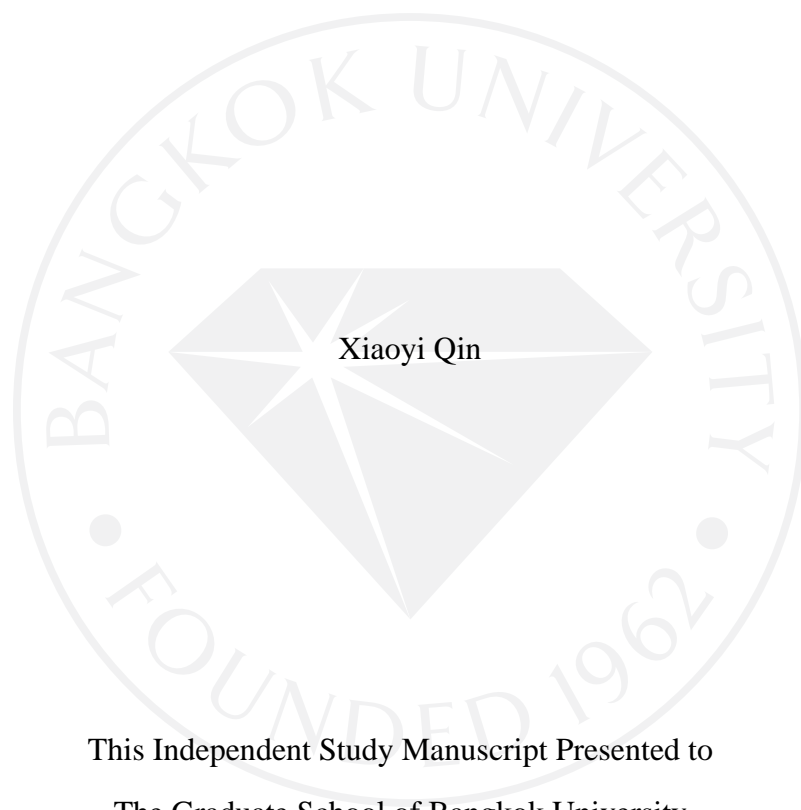


HIGH SPEED TRAIN: ANALYSIS OF CHINESE PEOPLE'S AWARENESS,
KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND OPINION ABOUT CHINA AND THAILAND
CONNECTION



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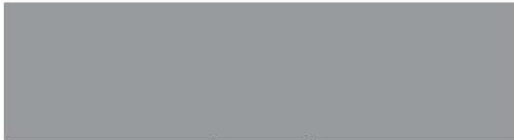


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High Speed Train: Analysis of Chinese People's Awareness, Knowledge, Attitude and opinion about China and Thailand Connection(74 pp.)

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ABSTRACT

The development of a high-speed railway line between China and the ASEAN region has a wide array of benefits to all the participating countries. This research aims at ascertaining the possible benefits, both social and economic, that the participating countries are likely to enjoy should this project be implemented successfully. The research also analyses the Chinese people's awareness, knowledge, attitude and opinion about this connection.

The Chinese people believe that the inception of this project would have a significant impact on business, connectivity, and international relations between China and Thailand among others. The Chinese people are generally aware of the proposed project and are optimistic that it would benefit the ASEAN region. Their attitudes towards this project are generally good, since, according to the primary research, most of them support the idea.

This research uses primary data collection methods with a survey that focussed on both Thai and Chinese participants. The questions in the questionnaires sought to establish what the participants expected from the project, and whether its implementation would boost their means and desire to do business.

This research finds out that notwithstanding the various disagreements that have led to several rescheduling of this project and the disagreements among the countries in the region, the benefits of this project outweigh any shortcomings, and the result

would be a more developed region, increased tourism, and easy movement within the region and into China.

This research concludes that the Chinese people are optimistic about this project in that they believe it would significant positive effects of the region's tourism, business, and international relations. The Chinese people are aware of this project and as this research establishes, there are a few problems that challenge its successful implementation, but the chances of its success are good.



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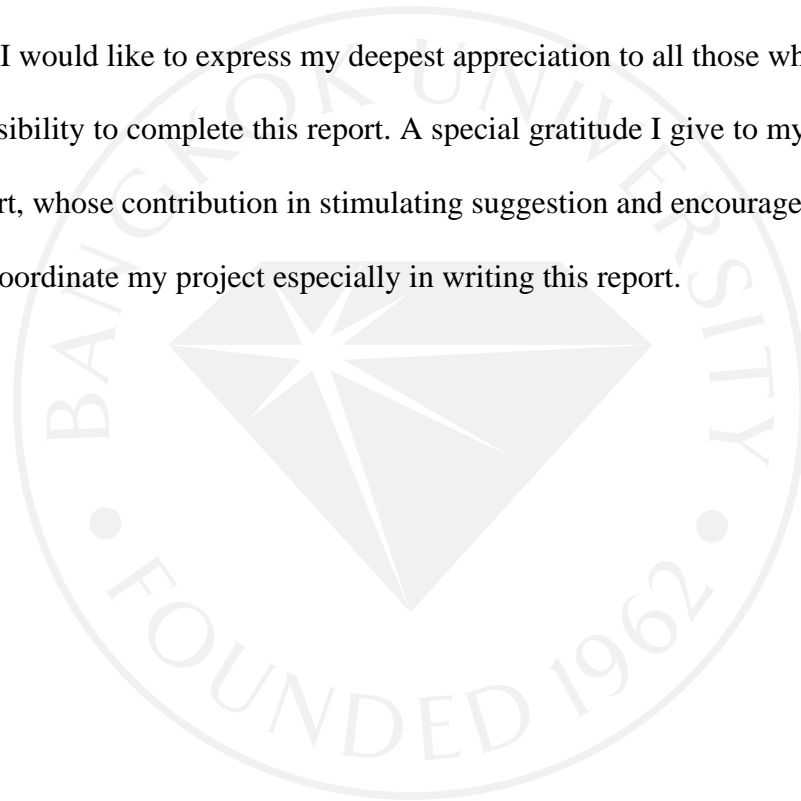


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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Chinese economic upsurge has significantly influenced a number of infrastructural developments in Asia. The influence of economic development on physical infrastructure is one of the aspects that have been evident in China and her trading partners, and one of the countries that has benefited from the Chinese rapid development is Thailand. Experts have linked the Chinese interest in development of infrastructure with the country intentions to make trade routes in many parts of Asia.

The fact that the introduction of fast trains in China and its trading partners is a strategic move as far as China's trade interests are concerned, does not mean that such moves do no benefit other countries as well (Gray, Lane&Varoudakis, 2007). Thailand would benefit greatly from the connection between itself and China, where there would be more opportunities for the country to develop economically by creating many opportunities for the Thai people among other benefits. Opening up the country would not only give it an opportunity to exploit its economic potential, but also strengthen its inherent trading and developmental instincts. This research would aim at determining the various impacts, both economic and social, of high-speed train connecting China and Thailand.

Background Information

History of Railway Development between China and Thailand

Linking China with Thailand would not only open up Thailand, but would also create an opportunity for its growth and development. On the flipside though, this would also have multiple effects on the growth of the Chinese economy. The trade between China and Thailand has been on a steady rise for a long time, and this linkage would make it even more so. Transport infrastructure between the two countries has improved business, as well as diplomatic relationships between Thailand and China.

A high-speed train linkage between Thailand and China would not be the first infrastructural investment by China in an attempt to connect itself with other regions.

If anything, there has been a continuous investment in railway between China and these other parts for a while now. The Trans Asian railway, launched in the 1960s sought to provide at least 8,750 miles of rail linking Singapore and Istanbul in Turkey (Zhang & Heung, 2002). There are also plans of extending the same to Europe and Africa. However, political and economic obstacles halted the project from raking off from the 1960s to 1980s. The end of the cold war saw immense support from many Asian countries as far as linking different parts of the continent with roads and railways are concerned. A number of miles of railway serving different parts of the Asian continent have significantly contributed to the growth of economy (Emerson & Vinokurov, 2009).

The northern corridor was already in operation before the collapse of the project and as such, there is a train ferry operating across Lake Van, thus allowing services between Iran and Turkey. There is a linkage between China and Kazakhstan, which started operations in the 1990s (Goh, 2004). A link also exists between Iran and central Asia, completed in 1996. Monster tracks link China to many parts of the Eurasian region, among them being Laos, Afghanistan, Mongolia, among others. The realization that the country benefits considerably from the increased investment in these regions saw an increase in the government investment in infrastructure in the region. The Trans-Asian railway, one of China's biggest railway investments links majority of the Asian region, opening u many parts and thus easing the movement of goods and people from one country to another, a reason for the growth of the region. For instance, it cuts across many corridors such as the northern corridor and the southern corridor. Currently, there is a proposal seeking to connect Kunming, China with Bangkok and Cambodia via Vietnam. The link will also serve the central route through Laos and the western route via Myanmar (Li & Cai, 2007).

Research Problem

According to Shenggen & Zhang (2004) in an increasingly globalized world, transport infrastructure is becoming an important element of economic growth and development. Business requires the ease of operations, with smooth transport processes from one place to another. The ease of moving goods and services, as well as people from one place to another makes it important for the growth of any

economy or country. Recently, with the launch of the internet and the personal computers, the world has grown at unbelievably high speed (Yoshino & Nakahigashi, 2000). The ability of people and businesses to share information becomes of great importance to the people, as this is the only sure way of achieving growth.

Since the end of the Second World War however, the global growth levels in terms of business, technology and information has grown in an alarming rate. More than ever, the world embarked on expansive and drastic growth strategies to push the growth and the development of the world business. Volumes of goods traded across borders grew tremendously. Countries that even did not belong to trade blocks started doing business with each other (Jeffreys, 2011). China started shipping more goods to the United States, while companies devolved their operations to china and other parts of Asia such as Thailand.

Several factors contributed to the expansion and growth of the Asian region. While government investment remains the key factor to this growth, it is important to note that its dedication to infrastructure was the biggest contributing factor to this growth (Demurger, 2001). As noted by the World Bank, infrastructure is critical to the growth and development of a country. As such, countries should invest in expanding their infrastructure in order to attract more business and investors. Minimizing the cost of doing business within a country saves operational costs for business people. Subsequently, they can invest in other sectors, contributing to overall economic growth and development.

China has embraced the expansive infrastructural growth for a while. As Lin, Cai, & Li, (2003) point out, in the recent past, state of the art infrastructural designs that the Chinese government embraced have seen tremendous growth in the investments from the west, especially United States and Europe. Multinational companies have set up camp in the country, thus contributing to the growth of the Chinese economy through a number of ways. Employment opportunities and taxes to the central government are the major ways through which these businesses contribute to the growth of the economy. Thus, putting up quality infrastructure is the best way to achieve economic growth and development of any country. According to Simon & Goh (2008), the ability of China to establish state of the art infrastructure is the main reason for the country's growth and development.

China has become a huge economy over the recent past. Its increased relations with Thailand have been a source of growth for Thailand. Through the bilateral agreements between the two countries, there are increased levels of business operations between China and Thailand. There have been cordial relations between the kingdom of Thailand and China, especially those targeting the business acumen as well as the political administration. For instance, China supports the Royal Thai government, especially in the implementation of various projects such as the Roadmap on national reform. Thailand's economic growth and the wellbeing of the people is yet another important concern for the Chinese government. Thus, it offers any form of support to the Thai government, including monetary and technical expertise. In 2015, the two countries celebrated the 40th anniversary of the established diplomatic relationships between China and Thailand.

Significance of the Study

The aim of this research is to analyse the Chinese people's awareness, knowledge, attitude and opinion about the high speed train. There has been a number of studies focussing on the benefits of high speed trains in different parts of the world, but there have been hardly any studies on the Chinese people's attitudes, knowledge, and opinions on the high speed train between China and Thailand. This research is important in that it adds to the body of knowledge about how the high speed train is likely to benefit the ASEAN region. This paper is one of few studies, which investigates the awareness, knowledge, attitudes and opinion of the Chinese people about high speed train in Thailand. This study would benefit the government and the people in general in terms of providing them with the knowledge of how people perceive this project and the likely benefits that might come out of it.

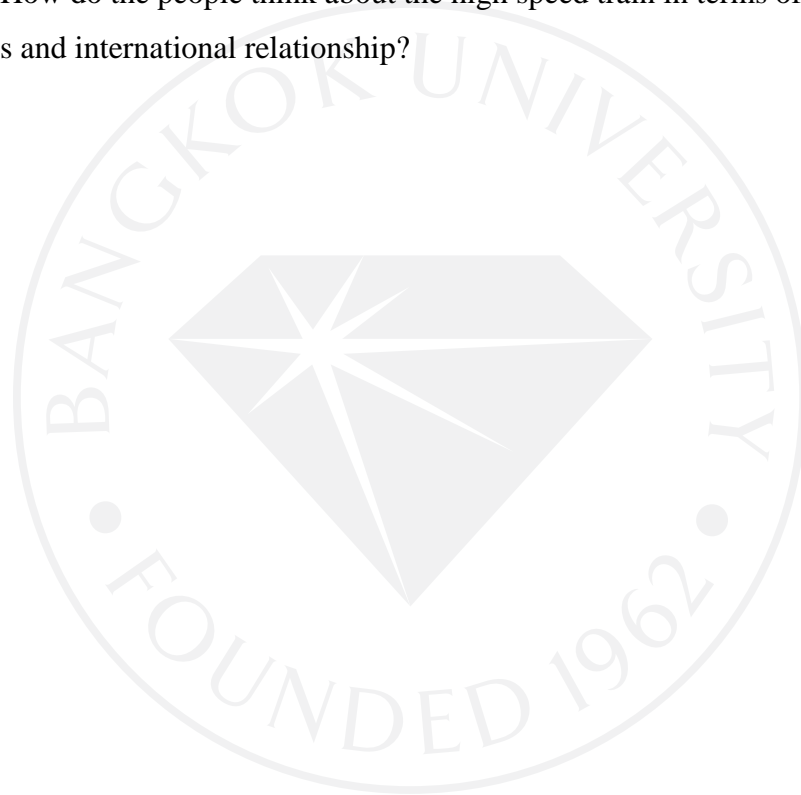
Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research is to analyse the Chinese people's awareness, knowledge, attitude and opinion about high speed train project. The economic upsurge in China has had its influence in the region in terms of infrastructural development, and this research would focus on how connecting China and Thailand using a high-speed train is likely to affect these countries. The objectives of this research would be:

1. To examine the awareness, knowledge, attitude and opinion about the high speed train among Chinese people
2. To examine whether the media explore have effect on those awareness, knowledge, attitude and opinion
3. To determine the problems/benefits about the high speed train

Research Problem

How do the people think about the high speed train in terms of tourism, business and international relationship?



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Globalization has had both positive and negative impacts on the contemporary society. It has to be understood that globalization has made the world operate and function similar to a global village. The degree of interaction as well as its quality has been enhanced. As cultures interact, economies also interact. According to Henckel (2012), when countries work together towards a common goal, the potential for success of that goal is enhanced. While the advent of the digital age has amplified the means via which nations can interact, the building of transportation networks has never been under-estimated. The rationale for this is that the building of efficient and reliable transportation networks amplifies the economic, social and political interaction between nations.

Overview of the Chinese-Thailand High-Speed Train Connection

The Chinese economy is among the best performing economies in the world. China has experienced positive gains in recent times (Anderson, Cavanagh & Lee, 2005). It has been posited that with time, the Chinese economy will surpass the performance of the American economy (Yusuf, Nabeshima & Yamashita, 2008). The levels of investments that have been attributed to China have catapulted it into one of the best performing economies of the world. On the other hand, Thailand is one of the emerging economies. Its recent economic performance can be used as a testament of the validity of this assertion (Gray, Lane & Varoudakis, 2007). With time, the levels of investments that have been directed towards Thailand have increased. The resultant effect is an improved potential of the Thailand economy.

A link between these two nations has the potential of resulting in improved economic performance. The link will serve to fashion an enabling environment for greater economic, social, and political interactions (Hill & Gochoco-Bautista, 2013). In this case, the link has been fashioned via establishing a railway line between the

two nations. The two nations have entered into an agreement to build a high-speed railway that would connect the two economies. The setting up of this railway connection is bound to have some impacts on both nations. With this being said, the intent herein is to analyse the railway connection between Thailand and China. The focus has been placed on the business impact of the establishment of the high-speed railway. The setting of the high-speed railway will have a positive impact on businesses potential in both nations. The railway will fashion an enabling environment for greater economic interactions between businesses in both nations.

Analysis

Thailand is one of the emerging economies in the world. The recent economic performance can be used as a testament of this improvement. However, despite the improved economic performance by Thailand, there are still a great percentage of the people whose economic performance has yet to be improved (Weiss, J., & Khan, 2006). A look into Thailand would reveal that the population living in the rural regions in the country is yet to enjoy the fruits of the improved economic performance. Those living in the rural Thailand have been forced to survive on barely a dollar a day, which is of the rationales that have been postulated in a bid to explain this eventuality is the dependence on natural resources (Kohli, 2008). According to Bhagwati & Panagariya (2013), the economic development of Thailand has been attributed to the divergence of economic interests. There has been a change from the traditional agricultural based economy to an industrial based economy.

In expanding the transportation infrastructure, the nation has hoped that the growing divergence in economic performance would be addressed. In fashioning a link between the nation's capital and China, the adopted notion is that the economic potential of the nation will be enhanced to the point where the rural regions will begin to benefit from the improved economic performance (Asian Development Bank, 2012). However, such a notion is susceptible to wide critique. It is quite questionable if the mere setting up improved infrastructure between the nation's capital and the China is sufficient to instigate economic rejuvenation in the rural regions. While the urban regions are also in need for economic improvement, the situation in the rural regions has been said to be much direr (Tan, 2010).

In line with this understanding, the best approach would then entail using other economic means to boost the economic potential of the rural regions. The impact of the high-speed railway to the rural Thailand is somewhat complicated. For one, the impact of the improved infrastructure to the rural Thailand will be long term. In the short term, the establishment of the railway connection will be limited. In the event of improved business interaction, the urban regions are expected to be the first beneficiaries. It can then be postulated that the establishment of the railway link will do nothing, which is in the short term, to address the divergence of economic potential between the rural and urban regions.

The economic case for the need of the railway link is best described as weak. The initial argument that has been provided by the Thailand government was to fashion an enabling environment for greater economic performance (Weiss & Khan, 2006). The adopted perception is that establishing a connection with the ASEAN-China will culminate in an augmented economic performance. However, the government has done a poor job of convincing the nation and more so the world of the need for the railway line. The government is so bent on establishing the link that they have ignored the need to investigate on the economic potential of the railway line (Cockburn, Dissou, Duclos & Tiberti, 2013). It is not sufficient to simply believe that by setting a link between the ASEAN-China will translate in improved economic performance.

A cost-benefit analysis ought to have been undertaken by the Thailand government. However, as has been reiterated herein, the government seems to have ignored the need for this analysis. Detailed economic calculations ought to have been undertaken. The levels of investments that have been directed towards this endeavour make it critical to conduct sufficient research into the benefits of the undertaking. The Thailand economy has become increasingly dependent on mineral exports (Futamatsu, Escritt & Davies, 2013). Therefore, the viability of the investment is significantly dependent on its ability to promote the exportation of the mineral resources to be found in Thailand.

On a theoretical perspective, the establishment of the railway network will culminate in an improved exportation of the mineral resources. According to Hubbard (2009), improved infrastructure has the potential of realizing improved

exportation of a nation's products. The adopted rationale is that the establishment of efficient transportation networks fashions an enabling environment for the improved exportation. It then translates to mean that on a theoretical front, Thailand is in a position to experience positive gains resulting from the setting up of the railway link.

Opportunity costs to be realized have to also be factored into the equation. Improved infrastructure is set up in order to save on time. The setting up of the railway is projected to save on time. Moreover, there is need to appreciate that the railway has been built for a high-speed train. Therefore, time saving is a goal that will be realized via the high-speed train. There is then a need to appreciate the value of the time that has been saved on travel. According to Quah&Toh (2012), time saving has the capacity to realize improved economic gains. In the case of Thailand, the nation stands the chance of realizing improved economic gains.

The labour perspective has to be given focus. China is a labour rich nation. According to Alberts (2006), the population size has enabled the country to have wide access to labour. On the other hand, Thailand is an emerging nation. Therefore, the labour link between the two nations ought not to be downplayed. However, there is a need to give mention to the dynamics characterising the Asian region in recent times. Hira&Hira (2005) argues that there is recent trend is of multi-nationals choosing to expand into different regions separate from China. The dynamics of the Chinese market were such that they motivated the need for out-sourcing manufacturing undertakings to the Chinese market. The labour supply coupled with the technical knowhow that enables multi-nationals to realize cost-efficient manufacturing, have been pointed as the core rationales for why multi-nationals favoured China as the go to location. However, the changing dynamics in the Chinese market have compelled the need for looking for alternative manufacturing locations.

Paus (2007) has argued that the China plus one approach has been slowly gaining support of the manufacturing community. The deteriorating condition of China as the best manufacturing location has compelled a shift to other Asian regions. One of the core rationales that can be pointed out is the threat to the crucial intellectual rights. The Chinese government has adopted a passive approach to the

protection of intellectual rights. The resultant situation is an environment that is not enabling for improved investment. Such a statement has been made, especially in reference to firms that have a high degree of dependence on intellectual rights. In the pharmaceutical industry, the threat to intellectual rights has been treated with clear alarm.

Given the growing unsuitability of China as the best out-sourcing location, the setting up of the railway line enhances the potential for multinationals to shift to Thailand. China has been identified as having sufficient access to otherwise cheap labour. On the other hand, there is also the factor of technical knowhow that enables complex manufacturing undertakings to be out-sourced to the nation. The setting up of the high-speed railway will provide a means for Thailand to reap some of the benefits previously attributed to the Chinese market.

In the theoretical sense, improved infrastructure will enable ease of labour flow between the two nations. Given the rising costs of Chinese labour, Thailand can position itself as a source of cheap labour. The presence of the high-speed railway will make it fairly easy for cheap labour to move between the nations. It can then be postulated that the railway will make Thailand a more appealing location for outsourcing manufacturing undertakings Greenaway, Milner & Yao (2010). The link with China then serves to improve the economic potential of the Thailand with time. It can then be argued that the setting up of the railway will then improve the suitability of Thailand as an investment location. The railway might act as a link between Thailand the technical knowhow with which China has become synonymous.

It is not quite apparent as to how the setting up of the railway will culminate in the increased economic interaction between the first tier and second tier cities in Thailand. While it is immediately apparent that the first tier, cities will benefit from the implementation of the railway connection. However, it might be postulated that the economic benefits will realize improved economic opportunities. In the end, the economic performance would be distributed in the second tier cities in Thailand. Again, an example of the Chinese perspective might be postulated. However, in the Chinese perspective, the government has implemented policies that have been endeavoured at motivating the industries to move to the rural regions of China. In

the same way, the Thailand government has to then implement policies that will motivate firms to move to the second tier regions.

The setting up of the railway has been endeavoured to aid in improving the nation's economic performance. The railway has been set to link Thailand to other nations in the region (Yeung, 2000). In this way, the railway will realize a regional link to the three regions. The exportation of agricultural products as well as mineral such as copper, potash and gold are thus set to increase once the railway line has been set up. The railway line will realize improved access to new markets for the agricultural products as well as the market for the mineral exports. It can then be postulated that the high-speed train will positively impact the first and second tier cities in Thailand. According to Ali & Yao (2004), improved infrastructure has the potential of realizing improved access to new markets. Therefore, enhanced infrastructure systems have the potential of improving a nation's productivity (Beall, Guha-Khasnobis & Kanbur, 2012). Thailand then stands a chance of benefitting from the setting up of the enhanced infrastructure systems.

The high-speed railway has been projected to aid in augmenting the economic performance of the countries involved in the railway line. Initial research has established that the railway will culminate in enhancing the economic potential of the nations linked to the high-speed train. However, there is need to point out the obvious. Of all the nations' party to the high-speed train link, China perhaps has the best performing economy. The perception that has been adopted in the region is that the high-speed train is part of the Chinese diplomacy to exert its influence in the Asian region. China is expected to avail its expertise to the other nations who access will be amplified by the presence of the high-speed train.

The adopted understanding herein is that Thailand seeks to benefit to a high degree by the setting up of the high-speed railway line. While China stands a chance to experience significant benefits, Thailand is in a better position to instigate improved economic performance. China is an economic hub in the region. In improving the level of infrastructure connecting the two nations, Thailand stands the chance to reap from the improved market for its products and also improved access to technical labour. The validity of this rationale can be attested to by the fact that

the Thailand government has been more anxious about the project as compared to its Chinese counterparts.

Asia is a global economic hub. The level of productivity that has characterized the region in the recent past can be used as a testament to the validity of this statement. Despite this high level of economic productivity, the level of inter-connectivity is still well below par. The potential of the region has yet to be fully exploited. The setting up of the railway line has addressed the need for a high degree of inter-connectivity. With this enhanced level of regional interaction, inter-regional agreements can be forged between the partner nations. At the current moment, there are interactions between these partner nations. However, the high-speed railway is expected to enhance the level and subsequent productivity of the party nations.

The business front is expected to experience the most evident impact emanating from the high-speed railway. Asia is a populous region. It then translates to mean that this large population can be converted to a large market base. The high-speed railway will enable the businesses to have access to new and improved markets. The high-speed railway will enable business to have access to markets in different nations. There is then the exponential potential for businesses once their access to wider and far-reaching markets has been enhanced. Straub, Straub, Vellutini & Warlters (2008) has postulated the notion that one of the core elements of business success is access to markets. It has to be understood that the Asian market is dynamic at best. Therefore, there is room for the marketing of a variety of goods. The high-speed railway then fashions an enabling environment for a range of businesses in the region.

The cost saving that can be realized from the high speed train is quite significant. One of the key features of the train is speed. Such a quality will ensure that the time spent in travel is cut by a significant margin. Businesses will then be able to exploit this capability, thereby saving on both time and cost. The current systems of transport used in the transportation of time critical products are quite costly. It then translates to mean that in exploiting the capacity of the high-speed train system, businesses will be able to save on time and cut on costs associated with the transportation of their products.

Possible Benefits of the Project after Completion

China is looking forward to completing the deal with Thailand as soon as possible, as many benefits will be realised in both the short-run and the long-run period after the project is completed according to Boonsu (2012). The obvious and most important benefits will accrue to both countries in that the railway will open up connectivity. As the world is expanding and social life is becoming simpler, cheaper and better means of travelling between places. This enhances social cohesion and integration between nations at different stages.

People want to have means and methods by which they can travel between two or more cities in different countries and not waste time. High speed trains connecting to countries would be the perfect solution here people would not have to struggle to travel for days by road, or pay expensive tickets by plane. A railway connection with especially high-speed trains makes the perfection connection and closes the gap between long road trips and expensive plane tickets.

China and Thailand are neighbouring countries, which means that there is a lot more going on than people could imagine. Many people have family, friends, and relatives living in either side of the country, and social life is very much important as business is to living in harmony. Having a better and faster means of connecting the two areas is a welcome idea because families would see each other more often.

This will mean that people in the two countries will not have to save for long or much money to visit relatives on the other side. Often, relationships between families and friends enhance good relations between countries and constant contact between them even more so (Hu, 2013). Such a venture shows that the two governments are aware and are concerned with not only the business side of the deal, but also the social well-being of its people.

China and Thailand have a long-standing relationship such that there is a vast majority of people and children who are students in each country from the other as Trajano and Julius (2012) put it. Many people from Thailand go to Chinese schools, whether on an exchange program or by choice. This is also true for Chinese students in Thailand. Given the budget constraints and already high costs of education, having

low cost and fast transport linking the two countries is a relief. Thus, students can travel back and forth as many times as possible during holidays and safely after the project has been completed.

Since the late 80s when China turned around its economic approach and fully focused on development, the country has seen numerous changes in its economic performance, for example, China now supplies a fifth of the world's manufactured goods, including electronics. The country is a leading manufacturer and has the fastest growing economy even compared to the US. For one, a connection between Thailand and a country like China is a good influence on stirring up the local economy of Thailand. Thailand can learn many lessons through trading with China, especially after further opening of its borders to railway transport.

Thailand can gain a lot on the side of actual business with China through being able to procure goods at a lower. Since China is a world leading producer, and it manufactures almost all types of goods, it would be easier for Thailand to obtain their goods at lower prices and even faster, especially for the perishable goods. High-speed trains would deliver perishable goods from China in time to ensure that business people are not encountering losses through goods being perishable or expensive modes of transport such as aeroplanes.

On the other hand, China will also benefit from this in terms of business. For one, they will be able to widen their market through Thailand by having a faster and cheaper means to dispose of the finished goods. Manufacturing goods without a faster and better means to distribute the goods to the market makes it very hard to earn profits or develop the economy. Many researchers and theorists argued that sooner or later, China was going to have to look for direct partners in doing business. This is because their output is expanding at a very fast rate, building the railway to connect the two countries with high speed trains is a very specific and well-aimed venture as it is targeting to ensure that China is still leading in business. In short, the two countries will be able to have an improved state of bilateral business, which will be mutually beneficial.

One of the most specific sectors business direct businesses that will benefit from the high-speed train connection is tourism. In many countries, including Thailand, tourism forms a big part of the national income strategies, and these countries have taken necessary steps to ensure the continuity of the sector. Tourism offers many benefits such as gaining foreign currency, revenues, creation of jobs, as well as exchange of cultural values. This connection will increase the number of tourists moving from one country to the other, because it will be less expensive and more comfortable to travel by high-speed trains.

One of the highest rated barriers to tourism is the expense, followed by distance and appropriate means of travel according to Chang (2013). Many people fear the expenses of tourism, especially average citizens earning a medium to low salary. Such people have to save for long in order to afford a relevant means of travel and be able to enjoy their vacation. Most people want to go for a vacation in order to relax and have fun without the hassle of travelling. This means of transport will offer all that because the other country would now be nearer and at a reduced expense.

China has been in this business for a very long time, since when they turned their economy around. They understand how to make strong yet less expensive models of the connecting railway. China learnt their construction prowess in these areas from German and Japan. These two countries are the super powers when it comes to strong and lasting constructions. China was able to learn from them and then improvise some of their own ideas to make their cost of construction cheaper. Thailand will thus have new railway line for high-speed trains connecting it to China at a very low price. Many countries are afraid of the challenge of high-speed trains because of the cost involved. In this case, the Chinese would provide technological support as well as monetary support.

According to Chen (2013), the past few years have seen a shift in the trend of various things in the economy of China, one of them being labour. The cost of labour in China is rising at a very fast rate, and many industries and companies complained that it would be very hard to manufacture goods because the cost will be very high. The rise in cost of labour has come about due to development and improvements in

social welfare policies as well as inflation. One of the solutions for many companies in China is outsourcing labour that is more affordable. Thus, Thailand might provide one of the areas where people come to China to work. Building such a high connectivity train will open up the interior of Thailand to Chinese companies who are seeking to find new and more available labour options.

As much as there are numerous advantages to building the railway to connect China and Thailand, there are several drawbacks, which might cause serious issues. The opening up of borders between countries attracts business, family visiting, and tourists, but along it can also bring unwanted people and businesses such as crime. Criminal gangs and people might take advantage of the opening to expand their territories and have a faster means of commuting, especially after committing a crime. However, boarder and customers inspections are expected to be efficient and stricter to curb international crime especially that which is dependent on transport and communication networks like this.

According to Parameswaran (2013), in such a mutually beneficial agreement that has bilateral trade and other types of business going on, one other disadvantage is that the business relationship and economy between these two countries is dependent on the other. This means that if at some point one of the countries suffers and economic problem, the effects will be most likely felt into the other country as well. For example, if China faces a financial problem or the current state of inflation continues to rise, Thailand would be affected too because most of their dealings will be closely related. This makes relationships between countries a liability that will impact negative effects on one or the other countries. However, in most cases, it is the larger economy that will affect the smaller economy. In this case, China is more likely to affect Thailand in either a positive or a negative way if the deal goes wrong.

Some researchers have expressed the fact that the deal that China made with Thailand will have greater benefit and much value to China than when compared to Thailand according to PattayaTimes (2012). The researchers attribute such an outcome to the fact that China is the main dealer in the bid to build a new railway line between the two countries China is also the most in need and the most wanting of

such a railway line to be complete, as much as both sides would gain from the project. These researchers further explain that China is expanding and growing economically each day at a very fast rate. Their output is in excess and they need to expand their markets, and one of the ways is having faster and more efficient tools for delivering the goods to as many places as possible. Thus, China would be heavily relying on Thailand for disposal and reduction of output that is ever growing.

According to The New York Times (2013), The Chinese and Thailand high-speed railway connection is part of a larger plan of building high-speed train railways for countries in East Asia in order to connect them. British and French people who were in the area started the project a long time ago, but political and major economic differences made it difficult to complete it. The railway line connecting countries in East Asia is viewed as a beneficial plan to all countries; China and Thailand included, and was revived in 2006. The countries included in the project are obviously China and Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia, Singapore, Vietnam and Malaysia.

According to the agreement between representatives from each country, the respective governments needed to build their sections in order to make it easier to connect the lines. The other requirement also involved building the railway with a standard procedure, which will not just allow connection, but smooth transition into another railway line, especially for the high-speed trains that are very dangerous if not well maintained.

The building of the high-speed railway track for Thailand has been met with many challenges (Storey, 2012). The project was to start in 2011, but due to financial and political problems, the project halted to pave way for discussions. In Bangkok, many people protested as to the need for a high-speed train connecting Thailand with many other countries, one of them being China. In some ways, the protests are legitimate because many people questioned if Thailand will benefit much from the strategy. Again, many people who complained felt like China is the major player and they would have everything to gain from the project.

Moreover, there was a change in power in Thailand where a military commander took over control of the country after a successful coup. The change of

power presented newer challenges of funding and familiarisation with such projects arranged under previous governments, however, Thailand managed to put together many of the requirements and construction began in 2015. China promised to provide aid in terms of construction as well as funding to ensure the project in Thailand is completed in time. The keenness and degree of involvement of China in ensuring that this project is successful shows that their commitment is based on genuine need for the high-speed train connection and realisation of positive realisation of outcomes after completion.

China is known for its foreign investment policies in many countries, and Thailand happens to be one of the beneficiaries as Lam (2013) explains. China understands the importance of not just growing and developing one's country, but also the need to improve the economic as well as social standards of all countries close and far away to them as much as possible. The world needs to develop as one in order to allow equity in distribution of wealth and resources. Moreover, if countries around China become poorer because economic or political issues affect them, China will stagnate because its economy is very much dependent on others.

However, it does not matter whether China will benefit most or not, because one of the most important outcomes will be that Thailand will have a high speed train connecting it to other countries at a lower cost. The benefits cannot get worse or siphon the economic progress by Thailand- in fact it might just enhance it- because results can only be better, otherwise the Thai government would not have considered it in the first place. On the other hand, China is committed to ensuring that the plan succeeds for both their economy as well as the success of the other country.

Conceptual Framework

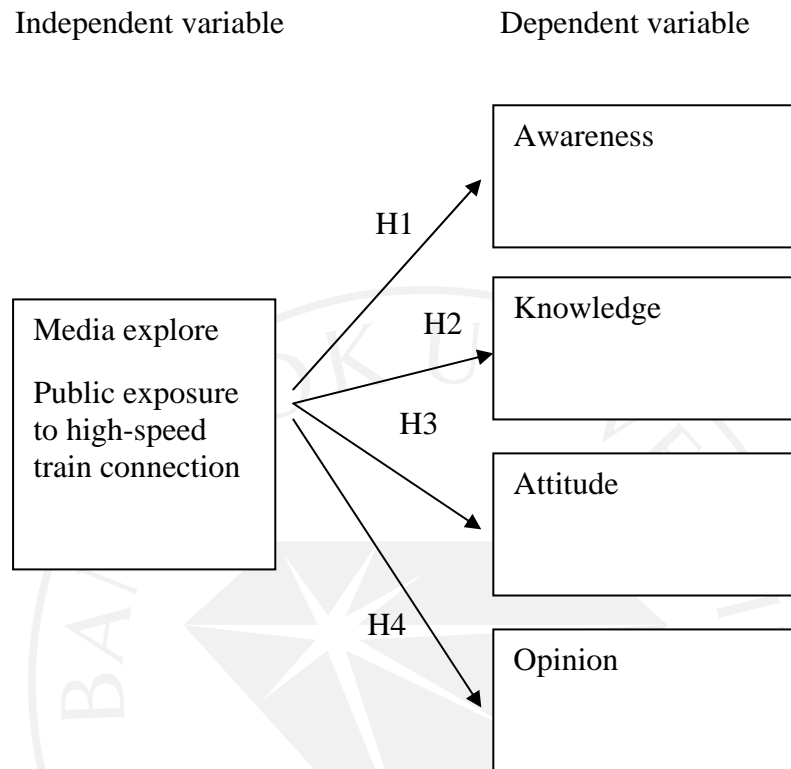


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Media Dependency Theory

The media dependency theory is embedded in classical literature that suggests that the media and its audiences are best studied in the context of wider social systems. This theory brings together the interrelations between the audiences, mass media and broad cultural society, and how the effects are perceived. The theory suggests that if a person becomes more dependent on the media in their daily life, the more useful the media would become in such a person's life.

There are three major components in the relationship, which include the society, the media, and the audiences. The first relationship is between the society and the media, the second relationship involves the media and the audiences, and the third relationship is between the society and the audience.

These three relationships explain the wider concept of how a person could use and depend on media, given that the media or the society cannot exist on their own in isolation. The effects of using media are categorised as cognitive, affective, and behavioural. The cognitive effect allows people to get information they did not have and gain new knowledge, which could either be full information, or fragmented. Affective effects of media happen when a person becomes too engaged in a certain form of media, until they become disengaged from the reality. Violent games, crime movies and other forms of extreme media could result. The third effect is behavioural, and experts suggest that sometimes people would not behave the way they do, if they had not been influenced by the media to take certain actions. The behavioural effect also has a second side where in some instances; people do nothing because the media information caused such inaction.

In the media dependency theory, there are two levels of media dependency guiding the relationships between people and the media. One of the levels is the micro level of dependency, which is also known as the personal level. The micro level investigates and understands the relationship and influence of the media to a particular individual. The media allows people to understand, gain basic orientation, and engage in recreation on an individual level.

The second level of dependency on media is the macro level, which investigates the relationship of the society and the media. This broad categorisation allows people and the society to use media in different ways to influence decisions on a global scale. The media in such a case is a tool for influencing the political system, the economic system, as well as the secondary systems in a society that include family systems, religious systems, and many more.

In the context of the perceptions, knowledge, attitudes, and opinions of Chinese regarding the fast train connection, the media is a huge part of the influencing people's decisions. The fast train is a good economic as well as social improvement that would ensure there is a lasting connection. The choice to like, recommend or participate in creating the high-speed connection between China and Thailand is highly influenced by media and the media reports. Positive media reports create

positive attitudes from citizens towards such a government project, which would result into positive action of people using such means of transport, leading to an economic improvement.

It is important for the government to consider the attitudes and opinion of the people, since they highly affect the outcomes of a project and the economy. Most importantly, the government should ensure honesty, transparency, and clarity in such projects. Any form of negative information that the media highlights would generate negative feelings.

This research seeks to assess the various attitudes, knowledge, and opinions of the Chinese people on the high-speed train connection project between China and Thailand. This project is expected to have various impacts on business, tourism, and international relations. This is summarised in the conceptual framework above. The high speed train connectivity influence different sectors, both in China and Thailand, and this research focuses on the various ways the Chinese people perceive this project in terms of their opinions, attitudes, and awareness of the existence of the project.

Hypotheses

- H₁** = Positive relationship between media explore and awareness
- H₂** = Positive relationship between media explore and knowledge
- H₃** = Positive relationship between media explore and attitude
- H₄**= Positive relationship between media explore and opinion

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter constitutes the data collection methods as far as the research topic is concerned. The high-speed link between Thailand and China a major milestone as far as business between these two countries is concerned (Emerson & Vinokurov, 2009). Investigating the social and business impacts would constitute utilising primary methods to gather evidence in the different aspects of this study, and since the focus would how the introduction of a high-speed train between China and Thailand would be; every variable in this respect has to be addressed.

This research employs primary data collection methods, whose findings would be complemented by the past research and a critical examination of the findings by other researchers. The primary research will aim at collecting information on the key variables of this research including the overall benefits of the introduction of high-speed trains in an economy or region. With the participants being Chinese, the researcher sought to obtain first-hand information to determine the reactions of the participants with respect to the connectivity between China and Thailand.

Sample and Participants

Study Population

The study population constitutes the Chinese people especially in Shanghai and Beijing. These are those who could visit Thailand and mainly had an interest in business, and would like perhaps to do business in Thailand. This research targeted people in these cities who were mainly in the middle class level of income and above, preferably those running businesses, those who are self-employed, as well as those who would want to venture into business. The reason why such people were preferred in this research is because they most likely were aware of the high-speed train and could,

therefore, give valid data. The credibility of data, in most cases, is determined by the quality of the sample.

Sample Description Sampling Method

The recruitment of participants of this research was based on a simple criterion that required the participants to be Chinese, especially in Shanghai and Beijing. The sample selection process was based on simple random sampling, which ensures that every participant has equal chance of being in the sample. The use of randomness goes a long way in minimising subjective or experimental bias, and the researcher ensured that the sample was objectively selected in a bid to facilitate data validity and reliability (Storey, 2012).

The sample size in this research was 160. It is imperative that the researcher ensures that the sample is not too small such that it is not representative enough. Small sample sizes are poor representations of the entire population. The sample size also needs not to be too large, since this would make carrying out the research difficult, and perhaps, expensive.

Research Design

The ease and effectiveness of collecting data in any research is dependent on the research design being used. A survey would be used in the data collection process, where questionnaires constituting both structured and unstructured questions would be used. The data collected in this research would be both qualitative and quantitative, since the questionnaires constitute both closed ended and open-ended questions.

Procedure and Data Collection

The questionnaires were structured in such a way that the participants are able to respond easily to the questions, since the questions were simple, direct, and relevant to the research question. The questionnaire was translated from English to Chinese before being sent to the participants, which was later retranslated to English after they were dully filled. The researcher preliminarily sent the questionnaires to 25 participants to gauge how they responded as a way of determining whether or not the participants understood what the questionnaire required of them. After the process of

recruiting the participants and the selection of the sample, the researcher briefed the participants on the requirements of the research and reminded them on the need of being as honest in their responses as they can. As a step to minimise costs and improve the efficiency of the research through ensuring the convenience of the participants, the researcher obtained the contact addresses (emails) from the participants so that the questionnaires would be sent to them via email. This took care of the geographical differences among the participants, as well as the researcher (Neuman& Dickinson, 2001).

The participants were expected to fill the questionnaires and return them within four days by replying to the email. They were also required to be as direct in their answering as possible, and in case of any delays, the participants were expected to communicate to the researcher in that respect. Upon receiving the dully-filled questionnaires from the participants, the researcher will ensure that they have been retranslated into English before organising the data ready for analysis, which would provide the basis of making conclusions on the research topic. This would include tabulating and graphing the responses that constituted quantitative data, and breaking down the responses into themes for the responses that constituted qualitative data.

Limitation of the Study

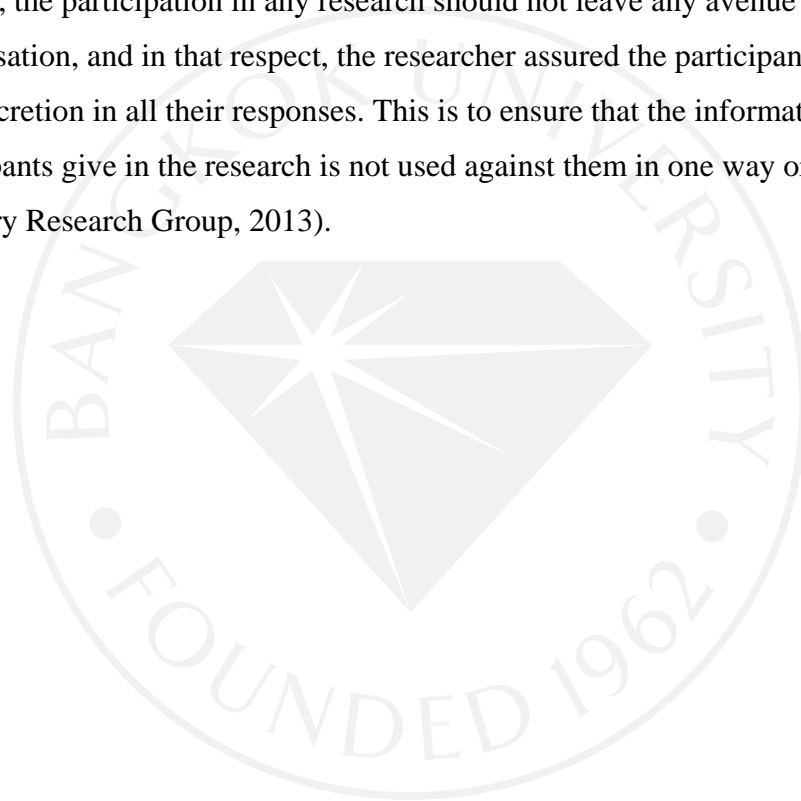
One of the major limitations of the methodology in this research is that the respondents might not be motivated to give honest or accurate answers, and there is no way the researcher will know. Thus, the researcher has to work with the assumption that the participants provided honest responses. Additionally, it is possible that some of the participants lacked the knowledge of the topic under investigation and, therefore, gave answers that might not reflect entirely what is true.

Ethical Considerations

Any research that involves human beings has to take into consideration the various ethical issues of research. The fundamental objective of research is not only to achieve the specified objectives of a particular research, but also to ensure that the process of collecting data does not cause distress or disrespect to people especially the participants.

Firstly, the researcher sought consent of the participants so that all those who participated in the research did it out of their own will, and do not feel coerced whatsoever. Seeking the consent of the participants gives the participants an opportunity to choose whether or not to participate, and this significantly affects the quality of their responses (Bodden, 2013).

The researcher also ensured that the data recorded is not exaggerated, that is, it is recorded exactly as the participants had responded on the various questions. Further, the participation in any research should not leave any avenue for victimisation, and in that respect, the researcher assured the participants of anonymity and discretion in all their responses. This is to ensure that the information the participants give in the research is not used against them in one way or the other (Primary Research Group, 2013).



CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the survey conducted in the previous chapter. The questions in the survey were both open and close ended, implying that the data collected in this case was both qualitative and quantitative. This chapter presents a summary of the results with interpretations as far as the research topic is concerned. Quantitative data in this chapter is presented using tables, as one of the most effective methods of data presentation, especially for quantitative data. Qualitative responses were coded and thematically broken down and interpreted in the context of the research focus. All these processes deductively lead to a conclusive answer on the research questions.

Survey Results

Building a high-speed train connection between China and Thailand is one of the seemingly greatest business ideas, but this is highly debatable taking into account the fact that most of the countries in the region are at different stages of development. The importance of connecting China and Thailand has some obvious advantages such as opening up Thailand, and this would be good for business and overall economic development. It can easily be argued, however, that the development of this facility is in the interest of the Chinese and Thailand would hardly benefit.

This research engages participants with questions about what they expect would come out of the high speed train should it be built to connect China and Thailand, as well as what the impacts, economic and social, are likely to be. Generally, the optimism of the participants on the various possible benefits of such an infrastructural milestone was expected, but some of the arguments against these developments, according to existing research, can be substantiated.

According to the above table, the respondents believed that the two countries have a good relationship in terms of trade, as well as in terms of diplomatic

relationships. However, a significant number of them, at 38% did not know whether or not China and Thailand had a good relationship. The purpose of this question was to gauge the amount of knowledge a participant has on international and regional trade, which has close associations with diplomatic relationships between countries.

According to the table below, information from Thailand to China is mainly conveyed through television, but some other significant means include internet and radio. This question was meant to determine how information moves across these two countries, as one of the factors affecting business.

Basic Demographic Information

Age

Table 4.1: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Age

Table 4.1		Age
Age	Date	Percentage
15-30	86	54%
31-40	39	24%
41-50	24	15%
50 up	11	7%

As shown in Table 1, this graph shows the age of all the participants, with those aged between 15 years and 30 years old having the highest number at 54% (N=86), and 24% (N=39) between ages 31 and 40. Those between 41 and 50 years were at 15% (N=24) and those above 50 were at 7% (N=11).

Gender

Table 4.2: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Gender

Table 4.2:		Gender
Gender	Data	Percentage
Male	97	61%
Female	63	39%

As shown in Table 2, this graph shows the gender of all the participants, with male participants at 61% (N=97) and female at 39% (N=63).

Educational Background

Table 4.3: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Educational background

Table 4.3:		Education Background
Education Background	Data	Percentage
High School	42	26%
Undergraduate	75	47%
Graduate	25	16%
PHD and above	18	11%

As shown in Table 3, the highest number of people included undergraduates (47%, N=75), followed by high school students (26%, N=42). Graduate (16%, N=25) shown as the third. PHD holders (11%, N=18) accounted for the lowest percentage as shown in the above table. This implies that the sample constituted people who had a relatively strong academic background.

Awareness, Knowledge, and Opinion About the High Speed Train

Awareness

Table 4.4: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Questionnaire “Are you aware of high stain”

Table 4.4: Are you aware of the high speed train		
Are you aware of the high speed train	Date	Percentage
Yes	123	77%
No	37	23%

As shown in Table 4, 77% (N=123) of the participants have heard about the high-speed train connecting the two countries compared to those 37% (N=37) who have not heard about it. A majority of the participants have heard about the high-speed train.

Table 4.5: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Questionnaire “How do you hear about high speed train”

Table 4.5:How did you hear about it		
How did you hear about it	Date	Percentage
Local media like Newspaper, TV news	86	54%
From friends or others talking	17	10%
Social media like weibo	33	21%
Internet website such as Sina, Yahoo	21	13%
Other sources	3	2%

As shown in Table 5, a majority of the participants, as indicated below heard about the project from local media (54%, N=86) and social media (21%, N=33). This is because the two are the leading forms of communication that have penetrated numerous markets. The internet (13%, N=21) as well as other digital media information sources have become very popular and have aided in passing important messages to a wide area or region.

Knowledge

Table 4.6: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Questionnaire “Do you know more details about the high speed train”

Table 4.6: Details		
Do you know more details about the high speed train	Date	Percentage
Yes	19	12%
No	73	46%
I am not sure	68	42%

As shown in Table 6, 46% (N=73) of the respondents as shown in the table below said that they did not know any further details about the railway project, and that all they know pertains to the construction in the near future. Almost the same percentage (42%, N=68) as those who did not know any details were not sure of any more details. Only minority (12%, N=19) know more details about the high speed train project.

Opinion

Table 4.7: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Questionnaire “Do you agree about signing the agreement between China and Thailand”

Table 4.7: Agree signing agreement		
Do you agree about signing the high speed train agreement between China and Thailand	Data	Percentage
Yes	70	45%
No	30	21%
Not my business	54	34%

As shown in Table 7, 45% (N=70) of participants who agree to the signing of the agreement are business people, as well as those with potential business prospects in China, thus wanting a faster and less expensive means of travel. Closely following

is 34% (N=54) participants who did not think that it is their business to agree or disagree with whether the signing should take place or not. 21% (N=30) of participants disagree.

Table 4.8: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Questionnaire “Do you think the high speed train will bring benefit to China”

Table 4.8: Benefits		
Do you think the high speed train will bring benefit to China	Data	Percentage
Yes	157	98%
No	3	2%

As shown in Table 8, 98% (N=157) of respondents were optimistic to the fact that China will gain much from the project by a huge margin. This outcome was as a result of the on-going businesses in China that have seen a tremendous increase in output, which requires a wider market to sell. Thus, China will benefit largely from this project.

Table 4.9: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Questionnaire “What kind of benefit do you think the high speed train will bring benefit to you”

Table 4.9: What kind of benefit		
What kind of benefit do you think the high speed train will bring to you	Data	Percentage
Business	88	55%
Culture	9	6%
Economy	37	23%
Tourism	21	13%
Others	5	3%

As shown in Table 9, 55% (N=88) of the respondents agreed that they would benefit from the high-speed train in terms of business. As explained, China is an

economic hub that manufacture and produces many goods. Culture, economy, and tourism trailed behind the business entity. 23% (N=37) of the participants believe that economy would be their greatest benefit. 13% (N=21) agreed on tourism and 6%(N=9) agreed on culture.

Table 4.10: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Questionnaire “Will you consider doing business in Thailand after the high speed train start”

Table 4.10: Consider business after signing		
Will you consider doing business in Thailand after the high speed train start	Data	Percentage
Yes	133	83%
No	27	17%

As shown in Table 10, 83% (N=133) of the participants indicated that they have never thought of doing business in Thailand, while 17% (N=27) of them indicated that they have. It is important; however, to note that this does not mean that Thailand does not have a conducive business environment, what it means is that most of the participants of this research had not considered doing business in Thailand.

Some of the factors that might influence this include the fact that the participants were simply not interested in business, or they believed that their businesses would not be successful once they have set them up. The risks involved in setting up a business have to be clearly understood, and it takes someone not only with entrepreneurial skills, but also with the ability to take risks to start a business amid the uncertainties that characterise any business environment.

Table 4.11: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Questionnaire “Have you ever been in Thailand”

Have you ever been to Thailand	Data	Percentage
Yes	57	36%
Not yet but plan to go	99	62%
No Plan	4	2%

As shown in Table 11, about 62% (N=99) of the respondents, as shown in the table below, have never been to Thailand, yet it is one of the neighbouring countries. The majority of the people that have never visited Thailand are planning to visit Thailand after the high-speed train has been established, in order to survey business prospects or as tourists. Very few explained that they have never been to Thailand and have no plans in the future for visiting the country (4%, N=2).

Table 4.12: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Questionnaire “Do you think the high speed train will help make travel cost lower”

Do you think the high speed train will help make travels cost lower	Data	Percentage
Yes	107	67%
No	53	33%

As shown in Table 12, the improvement of infrastructure, in most cases, would lead to a reduction of travel costs. Asked if they believed the travel costs would go down after the introduction of the high-speed train, a majority of the participants (67%, N=107) believed that the travel costs would go down. Minority (33%, N=53) did not believe.

Table 4.13: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Questionnaire “Do you think the high speed train will boost up business between China and Thailand”

Table 4.13: Boost up business		
Do you think that high speed train will boost up business between China and Thailand	Data	Percentage
Yes	149	93%
No	11	7%

As shown in Table 13, majority of the participants (93%, N=149) believed the high-speed train would boost business between China and Thailand. This would probably be due to improved connectivity between the two countries should the project be implemented.

Table 4.14: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Questionnaire “Do you consider doing business in Thailand now”

Table 4.14: Doing business in Thailand now		
Do you consider doing business in Thailand now	Data	Percentage
Yes	132	82%
No	28	18%

As shown in Table 14, majority of the participants (82%, N=132) indicated that upon the completion of the project, they would love to do business in Thailand. This is probably due the better opportunities that such a development would bring.

Table 4.15: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Questionnaire “What is your major concern about doing business in Thailand”

What is your major concern about doing business in Thailand	Date	Percentage
Business Environment	102	64%
Language	22	14%
Culture	20	12%
Others	16	10%

As shown in Table 15, most of the participants indicated that their most serious concern about doing business in Thailand is the business environment (64%, N=102). The uncertainty of the business environment in foreign country is what most of the participants indicated to be afraid of. Other concerns included language (14%, N=22) and culture (12%, N=20).

Table 4.16: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Questionnaire “Do you think high speed train could help reduce cost of logistic between China and Thailand”

Do you think the high speed train could help reduce cost of logistic between China and Thailand	Date	No
Yes	107	67%
No	53	33%

As shown in Table 16. The costs of logistics tend to go up with problems of infrastructure and transport, and with the implementation of the high-speed train project, most of the participants agreed (67%, N=107) that this would help reduce the costs of logistics between Thailand and China.

Table 4.17: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Questionnaire “Do you think high speed train could help promote the relationship between China and Thailand”

Table 4.17: Promote relationship between China and Thailand		
Do you think the high speed train would help promote the relationship between China and Thailand	Data	Percentage
Yes	144	90%
No	16	10%

As shown in Table 17, a majority of the participants (90%, N=144) believed that the high-speed train project would play a significant role in promoting the relationship between China and Thailand as shown in the table.

Table 4.18: Frequency and Percentage of sample according to Questionnaire “Do you think high speed train would make China become a super power compete with US”

Table 4.18: Relationship between China and US		
Do you think the High Speed Train would make China become a super power compete with US	Data	Percentage
Yes	84	52%
No	76	48%

As shown in Table 18, the idea that China might become an economic superpower is real according to the majority of the respondents. This is attributed to the fact that the Chinese economic influence is significantly growing the high speed train is just another of China’s economic aggression. Most of the participants (52%, N=84) believed China could be a superpower.

Conclusion

This chapter presents the analysis of primary research through the survey findings, where the prospects of a successful implementation of the high-speed train to connect the two countries and the ASEAN region in general are positive. People believe that this project is likely to have an impact on economic development and the general ease to do business in the region. There are, however, mixed responses on whether or not this project would benefit the countries equally, and who actually needs this project more than the other does. Concisely, the participants of this research gave varying opinions on the project and its economic and social impacts.

Statistical Analysis and Hypothesis Tests

Chi square Tests

Decision rule

If the p value of chi square is $< \alpha = 0.05$, then there is a statistically significant relationship between the variables. If the p value of chi square is $> \alpha = 0.05$, on the other hand, then there is no statistically significant relationship between the variables.

H₁ = Positive Relationship between Media Explore and Awareness

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CROSSTABS
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/COUNT ROUND CELL.
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Are you aware of the High Speed Train between China and Thailand? * How did you hear about it?

Table 4.19: Chi-square Tests of Are you aware of the High Speed Train between China and Thailand? *
How did you hear about it?

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	95.441 ^a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	93.850	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	35.959	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	160		

a. 4 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .69.

Table 4.20: Symmetric Measures of Are you aware of the High Speed Train between China and Thailand? * How did you hear about it?

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.772	.000
	Cramer's V	.772	.000
N of Valid Cases		160	

In the above output, the p value of chi square is 95.441 which is statistically significant at 0.05 level. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between media explore and the people's knowledge about the high speed train project. This hypothesis is supported.

H₂ = Positive Relationship between Media Explore and Knowledge

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CROSSTABS
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  /COUNT ROUND CELL.

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Do you know more details about the High Speed Train? * How did you hear about it?

Table 4.21: Chi-square Tests of Do you know more details about the High Speed Train? * How did you hear about it?

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	149.998 ^a	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	207.562	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	70.388	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	160		

a. 6 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .36.

Table 4.22: Symmetric Measures of Do you know more details about the High Speed Train? * How did you hear about it?

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.968	.000
	Cramer's V	.685	.000
N of Valid Cases		160	

In the above output, the p value of chi square is 149.998 which is statistically significant at 0.05 level. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between media explore and the people's knowledge about the high speed train project. This hypothesis is supported.

H₃= Positive Relationship between Media Explore and Attitude

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Do you agree about signing the High Speed Train agreement between China and Thailand?
* How did you hear about it?

Table 4.23: Chi-square Tests of Do you agree about signing the High Speed Train agreement between China and Thailand? * How did you hear about it?

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	190.785 ^a	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	206.315	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	17.211	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	160		

a. 5 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .68.

Table 4.24: Symmetric Measures of Do you agree about signing the High Speed Train agreement between China and Thailand? * How did you hear about it?

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	1.092	.000
	Cramer's V	.772	.000
N of Valid Cases		160	

In the above output, the p value of chi square is 190.785 which is statistically significant at 0.05 level. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between media explore and the people's knowledge about the high speed train project. This hypothesis is supported.

H₄ = Positive Relationship between Media Explore and Opinion

CROSSTABS

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/TABLES=Q9 BY Q5
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/CELLS=COUNT ROW COLUMN TOTAL
/COUNT ROUND CELL.

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Do you think the High Speed Train will bring benefit to China? * How did you hear about it?

Table 4.25: Chi-square Tests of Do you think the High Speed Train will bring benefit to China? * How did you hear about it?

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	25.413 ^a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	12.775	4	.012
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.632	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	160		

a. 6 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.

Table 4.26: Symmetric Measures of Do you think the High Speed Train will bring benefit to China? * How did you hear about it?

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.399	.000
	Cramer's V	.399	.000
N of Valid Cases		160	

In the above output, the p value of chi square is 25.413 which is statistically significant at 0.05 level. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between media explore and the people's knowledge about the high speed train project. This hypothesis is supported.

Based on the descriptive statistics, it can be concluded further that there exists a positive relationship between media explore and people's awareness, knowledge, attitude and opinion, thus the hypothesis is supported.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The high-speed train project between China and the ASEAN region is one of the constituent steps in improving the overall business situation in the region and ultimately creating a Chinese-ASEAN Free Trade Area (Alberts, 2006). This chapter presents a detailed analysis of the findings from the survey, as well as existing research. China's objective for being involved actively in this project was to ease trading and exporting in this region. The chapter also examines the various challenges that characterise this project, as well as how the ASEAN region and China could use this project to enhance their various business aspirations and cooperation as far as trade is concerned.

Media Dependency Theory

The theory attempts to explain the effects of using media over a long period of time on the society as a whole. When people become dependent on media, they would consider it more important over time in fulfilling their needs. The social construct and stability is based on how people interpret the ideas and information gathered from media. People start questioning beliefs, ideas, and other forms of information because they start to critically understand the wider social system.

The cognitive, affective, and behavioural effects of the media on the people are long-term outcomes that occur in stages. The media system, function, and information gathered affect the audiences depending on the degree of dependency for each individual or society.

Awareness, knowledge, attitude, and opinion are related and lead to the next level of understanding the society. The media dependency theory suggests that the media lays a great role in increasing people's awareness, which leads to knowledge, formation of attitude, and finally an opinion on a given subject. Over a long period of time depending on how a person is dependent on the media, their awareness,

knowledge, attitude and opinion can grow to levels that can effect change throughout a whole society.

Awareness is realising the existence of a given phenomenon or idea, which is an important step towards understanding the functioning and effects of such a phenomenon. The media helps a person to know if something is in existence through the various forms such as TV, newspapers, radio, and the internet. After being aware of something, the continued use of the media leads to knowledge, which is a deeper understanding of a phenomenon after being aware it exists. The knowledge of all details leads to a person taking a particular perspective, which makes them form an attitude. The media could provide varied perspectives on the same subject, but people make their own choices. After forming an attitude, it is easy for a person to have an opinion about something, since they already have a specific perception towards it.

The Chinese and Thailand high-speed railway connection has certainly been influenced by the media dependency theory, leading to people having different awareness levels, knowledge, attitudes, and opinions. Depending on how the media portrays the arrangement, the level of media dependency varied to affect the outcomes of how people perceive the project.

In this case, many people have positive attitudes towards the success and the help that the railway line would offer between the two countries. This has been made possible through the fact that media has constantly portrayed the project as one that would bring success. The knowledge and awareness of people about the project varies, with others being just aware, while others having significant knowledge.

Businesspeople in China have a high degree of knowledge, which has contributed to a positive attitude and better opinion that the high-speed train connection will serve. The Chinese businesspeople hope to transport their goods at a cheaper cost, as well as acquire raw materials faster and cheaper.

Overview of the Findings

The majority of the participants believed that there would generally be an ease in movement not only between China and Thailand, but also with the ASEAN region

should the high-speed train be a success. This would, therefore, enhance tourism in both countries, and indeed, in the entire region. This would also be accompanied with the development of major amenities not only in China and Thailand, but also in the ASEAN region in general.

With better connectivity, better movement of people and goods would be facilitated. This is consistent with the responses of many of the participants, who believed that the successful completion of this project would enhance business. The fact that the high-speed train would create the ease of movement within the region means that there would be better business opportunities.

Better connectivity between China and Thailand would increase the number of bilateral activities between these countries. The citizens of both countries would interact more, and there would be increased interdependence between the countries. According to the participants, majority of them as shown in the results believe that this project would significantly affect the international relationship between China and Thailand.

The survey also constituted open ended questions, where some included what the participants thought was the major concern as far as doing business in Thailand is concerned, what the cultural impacts of the project would be, the possible problems that could be foreseen as far as this project is concerned and the role of the Thai government in facilitating business after the project is completed. The fact that people from different countries would be moving across borders means that they are likely to have a cultural influence as they move, such as the introduction of Chinese culture in some parts of Thailand and the other way round.

Awareness involves having heard about a particular issue, whether or not a person understands or knows the details. The media is a useful source of creating awareness to the people. In China, the high-speed train connection to Thailand was mainly received by the people through varying sources of media such as radio and television. A majority of the people knew about the connection through the most common modes of news transmission that is TV, newspapers and radio.

As much as people are still reliant on television and newspapers, a new mode of media is merging in China through the growth of the internet and availability of internet-enabled mobile phones. Social media is quickly replacing other forms of media since more people are embracing it. Sites like WhatsApp, and SinaWeibo have over 500 million users, and information spreads very fast. The knowledge about the high-speed train in China is highly facilitated by the presence and use of media. The theory of media dependency highly applies in this case and in China because more and more people are seen to be dependent on the internet and social media.

Knowledge involves awareness of existence of an issue, as well as a deeper understanding, knowledge of updates and details. Many people in China are less aware of what is happening with the high-speed train connection, even though they know of its existence. In this case, the media was very informative when it came to dispatching awareness; however, many people are not keen when it comes to details of such a project.

According to the media dependency theory, many people would use or depend on the media to get information details and understanding on issues they are interested in, as well as those that directly affect their lives. Thus, the knowledge of the high-speed trains would become more significant to the people during the time of completion and use.

Majority of the people agree that there should be such a treaty for a high-speed train connection between China and Thailand, and many more agree that there would be benefits. China is a highly developed industrial country with high requirements for raw materials, as well as a need for a market to sell their goods. Chinese people understand the importance of such a project.

Again, the knowledge and awareness that allows people to formulate opinions about the economic gains that a particular project would bring is facilitated by knowing the media influence. People watching a lot of news and opinion talks would have much knowledge as well as be highly opinionated on how such a project would affect the Chinese economy during its initial stages, as well as later stages after completion.

Analysis of the Benefits and Problems of the Project

This research has shown that people have mixed feelings about how effective investing in the high-speed train would be for the Thailand and China, as well as the rest of the ASEAN countries. According to the survey, most of the participants believed that the connectivity between China and Thailand could spur development by presenting new business opportunities that come as a result of improved communication and transportation. This is because communication and transportation are essential factors for successful business, and by implementing this project, both countries could have a lot to gain.

China and the ASEAN region, in which Thailand is a member, have created a free trade area despite the fact that China is not a member of the declaration signed in 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand (Chang, Rachel, 2013). The objective of this declaration was to enhance trade and cooperation between the member countries, and to ensure that there are as minimal barriers to trade among the countries as possible. The Chinese-ASEAN high-speed train connectivity would, therefore, play a very important part in achieving the objectives highlighted in the free trade area.

The various doubts that have cast the success of this project have been closely associated with the fact that countries might not cooperate as agreed probably because the levels of development among the ASEAN countries and China might differ significantly. The plans of building this railway have changed several times, a fact that symbolises challenges of the project.

This research focuses on Thailand, and the country has been contemplating on the various ways in which to invest in the high-speed rail line. The country has faced significant resistance from its locals in joining the ASEAN counterparts in the implementing the high-speed train. The trade between China and Thailand is mainly rice from Thailand and manufactured goods from China. Thailand is one of the countries where, as research has shown, doing business is easy. China stands a chance of benefiting more should this project be implemented in Thailand since by 2008, Thailand ranked 13th out 180 countries, and China would be happy to do business in

such an environment that is conducive for business (Anderson, Cavanagh & Lee, 2005).

The plans to implement this project in Thailand have been interrupted severally, with the Kunming-Singapore rail plans being stopped by the new Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. This has been one of the reasons why the whole process has stalled, with the new Prime Minister not honouring the agreement between China and the previous Prime Minister.

The survey in this research showed that not everyone looked forward to the successful implementation of this project. This is because researchers have hypothesized that there would be several negative repercussions on the countries that are involved. The new railway would definitely bring an overall significant improvement in the region. This is despite a few disagreements among a few of the countries. Tourism in the region would certainly improve, with tourists moving across the region with ease. Some of these challenges have been the reason for reluctance in some countries such as Thailand, and the political systems have also played a part.

Chen (2013) points out that most of the challenges in the implementation of the high-speed train between the ASEAN countries and China is the fact that some countries view this project as a contest between Japan and China for geographical advantage. This is because such projects have proven to facilitate economic development in other regions, for example, the European Union. The high-speed rail technology, according to Hu (2013), is proven, energy efficient, and would go a long way in facilitating economic growth in the region. Thailand is one of the countries in the region with the best conditions of doing business, and the implementation of this project would attract more foreign investors and provide business opportunities to the locals not to mention improving their living standards. Japan is one of the countries that have successfully used high-speed systems domestically, and according to Chang (2013), Thailand has great potential to be one of the best investment destinations with improved communication and transportation, and this would be facilitated by the high-speed train system.

Opinion of the Chinese People

China and Thailand can both find reasons to justify the building of the train connection from both the economic and social benefits if they carefully consider involving the people. It will avoid distress, conflicts as well as marginalisation, creating information symmetry and development in the whole area. Most of the issues that have cropped up are due to lack of information and basic understanding of how people will gain. All people can see is the cost of building such a high-speed train connection, but they cannot see the outcome.

However, the Chinese people, as this research has established, are very positive about the various benefits that this research would bring to Thailand and China, as well as the ASEAN region in general. The fact that these people have sufficient knowledge of the existence of the project and have exhibited some positive energy prior to its inception demonstrates their positive attitudes towards the project, and implies that they are likely to utilise the project as an opportunity to better their business ambitions. Simon & Goh (2008) cite the industrious nature of the Chinese people, and adds that since the high-speed train brings in more opportunity, the Chinese are likely to reap huge benefits.

The ASEAN Relationship with China

The ASEAN countries, which constitute Thailand, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia form one of the oldest regional cooperation signatories. The declaration on August 1967 in Thailand saw the association between these countries strengthened. The association among these countries was aimed at strengthening regional trade and cooperation in the region, and this has gone a long way in facilitating business opportunities for entrepreneurs in the region besides some of the inherent problems including lack of proper connectivity among the countries.

Cross border business relies on the communication and transportation tools in place, and in the absence of transportation and communication infrastructure, effective business is hindered. This cooperation was intended to raise the living standards of citizens in these countries through enhancing international commodity

trade and providing their citizens with enabling environments for start and run businesses (Bodden, 2013).

The fact that expanding the business networks enhancing trade in the ASEAN region through betterment of transportation and communication is one of the oldest objectives of the ASEAN trade agreement, the implementation of the high-speed train project that would link China and the ASEAN countries would help facilitate this aim (PAUS, 2007).

The question has been why China would want to help the ASEAN countries, and despite the fact that China is not a member of ASEAN, it has gone ahead to create a free trade area agreement with the member countries. The European Union and Japan are the only trading partners of the ASEAN ahead of China, and the country seems determined to strengthen the trading ties even more. The FTA created by China is expected to make it the number one trading partner with the region, where China imports palm oil and rubber from the ASEAN region, while it exports textiles and steel to the ASEAN region. The barriers to the movement of goods have been removed and since China's developmental objectives are to ensure that the country engages in foreign trade as much as possible, the country stands to gain a lot from better connectivity in the region.

The tariff rates on goods from either side has gone down significantly, for example, the tariffs that China charged the ASEAN goods went down from 9.8% to 0.1%, while the ASEAN tariffs on Chinese goods went down from 12.8% to 0.6%, and this has gone a long way in facilitating trade among these countries (Gray, Lane & Varoudakis, 2007). The connectivity between these countries in the interest of every member of the ASEAN region and China and despite the fact that countries might benefit differently from this project, the most important thing is that the high-speed connectivity would improve the living standards of people from either side.

Need for the Connection; Is the High-Speed Train Justified

China and Thailand are set to benefit in many ways after the railway project for fast trains is completed to connect China and the rest of East Asia. Many expressed optimism on the outcomes of the project after completion since they are

looking forward to using the connection to grow, develop and expand their own enterprises. However, there were those who explained that they did not see the need for such a connection using high-speed trains.

This is because for one it would not bring much benefit to them, as well as the fact that other modes of transport and connectivity exist between the two countries (China and Thailand) that are part of the larger project to connect the whole of East Asia. Other respondents among those interviewed remained neutral and want to see the outcomes of the project for themselves before they could make any conclusions as to whether the project was helpful to the two countries or not.

In both China and Thailand, many people believe that the trading partnership that has been going on between the two countries for a long time is beneficial to both countries. Over 55% of the people interviewed in this research explained their satisfaction on the level and relationship of business, citing the fact that China has provided many essential goods to Thailand, and vice versa. About 38% of people interviewed did not think that the relationship benefited either side in the two countries.

Most of these people who did not feel that a good trading relationship existed were because they did not engage in cross border trade, so they did not feel the impact. Moreover, most of the people in Thailand think that the trade dealings benefits China business people and enterprises more, because they have more goods to sale as they look for wider markets in countries such as Thailand.

Of all those interviewed, only 56% claimed to know and have heard of the high speed train connection being built starting from China through Thailand and other countries such as Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. The fact shows that distribution of information is not equal throughout the countries. Those with information mostly come from cities, while a majority are not aware of any connectivity opening up between countries. A high number of people, about 44% of those interviewed and possibly more within the wider population are still not aware of the fact that a train connection with a high-speed capacity is passing through their countries.

The information asymmetry within a country is not a good factor when it comes to investments, the economy and business transactions (Hubbard, 2009). This is because as many people as possible are required to produce more in a country in order to have a chance of increasing the GDP as well as having a higher rate of economic growth. The less people know about a business venture likely to benefit the whole region, the less likely that they will invest and hence the project cannot achieve its maximum benefits to the communities if any.

The fact that many are optimistic of the benefits proves that to some extent the construction of the high-speed railway tracks are justifiable. When asked if the railway line will play a significant role in upping business as well as economic development in China and Thailand, 53% of the respondents said yes, while the other 47% disagreed. Majority of the business people who responded positively came from China. These businesspeople from China were very excited on the prospects of acquiring a faster mode of transport that will not just create a connection, but also allow many local Chinese businesspeople to sell their goods across the border.

Besides manufacturing of goods in China from large factories and companies that have the latest technology as well as a huge market on a global stage, China has many small and medium enterprise businesses, which have diversified into farming besides manufacturing. All these businesses are looking to find a market in order to better their livelihoods (Asian Development Bank, 2012).

In the same interview, many people from China confessed that after the project was complete, they would consider looking for business ventures in Thailand. Market opportunities often come with improvement in public services and amenities (Hubbard, 2009). Such include transport and communications systems, which are necessary for not just fast transfer of the goods, but also creating a continuous link that will serve the business many times over. Some of the people interviewed in China are still not sure if they will look for business opportunities in Thailand after the project is complete due to various reasons.

Such people claim that the two countries already have a connection by air and road, which means that there is some form of business going on. Therefore, they do

not understand how the fast train will increase the impact of business because if one wants to start a business in another country, they could do it now (Bhagwati&Panagariya, 2013). This group of people does not think that there is need to wait for the train project to be complete, because people could access the same market at any time they want with the current modes of transport.

The need and justification for having a high-speed railway track connection East Asia is for the most part for social as well as business needs when it comes to China, and social and lesser of the business end when it comes to Thailand. Thailand already has access to essential goods and services manufactured in China, and their main use for the fast trains would be for social visits. This though does not mean that Thailand will not attract and gain a significant amount of business benefits from this project. For one, businesspeople from Thailand could start ventures of going to China to buy finished goods at lower prices for themselves for resale in Thailand, rather than wait for Chinese businesspeople to take the opportunity to open up stores and sales places in Thailand.

China and Thailand as countries will directly and continuously benefit from building such a high-speed functioning railway track, as much as most people do not think there is a need for such a venture, the government will not be operating the services for free (Emerson & Vinokurov, 2009). In real sense, they will be making profits because the trains are made for maximum carriage of people as well as comfort. The ticketing and taxation services generate a lot of income for countries without people realising their impact. For example, if China taxes foreign people entering their country for social visits, as well as tax businesspeople who will have increased due to availability of such a transport network, they will earn money that will be used to develop other parts of China as well maintain the railway and the trains used.

The same applies to Thailand, who will have enabled most of the people engage in business and most importantly improve their economy. The train and railway tracks are being built to last a long time, with part of the revenues earned will be used for repairs and maintenance after a very long time. This means that the money earned is free and available to make the important investment decisions (Hill

&Gochoco, 2013). Thailand prides itself in hospitality and high quality service, which has attracted many people to their country for tourism, thus it will be highly beneficial to have the fast train connection.

Since these connections are not just for businesspeople and tourists incoming across the border from a different country, Thailand is in a strategic position to earn more from these trains (ALI & YAO, 2004). This is because the high-speed train is passing across the country, with many stops across the way. Thus, people can board and exit the trains in as many destinations as possible throughout. For one, this will ensure maximised revenue because people will be boarding and exiting as many times as possible across the country, even if they do not plan to go across the border into China or any other country. Secondly, the high-speed connection beside opening up Thailand to China and other countries, there will be a local connectivity that will increase output of the local people. For example, people will get to work faster and avoid traffic, while other will make their local business flourish by having goods in time on the market.

The long-term positive outcomes are not the only ones that will accrue as benefits to either the government or the people in both China and Thailand. The process of building the railway tracks will take at least six year for the one in Thailand set to start in 2015 and end in 2016. After that, the process of building and procuring trains will start, which will also be parallel with logistics services to link the movement of the trains across the countries. The reality is that even before the high-speed trains start operating, there will be creation of tens of thousands of jobs across all countries involved in the venture including China and Thailand. The people involved in construction will earn money and will have jobs assured for the next six years. This will percolate to the local people, as they will start putting up supportive services in areas where the railway tracks are being built such as hotel and food service points, giving more jobs to women and cooks.

After that, the trains will require drivers, logistics and schedules, and people to monitor the progress of the business. All this offers jobs to people, which will increase economic stimulation from within. People in both Thailand and China will

have to coordinate and create command centres that will ensure a smooth flow of information from either side. Thus, there will be more jobs, and thus better connectivity and therefore regional development across East Asia.

This mode of transport will be very interesting to observe in how it will affect tourism between Thailand and China. Literature predicts that most definitely, the tourism activities will go up in both countries due to cheaper and faster means of transport available. However, looking at the tourism activities in both countries, the completion of the high-speed train project will attract more tourism to Thailand than it would attract in China. Thailand is considered one of the world's exotic tourism destinations. More Chinese people would visit Thailand due to its scenery and historical tourist attraction sites.

Furthermore, it is not just Chinese tourists who will be visiting Thailand because the high-speed train connection will open up Thailand to the rest of the world as well through China. It is very easy for tourists who visit China to decide to visit Thailand as well if there is an affordable means of transport that is fast. Comparing the available modes of transport, most of the tourists in China would consider road transport to be time consuming and tiring, while air transport might be quick but very expensive. Thus, a moderated means will ensure that there is a balance in speed and expenses, thus opening up a gateway to Eastern Asia.

Tourism does not just occur because people planned to take a trip during their vacations. Sometimes tourism can occur spontaneously in the middle or at the end of other activities. For example, businesspeople sometimes feel compelled to take a break in their busy schedule to visit certain places, which then becomes tourism, China is a country that receives numerous businesspeople from all over the world, who personally visit the country for the sake of acquiring goods and services at lower prices. Having a good connection might lead many people in China who are on business trips to visit Thailand as a way of taking a break, thereby expanding tourism. More often than not, many business trips especially by foreigners turn into tourism adventure because they are as well in a foreign country; why not make time for site seeing(Lin, Cai& Li, 2003).

Given that there are mixed feelings from interviews with people in China and Thailand about the high-speed train connection, the justification of having such a connection will have to be based on the overall outcomes for both countries. This is because each person would have a different experience, creating dynamism of how they have been affected. Some will benefit greatly in terms of business, while other will enjoy a social openness. However, some will feel a negative influence in the business side. For example, some businesspeople might feel that business has been ruined due to allowing foreign business to compete with theirs directly.

In other cases, some people will not feel any impact of the high-speed connection because they might feel that they do not have any connection to the project. For example, family and friends might all be local, one might lack funds to travel, or they might also not have any business venture that relies on such a mode of transport. Besides, the railway connection only passes through certain areas, hence some people might feel left out.

Most of those who claimed that they do not feel that they will benefit or are not sure how they will fit into the plans, while others not being aware at all of the plans underway to build a 21st century super speed railway connection were for the most part people from marginalised areas. As much as China and Thailand are trying very hard to ensure that there is equitable distribution of resources throughout their countries, it is true that poverty is rampant. Many people have no idea that a fast train connection is being built, and those who have heard of it, have no idea how they will benefit in any way.

Marginalisation in many areas creates poverty, which stagnates growth and development in a country. Thus in poor regions, most of the people will continue to be poor and languish in extreme poverty because they are either not aware of opportunities, or they do not understand how to get involved. Marginalisation, poverty and lack of development go hand in hand in creating a division in social classes as well as in the way developmental project benefit people. Thus, people with money and education will continue to have access to more opportunities for development, while the poor will have less as time goes.

In simple terms when translated into this scenario is that those who do not understand the importance of this project in both China and Thailand, or are not aware of its existence will not benefit at all, while businesspeople with establishment, wealth and investments will continue to gain more profits through such a project. Those in towns and high-rise areas that get information through radio for the least part or television and internet access will always have better opportunities for themselves.

Thus comes in the question of justification for the need of the high-speed railway connection. It is true from the interviews and information gathered from the literature that both countries will benefit, and that this benefit will mostly come in terms of business opportunities, however, is the overall outcome justified, given that half of the people will not benefit, but rather only half of them have contributed to such a growth. When a government decides to bring in a project to create development, it is mostly intended to bring improvement to the marginalised and the poor (Cockburn et al, 2013). However, in this case, like in many others, not all and certainly not most that need it will use it to better their lives. Thus it further heightens the question for the need of the railway line, if the countries will benefit generally, without looking at the local impact on some people.

To correct such a problem in order to create uniform benefits across the countries that will provide even more benefits to the central governments, it is important to consider all types of people that need to be involved. The local and rural people are as much stakeholders in such ventures as the established businesspeople in towns, and their impact would be much greater and appreciated if given half a chance.

Therefore, it is the duty of the governments in both countries to ensure symmetrical and equal distribution of such important information. Information asymmetry generates negative reviews and hostile feelings to some extent for people who do not understand the impact as well as importance of a certain project. Taking for example the case of Thailand, the protests and disgruntles among the community were complaints of people who did not see the impact nor feel the need for such a high-speed railway connection. Thailand made necessary steps to stop the protests, but that will not help to explain to these people. Hence, education is the only solution.

There would of course, not be a perfect functioning system that will allow the whole community to be streamlined in aligning its services, but for the most part, if a larger area of the community understands the need, they will slowly absorb the remaining few over time, thus creating harmony. People build nations, and their protests and complaints will not make such developmental projects any easier. As seen from the literature and interviews with businesspeople as well as common citizens from both countries, it is very clear that all countries will benefit, even if not to the same degree. China might benefit more in terms of business selling, but Thailand will also gain by receiving more goods as well as reselling of these goods. Thailand on the other hand will benefit more when it comes to tourism and gaining access to their tourism destinations by many people including those not from China.

It is just a simple issue of making the people understand. This can be done through putting in place the relevant means of accessing and distributing information. Advertising such a project through local radio stations as well as setting up information centres will get more people involved. The governments of both China and Thailand might even take a step further to engage the community in giving suggestions as to how they feel such a high-speed train connection can be improved. Most governments like to think they have thought of everything, which is usually the wrong thing to do.

Unlike in Thailand, most people in China do not seem to have a problem with having a high speed train connection starting from their country and spreading throughout the rest of the East Asian countries such as Thailand. People in China seem to be more industrious and certainly diversified in their business activities, such that their business strategies have evolved to want to expand more and build more connections, even if it means funding other countries. The Chinese foreign policy on trade requires investments in such areas since they are producing more goods that need to be sold at a faster rate to more people in order to sustain their rate of economic growth. Thus, China has no problem among many of its citizens in justifying the need for such a connection.

However, the problem comes in for some of the people living in rural China, who have never heard about such a venture. It is hard to justify such a need when the impact would be on businesspeople in towns and developed provinces with huge manufacturing plants that are always ready to receive an extra cheaper mode of transport. People living in faraway areas in rural China who engage in farming and less diversified activities such as manufacturing will not benefit in any of such ventures. It will be up to the government to ensure that these people are made aware of the connection, and given means to avail their goods at the market in order to raise their profits (Beall, Guha&Kanbur, 2012). Only after this then, will the need for such a high-speed railway, transport connection will be justified in both countries.

In conclusion, the impact of the Chinese-Thailand high-speed railway construction on the overall economic development and the general living standards of the people are clearly demonstrated in this research. The ASEAN goal of unity and enhanced trade can be achieved easily with the inception of this project, which would go a long way in opening up Thailand and other ASEAN countries. There are clearly several possible negative repercussions to the involved countries particularly in terms of the agreements and lack of trust. This project has been received with mixed reactions in Thailand, with the prime minister of Thailand expressing his reluctance to go ahead with the project (Hira&Hira, 2005).

The primary research complemented by different secondary sources shows that the Kunming-Singapore high-speed rail line is what the people of Thailand and the ASEAN region in general need, since notwithstanding the few disagreements that countries have had in the region, this project would bring overall improvement in the participating countries. Thailand, being one of Asia's best business environments could benefit in many different ways, both economically and socially, where opening up of the country would most likely increase tourism, which would, in return, generate a thriving economy. This is because of the transport integration that would be in the country.

The trade between China and Thailand and the ASEAN region in general would be enhanced with the successful implementation of this project, and as such,

more business opportunities would be available. This would promote the entrepreneurial culture and improve the general living standards of the people of Thailand. China, being an economic powerhouse in Asia could play an important role in the economic development of Thailand. Concisely, the implementation of the high-speed railway would present better opportunities and living standards for the participating countries by creating easy migration flow with the region as well as into China.

Both China and Thailand agreed to become part of a long-term strategy to connect East Asia through high-speed trains. The project starts with laying the foundation that involves building railway tracks all across the countries involved with each country building their portion. The obvious fact is that all sides will benefit from the project, even though some will benefit more, while others might even experience negative effects along with the positive outcomes.

Among the benefits that will accrue to both sides is the establishment of a connection that will allow business and tourism to flourish. Chinese manufactures will export their goods more easily to countries like Thailand who need less expensive goods in order to sustain their economy. Tourism in Thailand will possibly peak because many people will have an easier option of travelling by train, which is fast and economical (Yeung, 2000).

The presence of such a project in a span of over six years before completion will create thousands of jobs for both countries, making it easier for people to have an income, thus stimulating development. On the other hand, the government will earn a lot of cash when they complete the project through revenues and ticketing. Overall, the project is justified and beneficial to both countries, as the high-speed train connection will open up East Asia.

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APPENDIX

Appendix

Questionnaire in English Version

Questionnaire About High Speed Train Connected China and Thailand

i) Your age please:

- A. 15 - 30
- B. 31 - 40
- C. 41 - 50
- D. 51 up

2. Gender:

- A. Male
- B. Female

3. Your education background:

- A. High School
- B. Undergraduate
- C. Graduate
- D. PHD and above

4. Are you aware of the High Speed Train between China and Thailand?

- A. Yes
- B. No

5. How did you hear about it?

- A. Local media like Newspaper, TV news
- B. From friends or others talking
- C. Social media like Weibo
- D. Internet website such as Sina, Yahoo

E. Other sources, please explain____

6. Do you know more details about the High Speed Train?

A. Yes

B. No

C. I am not sure.

7. Please describe what did you hear about the High Speed Train?

Answer:

8. Do you agree about signing the High Speed Train agreement between China and Thailand?

A. Yes.

B. No.

C. Not my business.

9. Do you think the High Speed Train will bring benefit to China?

A. Yes.

B. No.

10. What kind of benefit do you think the High Speed Train will bring for you?

A. Business

B. Culture

C. Economy

D. Tourism

E. Others, please explain_____

11. Have you ever been to Thailand?

A. Yes.

B. Not yet but plan to go soon.

C. No plan.

12. Will you consider using High Speed Train travel to Thailand?

A. Yes.

B. No.

13. Do you think the High Speed Train will help make travel costs lower?

A. Yes.

B. No.

14. Do you think that High Speed Train will boost up business between China and Thailand?

A. Yes.

B. No.

15. Will you consider doing business in Thailand now?

A. Yes.

B. No.

16. What is your major concern about doing business in Thailand?

A. Business Environment

B. Language

C. Culture

D. Others, please explain_____

17. Will you consider doing business in Thailand after the High Speed Train starts?

A. Yes.

B. No.

18. Do you think the High Speed Train could help reduce cost of logistic between China and Thailand?

A. Yes.

B. No.

19. Do you think the High Speed Train would help promote the relationship between China and Thailand?

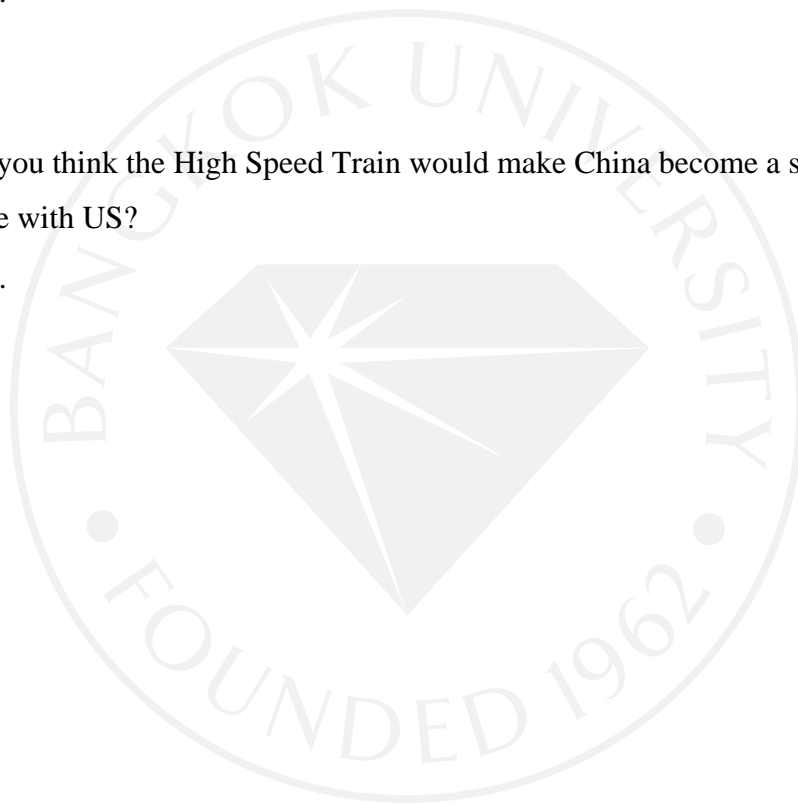
A. Yes.

B. No.

20. Do you think the High Speed Train would make China become a super power compete with US?

A. Yes.

B. No.



Questionnaire in Chinese Version

关于中泰高铁的问卷调查

1. 请问您的年龄：

A.15 - 30

B.31 - 40

C.41 - 50

D.51 up

2. 性别:

A. 男

B. 女

3. 您的教育程度:

A. 高中

B. 本科

C. 研究生

D. 博士或博士以上

4. 请问您听说过中泰高铁吗?

A. 听说过

B. 没有听说过

5. 请问您是从哪种渠道听说的中泰高铁?

A. 当地的报纸，新闻杂志

B. 朋友或者其他人的谈话

C. 社交媒体例如微博

D. 网站新闻

6. 您知道更多关于中泰高铁的消息吗?

A. 是的

B. 不是

C. 我不能确定.

7. 能不能详细说明一下您听说的中泰高铁?

回答:

8. 您是否认同中泰之间签订高铁协议?

A. 是.

B. 不是.

C. 不关我事.

9. 您是否认为中泰高铁可以给中国带来好处?

A. 是.

B. 不是.

10. 您认为中泰高铁可以给中国带来哪个方面的好处呢?

A. 商务

B. 文化

C. 经济

D. 旅游

E. 其它

11. 请问您有没有去过泰国?

- A. 有.
- B. 还没但是计划要去.
- C. 没有这项计划.

12. 会不会考虑使用中泰高铁去泰国?

- A. 会.
- B. 不会.

13. 您是否认为中泰高铁可以帮助降低旅游支出?

- A. 可以.
- B. 不可以.

14. 您是否认为中泰高铁可以帮助推动中国和泰国间的商务往来?

- A. 会.
- B. 不会.

15. 您现在会考虑在泰国经商吗?

- A. 会.
- B. 不会.

16. 如果您选择在泰国经商的话, 请问您最重要的顾虑是什么?

- A. 经商环境
- B. 语言
- C. 文化
- D. 其他

17. 中泰高铁建成后，您是否会考虑来泰国经商？

A. 会.

B. 不会.

18. 您是否认为中泰高铁可以帮助降低泰国与中国之间的物流成本？

A. 会.

B. 不会.

19. 您是否认为中泰高铁可以帮助中国和泰国进一步的加深伙伴关系？

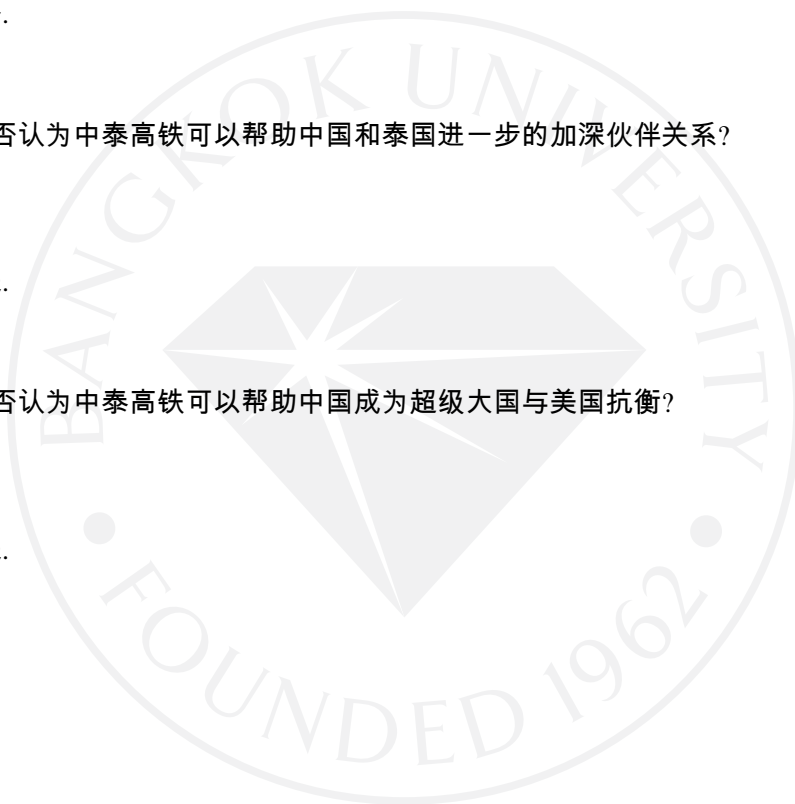
A. 是.

B. 不是.

20. 您是否认为中泰高铁可以帮助中国成为超级大国与美国抗衡？

A. 是.

B. 不是.



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