship between socio demographic characteristics and travel motivations, perceptions on importance levels of destination image attributes and factors influencing destination choice, Independent sample t-test and One Way ANOVA analysis tests were undertaken. A statistically significant relationship was found between the various socio demographic variables and each of the dependent variables listed above. The findings are reported in Chapter 4. Respondents were in full agreement with all the six factors namely: Good cultural experience, visiting national parks and nature reserves, affordable lodging, environmental conservation, beach tourism and the quality of transport as influential and important in determining their selection of Southern Thailand as a tourist

destination. It was, however, found that tourist from different nationalities and varying age groups attach different levels of importance to varying destination image attributes. The findings are in line with McIntosh and Goeldner (1990) who define travel destinations as those including natural and developed 'mainsprings' that drive people to travel such as national parks, historical sites, cultural resources, shopping facilities, natural scenery, recreational facilities, food, people and culture of different travel destinations. Furthermore, results of the Independent sample t-test and One Way ANOVA showed statistically significant differences between most socio-demographic characteristics and factors influencing destination choice. In terms of nationality, a high statistically significant difference was found in all the six factors.

5.2.2 Objective 2: To determine which key destination market segments are in line with increasing demands and opportunities in the ecotourism industry market place.

Market segmentation recognizes that no single market offering will satisfy all individuals (Alderson, 1993). The following market segments have been selected as some of the key in the ecotourism sector as per results from this study. The results show that a majority of tourists were motivated to travel to Southern Thailand (Phuket and Songkhla) for holiday and only 1.5% travelled for nature and ecotourism activities as shown in figure 5.1. This may suggest that Tourism Authority Thailand (Southern Region) and destination marketing organizations have not been successful in appealing to the minds of these consumers and offering a unique selling proposition for ecotourism. However, the interesting thing is that they meet the criteria of ecotourists since the aspect of relaxation and exploration is under-scored in their travel. This is consistent with other studies (Henderson, 2005; Lindberg, 1991 and Wight, 1996 who have observed that the travel motivations of ecotourists can overlap those of other types of tourists and may partake of nature incidentally or as part of a broader trip.

In the case of Botswana, it was observed from Table 1.3 that the tourist generating markets are Africa as a result of proximity, followed by Europe and the Americas. Furthermore, the majority of tourist arrivals in terms of purpose of visit show that Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) is the largest market segment,

followed by Holiday/ Leisure travelers. Tourist attractions visited are Kasane/Chobe areas in the Northern part of the country with an abundance of flora and fauna which are main attraction in the country. The graphical presentation below gives a summary of the situation in Southern Thailand. It should be noted that for the purpose of this study, ecotourists fall within the Holiday/leisure category as ‘soft tourists’. Results show that enjoying ‘holidays/leisure’ is the most important vacation motive.

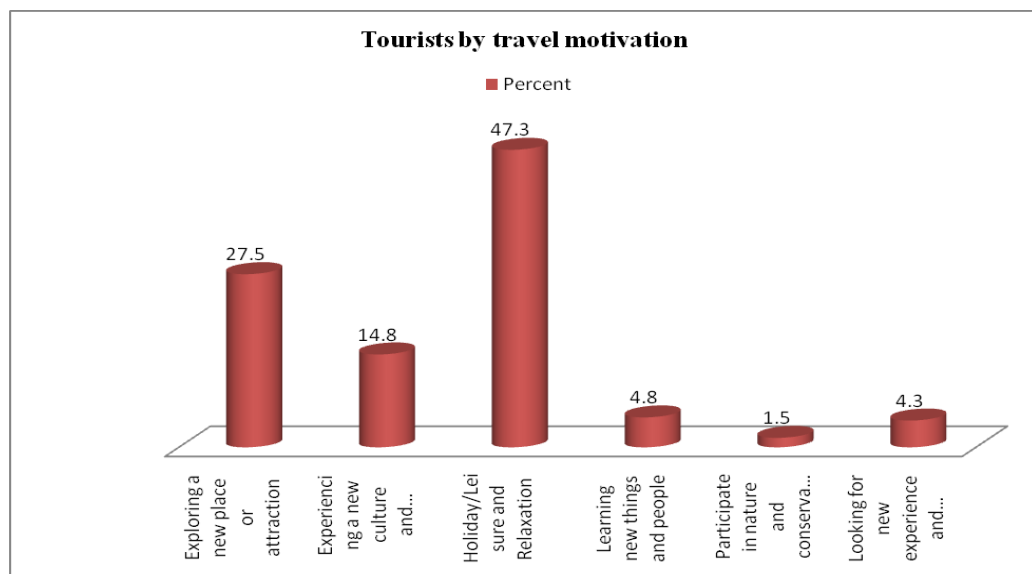


Figure 5.1 Tourists by travel motivation

Another noteworthy contribution is that most ecotourists are highly educated as shown in figure 5.2. The results show that the majority possess a Bachelor’s Degree qualification (31.5%). This is in line with other studies on nature-based research (Lang and O’Leary 1997, cited in Meng and Uysal, 2008; Wight, 2001) whose studies have found out that ecotourists tend to have a high level of education. This is similar to other studies where large majority are highly educated and travel mostly for leisure.

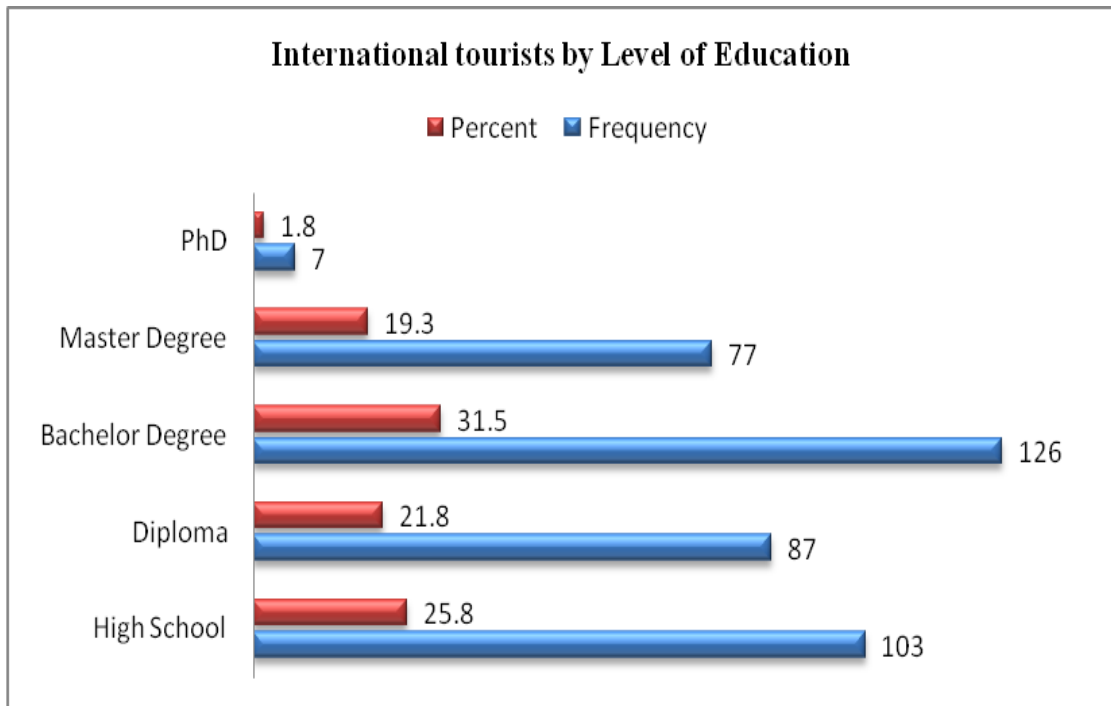


Figure 5.2 International by level of education

The majority of respondents come from Asia Pacific Region (46.5%) followed by Europe as shown in figure 5.3. This is consistent with Tourism Authority Thailand (2012) statistics which reflect that by region, East Asia recorded the largest increase in receipts in 2011 followed by South Asia.

Key market segments for Thailand, as reflected by the study results, are the high spending tourists composed of Europeans with a college education, holiday/leisure/relaxation travelers, employees with a propensity to spend and honeymooners mostly from India. However, the majority are from within the region mostly the young and middle-aged. TAT reported that Europe holds the largest share of the international tourism receipts. This information supports the results of the study. The young seem to be more environmentally concerned and one explanation for this could be attributed to exposure to environmental education that the older people may lack (Fransson and Garling, 1999). For Botswana, nature lovers and environmentally-conscious travelers dominate the market as the majority come for game viewing in national parks and nature reserves. The largest market, as per Department of Tourism statistics (2009) is Africa, Europe and the Americas..

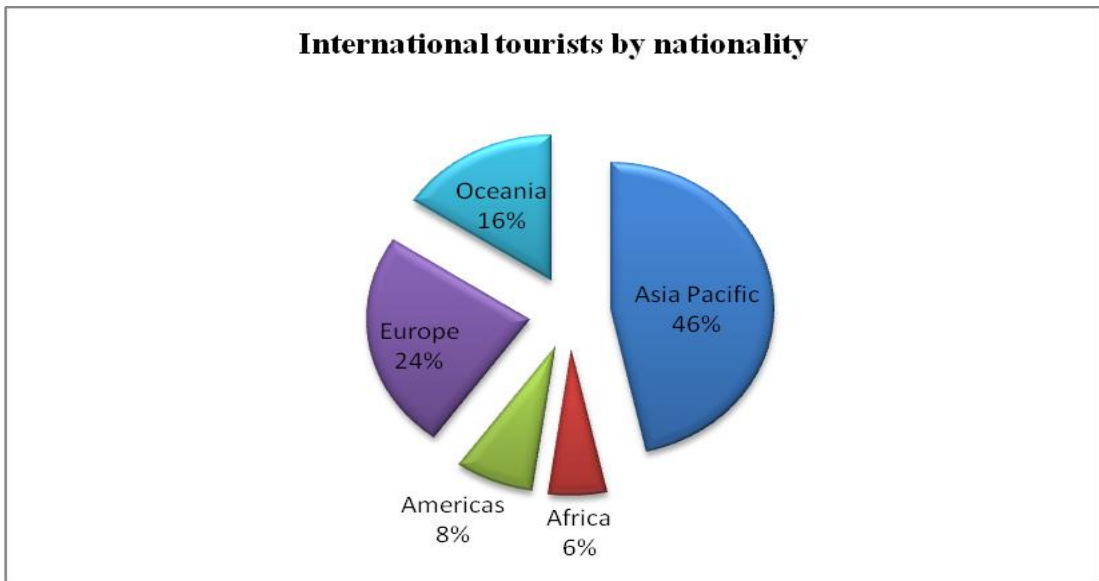


Figure 5.3 International visitors by Nationality

The majority of the respondents possess middle to high levels of income (Boo, 1990) with the income for males being higher than that of females.

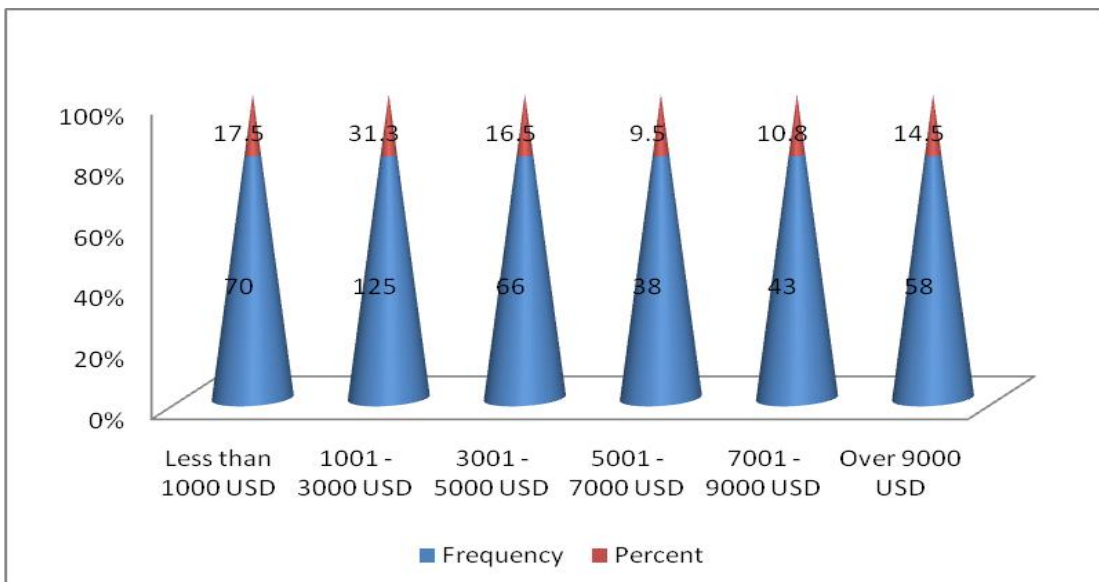


Figure 5.4 Tourists by monthly income

It should be noted that more information on key market segments is contained in Chapter 4.

5.2.3 Objective 3: To examine the key marketing strategies employed by ecotourism businesses in attracting international tourists to their ecotourism destinations.

It is important to understand how suppliers, tourism boards, tour operators and intermediaries understand and define ecotourism since this shapes the immediate and long-term impacts on destinations. It also shapes expectations and actual experiences of tourists participating in activities that may be considered ecotourism.

The results of the study were derived from interviews with Botswana Tourism Organization (BTO and Tourism Authority Thailand (TAT; Southern Region) and literature review.

Botswana Tourism Organization: The marketing and promotions officer of the organization highlighted the following as marketing campaign efforts to attract international tourists:

- a) Tourism marketing activities are undertaken both locally and internationally. Key sites are identified in each district at which large numbers of tourists congregate and develop the sites as promotional ‘hubs’ to advertise and raise awareness of other ecotourism sites and activities in the country.
- b) Develop a comprehensive database of businesses providing tourism-related goods and services in Botswana and share it with stakeholders
- c) Encourage, facilitate and promote inter intra-sectoral collaboration in marketing activities between stakeholders and from the public, commercial and community sectors offering complimentary products or services.
- d) Promote community-based ecotourism (CBE) enterprises on the internet through the existing specialist (CBE) websites.
- e) Participate in international ecotourism and special interest travel and trade fairs including participation by SME’s CBO’s.
- f) Produce a high quality ecotourism product catalogue highlighting new ecotourism products and circuits in Botswana as a means of enhancing international perceptions of Botswana as an ecotourism destination with a wide product range.

g) Offer product packaging by identifying products with high product profile and focusing Botswana holiday propositions on ‘high spots’ which make the country fascinating.

Tourism Authority Thailand: The management of the organization highlighted the following as marketing campaign efforts to attract international tourists:

a) Tourism marketing activities are undertaken both locally and internationally. Efforts are made to market to the domestic market in order to encourage domestic tourists to visit tourist attractions in and around Southern Thailand. For example, ‘Phuket Great Time’ is a festival that brings together hotels, airlines, car rental operators, tour operators to offer their services at reduced rates in order to attract more domestic tourists. These promotional and marketing services are normally offered during the low season which runs from April – October each year. The agency has since seen growth in the number of domestic tourists since the introduction of these strategies. For example, 90 million man trip domestic tourists are received per year. It should be noted that the number of man trip domestic tourists is higher than the population in Thailand since many undertake travel more than once per year. For the international market, educational trips are organized for trade partners and agencies in other parts of the world including Germany and the U.S.A in order to experience cultural life in Thailand.

b) Tourism Authority Thailand has international representation in 25 countries world-wide meant to promote and market tourism in Thailand.

c) Cross-regional adverting and promotions done in order to attract tourists from within the region to Thailand through inter-regional exchanges and alliances with selected airlines and hotels. For example, there are 200 flights per week in Phuket scheduled for travel to North-South and South-North.

d) Production of educational materials such as brochures, flyers, pamphlets, magazines done as part of marketing strategy to target both domestic and international tourists. For example, Phuket online e-magazine is produced ever two months and can be accessed online at www.phuketemagazine.com. It was meant to appeal to the young as an upcoming market segment.

e) Other marketing strategies involve international travel shows in different parts of the world with representatives of TAT, airlines and hotels and selected businesses. For example, the ITB in Berlin which is considered the world travel mart in the whole world. The WTM in London and the Moscow Travel Show.

f) Main markets highlighted included the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, France and the U.S.A. In Asia, the main markets are South Korea, Japan India, China and Indonesia. The management of TAT indicated that Indonesia is a small market that they want to grow as it has potential for economic value. China was reflected as of low economic value despite the high population. India, on the other hand, was targeted for its attractive economic situation. Indians stage their weddings in international chain hotels in Thailand and mostly visit for honeymoon purposes and hence a lucrative market.

This is supported by results from the survey that reflect the largest tourist generating geographic region as Asia Pacific (46.5%), followed by Europe (24.3%) and Oceania (15.8%). The socio demographic profile shows that the youth (20-29 years of age) and middle-aged (30 – 39 years of age) are in the majority. The Male respondents (58.5%) are predominantly more than females (41.5%) and this is in line with Tourism Authority Thailand Arrival statistics (TAT, 2011). Over half of the respondents (72.6%) had a minimum of a Bachelors Degree and nearly 50% had a monthly income less than 3,000 US\$ indicating that ecotourists have a relatively high level of education and moderate income.

The main motivation for travel for Asian Pacific tourists was holiday/leisure and relaxation and visit for religious purposes where temples, shrines and other sacred areas are visited. However, the rating of level of importance for religious purposes was low. This could be attributed to the fact that most of the tourists from this region have limitations in understanding and using English as a language of communication. This could have had an impact on their responses.

Lack of coordinated efforts between the various stakeholders was noticed though in the case of Tour Operators and Tour Agencies, the same operational laws applied.

Both countries have well defined ecotourism guidelines and policies. However, the aspect of implementation needs improvement.

Ecotourism Certification – Tourism Authority Thailand (TAT) reported that there were over 180 hotels that are recognized by the Green Leaf Certification Program.

Botswana, on the other hand, utilizes the Botswana Ecotourism Certification system that covers over 240 standards on environmental management, cultural resource protection and fundamental ecotourism criteria.

Environmental Protection and Carrying Capacity – The environment which is of high quality attracts large numbers of tourists and this may result in degradation as a result of the consumption patterns of the tourists. The two countries, as preferred destinations of choice reflected by high tourist arrivals, should have adequate visitor management plans as well as environmental management plans in place to optimize their carrying capacity.

In order to attract more tourists, tourism marketers should develop marketing strategies that address the various segments in terms of socio-demographic and trip characteristics, factors influencing destination choice, destination image attributes considered important by tourists. Emphasis should also be placed on the use of marketing mix variables to achieve their marketing objectives by delivering value to customers through an analysis and understanding of their needs, wants, expectations and expectations.

5.3 Recommendations

The results of the study indicate that promoting the sound development and success in the ecotourism sector is dependent upon effective and efficient marketing strategies. Successful ecotourism marketing requires an understanding of the factors affecting a destination's image and attractiveness as well as information on the needs, wants and vacation motives of tourists from different geographical backgrounds for better market segmentation. The study has also identified the importance of the role of the various stakeholders like tourism boards, government, tourists, local community and the private sector in ecotourism development

The following recommendations are suggested for the destination marketing officers and marketing personnel in the tourism industry in order to address the objectives of the study.

The researcher recommends that special attention should be paid to the needs and wants of customers in all the business endeavors. In today's competitive tourism and travel industry, destination marketers should be well informed of the motivational changes and trends through continuous surveys and reviews. Several studies conducted on motivation suggest periodic surveys of the different segments of the market which is crucial in determining the type of marketing packages to be designed for each segment. For example, Cha et al. (1995) cited in Jang et al. (2006) suggest that periodic surveys of the senior travel market may be an effective way of matching travel motivations with travel programs as well as physical facilities in destinations. Since there are different market segments, as revealed in the study, destination marketing officers must formulate marketing strategies relevant for each market segment.

Communication Strategy

There should be healthy collaborations among all the relevant stakeholders in the tourism sector to avoid duplication of efforts. The results of the study have found out that attractiveness of a specific destination depends on destination image attributes that best respond to the needs, wants and desires of respondents since products and services are mainly about creating value for customers. Friendliness of the local people, Land of sun, sand and sea and beautiful landscapes and scenery were rated as the most important destination image attributes by the majority of international tourists.

Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning

The three-phase marketing strategy and strong partnership between government and the tourism industry is recommended. Each country should find a unique selling proposition (USP) and capitalize on it. This will persuade current and potential customers to have empathy with the destination and its values. Market segmentation allows Destination Marketing Officers to identify those market

segments that have the highest propensity to purchase their services and products so that their marketing resources can be allocated and used more effectively.

Internet or website marketing

Continuous monitoring and improvement efforts are recommended in respect to marketing strategies for both Thailand and Botswana if they are to be used as tools to draw international tourists to their respective destinations. The World Wide Web has changed marketing and the results of the study have identified the internet; website; online marketing as an effective marketing tool with the majority (53.3%) of the respondents using the internet over other sources of travel information. Furthermore, the Word of Mouth marketing has been identified as a suitable tool that could be implemented for female tourists as the majority highlighted its use in their travel information search.

Green' Concept Marketing

The promotion of 'Eco' 'Green' movement is recommended for both Thailand and Botswana in line with the principles of ecotourism as outlined in Section 2.1.3 of Chapter 2. More emphasis should be placed on the marketing of eco-products, services and destinations. For example, eco-labeling of products and Eco-Certification for businesses that satisfy Green Environment requirements. A recommendation to integrate nature conservation and ecotourism in an effort to motivate local communities and tourists to participate and support nature conservation projects is proposed.

Interviews with the management of Thailand Tourism Authority (TAT; Southern Region) has indicated support for niche markets like Ecotourism, Health and Wellness, Honeymoon and Golf in line with market trends and this should be intensified and maintained as a strength and opportunity for growth in the ecotourism sector of Thailand.

Differentiation and Cost Leadership

Differentiation strategy is the best competitive marketing strategy with a focus on allocation of specific and limited resources and capabilities towards

sustainable competitive advantage (Wu et al, 2010). Botswana should concentrate its marketing efforts on wildlife and wilderness attractions concentrated in the Northern part of the country as they have proven to be major tourist attractions. In order to take full advantage of international tourism market, consultative meetings and possible alliances with relevant stakeholders in Air Travel and Aviation are a necessity in forging links for a possibility of a direct airline between Botswana and overseas destinations. Botswana could learn from Thailand and tap into cross-regional alliances with airlines for enhanced growth in the sector. Thailand's ecotourism products and services are renowned for value-for-money.

Destination Branding

Enhancement of exposure of the brand of each country is important as it is a marketing tool aimed at promoting and appropriately positioning the country in the global market. This can be achieved through the formulation and implementation of marketing strategies based on the unique features of each country's products including the authentic tradition and culture with unique customs and cuisines. Botswana with a wealth of unique cultural artefacts could serve better as a tourist attraction with these unspoilt cultural aspects. The brand for Botswana is "*Our Pride, Your Destination*" symbolized by the logo as shown below:



Figure 5.5 Botswana Logo

Source: www.bedia.co.bw

Contrary to expectation, the results showed that few respondents considered 'perceive ecotourism as part of own heritage' and 'beautiful architecture' as less important compared to other destination image attributes. In the case of Botswana, Dube and Mosweta (2003) advocate for all year round tourism packages that incorporate wildlife and cultural tourism. The researchers emphasize that the

cultural way of life of Batswana could serve as a tourism attraction and should be packaged and marketed as such.

Thailand's highly successful theme "Amazing Thailand, Always Amazes You" markets unique aspects of 'Thainess' that exceptionally positions the kingdom to the international market and differentiates it from other countries in terms of its product offerings. The theme's logo is as shown below:



Figure 5.6 Thailand Logo

Source: www2.tat.or.th

5.4 Recommendation for marketing strategy guidelines suitable for Thailand and Botswana

Developing a marketing strategy and mix for destinations is a complex process, mainly because there are many independent stakeholders and principals involved. Destinations cannot be managed or marketed as enterprises, due to the dynamics of interests and benefits sought by stakeholders and the differences between demand and supply experienced at different levels. As a result, marketing strategies should focus on building awareness and promoting the destination. It should be noted that the study applied both the quantitative and qualitative methodology for Thailand and Botswana. The recommendations proposed are on the basis of findings from questionnaires, interviews and reviewed literature from various sources. The researcher proposes the following recommendations based on the findings of the study and in line with the seven marketing mix variables:

1. Product:

a) The researcher proposes that destination marketing officers could segment their market by geographic factors as the results of the study found out that most ecotourists come from within the Asia Pacific Region, Europe, Oceania and the Americas. The target groups could also be segmented by demographic

segmentation based on variables such as gender, age, marital status, education, income and nationality. In this case more customer value would be realized. For example, the majority of ecotourists to Southern Thailand were found to be single males, in the age range between 20 -39 years of age from the Asia Pacific Region. Socio-demographic characteristics have been identified by the study as important segmentation variables for ecotourism marketing. With respect to travel motivations the majority visited for holiday/leisure purposes and travelled with family members. Tourism marketers should consider this as an important aspect in developing travel packages and promotional messages to appeal to leisure lovers and families. The ecotourism destinations should differentiate themselves by emphasizing on superior value so as to gain competitive advantage over their competitors. For example, the results of the study showed that 'service quality' was considered the most important product element among ecotourists followed by 'attractive tour packages' and 'variety of choice in tourism products' as important. Tourism marketers in Southern Thailand must ensure that they package their products to appeal to such a target group. Statistically significant differences at 0.05 significance level were observed on product elements for female tourists from the Asia Pacific Region.

b) In the case of Botswana, the results from the reviewed literature show that with respect to geographic segmentation, the main tourism generating regions are the African Region, followed by Europe and the Americas. Those comprising the majority are the Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) segment and visitors for Holiday/ Leisure. Tourism marketers in Botswana must ensure that they package their products to appeal to these respective target groups

For both countries, friendliness of the local people, service quality, beautiful landscapes and scenery, pleasant weather and climate and rich cultural heritage were considered more important destination image attributes that influenced international tourists' decision on destination choice. These appealed more to international tourists from Asia Pacific, Europe and Oceania followed by the Americas for Southern Thailand and the Europeans and Americas in respect to Botswana.

Tourism marketers in each country should ensure that these factors are taken into consideration when developing tour packages for the various market segments.

2. Price: The results of the study show that ‘value for money’ was the most important price element for the majority of respondents. ‘Variety of price range’ was also an important factor for consideration in destination choice. The ecotourism marketers in each country must ensure that they offer a variety of products and services with attractive packages at discounted prices to attract the price-conscious customers. Additionally, they could offer ‘value’ to customers as regards air fares, tour packages and cuisine.

3. Place: The results show that ‘guaranteed safety and security’ and ‘sanitation and cleanliness’ were the most important factors for consideration by ecotourists. The researcher recommends that enhanced security must be a priority in their enterprises and must be emphasized in their marketing and promotional messages. The results of the study showed statistically significant differences at 0.05 significant level on place element for age, nationality and monthly income. Marketing strategies developed by Destination marketing organizations should appeal to ecotourists these respective socio-demographic characteristics.

4. Promotion:

a) The results of the study show that website/online marketing is the most preferred marketing tool which is used by the Tourism Boards and it was found appealing to tourists as the majority of the respondents indicated that they used it as their source of information search. However, Word of Mouth; personal selling had the highest mean score at (mean = 3.91) compared to other promotion marketing mix elements. Statistically significant differences were found at 0.05 significant level on promotion elements for gender, marital status, nationality and monthly income. Tourism marketers should therefore emphasize on marketing strategies targeted for these market segments. The use of both the online marketing and building of strong customer relations with previous customers who may eventually recommend others through word of mouth is recommended. Poster exhibitions were considered of least importance by the respondents. The study has found out that sources of information

are influential in terms of destination image and selection and word of mouth referrals can contribute to generating more potential tourists.

b) In Botswana, the recommendation is to fully utilize the internet to promote and market Community-Based Ecotourism enterprises and activities around the country since more effort has been concentrated much in Northern Botswana.

5. People: Professionalism of staff in terms of problem solving ability and friendliness of staff are considered most important elements by the majority of respondents. Tourism marketers should recruit qualified, knowledgeable well-disciplined staff. The results of the study show that in most cases staff in the ecotourism sector occupy low ranking jobs whereas management and senior positions are reserved for expatriates. The language barrier was raised as an issue of concern in Southern Thailand as most tour guides were not able to communicate to tourists in English. Interpersonal and customer relations skills were lacking among staff. Training and development of staff should be given priority as this could enhance the overall image of the ecotourism sector. The results showed statistically significant differences at 0.05 level on the people element indicating that female tourists rated people at high importance level than their male counterparts.

6. Partnership: The study showed that partnership factors like networking between staff and customers, stakeholders and the role of tourism boards were important to respondents in determining their choice of a destination. In the case of Southern Thailand, lack of coordinated efforts was observed between the various stakeholders especially in the case of Tour operators and Tour guides even though they the same operational laws. Most respondents indicated that they were not aware of specific roles played by the Tourism Boards. The Tourism Boards and their marketing personnel should practice customer relations marketing where they liaise with current and potential customers to get their views on how they can best serve them other than relying only on non-human and impersonal means of advertising. Statistically significant differences were found at 0.05 significant level on partnership element with age, marital status and nationality.

7. Programming:

a) The results of the study show that ecotourists placed importance on programming marketing mix elements such as ‘guided tour for tourists’, ‘program itinerary for tour activities’ and ‘environmental conservation’. Ecotourism marketers should place more emphasis on the importance of environmental conservation and ensure that the program packages are clearly written, well designed and easy to understand for ease of reference to the various activities on offer. As regards conservation spending, 35.5% of the respondents were willing to spend between 51-100 US\$. Statistically significant differences at 0.05 significant level were found showing that female tourists from Asia Pacific Region placed more importance on the programming marketing mix element.

b) In Botswana, emphasis should not only be placed on specific species like ‘The Big Five’. Unique attributes of the destination should be used to differentiate it and provide benefits visitors are seeking. The Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism through the Department of Tourism and the Botswana Tourism Board and other relevant stakeholders must work collaboratively as a team for effective marketing of ecotourism in the country.

More emphasis should be placed on positioning Southern Thailand and Northern Botswana as Ecotourism destinations given their vast natural and cultural resources and rich flora and fauna (Wildlife Tourism) as the results show that the majority of international tourists consider the beautiful landscapes and scenery as well as the rich cultural heritage as important destination image attributes that have influenced their choice for the respective destinations.

Recommendations for Tourism Organizations and the governments of both countries to strengthen implementation of accreditation, certification programs and standards for ecotourism products and services are proposed.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The main limitation of the study is on the definition of ecotourism which embodies a number of concepts and carries different meanings by different authors. This makes it difficult to clearly define. Some authors emphasize the nature

of tourist's experience, others propose types of activities, whereas some highlight on both location and activity to define ecotourism. Furthermore, the study did not take cognizance of domestic tourists given the language and communication barrier in the examination of travel motivations, perceptions on importance level of destination image attributes and factors influencing choice of a destination. Domestic tourists are also important to consider when doing a survey.

The other limitation involves data collection techniques used in the study. The quantitative methodology was applied in the case of Southern Thailand whereas qualitative methodology applied more in the case for Northern Botswana. This could have an effect in the analysis and presentation of the final results.

Conducting the survey during the low season (Low season is between May – October) served as a limitation as that had an effect on the number and geographical representation of the tourists. The quality of responses may, however, be questionable. Time factor was another limitation. Although limitations are evident in the study, positive experiences prevail in that some valuable consumer insights were discovered that have contributed to the development of ecotourism marketing strategy guidelines. The results of study will further assist policy makers regarding decisions on how to package an ecotourism product and service for the benefit of relevant target segments.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

Further research can be undertaken to explore the relationship between travel motivations and the travelers' selection of a destination from a wider geographical perspective outside Asia and Africa. It would be of benefit to also examine both domestic and international eco/tourists to obtain more useful information.

It is important for the diversity that is represented within the ecotourism market and the impacts associated with visitor behavior to be considered in future product development and research.

It would be interesting to replicate the study in other geographical boundaries within Asia and Africa.

Further research could explore longitudinal studies to examine travelers to ecotourism destinations over some years so as to fully understand this complex niche market.

Data collection could have been extended to other major policy makers in government, tour operators and travel agents in the respective countries of study for their additional contribution towards enhanced improvement in the development and implementation of effective marketing strategy guidelines.

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APPENDIX A



QUESTIONNAIRE

International Tourists

Marketing Strategies in Ecotourism: The Case of Southern Thailand; Phuket and Songkhla Provinces.

By Mabel Tshukudu

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data for a Graduate Thesis for the International Master of Business Administration (IMBA) Program in the Faculty of Management Sciences, Prince of Songkhla University, Hat Yai Campus, Thailand. The data collected will only be used for academic purposes to examine demand factors in the ecotourism sector that have an influence on international tourists' decision to select a tourism destination. The researcher would like to express her sincere gratitude for your cooperation in offering your valued expertise and time in the completion of this questionnaire and in helping to ensure the final success of the survey. Your response will be treated as strictly confidential.

Section 1: Information about your important motivational travel factor

Kindly tick ✓ the appropriate answer in the box shown or write down the answer in the spaces provided.

1. Purpose of your visit

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Holiday/Leisure | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Visiting relatives/friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Business | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Official |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Ecotourism/cultural visit | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Other (Please specify.....) |

2. Whom did you travel with in this trip to Thailand?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. By yourself | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Business Partners/Associates |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Family | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Group (Package Tour) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Friends | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Other please specify.....) |

3. What were your motivations for travel to Southern Thailand?

- 1. Exploring a new place or attraction
- 2. Experiencing a different culture and tradition
- 3. Holiday/Leisure and Relaxation
- 4. Learning new things and people
- 5. Participate in nature and conservation activities
- 6. Looking for new experience & authenticity

4. How much are you willing to pay for ecotourism conservation and minimization of negative impact in ecotourism sites? (USD)

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. less than 50 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3. 101 – 150 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. 51 - 100 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Over 150 |

5. Total number of days spent in Southern Thailand.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. less than 3 days | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. 9 – 10 days |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. 4 – 6 days | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. More than 11 days |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. 7 – 8 days | |

6. Indicate your average expenditure per day in Southern Thailand, including accommodation (USD).

1. less than 150 3. 201 – 250
 2. 151 - 200 4. Over 251

Section 2: What are your perceptions regarding Southern Thailand as a tourism destination?

Rate the level of importance of these destination image attributes

5 = Most Important, 4 = Important, 3 = Neither Important nor unimportant 2 = Unimportant,

1 = Least Important

	Most Important	Important	Neither Important nor unimportant	Unimportant	Least Important
Land of sun, sea and sand					
Friendly local people					
Pleasant weather and climate					
Beautiful landscapes and scenery					
Rich cultural heritage					
Accessible (information on transport, restaurants, accommodation)					
Budget tourism destination					
Unique cuisine					
Good place to do business					
Perceive ecotourism attractions as part of own heritage					
Religious purposes					
Beautiful architecture					

2. How did you find out about the destination image attributes?

- 1. Internet
- 2. Magazines/Brochures
- 3. Word of Mouth
- 4. Travel agent/tour Operator
- 5. Travel and Tourism Fair
- 6. Other (Please specify.....)

3. Is this your first visit to Southern Thailand?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Section 3: Factors that influenced your choice of Southern Thailand as a tourist destination

5 = Strongly agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neither Agree nor disagree, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly disagree

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Good cultural experience					
Nature/ecotourism					
Visiting National Parks & Nature Reserves					
Affordable lodging					
Environmental Conservation					
Beach Tourism					
Quality of Public transport					

Section 4. Levels of importance of Marketing Mix variables

Levels of importance of Marketing Mix variables and their influence on your destination choice.

5 = Most Important, 4 = Important, 3 = Neither Important nor unimportant, 2 = Unimportant,

1 = Least Important

Marketing Mix Elements	Most Important	Important	Neither Important nor unimportant	Unimportant	Least Important
Product (Packaging, Price, Promotion, Distribution)					
1. Service quality					
2. Attractive tour packages					
3. Variety of choice in tourism products					
4. Wildlife & Nature Reserves					
5. Historical sites & Monuments					
6. Variety of Thai Cuisine					
Price					
1. Value for money					
2. Availability of price range					
Place & Physical Evidence					
1. Guaranteed Safety & Security (transaction & transportation)					
2. Sanitation & Cleanliness (Place & Environment)					
Promotion					
1. Advertising (Tour package brochures, ecotourism products guide books, flyers, Pamphlets)					
2. Word of Mouth (Personal selling)					
3. Sales Promotions (Poster exhibitions)					
4. Website marketing (online sales, facebook marketing)					
People					
1. Professionalism of staff (Problem-solving ability)					
2. Friendliness of staff					
Partnership					
1. Networking between staff and customers					
2. Networking between staff and stakeholders					
3. Networking between customers and stakeholders					
4. Role of Tourism Boards					
Programming					
1. Guided tours for tourists					
2. Programme itinerary for tour activities					
3. Environmental Conservation					

Section 5: Personal Characteristics

Kindly tick ✓ the appropriate answer in the box shown or write down the answer in the spaces provided.

1. **Gender** 1. Male 2. Female

2. **Age** 1. Below 20 year 4. 40-49 years
 2. 20-29 years 5. 50-59 years
 3. 30-39 years 6. Over 60 years

3. Marital Status

1. Single 3. Widowed
 2. Married 4. Divorced

4. **Nationality**

5. Level of Education

1. High School 4. Master Degree
 2. Diploma 5. Ph D.
 3. Bachelor Degree

6. Occupation

1. Business Owner 5. Retired
 2. Housewife 6. Employee
 3. Government Officer 7. Unemployed
 4. Student 8. Other (Please specify.....)

7. Monthly Income (USD)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Less than 1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. 5,001 – 7,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. 1,001 – 3,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. 7,001 – 9,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. 3,001 – 5,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Over 9,000 |

Your overall satisfaction with the tourism destination

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Very Satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Dissatisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Very Dissatisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Neither Satisfied nor dissatisfied | |

Thank you for your valued input and cooperation.

APPENDIX B



Interview questions for Thailand Tourism Authority Officials

The purpose of this Interview Guide is to collect data for a Graduate Thesis for the International Master of Business Administration (IMBA) Program in the Faculty of Management Sciences, Prince of Songkhla University, Hat Yai Campus, Thailand. The data collected will only be used for academic purposes to examine supply factors in the ecotourism sector. The researcher would like to express her sincere gratitude for your cooperation in offering your time and valued expertise in answering some pertinent questions relevant to your organization. The interview questions will take between 15-20 minutes. Your participation is absolutely voluntary and will be treated as strictly confidential.

1. Briefly explain ecotourism attractions that are most frequently visited in Southern Thailand.
2. Explain the current marketing strategies employed in your organization to promote ecotourism.
3. How are they of benefit in Southern Thailand?
 - Their benefit to ecotourism businesses
 - Their benefit for ecotourists
4. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the current marketing strategies employed in your organization.
 - What measures do you have in place to address the weaknesses?
5. Discuss the opportunities and threats that your organization is faced with from the external environment and
 - What measures do you have in place to address the threats?
6. In view of the prevailing weaknesses and threats, what future plans does your organization and or ministry have with regard to the marketing of ecotourism in Southern Thailand?
7. How would you rate the demand for ecotourism, cultural heritage tourism and nature-based tourism in Southern Thailand?
8. What advice would you give to the Thai government concerning the future development of the ecotourism sector in Southern Thailand?
9. Is there any other information you may want to share?

Thank you for your valued input and cooperation.

APPENDIX C**Interview questions for Botswana Tourism Authority and Ministry of
Environment, Wildlife and Tourism**

The purpose of this Interview Guide is to collect data for a Graduate Thesis for the International Master of Business Administration (IMBA) Program in the Faculty of Management Sciences, Prince of Songkhla University, Hat Yai Campus, Thailand. The data collected will only be used for academic purposes to examine supply factors in the ecotourism sector. The researcher would like to express her sincere gratitude for your cooperation in offering your time and valued expertise in answering some pertinent questions relevant to your organization. The interview questions will take between 15-20 minutes. Your participation is absolutely voluntary and will be treated as strictly confidential.

1. Briefly explain ecotourism attractions that are most frequently visited in Northern Botswana.
2. Explain the current marketing strategies employed in your organization to promote ecotourism.
3. How are they of benefit in Northern Botswana?
 - Their benefit to ecotourism businesses
 - Their benefit for ecotourists
4. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the current marketing strategies employed in your organization.
 - What measures do you have in place to address the weaknesses?
5. Discuss the opportunities and threats that your organization is faced with from the external environment.
 - What measures do you have in place to address the threats?
6. In view of the prevailing weaknesses and threats, what future plans does your organization and or ministry have with regard to the marketing of ecotourism in Northern Botswana?
7. How would you rate the demand for ecotourism, cultural heritage tourism and nature-based tourism in Northern Botswana?
8. What advice would you give to the Botswana government concerning the future development of the ecotourism sector in Northern Botswana?
9. Is there any other information you may want to share?

Thank you for your valued input and cooperation.

APPENDIX D

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

I am Ms Mabel Tshukudu, an International Graduate Student pursuing the International Master of Business Administration (IMBA) Program in the Faculty of Management Sciences, Prince of Songkhla University, Hat Yai Campus, Thailand. The purpose of this letter is to kindly request for your consent to participate in the study. The data collected will only be used for academic purposes to examine the effectiveness of marketing strategies in the ecotourism sector. As a government official, business owner or marketing officer in the tourism industry, your opinion and valuable input is crucial to the success of this research. Your participation is absolutely voluntary and will be treated as strictly confidential.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours truly

Mabel Tshukudu

Table 4.27 List of Interviewees

Name of Interviewee	Designation	Organization
1. Chinnaprayoon, B.	Director	Tourism Authority of Thailand, (TAT) Phuket Office
2. Limsakul, U.	Assistant Director	Tourism Authority of Thailand, (TAT) Hatyai Office
3. Bolele, M.	Assistant Director	Botswana Government, Ministry of Environment Wildlife and Tourism (MEWT)
4. Duma, W.	Marketing Officer (Environment)	Botswana Tourism Organization (BTO)

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Mabel Onkutlule Tshukudu

Student ID: 5310520016

Educational Attainment:

Degree	Name of Institution	Year of Graduation
Bachelor of Arts in Humanities	University of Botswana	1990
Post Graduate Diploma in Education	University of Botswana	1991

Scholarship and Awards during Enrolment

1. Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA) 2011-2012
2. First Place Award of Excellence for a Poster Presentation in an International Conference on “Educational Leadership, Knowledge & Technology Innovation in Cultural Diversity and Knowledge-Based Society” held on April 25-27, 2011, Phuket, Thailand

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