
Rungnapa Lertpatcharapong
B.Sc., M.Ed.

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Business and Law
The University of Newcastle, Australia
May, 2014
DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Rungnapa Lertpatcharapong
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the support and assistance of many individuals.

I would like to express my indebtedness to my principal supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Kevin Lyons, who always provided me with valuable advice and constructive criticism of my work. His timely advice and patience navigated me towards the successful completion of this thesis. I am also thankful to my supervisors, Dr. Patricia Johnson and Dr. Po-Hsin Lai, for their suggestions, encouragement and kindness on both an academic and personal level. Thankfulness is also expressed to Associate Professor Dr. Suzanne Ryan for her encouragement and constant support.

I would also like to acknowledge the financial support of the Suan Dusit Rajabhat University. I am also thankful to the University of Newcastle, who provided financial, academic and technical support for my study. Without their support, I would not have been able to survive in my research journey. Thanks also to all staff at the Faculty of Business and Law.

My deepest appreciation is also extended to my parents, Saovaluck and Nipon Lertpatcharapong, for their unconditional love, continuous encouragement and endless support. I am greatly indebted to my sister, brother, and uncle, Floyd Parton, for their unequivocal support. I am also especially thankful to my Australian family, Julie and Robert Norris, for their encouragement and unconditional support. My special thanks to Puritud Inya who devoted his time to share, encouragement, and support me during my journey. Great thanks for all kinds of support to my friends Palanuch Kongka, Sasipin Sukbunpant, and my friends at The Newcastle Business School.
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ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the most important businesses in many countries. It has often led to environmental problems, particularly in developing countries (Alexander, 2002; Kasim, 2007). Environmental impacts from the tourism industry have become a serious issue in developing countries such as Thailand. This is particularly evident in the Thai hotel industry, which consumes a huge amount of natural resources and is a major contributor to such environmental impacts.

Over the past two decades, the Thai hotel industry has begun to implement environmental management practices (EMP) in the form of ‘Green Leaf Certification’ (GLC) - an industry and government driven environmental certification program - as a way to address their environmental impacts. Despite the potential benefits from adopting environmental certification, environmental management practices and the GLC, they are still not popular in the Thai hotel industry, with only 203 out of 5,420 accommodation establishments (National Statistical Office, 2010) which are Green Leaf certified (Green Leaf Foundation, 2013b).

This study recognises that hotel managers in Thailand may play a central role in increasing the uptake of GLC. The purpose of this thesis was to examine the behavioural intentions of the hotel managers in Thailand to adopt the GLC. Specifically, this study considers how the perceived benefits of adopting the GLC, in conjunction with social pressures, the barriers to adoption and general environmental attitudes influence the managers’ behavioural intentions.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was used as the theoretical framework for this study. The data for this study was collected from a sample of hotels registered with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) through an online survey distributed to
359 hotel managers. The survey investigated hotel managers’ knowledge, attitudes and behavioural intentions (over one or five years) towards the GLC and their general environmental attitudes.

The findings of this thesis can be divided into two categories that relate to the periods of time in which the behavioural intentions were framed. Firstly, the factors that predict an increase in the hotel managers’ behavioural intention to adopt the GLC in the next year were their general environmental attitudes, selected subjective norms and economic barriers. Secondly, the predictors of intention to adopt the GLC in the next five years were external support barriers, knowledge of EMP barriers and the education level of the managers.

The findings of this thesis sheds some light onto strategies for increasing the number of certified hotels in developing countries. For example, most of the hotels in Thailand are small and medium sized, and the culture tends to be collectivistic. In the short term, the Thai government and associated organisations should pay attention to lowering the cost required to become certified, increasing the knowledge of the general environmental attitudes and of the people influencing them. While in the long term, the government and associated organisations should support hotels by creating seminars on knowledge about GLC and environmental problems into the formal education level such as diploma and Bachelor’s degree.

Moreover, this thesis focuses on the differences in the general environmental attitudes of hotel managers who knew about the GLC and those who did not. While both groups were more likely to be more eco-centric than anthropocentric, those who knew of the GLC tended to be less anthropocentric than those who did not know about it. These findings are discussed in the light of previous studies and the findings of the
thesis. The implications for the environmental policies and practices of the hotel industry in Thailand are considered, and the thesis concludes by presenting recommendations for future research.