

## การสำรวจภาพลักษณ์สถานที่ท่องเที่ยวโดยใช้เทคนิคการ ฉายภาพความคิดวัดและศาลเจ้าจีน ในจังหวัดภูเก็ต ประเทศไทย

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### บทคัดย่อ

วัดและศาลเจ้าจีนในจังหวัดภูเก็ต ประเทศไทย มีประวัติความเป็นมายาวนาน ซึ่งถือเป็นองค์ประกอบหนึ่งที่สร้างภาพลักษณ์การเป็นแหล่งท่องเที่ยวระดับนานาชาติของจังหวัดภูเก็ต อย่างไรก็ตามวัดและศาลเจ้าจีนกลับประสบปัญหาในด้านเงินทุน และต้องพึ่งพารายได้จากผู้ศรัทธาในท้องถิ่น ภาคธุรกิจ และนักท่องเที่ยวชาวต่างชาติ การที่แหล่งท่องเที่ยวที่มีศักยภาพดังกล่าวกลับไม่สามารถดึงดูดนักท่องเที่ยวต่างชาติได้เป็นผลมาจากการขาดภาพลักษณ์ที่ชัดเจน ซึ่งการเสริมสร้างภาพลักษณ์ด้านการเป็นแหล่งท่องเที่ยวทางวัฒนธรรมจะก่อให้เกิดประโยชน์ทั้งทางตรงและทางอ้อมต่อการสร้างรายได้ของวัดและศาลเจ้าจีน ดังนั้นงานวิจัยนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจภาพลักษณ์ของวัดและศาลเจ้าจีนในจังหวัดภูเก็ตโดยใช้เทคนิคการฉายภาพความคิดของนักท่องเที่ยวชาวต่างชาติ งานวิจัยนี้ศึกษานักท่องเที่ยวจำนวน 153 คน โดยใช้วิธีการ

สุ่มแบบบังเอิญจากสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวที่มีผู้มาเยี่ยมชมสูงสุดเจ็ดแห่งในจังหวัดภูเก็ต และใช้คำถามเพื่อฉายภาพความคิดจำนวน 19 คำถามในการศึกษาแง่มุมต่างๆของภาพลักษณ์ของวัดจีน การวิเคราะห์ผลการวิจัยโดยวิเคราะห์แก่นเนื้อหา (Thematic analysis) แสดงให้เห็นภาพลักษณ์สำคัญในด้านต่างๆ เช่นการเป็นสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวเชิงศาสนา สถานที่ท่องเที่ยวที่มีสีสันความงดงาม ดึงดูดใจ ลึกลับ สงบ และเป็นแหล่งท่องเที่ยวทางวัฒนธรรมดั้งเดิมที่มีเอกลักษณ์เฉพาะตัว นอกจากนี้ยังพบว่านักท่องเที่ยวชาวยุโรปจะรู้สึกถึงความสงบและน่าประทับใจยามมาเที่ยวชม ส่วนนักท่องเที่ยวชาวเอเชียเห็นว่าเป็นแหล่งท่องเที่ยวดั้งเดิมทางศาสนา จากงานวิจัยนี้จึงสรุปได้ว่าวัดและศาลเจ้าจีนในจังหวัดภูเก็ตเป็นแหล่งท่องเที่ยวที่นับเป็นสมบัติทางวัฒนธรรม ได้รับการยอมรับว่ามีคุณค่าควรแก่การเที่ยวชม เนื่องจากกระตุ้นให้เกิดการศึกษาและการเรียนรู้ด้านวัฒนธรรม

**คำสำคัญ:** ภาพลักษณ์สถานที่ท่องเที่ยว วัดจีน การท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรม คำถามเพื่อฉายภาพความคิด การท่องเที่ยวจังหวัดภูเก็ต

## Exploring Destination Image Using a Projective Approach: Chinese Temples and Shrines in Phuket, Thailand

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### Abstract

Chinese (Taoist) temples and shrines in Phuket, Thailand have a long established history which forms one aspect of Phuket's international image, yet Chinese temples and shrines struggle to fund themselves and depend upon the local support of believers, businesses and international tourists. Chinese temples and shrines have the potential to attract international tourists but fail to do so as their image remains unclear to international tourists. Through clarifying their image, Chinese temples and shrines would benefit financially both directly and indirectly by enhancing their international image as cultural and heritage attractions to attract tourists. Therefore, the aim of the study is to explore the image of Chinese

temples and shrines in Phuket by using a projective approach with international tourists. A total of 153 international tourists were surveyed using an accidental sampling method from seven of the most visited sites in Phuket. The survey used 19 projective questions to examine the aspect of the Chinese temple image. The results were analysed using thematic analysis and showed the significant aspects of the image as being religious, colourful, attractive, mysterious, peaceful, traditional, and unique cultural attractions. In addition, European tourists felt more feelings of peace and fascination and Asian tourists experienced more religious and traditional feelings when visiting. The study concludes that Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket are seen as cultural and heritage attractions that are considered worthwhile for visiting as they provide educational and cultural stimulus.

**Keywords:** Destination Image, Chinese Temples, Cultural and Heritage Tourism, Projective Questions, Tourism in Phuket

## 1. Introduction

Thailand is one of the leading tourist destinations in the world (UNWTO, 2016). In 2015, Phuket Island's tourism industry attracted 18,977,912 foreign tourists and contributed 272 billion Thai Baht (Thailand's Department of Tourism, 2015) to the Thai economy with its dominant sun, sea and sand destination image (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2016). Despite its popularity, Phuket's unique cultural and heritage attractions lay dormant because of its unclear cultural tourism image.

Chinese (Taoist) temples (and shrines) have a long-established history with Phuket's identity and are among the most common cultural and heritage attractions. However, Chinese temples struggle to fund themselves and depend upon the local support of believers and businesses. However, Phuket's yearly Taoists ritual called the "Vegetarian Festival" or the "Nine Emperor Gods Festival" (Hamilton, 2003) is promoted heavily through national and international media with its graphic images of body piercing (2013; Maud, 2007; 2015; Phuket Vegetarian Festival, 2015; The Independent, 2014). The Vegetarian Festival generates a high volume of local and international tourists which results in increased revenue for the local businesses over a nine-day period (Kasikorn, 2014). However, after that period, the image of Chinese temples fails to attract regular international tourists and as a consequence, passing traffic to local business reduces. Thus, it may be possible to attract tourists all year round to support the Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket.

However, the need to assess the image of Chinese temples by using international tourists is necessary in order to promote the

assets as cultural (and heritage) attractions. The images associated with the Chinese temples remain unclear in the minds of international tourists. It is vital to investigate the images that international tourists perceive at both a conscious and unconscious level with projective questions as it reduces the temptation to form contrived responses and diminishes the author's bias (Donoghue, 2000; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). Hence, clarifying the significant image of Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket using projective questions allows temple and shrine managers to understand the key aspects that attract international tourists. This is also valuable in developing the marketing and promotional image of Chinese as primary cultural attractions for the direct and indirect monetary benefit of the temples and shrines, local communities, and the enhancement of international tourists' cultural understanding and personal knowledge (McKercher & Du Cros, 2002; McKercher & Ho, 2006). Evolving the image of the Chinese temples as attractions would improve the island's desirable image, especially for international tourists who are known to visit throughout the year. This would also be beneficial for Phuket's local government, who endeavour to diversify their tourism products from the sun, sea and sand destination image. However, an assessment of the current image of Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket needs to be made before any promotional development is considered and acted upon.

Therefore, this research aims to explore the image of Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket by using a projective approach with international tourists. The main objectives are to identify the significant images international tourists associate with Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket and to compare the differences in perception

between Asian and European tourists.

## 2. Literature Review

Global tourism has seen uninterrupted growth since the 1950s (UNWTO, 2016), which has led to a greater range of niche tourism products such as cultural and heritage tourism (Li, Wu, & Cai, 2008; McKercher & Ho, 2006; Shuo, Ryan, & Liu, 2009; Tomalin & Starkey, 2017). This diversification of tourism products has increased competition among countries around the world and to further define the unique aspects of their destinations. Hence, the creation of a unique and appealing destination image is necessary to enhance a country's competitive advantage and further attract more tourists. Extensive research has demonstrated the promotional influence of a tourism destination image (Li, 2012; Tasci & Gartner, 2007) and its effect on a latent tourist's perception, behaviour, experience and satisfaction (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Reilly, 1990; Remoaldo, Ribeiro, Vareiro, & Santos, 2014). Although most studies are carried out on a national level using quantitative methods (Gallarza, Saura & Garcia, 2002; Pike, 2002) some studies used a qualitative approach (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Prayag, 2007; Jenkins, 1999; Reilly, 1990), which contribute to the greater understanding of destination image's influence on tourists' behaviour and destination selection.

### 2.1 Cultural Tourism

Thailand's destination image campaign "Amazing Thailand" began as sun, sea and sand tourism in 1998. This image was updated at the beginning of 2015 with "Discover Thainess" (2015), which was rebranded and focused on the unique aspects of Thai

culture. The campaign continued into 2016 until it was replaced in 2017 by the TAT to promote Thailand as a shopping and dining destination (TAT Shopping Destination, 2017). As a result of the Discover Thainess (2015) campaign, more of Thailand's cultural assets were emphasised. However, the lack of research examining the destination image of cultural resources, and more specifically Chinese temples and shrines in Thailand from an international tourist's perspective, possibly led to the change in direction to focus on shopping and dining, which is better understood and more widely studied.

## 2.2 Phuket Chinese Temples and Shrines

UNESCO (2016) describes ancient Chinese temples as representing the highest degree in Chinese culture and having a tremendous influence on the advancement of religious, architectural and cultural development. As Chinese traders sailed around the Andaman sea, Chinese merchants traded commodities in Phuket around the 16th century (Phuket History, 2015; Phuket Provincial, 2015). In the early 19th century an influx of Southern Chinese migrants from Fujian (Hokkien), Guangdong and Hainan came to Phuket. Shortly after, the Hokkien community assimilated into Thai culture and established their cultural identity and ritual traditions by building Chinese temples and shrines, mostly around the Old Phuket Town area (History Tin and Colonization, 2014; Hamilton, 2003).

The author's interviews with two local cultural experts, six local tour guides, two temple managers and a search on Phuket.com (Chinese Shrines in Phuket, 2016) identified 15 major Chinese temples and shrines throughout Phuket. The history or

specific importance is shown in Table 1. Uncovering the aspect of the destination image from an internal point of view gives insight into the important cultural images.

**Table 1.** Historical and important Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket (Author's interviews, 2015; Chinese Shrines in Phuket, 2016)

Chinese Temple/Shrine	History or Importance
Ban Tha Rue Shrine	The fourth-oldest shrine in Phuket.
Bang Neow Shrine	Relocated a few times because of fires.
Boon Kaw Kong Shrine	Known for granting wishes.
Cherng Thalay Shrine	Around 1901, Mr Ju Pai Tuk, a hairdresser, set up the shrine.
Hok Nguan Keng Shrine	Ju Su Kong is the most important ritual object.
Jao Mae Kuan Im Shrine	Kuan Im is the most important ritual object.
Jui Tui Shrine	Plays an important part in the Phuket Vegetarian Festival.
Kathu Shrine	Original home of Phuket's Vegetarian Festival.
Pud Jor Chinese Temple	Known as the oldest Chinese temple in Phuket.
Samkong Shrine	Privately owned. Known for healing and good health.
Sapam Shrine	Built by Chinese migrants from Fujian.
Saphan Hin Shrine (Kiew Tien Keng Shrine)	The shrine is uniquely located next to the beach.
Shrine of the Serene Light	Built by a local Chinese family.
Sui Boon Tong Shrine	Founded by a group called Entranced Horses mediums.
Yok Ke Keng Shrine	Unknown

While studies on Chinese temples and shrines have mostly been focused in China, some more recent tourism enquiries have been conducted in counties such as Taiwan, Malaysia, Australia and Thailand (Table 2). Of interest are the tourism studies that have used qualitative approaches using site audits (Laing, Wheeler, Reeves, & Frost, 2014; McKercher & Ho, 2006) and (semi-structured) interviews (Ismail & Mohd-Ali, 2011) to assess the tourism potential. Specifically, McKercher and Ho's (2006) cultural tourism assessment indicators draw attention to the tourist's experiential values and impressions from the management's standpoint; however, no

further exploration from a tourist’s perspective has been done to evaluate the congruency of these values. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate tourists’ perceptions using projective questions to uncover the deeper unconscious values and images, as they are vital for temple managers and marketers in the development of a destination image for Chinese temples.

Table 2. Studies on Chinese temples and shrines

Year	Author	Country	Study Focus	Method/Analysis
2015	Wang	Taiwan	Lodgers’ motivations and perceptions	Quantitative: questionnaire temples and pilgrims
2015	Deng, Lin, Zhao, & Wang	China	Social media, collaborative planning	Quantitative: online and on-site questionnaire
2015	Hong & Yan	China	Spatial, historical and religious comparison	Quantitative: maps, census data and data centre
2014	Laing, Wheeler, Reeves, & Frost	Australia	Tourism management and visitor experience	Qualitative: site audits and interviews
2012	Brown & Cheng	Taiwan	Historical, religious and political	Qualitative: observations
2012	Kataoka	Thailand	Religious and government policy	Qualitative: critical analysis
2012	Zhou, Zhang, & Edelheim	China	Tourists’ perceptions of temple art and cultural	Quantitative: factor analysis and structural equation modelling
2011	Ismail & Mohd-Ali	Malaysia	Marketing, image and heritage tourism	Qualitative: semi-structured interview
2009	Shuo, Ryan, & Liu	Taiwan	Religious tourism and worship	Quantitative: cluster analysis
2006	McKercher & Ho	Hong Kong	Tourism potential	Qualitative: site audit

2.3 Tourists’ Cultural Perceptions

The local classification of countries in anthropology (Bolnick, 2008) and economics (Schnore, 1961) has been greatly disputed. Nisbett and Miyamoto (2005) examined the effect of culture on perception. They found that Westerners were focused on the

importance of an object separately from its context, whereas Asians made associations with the object and the context in which the object was situated. Moreover, Matzler, Strobl, Stokburger-Sauer, Bobovnický and Bauer's (2016) research on "brand personality and culture: The role of cultural differences on the impact of brand personality perceptions on tourists' visit intentions" stated that the personality dimension of extroversion or activity had a fully mediating effect on visitors' attentions, while the dimensions of conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness had a partially mediating effect. Matzler, Strobl, Stokburger-Sauer, Bobovnický and Bauer (2016) surmised that categorising customer segments with comparable cultural dimensions can explain the link between a brand's identity and a tourist's characteristics. This can lead managers to form a meaningful and congruent brand personality strategy from the groups (Sonnleitner, 2011). Hence, the author concludes that arranging tourists' nationalities by their cultural and geographical similarities allowing destination management organisers to better understand the promotion of cultural assets such as a Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket.

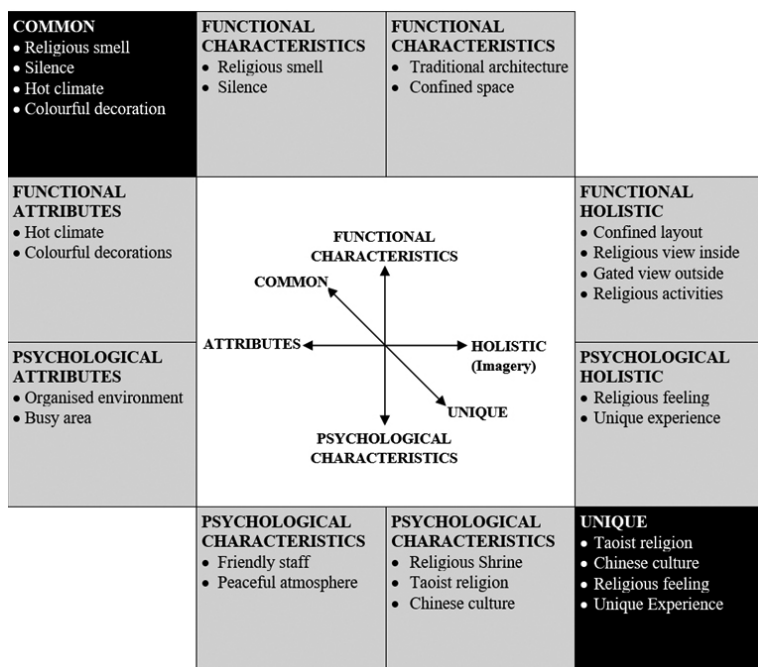
## 2.4 Measuring Destination Image

Destination image is the "The perceptions held by potential visitors about an area" (Hunt, 1975, p1). This can be defined as any visual depiction that is still or moving; written or spoken texts that mention a definite destination which may include the actual bodily or emotional experience of journeying to, touring or returning from

a country, a state, a province, a city, a town or a specific destination (Gartner, 1994; Gunn, 1988; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Sonmez & Sirakaya, 2002).

Past studies measuring image have primarily focused on the cognitive aspect of the image compared to the affective images (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). More recent research however has moved towards integrating both cognition and affect components (Fu, Ye, & Xiang, 2016; King, Chen, & Funk, 2015). Noticeable are the studies that have been constructed purely on qualitative methods to measure destination image (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Jenkins, 1999; Prayag, 2007; Prebensen, 2007; Reilly, 1990). This is because exclusive qualitative techniques are believed to give a richer, deeper insight and more accurate destination image (Prayag, 2007).

One of the most widely used frameworks for measuring destination image is Echtner and Ritchie's (2003) Components of Destination Image (Fig. 1). The model captures the functional characteristics, psychological characteristics, attributes, holistic image, common and unique features of destination. This describes the perception of the destination attributes and the holistic image made by a destination. Gallarza, Saura and Garcia's (2002) evaluation of the most regularly used attributes in tourism destinations research illustrates that Echtner and Ritchie's (2003) conceptual model has highest coverage of functional and psychological characteristics when measuring a destination's image.



**Fig. 1.** Components of Destination Image. (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003)

The internal white box shows Components of Destination Image framework. The external grey and black boxes shows the projective responses by international tourists within the framework.

## 2.5 Projective Questions

Projective questions are derived from psychoanalytic psychology and the technique implies that a person's conscious and unconscious views are obscured from one's own awareness (Donoghue, 2000; Loevinger, 1976). Projective questions theorise that in an uncertain situation, an individual forms patterns, ideas and beliefs based on his or her conscious or unconscious needs

(Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Through the indirect method of projective questioning a respondent may disclose accurate aspects of his/her internal images, attitudes, thoughts and emotions while reducing the probability of faking and evaluating both the conscious and unconscious domain (Marnat, 2003). By providing a verbal external stimulus, for example, “The feeling I get at this location is...”, the cognitive and affective images may be revealed. This could include questions that explore the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch and feelings of a destination.

The uses of projective questions in purely unstructured destination image studies has been limited (Prayag, 2007; Prebensen, 2007), although their findings are highly valuable in areas that remain unexplored (Ramsey, Ibbotson, & McCole, 2006), which contrasts with quantitative methods that only identify prescribed aspects (Day, 1989) with an increased chance of forced responses.

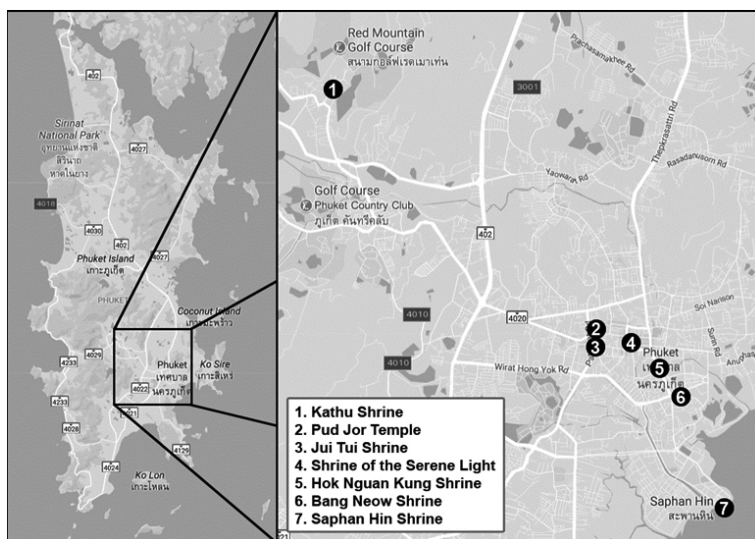
The value of discovering a tourist’s personal value and meaning attached to an attributed image (Keller, 1998) can benefit destination marketers when promoting a destination image (Cai, 2002). Thus, it is crucial to uncover the unconscious images that international tourists hold about Chinese temples through a projective approach for the development of the asset into a cultural attraction.

### 3. Methodology

Preliminary semi-structured interviews were conducted with two cultural experts, six local tour guides and two Chinese temple managers to identify the suitable methods and sites for the study. They were all selected based on their extensive knowledge of the

sites and tourists' interactions with the sites. The interviews identified inconsistent numbers of international visitors; therefore, accidental sampling was considered an appropriate method of data collection (Calder, Phillips, & Tybout, 1982; Higginbottom, 2004).

Next, seven of the major Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket were selected by their historical age, cultural significance, religious artefacts, tourist attractions recognition, visitor numbers, 2015 Vegetarian Festival schedule (as it was an indication where tourists would be on a given day and time), passing traffic and Google search rankings of the Chinese temples and shrines. Figure 2 shows the seven chosen temples and shrines.



**Fig. 2.** The seven selected Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket.  
(Google Maps, 2017)

Nineteen projective questions were constructed using the components of destination image model to measure various dimensions of the image (Table 3). After that, a pilot test was conducted on 30 international tourists that had just visited one of the seven Chinese temples and shrines. The author waited outside of the sites and approached individuals and groups of international tourists who were between 20 to 64 years old that were known to represent the sample population of visitors to Chinese temple and shrines (Lang, Chan, & Ragvald, 2005; Shuo, Ryan, & Liu, 2009). They were greeted warmly outside of the temple or shrine and asked a filter question about their nationality to determine if they qualified as an international tourist. Then, the purpose, confidentiality and the benefits of the study were explained to the prospective respondents, who were asked if they were willing to participate in the study. The willing participants were then asked to use adjectives when answering the 19 projective questions. The data was collected until the point of saturation (Baker & Edwards, 2012).

The raw data was then recorded into a custom-made repository grid. Saldana's (2009) coding manual for qualitative researchers was used for the thematic coding process of the projective questions. The codes, categories and themes were created and adjusted after three rounds of inspection. The final codes, categories and themes were checked by a PhD professor at the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism, Prince of Songkla University, Phuket campus to increase the trustworthiness of the results (Shenton, 2004). Finally, these results were then analysed in terms of frequency distribution.

**Table 3.** Projective questions for measuring the Components of Destination Image.

Variable	Author & Year
1. The Chinese temple is...	Echtner & Ritchie, (2003); Qu, Kim, & Im, (2011).
2. The layout of the temple is...	Echtner & Ritchie, (2003); Qu, Kim, & Im, (2011).
3. The space is...	Echtner & Ritchie, (2003); Qu, Kim, & Im, (2011).
4. The area around the temple is...	Echtner & Ritchie, (2003); Qu, Kim, & Im, (2011).
5. The view from the outside is...	Echtner & Ritchie, (2003); Jenkins, (1999).
6. The view from the inside is...	Echtner & Ritchie, (2003); Jenkins, (1999).
7. The architecture is...	Echtner & Ritchie, (2003); Hsu & Song, (2012)
8. The decorations are...	Echtner & Ritchie, (2003); Hsu & Song, (2012); Qu, Kim, & Im, (2011).
9. The staff or keepers are...	Ramkissoon, Uysal, & Brown, (2011b); Sonmez & Sirakaya, (2002).
10. The climate is...	Ramkissoon, Uysal, & Brown, (2011b); Sonmez & Sirakaya, (2002).
11. The feeling I get at this location is...	Echtner & Ritchie, (2003); Ramkissoon, Uysal, & Brown, (2011b).
12. The smell is...	Lee & Gretzel, (2006); Sonmez & Sirakaya, (2002).
13. The environment is...	Ramkissoon, Uysal, & Brown, (2011b); Sonmez & Sirakaya, (2002).
14. The sounds are...	Lee & Gretzel, (2006); Qu, Kim, & Im, (2011).
15. The atmosphere is...	Echtner & Ritchie, (2003); Lee, & Lee, (2009).
16. The activities are...	Ramkissoon & Uysal, (2011); Ramkissoon, Uysal, & Brown, (2011a).
17. The religion is...	Jenkins, (1999); Ramkissoon, Uysal, & Brown, (2011b).
18. The culture is...	Hsu & Song, (2012); Ramkissoon, Uysal, & Brown, (2011a).
19. The experience is...	Qu, Kim, & Im, (2011); Ramkissoon, Uysal, & Brown, (2011b).

#### 4. Results & Discussion

The research aim is to explore the image of Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket by using a projective approach with international tourists. The main objectives are to identify the significant images international tourists associate with Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket and to highlight the differences in perception between Asian and European tourists. A total of 153 international tourists were surveyed using a projective approach from the 3rd of October to the 13th of November 2015 at the Bang Neow Shrine

(22), Hok Nguan Kung Shrine (22), Jui Tui Shrine (21), Kathu Shrine (21), Pud Jor Temple (20), Saphan Hin Shrine (24) and Shrine of the Serene Light in Phuket (23). The data was analysed using thematic analysis and means of statistical analysis.

#### 4.1 Respondents Profile

The profiles of international tourists visiting Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket are presented in Table 4. The first part of the study gained an insight into the demographic profile of international tourists. There are slightly more male than female visitors; astonishingly just over three quarters of international tourists are aged from 20 to 39 years old. 81.0% had a bachelor's degree. The average income is between \$1001 to \$3000 USD per month, while a little less than three quarters of the participants (74.5%) are single. Likewise, Europeans are the majority of visitors, followed by Asians. Interestingly, 48.4% of international tourists visiting a Chinese temple or shrine reported themselves as cultural tourists, which is possibly supported by the idea of the level of education of visitors have achieved. Finally, cultural tourists are attracted to Chinese temples or shrines in Phuket.

**Table 4.** Profile of international tourists visiting Chinese temples & shrines in Phuket.

Variable		Frequency	%
Gender	Female	74	48.4
	Male	79	51.6
Age	13 – 19	3	2.0
	20 – 39	115	75.2
	40 – 64	34	22.1
	65+	1	0.7
Education Level	High School	13	8.5
	Bachelor's Degree	124	81.0
	Master's Degree	16	10.5
Income (USD p/m)	\$1000 and below	22	14.4
	\$1001–3000	82	53.6
	\$3001–5000	43	28.0
	\$5001–10,000	5	3.3
	\$10,000 and above	1	0.7
Marital Status	Single	114	74.5
	Married	36	23.5
	Divorced	3	2.0
Region	Africa	4	2.6
	Asia	56	36.6
	Australia	10	6.5
	Europe	65	42.5
	North America	17	11.1
	South America	1	0.7
Type of Tourist	Adventurer	5	3.3
	Backpacker	16	10.5
	Cultural	74	48.4
	Explorer	8	5.2
	Leisure	48	31.4
	Traveller	2	1.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>153</b>	<b>100</b>

## 4.2 The Image of Chinese Temples and Shrines in Phuket

The first objective of this study was to identify what significant images international tourists associate with Chinese temples in Phuket. The total results from Table 5 uncovered 59 unique themes from which seven significant themes occurred three times or more.

These were religious (8), colourful (5), attractive (4), mysterious (4), peaceful (3), traditional (3) and unique (3). Although cultural attraction occurred once, it was considered salient in the context of the study.

#### 4.2.1 Religious

The religious image of Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket could have been anticipated. However, the religious impressions are noted to be mostly established in the holist domains (Fig. 1) of the view from inside, activities and feelings (Table 5), with a noted position in the psychological characteristics of religious shrines. This means that the overall impression derived from the experience of visiting a Chinese temple or shrine in Phuket supersedes the individual's personality dimensions, including extroversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness (Matzler, Strobl, Stokburger-Sauer, Bobovnick, & Bauer, 2016).

However, the smell, according to the respondents, was also described as religious in the functional characteristics. This religious smell is caused by the use of incense sticks and is common amongst Chinese temples and shrines (Jetter, Guo, McBrien, & Flynn, 2002). Nevertheless, the image or experience of using incense sticks is a significant tangible image that enforces the sense of religious feelings. Feuchtwang (2007) describes the experience as follows: “the burning of incense is like inviting someone in to receive a gift of hospitality and to establish a relationship in which there can be a reunion” (p. 62). Interestingly, the feeling of being invited is seen as the second theme in the cultural element in Table 5. This indicates that the unconscious significance of incense

sticks image is religious but culturally attractive also. Therefore, images that show (Table 5) incense sticks burning, firecrackers let off, ringing the bell, interactions with friendly staff, offering food, meditation and praying or making a wish will be attractive to international tourists. It can also be useful imagery in promotional material to communicate an experience of the destination (Cai, 2002).

#### 4.2.2 Colourful

The bright colours are significant and noticeable aspects of Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket. In Table 5, these are moderately highlighted in the areas of the functional characteristics (Fig. 1) of the architecture and the functional holistic aspects of the views inside and outside the temple. Surprisingly, the colour of the decorations appeared as the most potent image in the functional attributes above statues, figures and gods, religious, detailed and aged decorations.

Although statues, figures and gods are the focal points in Chinese temples for pilgrims (Shuo, Ryan, & Liu, 2009), this study revealed the colours red (lanterns), green (dragons) and gold/yellow (Chinese calligraphy) as being salient features in attracting international tourist attention. The psychological effects of red and yellow as vibrant colours are known to cause arousal, activity and warmth, while green induces feelings of relaxation, calming and healing (O'Connor, 2011).

Therefore, the composition of colours and objects such as statues, figures and gods, lanterns, dragons and Chinese calligraphy should be considered as potent images in the promotion of Chinese temples and shrines as cultural attractions.

#### 4.2.3 Attractive

The attractive image in Table 5 shows Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket as being attractive and more precisely seen as a cultural attraction in the psychological characteristics realm (Fig. 1). Similarly, attractive is situated in the views from the inside and outside of the functional holistic part in Echtner and Ritchie's (2003) model and in the environment of the psychological attributes component. This reinforces the idea of attractiveness as being formed by an amalgamation of images. Lee and Lee (2009) likewise suggest that a destination's atmosphere and surrounding scenery contributed to the feelings of overall attractiveness. Lang, Chan, and Ragvald's (2005) also stated that a site (including its surroundings) needs to promote attractive goods and services as well as be accessible to visitors for a Chinese temple to be successful. McKercher and Ho's (2006) cultural tourism assessment indicators similarly emphasise the identification of other attractions nearby.

#### 4.2.4 Mysterious

The sense of mystery in Table 5 is not immediately apparent, although by its frequency, mystery is a salient image. The feeling of mysteriousness is present in the atmosphere and culture aspects of the psychological characteristics and in the functional holistic aspect of layout and the view from the inside. Shuo, Ryan, and Liu (2009) reported that visitors also experience a heightened level of religious mystery in Taoist temples. The sensations of mystery may be stimulated by the lack of religious knowledge about the culture and the sanctified environmental arrangement of items (Johnson, 1989), as the layout is perceived as organised,

geometric and mysterious (Table 5) by international tourists. This can be explained to some degree by the sacred Feng Shui philosophies in environmental design and layout (Johnson, 1989).

Nevertheless, images that generate a mysterious feeling can be used to promote Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket because curiosity (Shuo, Ryan, & Liu, 2009) sparks attraction, fascination (Degen, 2012) and the search for answers or knowledge within an individual (Matzler, Strobl, Stokburger-Sauer, Bobovnick, & Bauer, 2016). An example of a mysterious image would be the God Ju Su Kong at Hok Nguan Keng Shrine (Table 1) or the various religious statues, figures and gods within other Chinese temples which are mostly unknown to international tourists. Likewise, images of other religious artefacts such as Moon Blocks used for divination could induce a feeling of mystery as Westerners focus on the importance of an object separately from its context (Nisbett & Miyamoto, 2005). Therefore, this strategy can be employed to entice curious cultural tourists to the location. However, Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket must consider their assets as unique and historical items before this strategy is implemented.

#### **4.2.5 Peaceful**

The image of peaceful is most compelling in the dimension of atmosphere (Fig. 1), followed by the feeling at the location (Table 5), and then in the environment. Furthermore, peaceful is totally contained in the psychological domain (Fig 1), but covers all the aspects of psychological attributes, characteristics, and holistic sectors. Thus, the consistency of the image across the psychological hemisphere reveals its strong significance within the image of

Chinese temples in Phuket. The experience of peace has been identified in other studies (Lang, Chan, & Ragvald, 2005; Shuo, Ryan, & Liu, 2009). However, peace within these studies is more purposefully sought by visitors and was a result of the individual's characteristics and current emotional state at the time (Matzler, Strobl, Stokburger-Sauer, Bobovnick, & Bauer, 2016; Verwiebe, 2011). In contrast, the international tourists visiting the Chinese temples and shrines in this study may not have had the intention of seeking peace deliberately but experienced peace within the temple and its surroundings. This was significant in the results of the Saphan Hin Shrine (Fig. 2), which is next to the beach, and Kathu Shrine, which is in a rural area. Therefore, the natural environment contributes to the feelings of peace. Thus, the local attractions (McKercher & Ho, 2006) can extend into the landscape features and could be used in a targeted promotion of a destination to a specific group of tourists. This point will be further examined in objective two.

#### 4.2.6 Traditional

The image of traditional is strongly represented in the tangible aspect of the architecture (Fig. 1) but moderately in the intangible aspects (Table 5) of culture and to a lesser degree in the religion. The respondents in this research clearly identified the specific traditional aspects of Chinese temples and shrines as tangible, such as the gate (Fig. 1) and statues, figures and gods. Other functional qualities that describe the image of Chinese temples and shrines are (Table 5) made of stone, aged, detailed in design and geometric layout (Johnson, 1989).

Experiencing ancient architecture is also a significant finding

in Shuo, Ryan and Liu's (2009) research, revealing that the physical asset is worth visiting as a cultural and heritage attraction. Therefore, promotional images showing the splendour of the Chinese temples and shrines architecture trigger feelings of tradition.

#### 4.2.7 Unique

The unique image of the Chinese temples and shrines architecture is present in both the functional and psychological characteristics (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). The most significant reason for visiting a Chinese temple or shrine in Phuket is the uniqueness of the experience (Fig. 1). This can be explained by the combination of religious, cultural, visual (colour), mysterious, peaceful and traditional images highlighted in this study. However, the religious and traditional images are closely linked to uniqueness. Table 5 illustrates the architecture as traditional firstly and then unique. Likewise, the fifth theme in the overall image of Chinese temples and shrines is also unique. This means that the international tourists' experience within the architectural bounds is unique. Therefore, promotional images that express the uniqueness of Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket are those featuring the architecture and the activities inside the confines. For example (Table 5), religious activities, making a wish, mediating, burning incense or letting off firecrackers, looking around and taking photos are all cultural activities that can attract international tourists. This could help build the brand identity of Chinese temples and shrines using cultural activities within a cultural attraction (Matzler, Strobl, Stokburger-Sauer, Bobovnick & Bauer, 2016).

Table 5. The top 5 themes of Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket using Components of Destination Image

Question	1st Theme	2nd Theme	3rd Theme	4th Theme	5th Theme
1. The Chinese temple is...	religious	attractive	cultural attraction	colourful	unique
2. The layout of the temple is...	confined	organised	spacious	geometric	mysterious
3. The space is...	confined	spacious	adequate	religious	geometric
4. The area around the temple is...	busy	commercial	a street	sur. by nature	sur. by buildings
5. The view from the outside is...	the gate	hidden	attractive	walled	colourful
6. The view from the inside is...	religious	attractive	colourful	mysterious	statues/figures/gods
7. The architecture is...	traditional	unique	colourful	of stone	aged
8. The decorations are...	colourful	statues/figures/gods	religious	detailed	aged
9. The staff or keepers are...	friendly	unidentifiable	reserved	working	relaxing
10. The climate is...	hot	humid	warm	breeze	cool
11. The feeling I get at this location is...	religious	peaceful	fascinating	friendly	respect
12. The smell is...	religious	intoxicating	none	food	natural
13. The environment is...	organised	unorganised	natural	attractive	peaceful
14. The sounds are...	none/silence	musical	firecrackers	people talking	bells
15. The atmosphere is...	peaceful	religious	humid	mysterious	hot
16. The activities are...	religious	looking around	taking photos	meditative	making a wish
17. The religion is...	Taoist	Chinese	Buddhist	spiritual	traditional
18. The culture is...	Chinese	inviting	traditional	mysterious	spiritual
19. The experience is...	unique	pleasant	fascinating	worthwhile	religious

Note: sur. = surrounded. Significant images: religious, colourful, attractive, mysterious, peaceful, traditional, unique, cultural attraction.

### **4.3 Comparing Asian and European Tourists' Perceptions.**

The second objective of this study was to observe the differences in perception between Asian and European tourists visiting Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket. The overall first theme results showed that there were eight differences between the two groups (Table 6). The biggest discrepancy between Asian and European tourists is in the psychological characteristics and psychological holistic destination image (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). These are in the areas of the decorations, feelings at the location, the environment, the sounds, the atmosphere, the religion, the culture and the experience. The results showed that European tourists felt more feelings of peace and fascination. Although fascination was not a first level theme, it appeared frequently and significantly as a theme. In contrast, Asian tourists' experience more religious and traditional feelings when visiting a Chinese temple or shrine in Phuket. Traditional feelings were also seen as a frequently occurring theme and thus became significant.

#### **4.3.1 Decorations**

In the perception of the decorations (Table 6), Asian respondents viewed statues, figures and gods as the main decoration as opposed to colourful by Europeans. This can firstly be explained by the fact that Asian tourists have a higher probability of visiting a Chinese temple or shrine in their own Asian country. This increases the familiarity of Chinese temples and shrines and possibly the knowledge about it (Wong, 2017). Therefore, statues, figures and gods are seen in context by Asian tourists (Nisbett & Miyamoto, 2005). Meanwhile, European tourists focus on the importance of an

object separately from its context (Nisbett & Miyamoto, 2005). They may not have been familiar with objects' uses or purposes, thus colours were more expressible ideas. This caused increasing levels of fascination (Degen, 2012) and mystery.

This fascination can provide the Chinese temple and shrine managers an opportunity to inform and educate visitors about the religion, traditions, culture and history (Schmitt, 1996).

#### 4.3.2 Feelings at the Location

The feelings at the location between the Asian and European tourists were significantly different. Asian tourist experience more religious feelings (Table 6). This is because Asian visitors are more likely to experience Chinese temples and shrines in the Asian region (Wong, 2017). Meanwhile, European tourists are less familiar with the religious aspects and therefore experience feelings of peace. Nevertheless, Asian visitors are known to seek tranquillity at Taoist temples (Shuo, Ryan, & Liu, 2009).

Therefore, it is possible for Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket to promote both religious and peaceful images simultaneously. However, one image may be favoured over the other depending upon the site, location, size, function and cultural attraction objectives (McKercher & Ho, 2006).

#### 4.3.3 Environment

The overall image of the environment (Table 5) is considered organised. However, most Asian tourists reported the environment to be unorganised (Table 6). This can be explained by Nisbett and Miyamoto's (2005) findings, where Asians are known to view

the object and the context as a whole. For instance, Asian tourists took into account the busyness of the area around the temple (Table 6). Therefore, the context was considered in the (subconscious) assessment of the unorganised environment. Europeans, however, expressed the busy context of the area around the temple but focused on the organised aspects of the Chinese temples and shrines.

Therefore, the surrounding environmental factors need to be assessed and analysed for each site developed (McKercher & Ho, 2006).

#### 4.3.4 Sounds

Table 5 uncovered that the majority of international tourists heard silence more often than music. This experience is consistent with the European image (Table 6) but inconsistent with the Asian tourists' musical experience. Music is not always not played continually in all of the temples. The findings of this study agree with Nisbett and Miyamoto's (2005) results that Asian tourists make greater connections with objects and experiences with their surroundings. However, some Asian tourists' familiarity with the religious and traditional process allowed for them to interact with religious artefacts, such as (Table 5) letting off firecrackers and the ringing the bell. This would have created a more memorable and meaningful image of the experience (Gartner, 1994; Gunn, 1972). Similarly, some Asian tourist's may have been more familiar with the musical chanting and its meaning (Wong, 2017).

Therefore, the importance of playing music can enhance the overall attraction of passing traffic (Yu & Kang, 2010), while,

allowing international tourists to engage in cultural interactions with unique sounding artefacts like firecrackers and bells, which can result in memorable images of a destination (Gartner, 1994; Gunn, 1972). These should be considered in the branding image of the Chinese temple or shrine in Phuket.

#### 4.3.5 Atmosphere

The atmosphere within Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket overall is peaceful (Table 5). However, most Asian tourists expressed the dimension of atmosphere in terms of humid weather (Table 6). This is due to the Asian comprehension of the word atmosphere (Wong, 2017). European tourists reported sensations of peace more often. This is significant because the sense of peace is also highly prevalent in the feeling at the location (Table 6). Therefore, the experience of peace is much greater for European tourists visiting Chinese temples in Phuket. Moreover, Saphan Hin Shrine (Fig. 2) recorded the highest levels of peace because of its beach location for Europeans.

Shuo, Ryan, and Liu (2009) also identified peace as a factor for visiting a Taoist temple. Therefore, the promotion of a peaceful atmosphere within Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket is seen to be attractive aspect for European tourist (Cai, 2002).

#### 4.3.6 Religion

The foremost religion in Table 5 was identified as Taoist by international tourists. This is similar to the Asian tourist's response (Table 6) as they have a higher probability of experiencing Taoism (Wong, 2017). European tourists, on the other hand, described the

religion as Chinese, thus, showing a lack of knowledge about the religion. However, fascination was the next theme to emerge from European tourists, indicating an attraction element.

This provides an opportunity for destination image marketers and Chinese temple managers to educate European tourists on the site. Meanwhile, the religious aspect could be used to attract Asian tourists using the other religious festival (Shuo, Ryan, & Liu, 2009).

#### **4.3.7 Culture**

The culture was described as Chinese overall (Table 5). This is comparable to the Asian tourist's response in Table 6. However, European tourists perceived the culture as traditional, demonstrating a lack of knowledge about the culture (Wong, 2017). Nevertheless, the culture caused fascination within the European tourists. This is seen as the second theme in this dimension.

The opportunity rises again for destination image organisers and Chinese temple managers to encourage cultural education of tourists (Shuo, Ryan, & Liu, 2009) though the use of the asset as an all year round attraction.

#### **4.3.8 Experience**

All together the experience has been defined as unique (Table 5). Likewise, the vast majority of European tourists considered the experience as unique also (Table 6). This is because of the lack of knowledge about and familiarity with the destination. However, most Asian tourist's familiarity with Chinese temple and shrines reduced the level of uniqueness and more pleasant feelings (Shuo, Ryan, & Liu, 2009; Wong, 2017). Interestingly, Asian visitors

reported the experience as being more worthwhile than the overall image in Table 5. This is possibly to do with the known expectation of visiting a Chinese temple or shrine. In other words, the meaningfulness of the brand's personality is known to Asian tourists (Sonnleitner, 2011).

Therefore, the uniqueness of the experience is bound in the religious activities such as making a wish, mediating, burning incense or letting off firecrackers, looking around and taking photos. Thus, this research has provided some insight into the cultural activities that can attract international tourists visiting Chinese temple in Phuket.

**Table 6.** Comparison of Asian and European image of Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket.

Question	Asian (1st Theme)	European (1st Theme)
1. The Chinese temple or shrine is...	religious	religious
2. The layout of the temple is...	confined	confined
3. The space is...	confined	confined
4. The area around the temple is...	busy	busy
5. The view from the outside is...	the gate	the gate
6. The view from the inside is...	religious	religious
7. The architecture is...	traditional	traditional
8. The decorations are...	statues/figures/gods *	colourful *
9. The staff or keepers are...	friendly	friendly
10. The climate is...	hot	hot
11. The feeling I get at this location is...	religious *	peaceful *
12. The smell is...	religious	religious
13. The environment is...	unorganised *	organised *
14. The sounds are...	musical *	none/silence *
15. The atmosphere is...	humid *	peaceful *
16. The activities are...	religious	religious
17. The religion is...	Taoist *	Chinese *
18. The culture is...	Chinese *	traditional *
19. The experience is...	pleasant *	unique *

\* differences between the image

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore the image of Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket by using a projective approach with international tourists. A total of 153 international tourists were surveyed between the 3rd of October to the 13th of November 2015 at seven temples and shrines in Phuket (Fig. 2). Thematic analysis was used to interpret the results and to identify key findings.

The first objective was to identify the significant images international tourists associate with Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket. The seven significant images identified were religious, colourful, attractive, mysterious, peaceful, traditional, and unique cultural attraction. Although some previous studies have examined Chinese temples and shrines as cultural attractions (McKercher & Du Cros, 2002; McKercher & Ho, 2006), this research has contributed to the in-depth understanding of the image Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket from an international tourist's perspective using a projective approach. This holistic qualitative assessment (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003) has led to a deeper understanding of the various images constructed by international tourists both consciously and subconsciously, that form the image of Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket (Table 5). This is in contrast to Shuo, Ryan, and Liu's (2009) structured quantitative approach, which has provided useful but limited results. As a result, temple managers and destination management organisers can now understand and consider a wider and deeper range of images to apply in the development of their attractions as cultural destinations (Keller, 1998; Tomalin & Starkey, 2017). Furthermore, salient images such as

religious, mysterious, or peaceful can be used to promote a definite experience to attract a specific tourist group.

The second objective was to observe the differences in perception between Asian and European tourists while visiting Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket. The major differences were that European tourists experience more feelings of peace and fascination, while Asian tourists experience more religious and traditional feelings. While current research examining religious sites has started to understand the destination from both Western and Asian perspectives (Lang, Chan, & Ragvald, 2005; Shuo, Ryan, & Liu, 2009; Tomalin & Starkey, 2017; Wong, 2017), no studies have compared the holistic image (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003) of Chinese temples and shrines amongst international tourist groups. Thus, the projective approach has revealed both the similarities and differences within the functional and psychological domains of a destination's image (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003), hence adding to the current literature to the on European tourists' perceptions on Chinese temples and shrines. This is a practical guide for temple managers and destination advertisers in customising their marketing strategies for a specific tourist group. For example, images of fascination should be used for European tourists to evoke curiosity in light of the lack knowledge about the culture, traditions and religion.

Finally, the overall image of Chinese temples and shrines in Phuket has been found to be unique and culturally attractive to international tourists. Moreover, this study has taken the first step in clarifying and forming an alternative or additional image to the Vegetarian Festival, potentially allowing for the Chinese temples

and shrines in Phuket to become year-round attractions, as a result, benefiting the Chinese temples and shrines and the local business. While, enhancing Phuket's image as a cultural destination.

The limitation of this research was its short duration of data collection. As a result, only 153 surveys were conducted at seven sites. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalizable, as other locations and surroundings differ. Therefore, the author suggests a longer duration for data collection to fully assess the image throughout the year.

Further research should include a mixed method approach using photography (Virdee, 2017a) or drawing (Virdee, 2017b) to assess and measure the image, thus strengthening the reliability of the results. In addition, the local business perception of Chinese temple and shrines should be assessed to further understand the perceived benefit of a cultural attraction on local businesses.

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