

Abstract

The creation and communication of good destination image to tourists is useful for strategic tourism planning which fits behaviors of different tourist groups. The creation of destination image is particularly important to tourism products as they are intangible. However, destination image does change through time, and we therefore need to study it systematically and consider the changing environments as well. Besides, in the social media era, online social media are widely applied to several marketing activities, including creating destination image.

According to the importance of destination image mentioned above, the researchers aim to study the management of destination image of Thai tourism in the social media era. The research is divided into two projects. One considers the use and management of online social network to create destination image of Thai tourism. The other studies the creation of destination image perceived by tourists from BRIC, GCC and other parts of the world.

The two researches reveal three main components affecting the creation of good destination image in Thai tourism, namely, social network management, psychological factors and functional factors. The social network management affects the creation of the destination image positively; it includes social network knowledge management, trust, and social network site management. Psychological factor includes knowledge and social interaction factor and infrastructure and physical motivation factor. Functional factor composes 6 factors, namely transportation, climate and atmosphere, nature, activities, infrastructure and culture. All of these factors significantly affect the creation of destination image.

Comparing the three different tourist groups (BRIC, GCC, and others), we find that tourists from GCC rate the destination image of Thai tourism significantly below the average score rated by tourists from BRIC and tourists in other regions. The three factors that received a lower-than-average score are climate and atmosphere, transportation and infrastructure.

From the two projects, the researchers synthesize and develop the Thai tourism destination image creation model and propose strategic recommendation for integrated marketing. The results from the social network management and the creation of Thai tourism destination image are combined and presented.