



## Brand Trust, Perceived Quality, and Parental Decision-Making: A Study of International School Selection in Chiang Mai

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### Abstract

**Background and Aim:** This research investigates the factors influencing parents' decision-making process when choosing international schools in Chiang Mai Province, Thailand. With the increasing popularity of international education in Thailand, understanding the key determinants of school choice is crucial for both parents and educational institutions. This study focuses on the impact of brand trust and perceived brand quality on parental decision-making, aiming to provide valuable insights for school operators and stakeholders to develop competitive strategies and enhance educational services.

**Materials and Methods:** The study employs a quantitative research design with a convenience sampling technique. Data is collected from parents of children attending or considering 21 international schools in Chiang Mai through a structured online questionnaire. The questionnaire assesses brand trust, perceived brand quality, and their influence on the school choice decision-making process. Multiple regression analysis is used to examine the relationships between these variables.

**Results:** The findings reveal that both brand trust and perceived brand quality significantly influence parental decision-making. Brand trust emerges as the strongest predictor, indicating that parents prioritize the credibility and reputation of international schools. Perceived brand quality also plays a crucial role, as parents associate high-quality brands with superior educational outcomes. The study demonstrates that these two factors collectively account for a substantial portion of the variance in parental choices.

**Conclusion:** This research confirms the importance of brand management for international schools in Chiang Mai Province. By focusing on building brand trust and enhancing perceived brand quality, schools can effectively attract and retain students. The study's findings offer valuable guidance for school administrators and marketers in developing targeted strategies to meet the evolving needs and expectations of parents in the international education market.

**Keywords:** Brand Trust; Perceived Brand Quality; Decision-making Process; International School; Parental Choice

### Introduction

Education serves as the foundation for skill development, knowledge acquisition, and future career advancement, ultimately contributing to an improved quality of life (Kamkankaew & Thanitbenjasith, 2023). Consequently, parents place great emphasis on selecting educational institutions that best cater to their children's needs. In Thailand, the era of globalization has ushered in rapid changes, with borderless communication technologies and the widespread use of English as a global language (Pongsin et.al, 2023). Recognizing the importance of language proficiency, parents are increasingly opting for international schools, drawn by their adherence to internationally recognized curricula and the emphasis on English language acquisition from an early age (Deveney, 2005). This trend has led to a proliferation of international private schools in Thailand.

Thailand's educational landscape is dynamic and continuously evolving, driven by the need to adapt to global societal shifts (Thanitbenjasith & Kamkankaew, 2023). The country's integration into the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015 has further spurred the growth of international education, with the government actively encouraging foreign educational institutions to establish branches in Thailand (Kamkankaew et.al, 2024). The goal is to position Thailand as a regional hub for international education, leveraging a strategy of diversified subjects and competitive costs while maintaining high-quality standards (Naite, 2021).

International schools in Thailand, licensed by the Ministry of Education, offer kindergarten, primary, and secondary education. These institutions have garnered significant interest from parents and students,



with data from the Klomtooksing & Chirapanda Sato (2023) indicating 207 international schools in Thailand, serving a student population of 87,343. The diverse range of foreign curricula offered, including British, American, International Baccalaureate, and Singaporean programs, among others, underscores the demand for international education and the resulting competition among schools (Ye, 2017).

Chiang Mai Province, a focal point of this study, boasts 21 international schools listed in the Thailand International Schools Association (Pearce, 2023). These schools collectively offer a mix of American, British, and International Baccalaureate curricula, catering to over 8,400 students from kindergarten to Grade 12 (Klomtooksing & Chirapanda Sato, 2023). The diversity of educational systems and curricula, coupled with the unique strengths and weaknesses of each school, necessitates careful consideration by parents when selecting the most suitable institution for their child. This choice is influenced by individual needs, family preferences, and the specific characteristics of each school.

This research aims to investigate the factors that influence parents' decision-making process when selecting international schools in Chiang Mai Province. By elucidating these factors, this study intends to offer valuable insights to international school operators and relevant stakeholders who are engaged in developing competitive strategies and improving educational services. The findings will contribute to the ongoing discourse on international education in Thailand, ultimately benefiting both schools and families in making informed decisions.

## Objectives

This research aims to examine the impact of brand trust and perceived brand quality on the decision-making process of parents in Chiang Mai Province when choosing an international school for their children.

## Literature review

### *Decision-making process*

The multifaceted nature of decision-making, a cornerstone of human cognition, has garnered significant attention across diverse academic disciplines. Early scholarly investigations frequently conceptualized decision-making through the lens of rationality, wherein individuals methodically assessed alternatives and selected the optimal choice to maximize anticipated utility (Elbanna, 2006). Subsequent research, however, challenged this classical perspective, highlighting the influential role of cognitive biases, emotions, and heuristics in shaping decision outcomes (Lunenburg, 2010).

Contemporary research endeavors have delved into the intricate interplay of factors that govern decision-making processes, encompassing individual differences, social influences, and contextual variables. Dual-process theories, positing that decision-making involves both intuitive, automatic processes and deliberate, analytical processes (Wang & Ruhe, 2007), have elucidated the conditions under which individuals employ each mode of thinking, underscoring the importance of considering both cognitive and affective dimensions.

Within the organizational domain, scholarly inquiry has explored decision-making at both individual and collective levels. Investigations have examined how leaders formulate strategic choices, how teams achieve consensus, and how organizational culture modulates decision-making processes (Bouyssou et.al, 2013). Furthermore, the emergence of behavioral economics has catalyzed a burgeoning interest in understanding how individuals navigate real-world decision scenarios characterized by uncertainty, risk, and information constraints (Zak & Hasprova, 2020).

This literature review furnishes a conceptual framework for the present research, which aims to scrutinize the decision-making processes of parents in Chiang Mai Province when choosing an international school for their children. By integrating insights gleaned from prior studies, this research aspires to contribute to a more nuanced comprehension of how individuals and groups arrive at decisions, thereby yielding implications for optimizing decision outcomes across diverse contexts.

### *Brand trust*



The concept of brand trust has been widely studied in marketing literature, with various definitions and conceptualizations proposed. Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman & Yague-Guillen (2003) define brand trust as the willingness of a consumer to rely on a brand based on their confidence in its reliability and integrity. Kabadayi & Alan (2012) further elaborate on this, suggesting that brand trust is a multi-dimensional construct comprising beliefs about a brand's benevolence, competence, and integrity.

Numerous studies have examined the antecedents and consequences of brand trust. Antecedents include brand familiarity, perceived quality, brand satisfaction, and corporate social responsibility (Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman & Yague-Guillen, 2003; Bernarto et.al, 2020). The consequences of brand trust are equally diverse, encompassing brand loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, brand equity, and purchase intentions (Dam, 2020; Kwon et.al, 2021).

However, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the specific impact of brand trust on the decision-making process. While several studies have investigated the relationship between brand trust and purchase intentions, few have delved into the cognitive mechanisms through which brand trust influences consumer choices (Haudi et.al, 2022). This research aims to address this gap by examining how brand trust affects the evaluation of alternatives, information search, and risk perception during the decision-making process.

Based on the existing literature (Haefner, Deli-Gray & Rosenbloom, 2011; Adha & Utami, 2021; Kankam & Charnor, 2023), this research propose the following hypothesis:

*H1: Brand trust have an impact on the decision-making process of parents in Chiang Mai Province when choosing an international school for their children.*

#### *Perceived brand quality*

Perceived brand quality is a multi-faceted construct that has garnered significant attention in marketing literature (Moslehpour & Huyen, 2014). It refers to consumers' subjective evaluations of a brand's overall excellence or superiority, encompassing both tangible and intangible attributes (Vera, 2015). Scholars have extensively investigated the antecedents and consequences of perceived brand quality, recognizing its pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior (Moslehpour & Huyen, 2014; Tingchi Liu et.al, 2014; Baalbaki & Guzmán, 2016).

A plethora of studies have explored the antecedents of perceived brand quality, highlighting the influence of brand image, brand associations, product quality, and marketing communications (Akoglu & Ozbek, 2022). Brand image, encompassing the overall impression and associations consumers hold towards a brand, has been consistently identified as a crucial driver of perceived brand quality (Alhaddad, 2015). Positive brand associations, such as trustworthiness, reliability, and prestige, enhance consumers' perceptions of brand quality (Tingchi Liu et.al, 2014). Moreover, product quality, encompassing functional performance, durability, and aesthetics, directly influences consumers' assessments of brand quality (Zhao et.al, 2022). Marketing communications, including advertising, public relations, and social media engagement, play a pivotal role in shaping consumers' perceptions of brand quality through persuasive messaging and brand storytelling (Konuk, 2021).

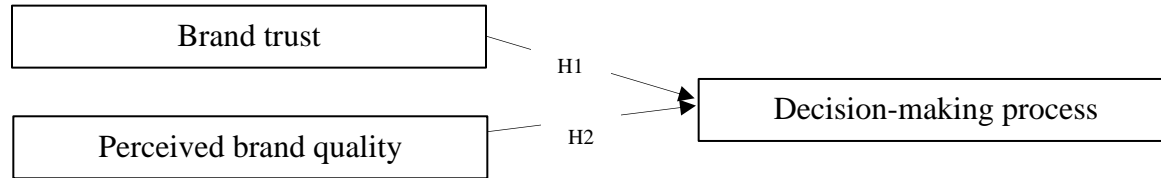
The consequences of perceived brand quality have also been extensively investigated, revealing its impact on consumer decision-making, brand loyalty, and purchase intentions. Consumers with favorable perceptions of brand quality exhibit higher levels of trust and confidence in the brand, leading to increased brand loyalty and repeat purchase behavior. Perceived brand quality has been found to positively influence consumers' willingness to pay a premium price for branded products, underscoring its economic significance for firms. Furthermore, perceived brand quality plays a crucial role in consumers' evaluation of alternatives and ultimately their purchase decisions.

Based on the existing literature (Herman et.al, 2013; Widjaja, 2019; Shafiq et.al, 2023), this research propose the following hypothesis:

*H2: Perceived brand quality have an impact on the decision-making process of parents in Chiang Mai Province when choosing an international school for their children.*

## Conceptual Framework

The research concept presented in Figure 1 has been formulated based on an extensive review of relevant literature.



**Figure 1** Conceptual framework

## Methodology

This study will employ a quantitative research design to explore the relationships between brand trust, perceived brand quality, and parental decision-making in the context of international school choice in Chiang Mai Province. A survey approach will be adopted to gather data from parents of children attending or considering 21 international schools in Chiang Mai. This design allows for a snapshot assessment of the relevant factors at a specific point in time.

### *Population and Sample Size*

The target population for this study consists of parents residing in Chiang Mai Province who have children enrolled in, or are considering enrolling their children in, one of the 21 international schools listed in the Thailand International Schools Association. To determine the sample size, the study will utilize a convenience sampling technique. This approach is practical given the constraints of time and resources often associated with academic research. While it may introduce some bias, it is a commonly used method in similar studies. A minimum sample size of 385 participants will be targeted, calculated using a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and an estimated population proportion of 50% (most conservative estimate).

### *Data Collection*

Data collection will be primarily conducted through a structured online questionnaire. The questionnaire will be designed using established scales and measures to assess brand trust, perceived brand quality, and the influence of these factors on the school choice decision-making process. The questionnaire will be pretested with a small sample of parents to ensure clarity and validity.

### *Research Instrument*

The primary research instrument will be the online questionnaire. It will consist of 25 closed-ended questions using five points Likert-type scales to measure the key constructs of brand trust, perceived brand quality, and their impact on decision making. Open-ended questions will also be included to allow parents to elaborate on their responses and share any additional factors influencing their choices. The reliability of the scales used in the survey will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with alpha coefficients ranging from 0.887 to 0.893, well above the conventional threshold of 0.7 (Kamkankaew, 2012).

### *Data Analysis*

Quantitative data from the questionnaires will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) and multiple regression analysis will examine the impact of brand trust, perceived brand quality on the school choice decision-making process.

## Results

### *Descriptive statistics of the variables*

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 provide insights into the central tendency, dispersion, and distribution shape of the variables under study: Brand Trust (BRT), Perceived Brand Quality (PBQ), and Decision-Making Process (Y\_DMP).





The mean values for all three variables are close to 4, suggesting a high average level for each construct. This indicates that, on average, participants reported high levels of brand trust, perceived brand quality, and involvement in the decision-making process.

The standard deviations (S.D.) for the variables range from 0.747 to 0.850, indicating moderate variability in responses. This suggests that while most participants reported high levels for each variable, there is a degree of individual difference in perceptions and behaviors.

The skewness values are slightly positive for all variables (ranging from 0.280 to 0.495), suggesting a slight rightward skew in the distributions. This implies that the majority of responses are clustered around the higher end of the scale, with fewer responses at the lower end.

The kurtosis values are relatively close to zero for PBQ (0.131) and slightly positive for BRT (0.513) and Y\_DMP (0.731). This suggests that the distributions are mostly mesokurtic (normal) for PBQ, with a slight tendency towards leptokurtosis (more peaked than normal) for BRT and Y\_DMP.

Overall, the data exhibit a relatively normal distribution for all variables, with a slight rightward skew and a tendency towards leptokurtosis for BRT and Y\_DMP. This indicates that the majority of participants reported high levels of brand trust, perceived brand quality, and involvement in the decision-making process, with fewer responses at the lower end of the scale.

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics of the variables

Variables	Mean	S.D.	skewness	kurtosis	Meaning of Mean
<b>Brand Trust (BRT)</b>	4.026	0.747	0.280	0.513	High
<b>Perceived brand quality (PBQ)</b>	4.061	0.801	0.495	0.131	High
<b>Decision-making process (Y_DMP)</b>	4.015	0.850	0.387	0.731	High

#### *Correlation analysis*

The results of the correlation analysis, as presented in Table 2, reveal significant positive relationships among the decision-making process (Y\_DMP), brand trust (BRT), and perceived brand quality (PBQ). Notably, brand trust exhibits the strongest correlation with the decision-making process ( $r = 0.674$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that consumers with higher trust in a brand are more likely to engage in its associated decision-making process. Similarly, perceived brand quality is also positively correlated with the decision-making process ( $r = 0.578$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that a higher perception of brand quality can influence consumer decision-making. Additionally, a robust positive correlation exists between brand trust and perceived brand quality ( $r = 0.746$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), underscoring the interconnected nature of these constructs in shaping consumer behavior. These findings collectively emphasize the pivotal role of brand trust and perceived brand quality in driving consumer decision-making processes.

**Table 2** The result of Correlation analysis

	<b>Decision-making process (Y_DMP)</b>	<b>Brand Trust (BRT)</b>	<b>Perceived brand quality (PBQ)</b>
<b>Decision-making process (Y_DMP)</b>	1.000		
<b>Brand Trust (BRT)</b>	0.674**	1.000	



	Decision-making process (Y_DMP)	Brand Trust (BRT)	Perceived brand quality (PBQ)
Perceived brand quality (PBQ)	0.578**	0.746**	1.000

Note: \*\* means a statistical significance level of 0.01

The assessment of multicollinearity, as presented in Table 3, reveals that the independent variables, namely brand trust (BRT) and perceived brand quality (PBQ), do not exhibit multicollinearity. This conclusion is drawn from the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values of 2.266 for BRT and 2.256 for PBQ, both falling well below the commonly accepted threshold of 5 or 10. Additionally, the Tolerance values of 0.443 for BRT and 0.444 for PBQ further support the absence of multicollinearity, as they are considerably higher than the minimum acceptable value of 0.1. The absence of multicollinearity in this dataset is a positive finding, as it suggests that the independent variables are not overly correlated with each other.

**Table 3** The result of multicollinearity testing

Variables	VIF values	Tolerance values	Meaning
Brand Trust (BRT)	2.266	0.443	Not Multicollinearity
Perceived brand quality (PBQ)	2.256	0.444	Not Multicollinearity

#### *Hypothesis Testing*

The results of the regression analysis, as presented in Table 4, provide compelling evidence supporting the significant impact of brand trust and perceived brand quality on the decision-making process of parents in Chiang Mai Province when selecting an international school for their children. Both brand trust (BRT) and perceived brand quality (PBQ) were found to be statistically significant predictors of the decision-making process (Y\_DMP), with p-values less than 0.001. The standardized beta coefficients ( $\beta$ ) of 0.547 and 0.470 for BRT and PBQ, respectively, indicate that brand trust exerts a slightly stronger influence on parental decision-making compared to perceived brand quality, although both factors contribute substantially.

The model's overall explanatory power is notable, with an adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.463, suggesting that brand trust and perceived brand quality collectively account for 46.3% of the variance in the decision-making process. This underscores the importance of these two factors in shaping parental choices regarding international schools. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.900 indicates no significant autocorrelation in the model's residuals, supporting the validity of the regression analysis. Overall, these findings confirm the hypotheses (H1 and H2) that both brand trust and perceived brand quality play crucial roles in the decision-making process of parents in Chiang Mai Province when selecting an international school for their children.

**Table 4** The result of entering method regression analysis

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: Decision-making process (Y_DMP)				
	b	SE	$\beta$	t	p-value
constant(a)	1.778	0.205		3.799	0.000*
Brand Trust (BRT)	0.622	0.172	0.547	2.596	0.001*
Perceived brand	0.580	0.167	0.470	2.671	0.000*



Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: Decision-making process (Y_DMP)				
	b	SE	$\beta$	t	p-value
quality (PBQ)	R = 0.683, R <sup>2</sup> = 0.467, Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = 0.463 F = 78.60, Sig F = < .001 ,Durbin-Watson = 1.900				

Note: \* means a statistical significance level of 0.05

The results of the regression analysis, as presented in Table 4, provide a clear quantitative representation of the impact of brand trust (BRT) and perceived brand quality (PBQ) on the decision-making process (Y\_DMP) of parents in Chiang Mai Province when choosing an international school for their children.

The equation derived from this analysis is as follows:

$$Y\_DMP = 1.778 + 0.622(BRT) + 0.580(PBQ)$$

This equation indicates that both brand trust and perceived brand quality are significant predictors of the parents' decision-making process. The positive coefficients (0.622 and 0.580) associated with BRT and PBQ respectively, imply that as the levels of brand trust and perceived brand quality increase, so does the likelihood of a parent choosing a particular international school.

## Discussion

The findings of this study provide robust evidence to support the hypothesized relationships between brand trust, perceived brand quality, and parental decision-making in the context of selecting international schools in Chiang Mai Province. Both brand trust (BRT) and perceived brand quality (PBQ) emerged as significant predictors of parental decision-making, confirming H1 and H2. These results align with existing literature highlighting the crucial role of brand trust and perceived brand quality in consumer behavior (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003; Kabadayi & Alan, 2012; Moslehpour & Huyen, 2014; Vera, 2015).

In this specific context, brand trust encompasses parents' confidence in the reliability and integrity of international schools, while perceived brand quality reflects their subjective evaluations of the school's overall excellence. The positive coefficients for both brand trust (BRT) and perceived brand quality (PBQ) in the regression model indicate that higher levels of trust and perceived quality are associated with an increased likelihood of parents choosing a particular school. This underscores the importance for international schools in Chiang Mai Province to cultivate and maintain a strong brand reputation that instills trust and communicates a perception of high quality.

The significance of brand trust in this context is particularly noteworthy. It suggests that parents place a premium on the credibility and reputation of international schools when making decisions about their children's education. Schools that have established a track record of delivering on their promises and exceeding expectations are more likely to be trusted by parents. This trust, in turn, becomes a powerful driver of parental choice.

Similarly, perceived brand quality plays a pivotal role in the decision-making process. Parents associate high-quality brands with superior educational outcomes, experienced faculty, and a nurturing learning environment. Schools that effectively communicate their commitment to quality and showcase their achievements are more likely to be perceived favorably by parents. This perception of quality then becomes a compelling factor in the selection process.

The collective impact of brand trust and perceived brand quality on parental decision-making is substantial, as evidenced by the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.463. This implies that these two factors alone account



for nearly half of the variance in parental choices. This finding highlights the importance of brand management for international schools. By strategically investing in building brand trust and enhancing perceived brand quality, schools can significantly influence parental decision-making and attract a larger share of prospective students.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the impact of brand trust and perceived brand quality in the education sector. The findings have important implications for international schools seeking to differentiate themselves in a competitive market. By understanding the critical role of brand trust and perceived brand quality in parental decision-making, schools can develop targeted marketing strategies that resonate with prospective students and their families.

## Conclusion

This research elucidates the profound influence of brand trust and perceived brand quality on parental decision-making processes when selecting an international school within Chiang Mai Province. Both factors emerged as significant predictors of parental choice, with brand trust demonstrating a marginally stronger influence. These findings underscore the imperative for international schools to cultivate a robust brand reputation that engenders trust and communicates a perception of superior quality. Moreover, the study's outcomes illuminate the potential for enhancing parental choice through targeted interventions. Schools can proactively foster trust by ensuring transparency, consistently fulfilling promises, and actively engaging with the parent community. By emphasizing academic rigor, the expertise of faculty, and a supportive learning environment, schools can elevate their perceived brand quality. Empowering parents with accessible and comprehensive information regarding schools' brand attributes can further facilitate informed decision-making. This could entail developing user-friendly websites, organizing informative events, and fostering open communication channels. By prioritizing these strategies, international schools in Chiang Mai Province can not only attract a wider range of prospective students but also contribute to a more effective and equitable educational landscape.

## Recommendation

### *Managerial Recommendations*

The findings of this research underscore the critical importance of brand management for international schools in Chiang Mai Province. School administrators and marketing teams should prioritize strategies that cultivate and enhance brand trust and perceived brand quality. This can be achieved through transparent communication about the school's values, mission, and educational philosophy, as well as showcasing the school's achievements and success stories. Investing in faculty development, curriculum innovation, and extracurricular programs can further enhance the school's brand image and perceived quality. Additionally, actively engaging with parents and the wider community through open houses, workshops, and social media can foster trust and build strong relationships. By focusing on these aspects, international schools can differentiate themselves in a competitive market and attract a larger share of prospective students.

### *Recommendations for Academia*

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on brand trust, perceived brand quality, and consumer decision-making in the education sector. Future research could delve deeper into the specific dimensions of brand trust and perceived brand quality that are most salient to parents in Chiang Mai Province. Additionally, exploring the mediating and moderating factors that influence the relationship between these constructs and parental decision-making could provide further insights. Longitudinal studies could also examine how brand trust and perceived brand quality evolve over time and how they impact long-term parental satisfaction and loyalty. By expanding the scope of research in this area, academics can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior in the education market and inform the development of effective marketing strategies for international schools.





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