

## Destination Image of New Zealand as Perceived by Thai University Students.

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### **Abstract**

Tourism destinations must have a highly positive image if it is to succeed in the industry. This arises due to intense competition between tourism destinations. International destinations receive economic rewards offered by tourism which have been recognised and are very real (Ashworth and Goodall 1994, Hall 1994).

In order to create an appropriate marketing strategy for attracting the travellers' market, destination image must first be explored. Understanding how images are formed and the subsequent effect they have on travellers is obviously a valuable exercise for a destination promoting itself internationally.

This research presents a comprehensive investigation into how destination images are formed. With the emergence of the Thai tourist market to New Zealand and increasing trends of international student travel, the research will be focusing on the Thai university students' travel market. Their based image of destination New Zealand and their travel preference were measured by self-administered questionnaires sampling 500 respondents.

The results were analysed using SPSS (Statistical Programme for Social Science). Frequency, mean, multi-dimensional scaling and factor analysis methods were used to analyse the results and interpretations.

The overall image of New Zealand was found to be oriented towards nature, unpolluted scenery. The destination image of New Zealand was also found to be difficult to differentiate with Australia. The destination was found to be less familiar by the Thai university sample group. However, regarding visitation, majority of the respondents has a positive image prior to visitation. This positive image was also found to increase after the visit.

This research was designed to be of use to the New Zealand tourism industry, while also creating a better understanding between the two cultures and bringing social harmony for future relations.