

# The Soul of Nordic Companies in Thailand

After two years of research, the Norwegian professor Ellen Hertzberg is in the final stage of finishing her extensive study. She is about to find out what makes a Nordic company successful when it moves to Thailand.

By: Rikke Bjerge Johansen

An interesting study about Nordic companies in Thailand is in the final stage after two years of research. The study wants to identify the factors that makes mission statements successful across cultures.

The result can help other Nordic companies when they move to Asia, and behind the extensive study is the Norwegian woman and member of Thai-Norwegian Chamber of Commerce, Prof. Dr. Ellen Hertzberg.

"I'll try to find the soul of the companies and how they are perceived in various parts of the world," she tells.

Ellen Hertzberg from Norway is a professor of Marketing and Strategy at Hedmark College in Norway, Bangkok University and University of Monaco. She also has her own consulting company Hertzberg Consulting AS. In 1992 she first came to Thailand to work with companies.

"I have been working with strategy all my professional life and I came to Thailand

on a mission because of the Norwegian government and Aid Agency of Norway (NORAD). Then I was supposed to build up the management education for engineers at Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) and Bangkok University, including two universities in Vietnam. So I had a lot to do with companies," she explains.

She chose to stay in Thailand where she adopted her two lovely Thai daughters. The family has recently moved back to Norway but still spend five months each year in Thailand.

The research for her current project started two years ago and together with her partner on the project, Prof. Dr. Andrew Criswell, a professor of Economics at Bangkok University, she has selected 24 Nordic headquartered companies with Thai based subsidiaries. Now the research is in its final stage, and as we speak Ellen is sending out 700 questionnaires to 24 companies where each company has to answer questions,



both in their Nordic and Thai headquarter.

"This paper seeks to determine what factors, as perceived by employees, contribute to the success of a company's mission statement. A mission statement has many audiences - customers, creditors, management- with different views regarding the company's core values, aspirations and strategies. Our focus here is how mission statements motivate employees and what elements of a mission statement resonate in the employee's mind," Ellen explains. She operates with two main hypotheses.

**Hypothesis 1:**

Both Thai and Nordic employees have the same perceptions of a company's mission statement.

**Hypothesis 2:**

The elements constituting a powerful mission statement are equally shared by Thai and Nordic employees.

"Staff is more likely trained to appreciate the nuance of meaning of their own mission statement ranking it more highly than the rest. The question about the company's own mission statement is the last one, only asking the employees to compare it with the other mission statements they have already reviewed," Ellen tells.

The companies have been chosen very carefully. Attention was given to asset size, sales and number of employees with an aim to select those with the largest presence in Thailand. Headquartered top management were contacted and asked for their cooperation in permitting distribution of a questionnaire to middle management. The usual caveats of confidentiality were assured. But Ellen will not reveal who is participating.

"I have been struggling to get them along for two years and they are all the main Nordic countries you can imagine. But I can't mention them because I have promised them to be anonymous, she explains.

Ellen is in Norway now but will return to Bangkok in May where the project will be finalized.