

Conference Name: International Conference on Business, Economics, Law, Language & Psychology, 04-05 March 2025, Singapore
Conference Dates: 04-Mar- 2025 to 05-Mar- 2025
Conference Venue: The National University of Singapore Society (NUSS), The Kent Ridge Guild House, 9 Kent Ridge Drive, Singapore
Appears in: PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences (ISSN 2454-5899)
Publication year: 2025

Mana Luksamee Arunothai, 2025

Volume 2025, pp. 283-284

DOI- <https://doi.org/10.20319/icssh.2025.283284>

This paper can be cited as Luksamee Arunothai, M.(2025). Constructing the Affordability Index of Icts and Internet Services in Thailand and Selected Asian Countries. International Conference on Business, Economics, Law, Language & Psychology, 04-05 March 2025, Singapore, Proceedings of Social Science and Humanities Research Association (SSHRA), 2025, 283-284

CONSTRUCTING THE AFFORDABILITY INDEX OF ICTS AND INTERNET SERVICES IN THAILAND AND SELECTED ASIAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract

The primary objective of this research is to formulate an index designed to quantify the affordability index of ICTs and internet services in Thailand in relation to 8 chosen countries: Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, China, Japan, and South Korea. The goal is to undertake a comparative analysis of strengths and weaknesses, and to proffer policy recommendations to bolster the affordability and reduce the problem of the digital divide. The index is a composite index having 2 main factors: (1) the price of access to ICTs (a 50% weighting) with 4 sub-factors – the mobile-cellular basket as share of GNI per capita; the mobile-cellular sub-basket (in USD); the mobile-cellular sub-basket (in PPP); and tax rates on mobile services, and (2) the price of access to the internet (a 50% weighting) with 5 sub-factors – the fixed-broadband basket as share of GNI per capita; the fixed-broadband sub-basket (in USD); the fixed-broadband sub-basket (in PPP); tax rates on fixed broadband services; and broadband internet speeds. The findings of the study disclose that in the year 2023, the affordability index in Thailand

was 0.973 which was lower than an average of 8 benchmark countries of 0.979 (Singapore 0.998, China 0.994, South Korea 0.994, Japan 0.992, Malaysia 0.990, Vietnam 0.986, Indonesia 0.974, and the Philippines 0.966, respectively). The index ranges from 0 to 1 with higher numbers indicating higher affordability. The competitive weaknesses of Thailand are concentrated in the mobile-cellular sub-basket (in both USD and PPP), tax rates on mobile services, and fixed-broadband sub-basket (in PPP). Thailand's competitive strengths, on the other hand, are predominantly located within the fixed-broadband basket as share of GNI per capita and broadband internet speeds. The future scope of the study should consider other indicators of digital divide such as communication infrastructures, computer availability, availability of alternative access through TVs or mobile phones, and internet access.

Keywords:

Affordability, Index, Icts, Internet Services, Thailand