

## Developing Perceptions and Brand Equity to Enhance the Potential of Adventure Tourism in Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi Provinces

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### Abstract

The objective of the study was to developing perceptions and brand equity to enhance the potential of adventure tourism in Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi provinces. The finding of the study were as follow: the personal factors of tourists had an effect on the brand equity and perception of adventure tourism as a whole at the 0.01 level of statistical significance. The potential factors of adventure tourism in natural resources and marketing could best predict its brand equity as a whole with predictive coefficient weighting of .431, 0.220 and 0.146, respectively as a whole could predict the brand equity in adventure tourism significantly, and they were in a positive direction on all sides. The adventure tourism's brand equity affected perceptions of adventure tourism at the statistical significance are perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand awareness. When considering deeper, it was also found that the personal factors of tourists, the potential factors, and the brand equity influenced the overview of adventure tourism perception 98.5 percents. The influential factors are natural resources; activities; marketing; brand associations; brand awareness; Bachelor's degree; travel; age 30-39; journal/magazine/guidebook, and student/college student.

**Keywords:** Brand equity, Adventure Tourism, Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi

### Introduction

In the strategic plan managed by the cabinet in November 2010, they categorized 75 provinces (at that time) and divided them into 19 provinces which are close geographically. So the five provinces in the Central part of the Central

region, comprising Chachoengsao, Samut Prakan, Nakhon Nayok, Sa Kaeo and Prachin Buri were set up to establish strategic joint development of the province under the name Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi Provinces (Five provincial cluster of the east Suvarnabhumi)

The shared vision of the above represents the main objective of the strategy on the development of service standards and eco-tourism activities to the international level in Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi Provinces. Therefore, the strategy of each province in that province group packed the development of appropriate resources in each province which is geographically similar: Fertile natural resources. However, there may be differences in the diverse and distinctive personality of each of the province in the group.

The development standard of travel services of Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi provinces was also related to the strategic plan for tourism development issues in the development of tourism products and services having quality and safety. Personnel involved in the development of tourism were focused on providing travel services to seek out novelty and to strengthen the competitiveness of tourism that have a model similarity between the rivals both in bound and out bound in international level. Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi provinces have a common potential source of adventure tourism with the readiness in aspect of good management. The advantage of the physical and the trends of tourists' demands show that the strategy of branding the adventure tourism

can be a powerful impact on competitiveness and sustainable development in Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi Provinces containing a unique and outstanding from competitors' attractions in the same category. According to Hall, 1992 quoted in Sung, H. H., (2000) and Sorenson, 1993 stated that tourism activities that can make more experience and construct benefits to the public by enhancing the power and wonderful time will contribute to the better perception, more activities, and the opportunities to participate in the creation of a great new experience. Transforming the destination since mainland natural environment with the feature of Eco-tourism to the novel trademark distinctiveness as adventure tourism, the destination developers ought to involve the study on the aware of the purpose ability. The destination should be scanned on the uniqueness characteristic as an enthusiasm location. The study employs the adventure categorization of Swarbrooke as a principle to classify the adventure behavior that evidently revealed in 10 dimensions characteristics whether a given activity can be classified as an adventure: 1) uncertain outcomes, 2) some element of danger and risk, 3) challenge, 4) anticipated rewards, 5) novelty, 6) stimulation and excitement, 7) escapism and separation, 8)

exploration and discovery, 9) absorption and focus and 10) contrasting emotions (Swarbrooke, et al. 2003: 9). These 10 dimensions of Swarbrooke would be employed as a form of adventure character to investigate the study site by means of survey the destination core identity which is the primary step of the destination branding process.

Furthermore, this study would show the effective potential factors which can assure of the destination branding on the tourists perception. Interrelated with Aaker (1996) informed that a successful brand-building is to know how to develop the brand of adventure tourism in Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi provinces.

### Purposes

To explore the personal factors influencing brand equity and perceptions of adventure tourism in Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi provinces.

To examine the relationship between personal factors and potential factors influencing the brand equity and perceptions of adventure tourism in Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi provinces.

To develop perceptions and brand equity to enhance potential of adventure tourism in Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi provinces.

### Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: The personal factors of tourists affect brand equity and adventure tourism perception.

Hypothesis 2: The potential factors of adventure tourism affect brand equity and adventure tourism perception.

Hypothesis 3: Brand equity of adventure tourism affects adventure tourism perception.

Hypothesis 4: Personal factors, Potential factors, and Brand equity of adventure tourism affect adventure tourism perception.

### Benefit of Research

This study is beneficial to Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) mutually in public and private sectors to identify the adventure tourist's characteristic that associated with the destination branding. To be informed of the marketing situations of adventure tourism, such as the readiness of adventure tourism destinations, the advantages and disadvantages of marketing promotion of adventure tourists in

Thailand and the opportunity for the market expansion in the future.

This study is beneficial to Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) mutually in public and private sectors' including the communities to know the essential of brand and perceptions, which impacts the enlarge excellence capability to respond the need of adventure travelers.

### Research Process

The study employed a quantitative method aiming at developing a functional of the survey on the perception of the adventure tourism in Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi provinces focus on the monitoring and evaluation of destination marketing mix via the sensitivity of the adventure occurrence of the destinations in the view of service receiver. A self-administered questionnaire was developed including both structured and open-ended questions to respond the research question in each research objectives.

### Population and Sample

The population in this study was Thai and foreign tourists who visited provinces in Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi including Samut Prakan, Chachoengsao, Nakhon Nayok, Prachinburi, and Sa Kaeo.

The sample group of this study was divided into Thai and foreign tourists who visited provinces in Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi were the sample of this study. The number of the sample was 385, accomplished by quota sampling. Since the exact number of tourists could not be identified, the infinite population formula was used to find a sample size (Kanlaya Vanichbuncha, 2007: 27-28). The sampling sizes in proportion in each province are 77 respondents

### Instruments

385 Questionnaires were used to collect the data. The questionnaire was constructed under the research concept. The questionnaire contains both close-ended and open-ended question. These questionnaires were for the tourists surveying their opinions on factors influencing their perceptions of the value of adventure tourism destination. The questionnaire was divided into five parts.

Part 1 is demographic information including gender, age, and nationality, level of education, occupation, income, and marital status. The questions in this section are in check-list format. The score was presented in percentage. Including with 13 questions

Part 2 is factors influencing the tourists' perception within the 7 aspects to assess the sensitivity of the adventure destination

Part 3 is factors influencing the 5 aspects of brand equity of adventure destination

Part 4 is questions about the 4 factors of adventure destination potential

Part 5 is an open-ended question for recommendation.

### Data Analysis

The result of hypothesis 1 showed that the personal factors of tourists influenced the overview of adventure tourism's brand equity at the 0.01 level of significance: Number of people traveling 6 – 10 people, expenditure in the tour 4,001 – 5,000 Baht, studying and seeking knowledge, being students, single status, living in central, male and age 30–39. On the other hands, for the influenced the overview of adventure tourism perception at the 0.01 level of significance: Number of people traveling 6 – 10 people, expenditure in the tour 4,001 – 5,000 Baht, studying and seeking knowledge, being students, single status, living in central, and age 30–39. It was showed that gender wasn't affect to the perception. The results of the analysis also found that the personal factors had the prediction power of the overview of the brand equity of adventure tourism at 47.2

percents, and also had the prediction power the overview of perception of adventure tourism at 41.1 percent.

The result of Hypothesis 2 testing found that the potential factors of adventure tourism in natural resources, marketing, and activities could best predict its brand equity as a whole with predictive coefficient weighting of .431, 0.220 and 0.146 respectively. And also affect the overview of adventure tourism perception at the 0.01 level of significance: natural resources, readiness, activities, and marketing. The results of the analysis also found that the potential of adventure tourism had the prediction power of the overview of the brand equity of adventure tourism at 74.6 percent, and also had the prediction power of the overview of the adventure tourism perception at 98.3 percent.

The result of Hypothesis 3 testing showed that the brand equity of adventure tourism affects the overview of adventure tourism perception at the 0.01 level of significance: perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand awareness. The results of the analysis also found that brand equity of adventure tourism affect the overview of adventure tourism perception at 66.9 percent.

The result of Hypothesis 4 testing showed that the personal factors of tourists, the potential

factors, and the brand equity influenced the overview of adventure tourism perception at the 0.01 level of significance: Natural resources, activities, marketing, brand associations, brand awareness, Bachelor’s degree, travel, age 30–39, journal/magazine/guidebook, and student/college student. The results of the analysis also found that the personal factors of tourists, the potential factors, and the brand equity influenced the overview of adventure tourism perception 98.5 percents

### Conclusion

The overview of hypothesis found that personal factors of tourists and adventure tourism potential factors influenced to the brand equity and adventure tourism perception. The most influenced factors of the destination potential are natural resources activities, and marketing. The significant brand equity factors are brand associations, and brand awareness, and that last imperative point are the destination target could be suggested that tourists who are in the range of 30–39 years old with the purpose of travelling, seeking adventurous travelling information via journal, magazine, and/or guidebook.

### Recommendation

Based on the findings, it was found that the adventure tourism’s brand equity in term of brand associated and brand awareness can enhance the potential of adventure tourism in the lower level than the activities and marketing within the site. Accordingly, Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi Provinces should emphasize on the variables of brand equity of attractions in those aspects by targeting a clear target group as well as the ability of skilled personnel presentation, the creation of new kinds of adventure activities unique to the natural resources in the provinces through a marketing communication process that could remarkably attract and stimulate brand awareness of adventure tourism in Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi Provinces. It was because successful creating brand awareness could increase the financial value of a province or group. It led to a competitive edge. That meant the brand could be a protection against price cutting. In addition, it could also reduce marketing costs because customers were aware of and were loyal to the brand.

To develop the adventure tourism awareness in Bencha Burapha Suvarnabhumi Provinces in term of brand associations was consistent with the perceived quality

recommendations above. This was also consistent with Aaker (1997)'s brand personality, which said that Brand Personality is "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" if the tourist attraction personality reflected the identity of the tourists. Besides, the tourist attractions could select the primary and secondary tourist groups properly. It was further said that the brand equity gauge of tourist attractions in term of brand associations must be the perfect combination of Value Proposition in terms of benefits gained during functional benefits, called in this research "a natural destination". On the other hand, Emotional benefits in this research was a risk experiences that could enhance the benefits in tourist attraction awareness quickly as number one in tourists' memories when thinking about adventure tourism if added self expressive benefits, called in this research "authentic and individual travel experiences in the sense of Bencha Burapha Suvambhumi". Additionally, credibility in this research was unique of land based – extreme activities, It could also be said that the creation of a brand personality was the discovery of brand identity of the destination that was a unique feature of the province to enhance the competitiveness potential of the adventure tourism of Bencha Burapha Suvambhumi Provinces

compared to other adventurous areas without a brand.

The potential factors of adventure tourism in terms of natural resources and activities could predict brand equity of adventure tourism in terms of perceived quality, brand awareness, and brand loyalty. That meant if there was an adventure tourism promotion straight to the right target audiences (the single tourists who are 30–39 years old) through the effective marketing communication tools (travel magazine or guidebook) to recognize the unique brand of Bencha Burapha Suvambhumi provinces focusing on activity-oriented and natural resource-oriented branding process, the process of delivering experience through skillful personnel and ensuring safety in adventure travel truly matching the moment of truth could be able to stably support brand loyalty of adventure attractions in Bencha Burapha Suvambhumi Provinces. As the advantage of the provinces are physical characteristics of could drive awareness to travelers who were interested in and adore land-based adventure among the natural features that truly corresponded to activities. The results of the research also supported that the factor of other proprietary brand asset was the only factor affecting the perception of adventure attractions in term of customer solution and expectation.

[320]

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