

The Opportunities for the Tourism Industry Enhanced by Social Media: Cultural and Heritage Tourism Products in Thailand

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Abstract

The emergence of ICT or Information and Communication Technology creates many interactions, networks and practices that cannot be done before. Therefore, local communities need to adjust their strategies to this new phenomenon quickly. Local manufacturers related to tourism rely on consumers or tourists in the process of technology facilitated by ICT. However, domestic producers often lack guidelines for accessing ideas and inspiration from consumers or tourists. Therefore, this article consists of three components: the use of social media space, creative consumers/tourists and the development of technology marketing strategies for tourism products in the local community in Thailand. The primary purpose of this paper is to investigate the use of social media space for cultural and heritage tourism products in Thailand, but also to study that local builders will benefit from it for the technology of existing products or services. The results reveal that the local people in Thailand do not just look at financial figures when using social media marketing, but instead, they consider satisfaction, engagement of both tourist and destination, and brand awareness.

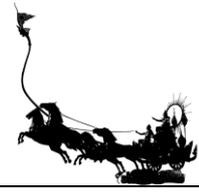
Keywords: *Tourism, opportunities, influence, tourism product, cultural, heritage, social media, Thailand*

1. Introduction

Destination management organisations (DMOs) cannot ignore the fact that social media sites like TripAdvisor, Lonely Planet, Booking.com are becoming more popular and tend to develop as the primary online travel information source. Ekinci (2003), creating a successful brand, partly depends on the positive relationship between tourists and destination. Wu and Huang (2012) state that to ensure the effectiveness of significant destination brands, DMOs need to integrate users with the brand building process and understand the evolution of the destination image through social media. Social media space is a new mechanism for DMOs to learn about the opinions of tourists about the destination (Boulin, 2008). Later, the local producer's ability to separate and combine valuable knowledge from consumers who are exposed to social media can improve their marketing strategies and also to applying external knowledge for commercial purposes can lead to product innovation, services and procedures (Munar, 2010; Gebauer et al., 2012).

Smartphones have become the main interface to change from the traditional comparison paradigm to the innovative standard driven by users and the concept of innovation inspired by users while consumers create and create their own products that are driven by needs, feelings, curiosity, fun, creativity and control places (MacColl, 2007; Von, 2007). There are innovative behaviours that users use to perform various types of actions that are implemented and shared by tourists, such as written reviews, reviews from colleagues or their relations, post photos and special blog maintenance (Schau, 2008). As a result of the arrival of digital media, social media space, computational tools and related mobile devices, new opportunities for creative practices and innovative models driven by users. Ogawa, and de Jong, (2011) said, the travellers are creative agencies that contribute to the production of their own values to the local community which demonstrates the behaviour of creative tourists. Consequently, the developments of ICT support the growth of creative tourism resulting in innovation-oriented online consumer communities which are influenced to the culture and heritage at the destinations.

In the present, tourists participate in collaborative innovation as possible with various mechanisms on the internet, participation with tourists via internet-based devices, supporting local tourism product creators to gain insights into communities that create knowledge. Different studies recognise the potential



of visitors to participate in experience and value for innovation purposes (Prandelli, 2005; Nambisan, 2002). Evidence from the local community shows that the participation of tourists or visitors in the community presents benefits related to essential innovations to the destination that hosts them (Muhlbacher, 2007). However, tourism organisations have become aware of the credibility of open innovation strategies, and activities of people in communities that have a positive impact and the travellers are often asked to participate in creating knowledge and problem-solving skills to develop new ideas and experiences, products and services through social media channels (Zach, 2013).

In order to better understand the focus of this article, an overview of the concept of social media is described in the following sections. There are books, articles and various online resources that try to define social media but have a different perspective. Social media comes from the marketer's perspective as a free or nearly free set of tools and allows marketers and communities to create meaningful online content and conversations as Gibson (2010) had said. Examples of social media such as blog sites, photo sharing, video sharing sites, social networking, audio podcasts, internet radio, internet sharing, social media and communication tools. Social media is a clear and uncomplicated way that allows everyone to communicate with everyone. Content created by consumers is distributed through easy-to-access online tools (Gibson, 2010 & Sterne, 2010). The increase in social media is a massive challenge for the way companies manages their brands. The essential features of the social media environment that have a significant impact on brand building are the transition from the company to the consumer as a brand writer in the brand building process and high levels of interaction appear in consumer social networks and brands and various channels and stories of brands that cannot be easily coordinated (Gensler et al., 2013; Gibson, 2010).

2. Research Question and Objectives

General objective: To investigate the use of social media space for cultural and heritage tourism products in Thailand and specific objective:

How effective is the technology competition for local providers to promote and develop marketing strategies opportunities for the tourism industry enhanced by social media: cultural tourism products and cultural heritage in Thailand?

3. Methodology and Theoretical background

Braun (1999) points out that tourists can choose to combine the main tourist attractions with related services "tourism services" and city integration services to optimise their experience at a particular destination and also Hankinson (2010), the destination experience is multi-dimensional, involving many independent organisations operating in the destination, co-producing destination experiences with tourists. Creating a destination brand is essential in managing the current destination, which has endless opportunities for tourism and attractions or in other words, the development of destination brands has become a strategic tool for many destinations in countries, regions and cities (Molina, 2012).

The technology process that users (travellers) drive creates value and supports consumer learning from situations such as problem-solving, and consumers want to find ways to combine and enhance efforts, such as participating in the form of cooperation (Von Hippel, 2005). Consumers are the key players of technology with the least involvement of the organisation. Therefore, the network for change driven by users can work correctly without facilitating:

- If travellers are motivated enough to create new things
- If some visitors reveal their social media
- If the spread of technology change is low cost, secure and competitive for commercial production and distribution (Von Hippel, 2007). As the Bayus, & Mason (2003) the research has paid great attention to the concept of tourists or consumers implementation of new technology. There are three primary levels of tourist technology mentioned:
 - General personality traits, natural technology
 - Technology behaviour.

Nambisan (2002) said that local product builders had recognised tourists' knowledge as a valuable support for developing their technology strategies. Also, local people notice that being involved with third



parties, especially visitors, helps them save resources by merely gathering the expertise of tourists. According to Piller (2010), residents need to start thinking from the end of the production process when using open technology strategies. The open technology is a collaborative process between local producers and buyers or tourists (Walter & Back, 2013). Therefore, consumers often have a variety of incentives to accept open new technology. 5P technology of "purposes, processes, people, partners and performance" supports the providers (local people) in creating innovative strategies that are in line with the overall business strategy (Piller, 2010). Therefore, the local providers need to ask themselves: which attributes should visitor have to be able to support the technology processes and in which community products are these tourists likely to be found.

Quantitative methods were performed by Burns and Grove (2001), a formal quantitative research agenda, systematic process objectives to describe and test relationships, and investigations of causes and effects between variables. This survey was used to collect original data to describe a population that is too large to be observed directly (Mouton, 1996). The survey was based on the self-reported questionnaire, which was a series of questionnaires from researchers (Polit & Hungler, 1995). In this study, data were collected using self-generated questionnaire. Quantitative surveys were chosen because they depict individuals with specific characteristics or characteristics such as behaviour, opinions, abilities, beliefs, and knowledge. The researcher sent a questionnaire to the research consultant for a review. After that, the researcher tested the questionnaire by sending the test sample to test how difficult the questionnaire was and when the response was satisfactory. The researcher took the questionnaire to the next step.

This research is quantitative research using survey research methodology with closed-end questionnaires created from past research review and instrument examination to find facts from data collection in studying the influence of social media on the tourism industry: cultural and heritage tourism products in Thailand. The population used in this study is consumers who use online social media that has travel experiences in various tourist destinations and resides locally, both in Thailand (North "Chiang-Rai", Northeast "Ubon-Ratchathani", Eastern "Chanthaburi" and Central "Bangkok") is an analysis to describe the characteristics of the information that appears in the questionnaire. The data collection was achieved through quantitative methods; the research was carried out during September – December 2018 in Thailand. Questions were asked about the influence of social media on the tourism industry: Cultural and Heritage tourism products in Thailand, the area of destination management, products activities and both of local providers and visitors perspective. Then there were questions to local communities or people living in four regions of Thailand such as university teachers and students, tour company staffs, local government officers, local producers, host and community members. At 18 years old and upward a total of 100 respondents were randomly sampled (Table 1).

Table 1 Demographics of Distribution of respondents (ages and genders)

Distribution based on ages		
	Number of persons	%
18-24	30	30%
25-34	39	39%
35-44	18	18%
45-54	8	8%
55-64	5	5%
65 upward	0	0%
Total	100	100%
Distribution based on genders		
	Number of persons	%
Male	51	51.51%
Female	49	48.49%
Total	100	100%



For the data collection and analysis, the researcher distributed a total of 100 questionnaires in Thailand and calculated as a percentage. After the questionnaire was returned, the survey was completely verified. The researcher analysed the data by using the Survey Monkey “<https://www.surveymonkey.com>” program to study the opinions of people in the community on the social media impact, also to examine relationships between genders, ages, education and occupation levels, how do local people feel about the Tourism Industry enhanced by Social Media and the statistics are used; frequency, percentage and mean.

The researcher divided the research tools into three parts.

- The status of the respondents are the genders, ages, education and occupations¹
- The opportunities for tourism industry enhanced by Social Media: Cultural and Heritage tourism products in Thailand is questioned about the opportunities for tourism industry enhanced by Social Media: Cultural and Heritage tourism products in Thailand, according to the opinion of the Thai people in the aspects: How Thainess social media influence on their social media experience on cultural and heritage tourism products. Respondents were asked to fill out a questionnaire with “1” for the most important, “5” to get the least important or choose the four most effective responses in the respondents' questionnaire.
- Comments and other suggestions question, where the questions ask the respondents about their cultural heritage tourism products or other related services in their communities. For example, the respondents will explain the culture and heritage tourism products of their area that they want to introduce or visit.

4. Results and Discussion

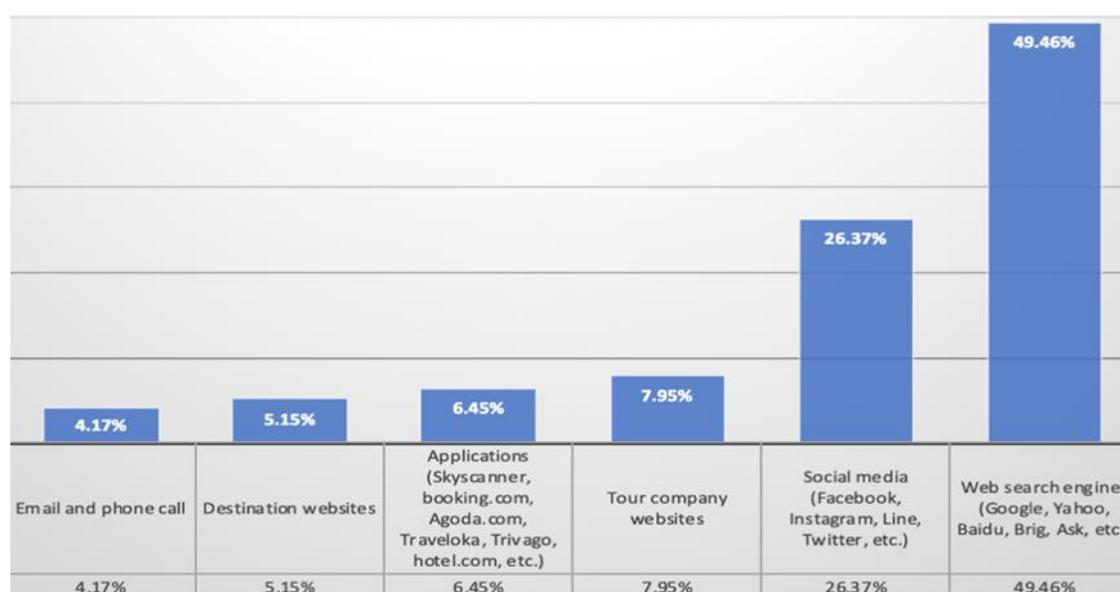


Figure 1 The current technology that respondents experience

This study shows that survey respondents indicate their experience in the social media space. The current technology that respondents had the experience to reach the cultural and heritage tourism products and services was web search engines such as Google, Yahoo, Baidu, Brig, Ask, etc. (49.46%) follow by social media, for example, Facebook, Instagram, Line application, Twitter and so on (26.37%), and tour company websites was 7.95% also on the other applications like Skyscanner, Booking.com, Agoda.com, Traveloka, Trivago, Hotel.com and many more (6.45%) as presented in Figure 1. Different forms of social networking, messaging, images, sharing, podcasts, wikis, blogs and discussion groups are examples of how visitors use social media. Therefore, the social media area is a place that brings together tourists' lives and



tourism experiences. The significant change is the relationship between the search for tourist information, the destination selection process and the social, cultural and economic differences related to tourism behaviour.

The diversity of existing social media areas and the design of new mobile phones is the beginning of the development of mobile computing platforms. Internet marketing is vital for the cultural and heritage tourism products to effectively utilise online advertising, social media, blogs, and online purchasing to help convenience their visitors. As shown in Figure 2 more than 60% of the respondents are agreed, and 38% (strongly agreed) that the social media is directly impact in terms of the advertising cultural and heritage tourism products and services through mobile networks. The use of social media in the cultural and heritage tourism product is overgrowing. It became a valuable marketing tool for tourism operators, it is impossible to ignore, and marketers should pay more attention. Nowadays, tourists have the possibility to comment, reviews and present different views of places that may be read in different parts of the world using social media networks.

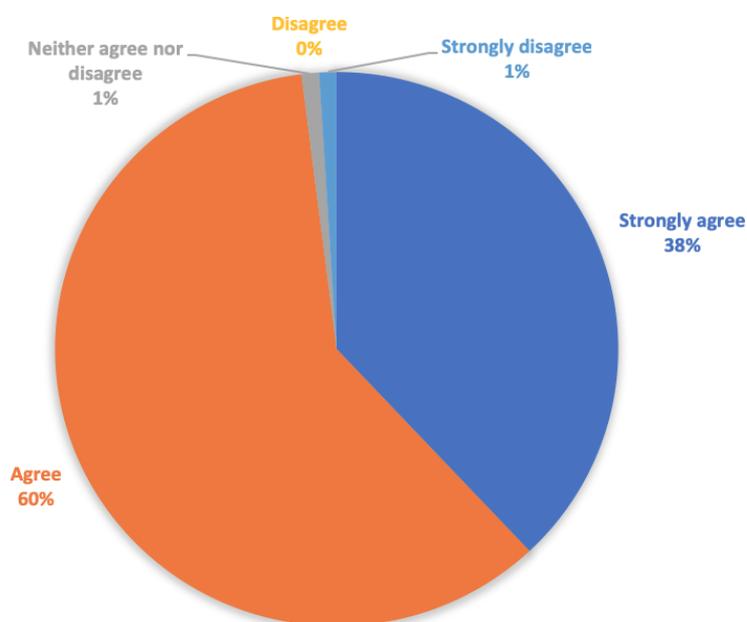


Figure 2 Internet marketing is vital for the cultural and heritage tourism products

The primary goal of the implementation of new technology for the cultural and heritage tourism products is to increase the opportunity to present the local identity by their products through the tourists, as shown in this study (Figure 3) by 46.88% believed that the new technology can be identified the local products, geological and awareness opportunities and the resident gave a significant idea that (43.30%) each single visiting of the tourism able to advertising secretly through the visitors such as posting pictures, sharing locations, etc. Moreover, the respondents pointed (35.42%) that new innovation can increase profits such as marketing promotions, increasing distribution channels or accessing tourists' products and services. Besides it (30.93%) the new technology also can improve the efficiency of cultural and heritage tourism products.

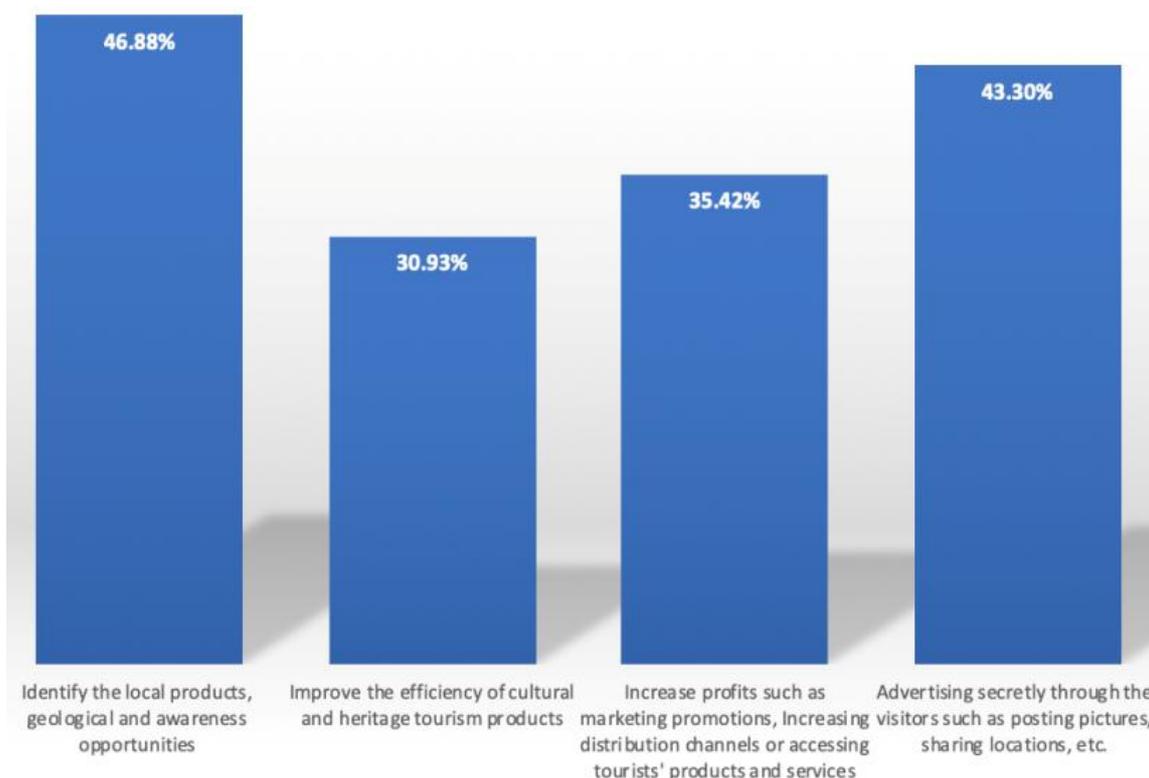


Figure 3 The implementation of new technology for the cultural and heritage tourism products

We know that, especially for products produced in geographic areas, globalisation leads to local identity enhancement as indicated in Figure 4 up to 53.26% believed that the innovation's effectively competition for destination management organisations to promote and develop innovative strategies for cultural and heritage tourism products and services in Thailand could developing a visitor information program, for instance, identify tourist information needs and generate a tourism information strategy. Cultural products that are promoted and presented in the media are stimuli for tourism activities because they attract visitors through their content to building the destination's online presence (utilise search engine optimisation) (50.54%), and 32.26% mentioned the developing destination marketing & positioning strategies (create a marketing SWOT analysis). The internet has become a useful marketing tool for all components of the marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion).

4.1 Discussion

While social media continues to grow, the importance of control, therefore, it is a marketing tool for every industry. The tourism industry aims to take advantage of social media channels because the industry relies on consumer reputation, consumer feedback, information dissemination and positive word-of-mouth advertising for a long time. Madondo (2016), also repeated that social media is the best alternative platform for interacting with marketers and tourists with more confidence in social media content than commercial ads, which corresponds to some academic scholars who notice the potential of social media to help travel companies and hotels to increase their online presence and to attract current and previous potential participant. Use of social media for marketing and sales is responsible for converting prospective tourists into tourists who will visit or plan to visit. The survey shows the importance of sharing travel experiences and consumer opinions that influence other decision-making processes when asked about the most critical resources that make them want to travel there. Due to tourist attractions and tourism



products being recognised by tourists who share information, pictures or sharing locations through social networks.

Social media is not only for social interaction, but most may become the best promotional model for service establishments where they can review all comments and opinions that will help improve their services. One good thing that social media can offer is that customers no longer need to go to specific locations or destinations before deciding whether to stay or not. As Zeng (2013) mentioned, taking advantage of social media to travel products in the market has proven to be an excellent strategy. Many countries concerned social media as an important tool in promoting their tourism industry. The advertisement examines the influence of social media on booking holidays and suggests that the presence of social media is influential.

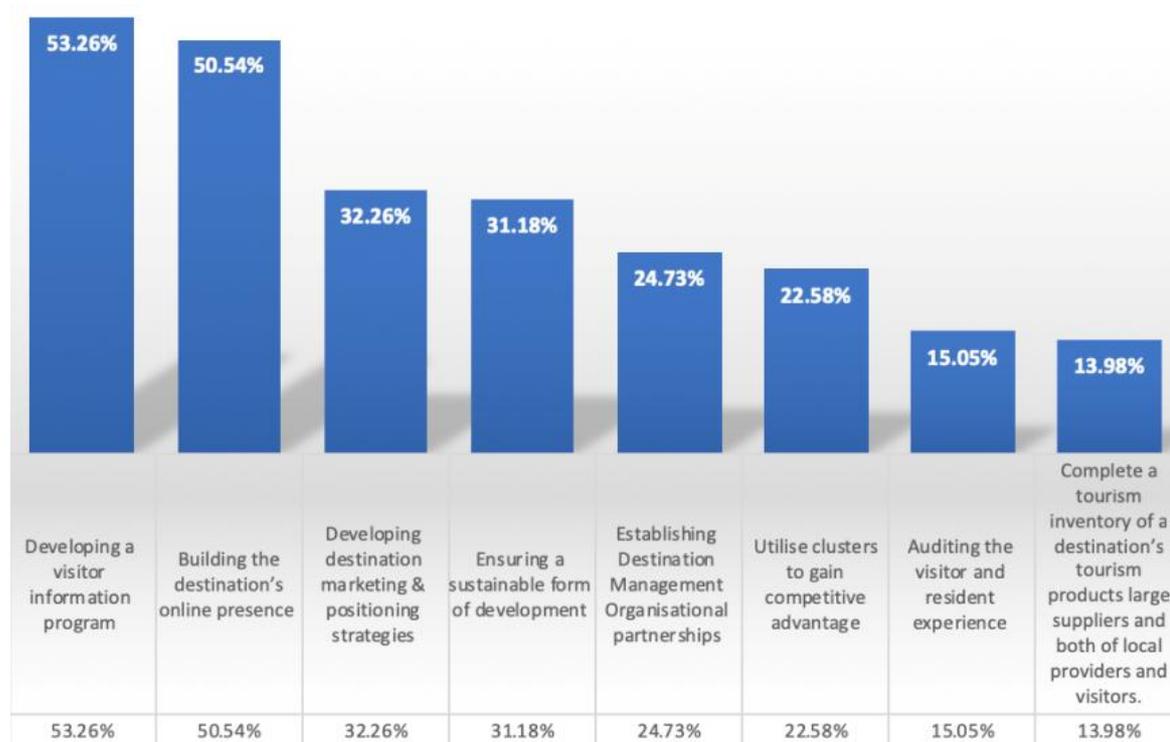
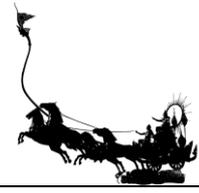


Figure 4 The effective's technology competition for destination management organisations

5. Conclusion and suggestion

The results show that it will be a mistake for local manufacturers and marketing destinations without social media. The time that consumers use in social media can be used to present the image of local products to consumers. It also serves as a way to chat with consumers and share information about updates, offers and prizes. Globalisation and supply concentration increase the level of competition that requires new strategies for internet communication. In terms of the need for financial resources and knowledge, it is a low barrier to entering destinations via the internet. New business environments and new business methods are the results of relatively low availability and internet costs. Tourism products are a significant source of income for many destinations, but budget cuts and changes in the use of media and technology have to change the communication strategies of tourism products and how they promote themselves in the market. The use of new media and technology is vital for survival. New media provide a cheaper marketing approach, and there are many opportunities for the participation of visitors and local manufacturers to attract visitors to destinations. Social media is a tool for tourism marketing, causing various destination manufacturers to convince them that they are part of a marketing campaign. As the indicated figures of the



surveys from a study on social media in the tourism industry, it is good that service providers and tourists or stakeholders will have a strong presence in social media to provide two-way communication between local producers and consumers. Because this study shows that most respondents do not measure social media in terms of revenue and cost, they measure the level of participation of followers, scores and comments from their past experiences, but do not link positive or negative responses to the number of purchases. Local service providers use social media mostly to allow travellers to recognise their brands and products and communicate with them to identify their needs and needs.

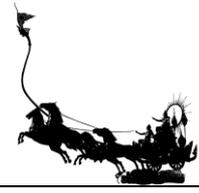
Management should identify opportunities for using social media to attract visitors on social media platforms that choose cultural and heritage tourism businesses. Consider creating a section of comments and questions for developing ideas and opinions, answering questions or requests, etc. It is important to consider the increase in interaction on social media platforms through applications, contests, etc. Through social media, heritage tourism businesses can create and increase reputation, and it is crucial that the information presented is honest. In Thailand, the way that local manufacturers' representatives have access to marketing activities via social networks shows that the use of such platforms has increased. From searching on social media platforms, it can be concluded that the presence of Thai cultural and heritage tourism products, but the increase in this appearance is necessary. From searching on social media platforms, it can be concluded that the presence of Thai cultural and heritage tourism products, but the increase in this appearance is necessary. Cultural and heritage tourism products must use strategies to ensure that the opportunities and challenges arising from technological advancements provide the only significant advantage for managers to move forward concerning innovation. The development of a spherical social media offers a benefit to local manufacturers because seeing destinations can increase the need to review communication strategies.

5.1 Suggestion

Some suggestions for additional research on this topic include interviews with local manufacturers and tourism institutions to provide more insightful issues such as specific innovation projects based on cooperation to identify factors and obstacles to innovation cultural and heritage tourism, such as the characteristics of tourism products that lead to the development of innovative systems region and to increase the efficiency of innovation. Access theory is a product that cultural heritage tourism opportunities allow for further study. Different access patterns within the operator's control are more valuable in exploring the idea that access is an element of heritage tourism instead of the result. Considering the role of business risk and innovation within the heritage tourism sector is another area that is not included in the previous study interests. Risks tend to involve risks to cultural and heritage tourism products instead of taking into account the dangers of social media in all its abilities (as carers and tour operators) when using innovation. Therefore, future studies can consider integrating differences that will reinforce the theory that explains the behavioural innovation of visitors used in mobile computing platforms. Also, for another further research can be done on the impact of self-esteem theory on sharing traveller's trip posts. The conspiracy theories presented by themselves affect the travel industry, which is shown to decide where to travel and to remember travel after travel and share experiences. There will be interesting to see how visitors decide how and when they share their travel experiences. Which can be implemented through additional research and should study the tourism behaviour of retirees in using social media to purchase products and services to support and meet the needs of consumers in the future.

6. Acknowledgements

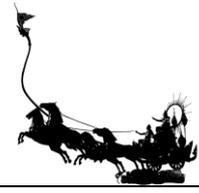
This article is the result of devoting time, focus on learning and trials and errors three months. That learning process, in addition to printed pages and written words. I have received a lot of credit, miles, high travel, many cities and countries, visiting cultural learning experiences and countless other consequences. I always challenged myself as a researcher and passed my guidelines for achieving this papers goal. However, the contribution and support of this research paper go beyond my single authorship. As such, my first grateful thank you goes to my dedicated supervisor, Dr Melanie Smith, Associate Professor and Researcher, Budapest Metropolitan University, Institute of Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality. Her passion

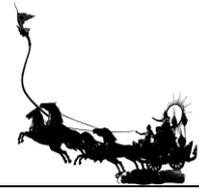


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