RESEARCH ARTICLE

Measuring Branding Variables that Affect the Brand Choice Intention toward Tourism Destinations in Thailand's Eastern Coastal Region

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A large number of tourists visit Thailand's eastern coastal regions every year. Brand choice intention is one of the fundamental elements for developing marketing strategies. Therefore, the purposes of this study are to investigate the impact of five brand elements on destination brand loyalty and brand choice intention and to study the relationships among each construct of consumer brand perception by using EFA, CFA, and SEM. A sample of 830 Thai tourists returned paper-based surveys regarding their interests and perceived value. The study found four brand elements that significantly affect brand loyalty and brand choice intention, both directly and indirectly. The four elements include *perceived value, interest, brand awareness,* and *brand image*. Based on the results, tourism organizations in Thailand may need to create marketing strategies that define and communicate the perceived values of traveling to the eastern coastal regions. Such strategies can provide long-term attractiveness that could enhance Thailand's east-coast tourism industry.

Keywords: Brand Choice Intention, Brand Loyalty, Thailand's Eastern Coastal Regions, Thailand Tourism Destination, Structural Equation Model (SEM)

JEL Classification: M31

Thailand has numerous attractive and interesting tourist destinations that have continually amazed people around the world. The specific interests are Thailand's beach and marine tourist destinations. The east coast of Thailand offers a variety of activities and experiences for travelers. Tourists can find cultural experiences (such as visiting fishing villages and lighthouses), marine activities (such as windsurfing, fishing, and sailing),

and swimming at beautiful beaches. Thailand has many geographical areas that offer beach and coastal attractions for tourists, and these areas attract many visitors every year. For this study, the brand choice intention concept was used to determine how tourists think about the eastern coastal region or if they would choose this region as a tourist destination since this region has well-known marine and beach tourism destinations. According to the literature, various researchers have studied customers' intention to visit the tourism destination and customers' perceived destination brand values that influence their destination loyalty. However, there is limited research related to the effect of customer brand perceptions on brand choice intention in tourism destinations, especially for Thailand's eastern coastal region.

Research Objectives

According to the previous studies of Thailand's eastern coastal region tourists, many studies focused on the tourists' satisfaction toward the 7Ps factors such as services, marketing communication tools, expenses of traveling, and physical environment. In addition, tourists' motivation and expectations were interesting topics among Thai researchers who investigated the factors of facilities, services, and traveling aims. However, the study of branding perceptions was lacking. Therefore, the present study would like to apply and extend the concept of consumer brand perception by assessing the brand choice intention, along with its adaptation by a survey of Thailand's eastern coastal region tourists.

The aims of this study are to (1) investigate the consumer brand perception factors influencing the brand choice intention of tourists who choose destinations in the eastern coastal region by applying the model shown in Figure 1 by using EFA, CFA, and SEM; (2) study the relationships among the different (re)constructs by exploring the effects brand loyalty and brand choice intentions; and (3) suggest more effective development strategies in order to help Thailand travel organizations or related institutions that would attract more tourists to the eastern coastal areas in Thailand.

Literature Review

Destination Branding – Eastern Coastal Region Tourism in Thailand

The eastern coastal region of Thailand has become a tourism destination for international tourists who have visited and will visit Thailand in 2019 and beyond. The Thai government has supported many coastal-related campaigns, and the government has launched multiple initiatives to sustain and strengthen tourism in this region for both Thai and foreign tourists. For example, the recently Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA) has worked with the Thai Ecotourism & Adventure Travel Association (TEATA) to develop coastal activities and destination routes for Thailand's eastern coastal region. These organizations released a campaign called "Go Ea(s)t & Go Green" to attract ecotourists and adventure tourists. The eastern coastal area is defined as an active beach area composed of multiple beach locations in four provinces: Chonburi, Rayong, Chanthaburi, and Trat. Many activities have been promoted for tourists that come to this region, including cruising, which is one of the most popular activities among Chinese and Korean tourists (BLT Bangkok, 2019). The concept of community-based tourism (CBT), where several communities in the eastern coastal area focus on related activities, is also supported. The government also supports the region by advising people in the coastal communities on various topics, such as how to plan, develop, and maintain areas that will create sustainable tourism (DASTA, 2019).

Consumer Brand Perception: The Constructs

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is a key aspect of brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Grassl, 1999), which means that brand awareness can help organizations to operate more successfully. The success of brand awareness comes with brand image, signature, or brand reputation, which play distinctive and reliable roles for an organization because they influence consumers' decision-making (Henderson & Cote, 1998). Chigora and Zvavahera (2015) researched brand equity for tourism by analyzing destination brand awareness, brand image, and perceived brand quality and how they impacted destination brand loyalty. Their study found that brand image was the most influential factor that could

raise the level of tourism destination brand loyalty in Zimbabwe. Then next two most influential factors were brand awareness and perceived brand quality. Different types of tourism destinations were analyzed by applying the concepts of brand awareness, image, equity, and loyalty. Kobierecki (2017) found that the Commonwealth Games (a set of diplomatic sporting events) could enhance national branding by developing cooperation among countries. Several countries used their own national branding to promote and communicate their uniqueness and to present their competitive identities (Bisa, 2013). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Brand Awareness will positively influence brand loyalty when tourists choose to travel to the eastern coastal regions in Thailand.

Hypothesis 2: Brand Awareness will positively influence brand choice intention when tourists choose to travel to the eastern coastal regions in Thailand.

Brand Image

Brand image refers to the connection between consumers' beliefs and their experiences with the brand that may be the result of brand differentiation (Aaker, 1991; Kotler, 1998). In addition, Radón (2012) found that brands can be viewed as direct and indirect communication tools that connect with consumers' viewpoints and can be assessed in terms of identity. Gantina and Swantari (2018) suggested that destination brand image can increase trip quality and perceived trip value. Parra et al. (2016) studied a cognitive attribute called "traveling destination image" by investigating the relationship between two variables: travelers' satisfaction and destination brand loyalty. These authors reported that image attributes are important because they can establish positive word-of-mouth recommendations among tourists, which can impact a tourist's revisit intentions. Some researchers found that using brand imaging, such as storytelling strategies (Volić et al., 2017) and brand stories (Lund et al., 2018) can create brand positioning and selling points (Jarratt et al., 2019). Hence, the following hypotheses are expressed.

Hypothesis 3: Brand Image will positively influence brand loyalty when tourists choose to travel to the eastern coastal regions in Thailand.

Hypothesis 4: Brand Image will positively influence brand choice intention when tourists choose to travel to the eastern coastal regions in Thailand.

Perceived Quality

Perceived quality is defined as a consumer's judgment of product excellence that is based on subjective perceptions (Das, 2014). Chapman and Wahlers (1999) considered perceived brand quality as a consumer's belief about how good the purchased product was based on their views about the brand. Consumers use both extrinsic and intrinsic cues to infer the quality of products and services. The extrinsic cues are related neither to physical product components nor to product performance. Instead, they are related to brand awareness, brand reputation, packaging, price, advertising, and country of origin. The intrinsic cues are associated with the product itself. For example, intrinsic cues include product shape, product color, technical content. Zeithaml (1988) claimed that consumers prefer to judge product or service quality by using extrinsic cues if the customers lack information about the actual product or service. Hence, the following hypotheses are developed.

Hypothesis 5: Perceived Quality will positively influence brand loyalty when tourists choose to travel to the eastern coastal regions in Thailand.

Hypothesis 6: Perceived Quality will positively influence brand choice intention when tourists choose to travel to the eastern coastal regions in Thailand.

Brand Fondness

Brand fondness is an important brand construct that creates aspects of product or service identity that are essential for consumers' perceptions and, thus, buying intentions (Jung & Sung, 2008). Several studies were organized to test the idea that arousal and pleasantness dimensions are predictive factors in buying situations at furniture stores (Donovan et al., 1994; Russell & Pratt, 1980). Consumers' emotional responses were an essential variable affecting buying behavior and intentions (Mazaheri et al., 2014). Emotional reaction

can be one of the predictors of consumer satisfaction. For instance, Lee et al. (2009) assessed the impact of consumers' emotions regarding their satisfaction and brand loyalty to selected restaurants. Sui and Baloglu (2003) reported that emotional attachments influenced behaviors such as spending time in a casino, word-of-mouth about the casino, and loyalty to the casino. Thus, the following hypotheses are considered.

> *Hypothesis 7:* Brand Fondness will positively influence brand loyalty when tourists choose to travel to the eastern coastal regions in Thailand.
> *Hypothesis 8:* Brand Fondness will positively influence brand choice intention when tourists choose to travel to the eastern coastal regions in Thailand.

Brand Association

Brand association refers to any kind of benefit that consumers cognitively connect with a brand (Keller, 1993). A positive brand association is realized when consumers' personal and social needs and brand meanings (emotional, functional, and symbolic meanings) are congruent with consumers' self-values and concepts about themselves (Funk & James, 2006). Kunkel et al. (2017) studied professional soccer league fans to examine the relationship between a team brand and team-related behaviors. It was found that four core brand association variables significantly affected customers' perceptions of a team brand and were related to customers' behavioral intentions. Therefore, a strong fan base created a strong brand association. Camarrone and Van Hulle (2019) claimed that in competitive markets, a company should ensure that customers perceive its brand with strong and unique associations by using neuro-marketing to measure brand associations. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed.

> *Hypothesis 9:* Brand Association will positively influence brand loyalty when tourists choose to travel to the eastern coastal regions in Thailand.
> *Hypothesis 10:* Brand Association will positively influence brand choice intention when tourists choose to travel to the eastern coastal regions in Thailand.

Destination Brand Loyalty and Brand Choice Intention in Tourism Destinations

Destination brand loyalty is considered to be one of the most influential determinants of economic growth for tourism markets, which impacts citizen welfare and employment rates linked to the tourist sector (Revilla-Camacho et al., 2015). Yoo and Bai (2013) claimed that brand loyalty toward a destination was considered to be an important indicator impacting profitability and growth. Moreover, Revilla-Camacho et al. (2015) suggested that measuring tourism brand loyalty can be achieved by gathering data for variables such as image, satisfaction, perceived quality, expectation, intention to revisit, intention to recommend the destination, and overnight stays. The basis of gaining traveler loyalty was to provide quick responses to traveler suggestions or requests, to provide high-quality standards of products and services associated with tourism branding, and to provide unique or exceptional service characteristics (Górska-Warsewicz & Kulykovets, 2020).

Many studies of motives leading consumers in selecting brand alternatives were influenced by interrelating variables, especially in terms of branding. Examples of such variables include product attributes (function, price, etc.), product or brand values, environmental issues, and consumer characteristics. Alam and Rubel (2014) suggested that brand choices depend on many factors. For example, when choosing a brand, a theory of brand involvement was applied to a specific situation. The paper concluded that service quality had a high impact on purchase intentions. However, consumers actually make poorer purchase decisions with more information (Alam & Rubel, 2014). According to Oliver (1999), brand loyalty, which implies consumers trusted a specific product's brand or company's brand, was one of the strongest factors leading to a decreasing level of switching to another brand. Hsu et al. (2012) agreed that brand loyalty was the key variable influencing brand equity and was a vital influence on brand choice intentions. The hypothesis is set as:

> *Hypothesis 11:* Brand Loyalty will positively influence Brand Choice Intention when tourists choose to travel to the eastern coastal regions in Thailand.

The conceptual framework of this work with the proposed hypotheses is presented in Figure 1.

Conceptual Framework

To achieve brand choice intention when selecting a tourism destination, consistent quality of branding products and services offered at the tourism destination is required. Chatzigeorgiou and Christou (2016) recommended that tourism branding organizations should not create drastic changes in product and service offerings very frequently. If changes are needed, then destination branding marketers should carefully communicate the changes to tourists.

Research Methodology

The motivation of this study was to explore the factors affecting brand choice intention toward choosing to travel in Thailand's eastern coastal region by Thai tourists.

Research Design and Questionnaire Development

A quantitative questionnaire with 30 items (including items from the brand choice intention construct) was adapted from the literature. Each item was carefully rephrased for the context of a travel destination. A 5-point Likert scale was used to assess the items based on the importance level of each item when choosing to travel to destinations in the eastern coastal regions of Thailand. The Likert scale ranged from 1 = "Least" to 5 = "Most". The collected data using the questionnaire were coded. Descriptive statistical analyses were explained for demographic data, whereas structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test the model's hypotheses.

The items employed in this study were translated appropriately into Thai for the questionnaires by maintaining the same meaning as the original English versions, as shown in Table 1.

A pretest of proposed model constructs of brand loyalty and brand choice intention scales, as measured by the respondents, showed that Cronbach's alpha values of reliability for the 30 items was 9.62. That value exceeded the threshold of 0.70, which is considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2006).

Research Setting and Data Collection

In order to empirically test the proposed research model (Figure 1), the study was conducted with Thai tourists who were not residents of the eastern coastal regions but had traveled to eastern coastal destinations.
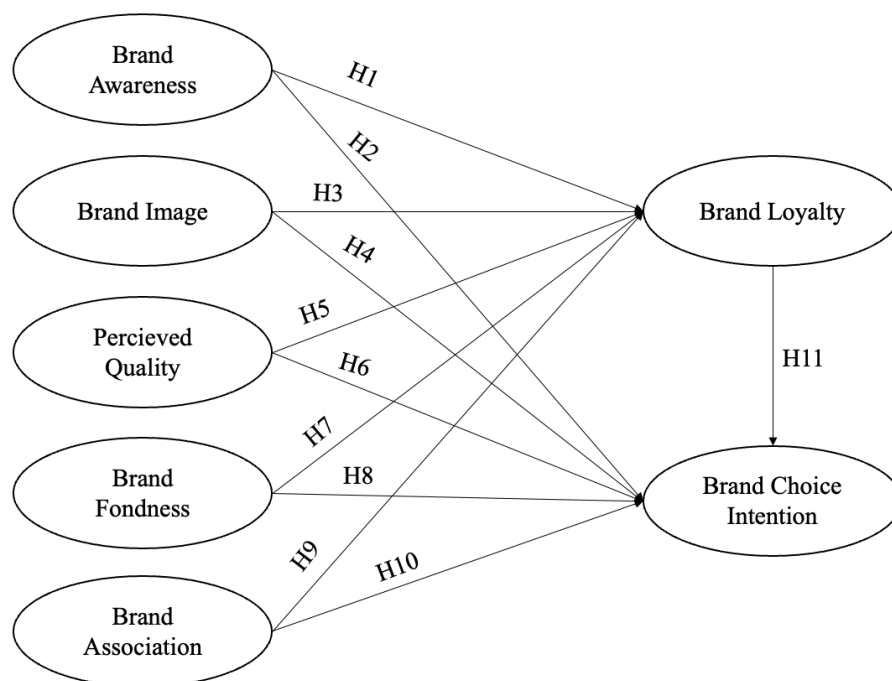
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Brand Choice Intention Study

Table 1. *Sources of the Constructs*

Constructs	Type of Variables	Sources
Brand Awareness	Independent variable/ Predictor	Adapted from Phung et al. (2019); Horng et al. (2012)
Brand Image	Independent variable/ Predictor	Adapted from Phung et al. (2019); Kim et al. (2018)
Perceived Quality	Independent variable/ Predictor	Adapted from Phung et al. (2019); Kim et al. (2018)
Brand Fondness	Independent variable/ Predictor	Adapted from Phung et al. (2019)
Brand Association	Independent variable/ Predictor	Adapted from Pappu et al. (2005); Aaker (1991); Washburn & Plank (2002); Yoo & Donthu (2001)
Brand Loyalty	Predictor	Adapted from Phung et al. (2019); Melewar et al. (2017); Boo et al. (2009); Pappu et al. (2005); Keller (2003)
Brand Choice Intention	Dependent variable	Adapted from Phung et al. (2019)

The investigation was carefully designed to ensure that a reasonable sampling selection for analysis covered a variety of Thai tourists. Data in this study were gathered through a paper-based questionnaire placed at different provinces in Thailand, except for the seven provinces in Eastern Thailand. Questionnaires were distributed to targeted Thai tourists in five parts of Thailand: 18.84% from northern Thailand, 36.19% from northeast Thailand, 5.65% from western Thailand, 23.80% from central Thailand, and 15.53% from southern Thailand. These proportions were based on population data provided by the National Statistical Office in Thailand (National Statistical Office, 2020). A pre-screen was used to ensure that only people who have visited the eastern coastal region could create a survey response.

A total of 830 tourist responses were received using the questionnaire. All 830 samples were reviewed and considered valid. A demographic data analysis of these samples is presented in Table 2.

Table 3 presents the cross-tabulations of age and gender from all 830 respondents. The highest numbers of the respondents who answered the questionnaires were those aged between 20–29, whose age were below 20 years old, and whose age ranged between 30-39. Among those groups of people, the number of females was more than that of males (Table 3).

Table 4 illustrates the association between age and travel companions. The data showed that the top 3 groups of age variables (20-29, below 20, and 30-39) chose to travel to Thailand's eastern coastal regions with their family, followed by friends. However, the family was one the most favorable choices for people of every age range to travel with.

Results

Using the data collected via the survey, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was adopted to conduct the preliminary analysis of brand choice intention for Thai tourists who chose to visit the eastern coastal region of Thailand. Originally, 21 items (excluding items from brand choice intention and brand loyalty) were derived from the framework. However, two poorly performing items were removed from the original 21 items. The 19 remaining items were resolved to form new constructs, and these items were grouped into four new constructs: Perceived Value, Interest, Brand Awareness, and Brand Image.

The brand awareness and brand image model constructs have existed for a while, but the other two constructs—perceived value and interest—were formed by using EFA analysis. These two new constructs were considered more appropriate dimension names. The

Table 2. *Sampling Profile*

Variable		N (830)	Percent
Gender	Male	420	50.6
	Female	410	49.4
Age	Below 20 years old	210	25.3
	20-29 years old	374	45.1
	30-39 years old	176	21.2
	40-49 years old	38	4.6
	50-59 years old	28	3.5
	Older than 59	4	0.5
Income per Month (in Thai Baht)	Below 10,000	320	38.6
	10,001-30,000	334	40.2
	30,001-50,000	108	13.0
	50,001-70,000	34	4.1
	More than 70,000	34	4.1
Education	Lower than bachelor's degree	450	54.2
	Bachelor's degree	318	38.3
	Higher than bachelor's degree	62	7.5
Occupation	Employees (private company)	308	37.1
	Government officer	50	6.0
	Business owner	102	12.3
	Freelancer	12	1.4
	Student	286	34.5
	Unemployed	72	8.7
	Other (please identify)	0	0.0
Travel Companions	Family	464	55.9
	Friends	242	29.2
	Couples or partners	94	11.3
	Tourists using a tour package	8	1.0
	Travel alone	22	2.7
	Other (please identify)	0	0.0
Information Search *(The respondents can select more than 1 choice.)*	The internet and websites	522	49.5
	Mobile phone travel applications	230	21.8
	Friends or family	242	23.0
	Travel brochures	40	3.8
	TV or radio ads	20	1.9
	Other (please identify)	0	0.0
Number of Visits to East Coast (in 1 year)	1 time	180	21.7
	2-4 times	353	42.5
	5-7 times	212	25.5
	More than 7 times	85	10.2

Variable		N (830)	Percent
Reason to Visit East Coast	Invited by friends or relatives	159	19.2
	Impressed from their first visit	224	27.0
	Suggested by public or private sectors	253	30.5
	Articles or photos	172	20.7
	Seminars, work, business	22	2.7
	Other (please identify)	0	0.0

Table 3. *Age and Gender Cross Tabulation*

Row Labels	Count of Age
Below 20 years old	210
Female	106
Male	104
Between 20-29 years old	374
Female	164
Male	210
Between 30-39 years old	176
Female	102
Male	74
Between 40-49 years old	38
Female	22
Male	16
Between 50-59 years old	28
Female	14
Male	14
Older than 59 years old	4
Female	2
Male	2
Total	830

Table 4. *Age and Travel Companions Cross Tabulation*

Row Labels		Count of Age
Below 20 years old		210
	Couples or partners	32
	Family	84
	Friends	82
	Travel alone	12
Between 20-29 years old		374
	Couples or partners	52
	Family	194
	Friends	124
	Travel alone	4

Row Labels		Count of Age
Between 30-39 years old		176
	Couples or partners	10
	Family	124
	Friends	30
	Tourists using a tour package	6
	Travel alone	6
Between 40-49 years old		38
	Family	34
	Friends	2
	Tourists using a tour package	2
Between 50-59 years old		28
	Family	24
	Friends	4
Older than 59 years old		4
	Family	4
Total		830

Table 5. *Structural Model Fit Indices*

Measurement	Model Findings	Cut-Off Value	Conclusion	References
CMIN/DF (	5.311	≤5.00	Moderate	Bollen (1989)
RMSEA	0.069	≤0.08	Good	Kline (2005)
TLI	0.790	≥0.80	Moderate	Bentler (1990)
NFI	0.794	0–- 1	Good	Hu & Bentler (1999)

Table 6. *Loadings and Composite Reliability*

Reconstructed and Renamed Items	Standardized Loadings	Composite Reliability
Perceived Value		0.890
I think the eastern coastal region is outstanding compared to other coastal regions.	0.960	
I can remember the identity of the eastern coastal region.	0.920	
I think traveling to the eastern coastal region is worth it.	0.626	
I think traveling to the eastern coastal region reflects my lifestyle.	0.577	
I think traveling to the eastern coastal region serves my needs.	0.565	
I always think about the eastern coastal region as the first destination when I want to travel.	0.564	

Reconstructed and Renamed Items	Standardized Loadings	Composite Reliability
I know how the eastern coastal region looks.	0.534	
Interest		0.883
I think people like to travel to the eastern coastal region.	0.913	
I think the eastern coastal region is interesting.	0.742	
Traveling to the eastern coastal region is interesting to people.	0.623	
I recognize the eastern coastal region well.	0.619	
I am proud of traveling to the eastern coastal region.	0.608	
I am confident when traveling to the eastern coastal region.	0.517	
Brand Awareness		0.824
I know the eastern coastal region more than other coastal regions.	0.907	
I think the eastern coastal region is always the first option in my mind.	0.776	
I am used to traveling to the eastern coastal region.	0.762	
Brand Image		0.824
I think the eastern coastal region is a good representation of Thai coastal areas.	0.829	
I think the eastern coastal region helps to support images of Thai coastal traveling.	0.733	
I think the eastern coastal region's image is unique.	0.554	

Table 7. *Correlation Coefficients for the New Observed Variables*

Variables	1 Perceived Value	2 Interest	3 Brand Awareness
Perceived value (reconstructed variable)			
Interest (reconstructed variable)	0.695**		
Brand awareness	0.651**	0.664**	
Brand image	0.674**	0.647**	0.537**

*Note: **Correlation is significant at a level of 0.01 (two-tailed).*

items under Perceived Value are mainly related to the different values perceived by the respondents. The items under Interest are mainly related to the various interests of the respondents.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted in AMOS. The CFA results revealed that the assessment of Thai tourists' brand choice intention confirmed their choice to travel to Thailand's eastern coastal regions, as shown by the model fit summary in Table 5. The model fit acceptance was indicated by a comparative fit index (CFI) value of 0.80 or higher (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Table 6 illustrates the principle component analysis of individual constructs. The model assessment used factor loading and composite reliability based on reconstructed and renamed variables.

The results of the CFA suggested that some constructs should be combined, but other constructs should be eliminated. The composite reliability for

each of the new constructs was greater than 0.70. As seen in Table 7, the correlation matrix of the new observed variables from the model was tested using a Pearson correlation, which measures the relationship among the new variables.
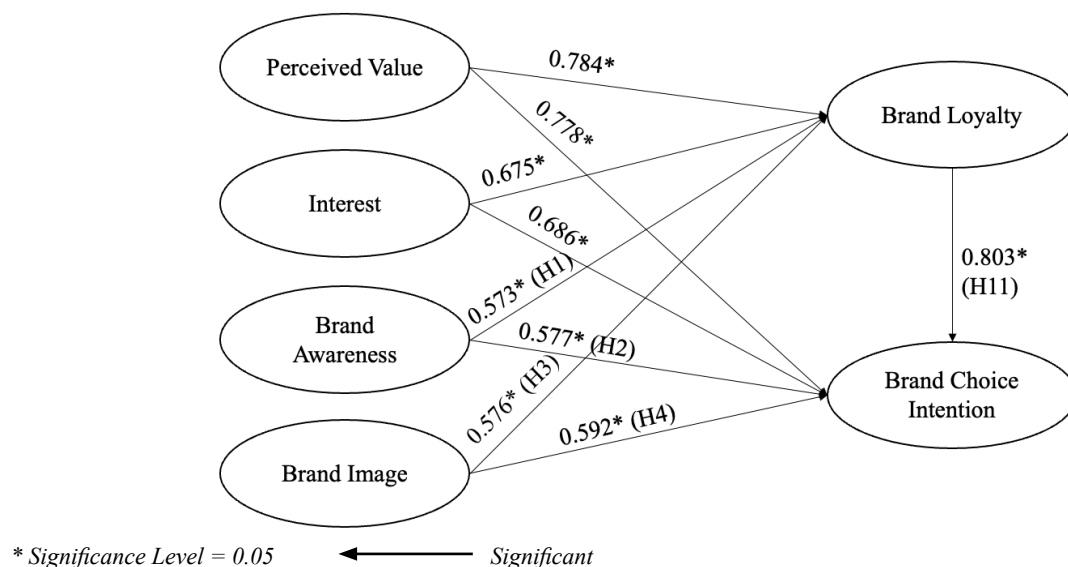
Hypotheses Testing

The 11 hypotheses listed earlier in the paper were tested using SEM. The results of this testing on the regrouped constructs are displayed in Table 8 and Figure 2. Five of the hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4, and H11) were supported by the model, and those hypotheses are shown in Table 8. However, the other six hypotheses (H5, H6, H7, H8, H9, and H10) could not be confirmed as acceptable because of the reconstructed variables. The final part of Table 8 shows how the reconstructed variables affect brand loyalty and brand choice intention.

Table 8. *The Mediating Effect Predicting Brand Loyalty and Brand Choice Intention*

Predictor	Brand Loyalty			Brand Choice Intention		
	B	SE B	Standardized Coefficient	B	SE B	Standardized Coefficient
Perceived Value	0.841	0.023	0.784*	0.816	0.023	0.778*
Interest	0.758	0.029	0.675*	0.753	0.028	0.686*
Brand Awareness	0.596	0.030	0.573*	0.587	0.029	0.577*
Brand Image	0.632	0.031	0.576*	0.634	0.030	0.592*
Brand Loyalty	-	-	-	0.785	0.020	0.803*

*Note: *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).*

Figure 2. Standardized Total Effects for the Reconstructed Model

Table 9. *Results of Structural Model (Hypotheses Testing)*

No.	Hypothesis	Coefficients (SE) N = 830	Result
H1	Brand Awareness → Brand Loyalty	0.573*	Supported
H2	Brand Awareness → Brand Choice Intention	0.577*	Supported
H3	Brand Image → Brand Loyalty	0.576*	Supported
H4	Brand Image → Brand Choice Intention	0.592*	Supported
H11	Brand Loyalty → Brand Choice Intention	0.803*	Supported
	Reconstructed Variables–- New Model		
	Perceived Value → Brand Loyalty	0.784*	Supported
	Perceived Value → Brand Choice Intention	0.778*	Supported
	Interest → Brand Loyalty	0.675*	Supported
	Interest → Brand Choice Intention	0.686*	Supported

*Note: *Significant ($p < 0.05$).*

Table 9 displays the results of the structural model using the four constructs diagramed in Figure 2. When using the SEM concept, the linear relationships between independent and dependent variables were checked when making decisions (Sin et al., 2015).

In the literature review, this study hypothesized the brand perception variables, including brand loyalty, predicting brand loyalty and brand choice intention (H1-H10) by using 830 samples. EFA, CFA, and SEM measured consumer brand choice intention and brand loyalty based on brand perception (re)constructs (perceived value, interest, brand awareness, and brand image). The original constructs of H1-H4, and H11 (brand awareness and brand image) were supported after hypothesis testing with standardized estimate values of 0.573, 0.577, 0.576, 0.592, and 0.803, $p < 0.05$, respectively, as shown in Table 9. Although the other six hypotheses were not confirmed as acceptable hypotheses, the reconstructed variables (perceived value and interest) in the new model (Figure 2) were tested and showed that they had positively influenced brand loyalty and brand choice intention, with standardized estimate values of 0.784, 0.778, 0.675 and 0.686, $p < 0.05$, respectively in Table 7.

Discussion

Theoretical Contributions

This study employed research statistics by using EFA, CFA, and SEM to investigate how tourists make a brand choice intention to visit Thailand's eastern coastal regions. The research explored dimensions that constitute brand loyalty and brand choice intention components. Based on the analysis of the data, the results of the hypotheses framework are presented in Table 8. The EFA and CFA analysis indicated that five of the hypotheses listed in this study were supported, whereas the other six hypotheses were not supported. The results show that the four new observed hypotheses influence brand loyalty and brand choice intention. The results suggest that four key elements significantly affect brand loyalty and brand choice intention. The four key elements are perceived value, interest, brand awareness, and brand image. This study implies that perceived value is the most effective factor influencing brand choice intention. The perceived brand value was treated as influencing brand loyalty directly (Lu et al., 2024; Šerić et al., 2014; So et al., 2013; Ahmad & Hashim, 2011). It was indicated that value or quality

dimensions (features, performance, conformation quality reliability, and design) were important in this respect (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). Konecnik and Gartner (2007) confirmed the perceived quality in the context of tourism can be related to the quality of food, accommodations, the environment, safety, and others. The results further suggest a direct effect from perceived value, through brand choice intention as a mediator, to brand loyalty. Interest, brand awareness, and brand image were examined and found to have significant relationships that impacted brand loyalty and brand choice intention. Yoo et al. (2000) stated that when brand awareness comes with brand associations, a brand image is formed. Regarding this perspective, brand awareness is relevant if tourists are aware of or recognize the brand (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014) and is not limited to the brand logo, symbol, or name (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003). Additionally, a unique image is treated as a dimension affecting destination brand selection. The overall brand image influences brand components (such as brand cognitive, brand affective, and so forth) and tourists' future behaviors, such as behaviors' intentions (Qu et al., 2011).

Managerial Implications

Based on the findings of this theoretical study, Thailand's tourism authorities and other related organizations involved in the tourism industry may want to create expectancy-value models for the eastern coastal regions. Related information could be communicated to tourists throughout Thailand. Tourists can apply several decision approaches to choose between different destination brands. Some approaches are simple, whereas others require high-involvement selection, which implies that tourists may need more time to evaluate various destination brand options (Mohan Raj & Aravamudhan, 2018). For example, the eastern coasts, approximately 100 kilometers southeast of Bangkok, have many high-quality destinations. Pattaya could be Thailand's number one package-tour destination for those who are looking for a beach destination along with a variety of entertainment options such as golf courses, shopping, and year-round diving. The coastal areas in Trat province consist of more than 40 islands, including Ko Chang, which is Thailand's third largest island after Phuket and Ko

Samui. Many of these islands have pristine beaches. The Trat area also provides tourists with a connection to Cambodia's coastal region.

Tourism-related organizations should understand how marketing campaigns can be used to communicate with target tourists. Valek (2017) studied the concept of destination awareness and claimed that it was an important dimension that impacts destination brand loyalty. However, successful tourism marketing campaigns are challenging jobs for tourism marketers. Currently, several potential marketing tools can be used to develop inspiring tourism marketing campaigns. These tools include various types of social media sites, online display ads, high-quality videos, and so forth. For example, Thailand's eastern coastal regions have plenty of beautiful beaches. The content in marketing or advertising campaigns can enhance tourists' brand awareness by simply using a photo of a beautiful, calm beach. The specific content depends on the purpose of the campaign as well as the target audience. Using taglines or keywords such as "amazing" is another option that helps tourists to remember a specific destination. In addition to beaches, the eastern coastal region hosts many interesting and challenging activities for tourists who visit the region. These other activities can also be communicated to tourists using social media, pictures, videos, and taglines.

Furthermore, the image of a destination contains and conveys brand meaning. The image refers to the extrinsic properties of the tourism destination. When a marketing campaign is created, marketers should understand the personality and values of the target tourists. These concepts are essential to develop a brand image that is related to the characteristics of the target tourist. Aaker (1997) developed five brand personality constructs: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. The presentation of brand image for Thailand's eastern coastal regions can convey sincerity or excitement, depending on the target tourists and the type of information that is communicated to them. Choosing the right image is important, but choosing the right marketing tools and channels to communicate with targeted tourists is also important. The right images and the right tools can allow marketers to reach the intended audience with a message that will increase tourists' interest in the destination.

Conclusion

Managing tourists' brand choice selection can be viewed as an integrated strategy for presenting the tourism destination's communication skills. This study can close the gap between academics and practitioners because the research aims to be useful in investigating the dimensions affecting brand choice intention when tourists choose to visit eastern coastal region destinations. This study also provided value enrichment by using the conceptual framework of the brand choice intention to find that four influencing constructs (perceived value, interest, brand awareness, and brand image) directly affect brand loyalty and brand choice intention. Even though all hypotheses were not accepted, the findings suggested that to achieve a brand choice intention, the tourism destination should recognize the dynamic nature of consumer brand behavior by adopting an understandable approach to examine how four reconstructs interplay in affecting brand loyalty and brand choice intention. Moreover, the relationship between the four brand constructs illustrated the practical insights for Thailand travel organizations or related institutes to refine their strategies and enhance brand-consumer relationships for the tourism industry, especially for Thailand's eastern coastal regions. In terms of practical contributions, this study provides valuable insight into marketing strategies that can create competitive advantages in the tourism industry. Understanding those relationships is essential for the tourism organizations that are responsible for building the competitive advantages that can create tourist loyalty to the destination brand associated with Thailand's eastern coastal region.

Limitations and Directions of Future Research

There are some limitations of this study that would be recommended for future research. Firstly, the data should be collected from foreign tourists as well to get a deeper insight into their brand choice intention for visiting eastern coastal region destinations. It could be used to compare the factors that affected brand choice intention with this study. Secondly, future studies might be extended by including factors related to green and sustainable issues. Lastly, the research can also enhance the results of the study by including the development

of other comprehensive models such as MICMAC (Matriced' Impacts Croise´s Multiplication Applique´e a UN Classement) for analyzing what affected the branding variables to the brand choice intention toward tourism destinations.

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