The Role of the Media in Promoting Tourism Towards Chinese Travelers

Korawan Sangkakorn[1], Pachernwaat Srichai[1] and Ravee Phoewhawm[2*]

[1] Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University, 239 Huay Kaew Road, Amphur Muang Chiang Mai, Thailand, 50200

[2] International Business School (IBS), Chongqing Technology and Business University No. 19 Xuefu Ave., Nan'an District, Chongqing, China

[*] Email: rtcm999@yahoo.com

Abstract

Abstraction in the media needs to be configured in a form that appeals to the travelers providing them accurate and clear information for traveling to places that are attractive to their needs. This work takes a look at how the role of the media should be applied for promoting tourism to Chinese travelers. It seeks to find out how the media contents are to be applied, how information should be presented and proposed for developing an appropriate media. The media serves as a platform for disseminating information, education, or entertainment to the targeted audience but how the message is to be delivered depends on the facts that have been gathered for planning. While the huge number of tourists from China may bring lots of income for the local community's economy the idea is to get a good quality number of repeated tourists who know what they want in vacationing. Results indicate that contents in the media should be designed for grabbing Chinese tourists' attention and interest on where to go and what to do as they come for rest and relaxation, as well as to enjoy the cultural recreation, natural environment, and activities that give them a chance to go shopping. Further study is recommended to truly discover what the Chinese travelers' values are when they immerse themselves in the events.

Keywords: Chinese Travelers, Developing, Media, Presenting, Promoting Tourism

Introduction

In today's world the majority of the population has been exposed to globalization, abstract media coverage and technological communication network which all shape the nature of ideas and perceptions of the current issue as well as factoring the information into making decisions (Puja and Amit, 2016). Promoting through the media to travelers from abroad is an art form that requires a delicate balance and understanding of culture and customs that keeps them engaged with the hosts. While the practical values in promotion are defined in many ways the tools of the media for making travelers feel at home should be more effective when applied (Enemuo and Amaechi, 2015). With respect to the public profession, the practice of promoting through the use of the media should help bridge the differences to be in compliant while at the same time give a sense of cauldron and friendliness that make the visitors feel in good spirit to be traveling in another country (Ayalew, 2016). Delivering the right content to the targeted groups comes from an ongoing basis of learning about the background of the audience and pointing out the critical points that are expressed in the most clear and concise manner to promote the desired behavior and action. With the approach in mind, the media as an organization needs to do its best through the different channel applied because the timing of things can be a critical factor that can either turn a positive experience into a negative one or vice versa (Praveen Kumar, 2014). According to Dobbs (2018), the increased of mainland Chinese outbound travelers have made a significant contribution in generating the Thai economy, particularly with hotels, restaurants, tourist sites, airline transportation, and retail vendors. Thailand is one of the preferred vacation destinations for Chinese nationals, and the Thai northern region has been the hotspot due to its attractive natural landscape and beauty, the friendly charm of the locals, unique cultural identity and environment, hosting the 'Chinese New Year', and places to dine and shop for a reasonable price (Choibamroong, 2017). A sharp rise in millions since 2014 has brought about a study by the Tourism Authority of Thailand to conduct a "China market research" for gathering information on providing better service quality and to better understand the needs and demands of some Chinese travelers willing to spend three times more than their fellow nationals (Ali Sharafuddin, 2017). Therefore, the media has to be coordinated well in enticing Chinese visitors to make full use of the tourist facilities when they embark on their journey.

Research Aim & Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine how the media's role should be applied when promoting tourism to Chinese national expressing an interest to travel to Thailand. To obtain the results from the examination the following questions have been asked:

1. How should the media contents be applied in promoting tourism towards Chinese travelers?

2. How should the information be presented in the media?

3. What is the proposal for developing an appropriate media?

Literature Review

Media Contents Applied in Promoting Tourism

The software applications and the system construction have been modified to be more user friendly which provide an effective platform for tourists to focus on their desired destination. There are psychological needs that factor into the decision making process which signifies the importance for determining that particular place: a family group

wants more safety and enlightenment values tied around their visits, a couple would like to be in interesting areas that are more private and secured giving them time and space to build their relationship, a group of co-workers and close friends want to be involved in activities and events that allows them to heavily socialize with their peers (Slocum and Everett, 2014). When tourists have an idea of where they want to go to meet their needs, the approach of using the media as a tool to help them acquire the basic information becomes highly important in that moment of time. Traveling to the desired destination points is a cross-functional process that involves many actors in the tourism industry who will need to compete with others offering the same product and service as well as apply their skills and abilities in the coordination process to highly satisfy the tourists in order to get a repeat business (Barron, Leask, and Fyall, 2014). With so much organizations and companies offering traveling services information, the media becomes very critical in order to differentiate the services in accommodation, travel arrangements, and support in tour guidance so that the attention of the tourists can be swayed towards a high interest and willing to pay for the benefits (Hyun Lee and Bai, 2014). In addition, consideration has to be maintained by highlighting the trait and feature that were experienced by past visitors and utilize that image for inserting it into the mind and soul of the tourists to make them feel the good vibes when coming into contact with the traveling sites (Fazenda, Nunes da Silva, and Costa, 2010). The media's technique in grabbing the visitors' heart and spirit for traveling can only be effective as the development of the brand and positioning of the destination have managed to receive the accolades from travelers worldwide who had an amazing experience and are recommending it to others through social media (José Valente, Dredge, and Lohmann, 2014).

Presenting Information in the Media

On its own the media can carry out the function of disseminating facts and information that may be of value and a curiosity for others while at the same time making others overlook them to find something else that is more meaningful for them (Presenza and Sheehan, 2013). Just trying to do too much or doing too little for the sake of the media's survival is not quite relevant when compared to understanding what the primary role of the media should be in serving its main audience (Collison and Spears, 2010). With tourism being factored into the global society people who are planning for a vacation abroad and business travelers making appointments to meet with their main contacts are always in high demand to be updated on the current events that are happening with the destined place, weather, transportation, government policies, social environment and the economy of that nation (Chandana, 2013). For the past decades the media has played a role in providing facts, figures and entertainment, serving as a platform for government officials to address their accountabilities to the taxpayers, offering viewpoints of journalists to form a public agenda and setting the priorities, calling for action to conserve the environment or support a community interest, covering on the latest details on the struggles and strife of humanity, and making a contribution for education and learning for all generation (Assaker, Esposito, and O'Connor, 2011). Presenting a message that is absolutely clear and easy to comprehend requires a sound collaborative network of government authorities, commercial sectors, and the local community in providing news that is transparent and benefitting for everyone that needs to make the right decision for traveling or holding off on it. Tremendous effort needs to be initiated from all those involved so that trust is flourished for people to understand the situation at

hand as it's happening in real time within the social media channels currently being accessed (Wan and Bramwell, 2015).

Developing an Appropriate Media

Like a unique meal or clothing style that is preferred by certain people the media in the tourism field has to be tailored to a specific range of groups who are planning to make the travel or are undergoing traveling at the moment (Simão and Mósso, 2013). Since each group will know what they are looking for when accessing through the multi-channels for finding information the task and duty falls into the hand of the technological media savvy talents that become the coffee baristas who metaphorically know how to measure and blend the right data to fill the mind to ones' content. An orchestration of the internet media such as the podcasts, blogs, message boards and video must be similar to a song that immediately becomes a hit with the listeners so that information can be updated on a daily basis as well as being shared with others who may need to be informed (Wang, Bickle, and Harrill, 2010). The content of the information presented has to be good enough in making the social connection with a variety of listeners who can also relay the current report with their fellow peers for a healthy and friendly discussion (Malikhao, 2017). Media presented in the background of tourism may bring about a charm to the public because it reaches out to a wider a demographic audience. Once again, the tools in the media that is composed by the agent reporting would need to carefully consider the actual intention for communicating the message to the vast spectators. One of the ways that the media can be used is advocating business and social matters for advertising, marketing, doing propaganda, public relations and communicating political ideas (Lin and Simmons, 2017). Another way that the

media is used is for entertainment such as musical performance, promoting an upcoming movie or a showing a classical one, broadcasting the latest sporting events, or serving as a video outlet for games and leisure activities (Moghavvemi et al., 2017). Most of the times, the media will always carry out the function of making public service announcements for people to be informed about the climate changes, concerning issues that may pose a risk to safety and security, directing viewers' behavior to comply with the law, and updating on local events for visitors to take notice of (Vargas-Hernández, 2012). Investments in the form of research, test and experimentation will need to be consistently applied to get the best out of an ideal model for the media which can enhance the competitiveness of that nation's tourism industry (Dredge and Jamal, 2015).

Methodology

The work focused on the Thai northern regional provinces which included Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lamphun, and Lampang. The tourists from the People's Republic of China and the local entrepreneurs involved in providing hospitality and transportation services were targeted for this study. Two separate questionnaires were created: the first concentrated on the tourism behavior of Chinese tourists, the second focused on the impact of Chinese tourists on the Thai tourism industry and the local people.

The samples were (1) Chinese tourists from the People's Republic of China (or Mainland China), (2) local people, (3) tourism business sectors, tourism business associations, and (4) the government sectors.

The Chinese tourists from the People's Republic of China were 408 Chinese tourists. The sample was calculated according to the method of Taro Yamane in case of the unknown number of populations by using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where 'n' is the sample size, 'N' is the population size, 'e' is the error of the sample.

The Confidence level of 90%, the margin of error is 0.10.

The Confidence level of 95%, the margin of error is 0.05 (usually confidence level of 95%)

The Confidence level of 99%, the margin of error is 0.01.

The sample for Chinese tourists from the People's Republic of China (or Mainland China) was 400, but in this study, there were 408 Chinese tourists who took part in the questionnaire.

The sample of local people were randomly selected in the area of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lamphun, and Lampang province. 1,422 local people were from different careers, such as farmers, shopkeepers, service providers, drivers, etc. The methods used were;

• 377 face-to-face distributed questionnaires from local people in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lamphun, and Lampang province.

• 1,045 online distributed questionnaires in Google document and Facebook.

The samples of tourism business sectors, tourism business associations were purposively selected in the area of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lamphun, and Lampang province. Data was collected via the in-depth interviews from the samples of twenty tourism business sectors and tourism business associations representatives.

The samples of the government sectors were also purposively selected in the area of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lamphun, and Lampang province. Data was collected via brainstorming meetings from the samples of twenty government sectors representatives.

The analytical design for the research questions was conducted in a questionnaire method that examined the behavior of Chinese tourists engaged in activities offered by the local tourism groups ranging from site seeing, cultural recreation, dining leisure, transportation, and commercial inquiries on products and services. Also, previous empirical research works pertaining to theoretical application, statistics, and market trends have been reviewed to build on the basis of the study. In addition, the social media outlets, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and online traveling websites, were examined to see the positive/negative viewpoints of Chinese tourists. The information provided for the first and second research questions were utilized for producing a proposal for an appropriate media that promotes tourism towards the Chinese tourists.

Results
Applying Media Contents in Promoting Tourism

The majority of Chinese tourists visiting the northern region of Thailand are attracted by the historical and religious sites that are surrounding the natural scenery and beautiful landscapes. There is an average number of tourists expressing interest in buying local souvenirs while going to visit places that are located in an old community, holding a festival, or having a museum that is not quite appealing for others.

Another purpose of making the vacation is to take part in activities such as seeing the historical sites and sampling popular local dishes with their relatives and friends. Temples and places of worship are also a keen idea for their activity schedule, as well as making time to receive a Lanna style massage services. While the thought of doing an event of purchasing local goods and observing the old community does get some attention, being involved in watching cultural shows, communicating with locals about the traditional way of life, being at a museum, practicing meditation or making local handicrafts/cooking just don't really bode well as a suggestion for tour activities. On average, the travel expenses are 8,667.40 Baht; for accommodation they spend about 6,828 Baht; the average amount of 5,035 Baht is spent on food. Moreover, they came to learn about the lifestyle, culture, and beliefs of the local community. The most frequent visits made were to temples, recreation sites that offered thrilling activities, the weekend walking street that offers tons of local gifts and souvenirs, Tha Phae Gate, Nimmanhaemin Road, and Chiang Mai University. With the interesting points located close by each other it's critical for the traffic system to be highly monitored to ensure that the roads don't get congested and that accidents can be prevented: Chinese tourists do not like to be involved in that type of stressful situation (Sangkakorn, Srichai, and Phoewhawm, 2020). By extrapolating on the facts, the media should focus on the contents that deal with wellbeing, education, recreation and leisure. While each tourism theme is wide in general there should be tools allowing the travelers to get access into the basic details about the place and things to do featuring videos and imagery that urge them to make arrangements based on that idea (Hays, Page, and Buhalis, 2013). The relative comments made by tourists about the visiting sites, regardless if it's good

or bad, can be configured as useful information for developing the contents. But most importantly the feedback help the travelers decide if they want to make the trip there or not (Al-Badi, Tarhini, and Al-Sawaei, 2017).

Most of the Chinese tourists possess a Smart Phone for communication and access to entertainment. This technology is part of their everyday living and lifestyle. Getting details, directions, and making decisions on things involve the utilization of the social media and other online links that provide the tourists a clear picture of what they need to obtain or planning ahead of time (Hassouna et al., 2015). With a difference in age and generation amongst Chinese travelers the question will always be about getting the right content and accessibility in balance for all to understand and fully appreciate the services being provided. Therefore, to make things simply comprehensible a narrative approach is best considered as it allows the information to be properly digested into the mind and be aware of the proper behavior to take (Floris and Campagna, 2014). (*See* tables 1, 2, and 3 in the appendix section)

Presenting Media Information

The inbound tourists from the mainland are highly satisfied with the way locals present themselves as being friendly and courteous to them. Another strong satisfaction is with the climate of the region and how the atmosphere blends in with the cultural scenery that gave them an impressive perception of how the way life governs itself. Although these other categories are not held in the highest regards the issue of accommodation, meal and beverages, security, cleanliness of tour attractions, and traveling route have done well to serve as a complement to provide a positive traveling experience for the mainland Chinese visitors. According to the buying behavior of Chinese tourists,

items truly bought the most were in the form of traditional costumes and fresh/dried food, and to a lesser extent ornaments, such as rings and necklaces, home appliances, and novelties are bought with lesser interest; the ornaments are given consideration of purchase but not so intriguing enough. The highest concern that makes Chinese travelers uncomfortable is communicating in a language that they are not familiar with. Asides that they don't like the feeling of being cheated on a health insurance, and getting into some accidents. (*See* tables 4, 5, and 6 in the appendix section)

Presenting information through the media is part of a strategy in keeping the number of Chinese traveling to Thailand and to guide them towards being exposed to the positive side while knowing what to be aware of when unpleasant things may occur. The value of messages pertaining to joy and excitement should be highlighted to see and sense by showing how other fellow Chinese nationals are going on about their excursion. The most important thing is to record these cases as they are actually happening from various sources to give a vivid explanation of what is occurring and offer guidelines on how to interact with the matter (Chandra, Chandana, and Richard, 2013). The issue of safety and security is also a major concern as members of the stakeholders want to uphold on the positive things and doing all they can to prevent the moment being ruined by cultural differences from certain people that don't take them into consideration (Boustras and Boukas, 2013). Ensuring that no harm or damage is done will have a strong impact that involves how the intention is presented: Is it about knowing how to say some simple words to survive for eating, transportation, and buying things? Is it about going to the right places for information or to resolve the matter to prevent oneself from being cheated? Is it about preventing from getting into

accidents by being aware of certain areas and functions that are not quite safe for tourists to go to? No matter how it's delivered to the Chinese tourists the most pressing issue is that they know what to do when the situation occurs.

Proposal on Developing an Appropriate Media

Media is a tool that can influence the attitude and behavior of people to do certain things. For promoting tourism towards Chinese tourists there has to be some human touch that fosters a sense of being experienced with great joy and excitement while developing a sense of responsibility for one to look after their own well being. The most important thing is to get the positive messages into the promotion campaign so that there will be more repeated visitors coming from the mainland on a yearly basis (Chen, 2017) as if Thailand is their second home. The proposal for developing an appropriate media calls for the contents to be narrated in Chinese that highlights about the history and knowledge of the local culture as it points about how the Thai people have been living in the ways of working, playing, eating, shopping, and greeting foreign guests so that future Chinese tourists can be aware of performing the proper behavior as visitors (Yuan, 2013). The Chinese are charmed by celebrities in advertisement. Therefore, it's only fitting to find a current superstar from China that can act as the representative for the Thai tourism industry to narrate on the interesting places for meeting the travelers' needs. The popularity of the person should also narrate on the etiquette and protocol to take when they might encounter an undesired or uncomfortable situation (Liu, 2017). Overall, the content in the promotion should ask for the travelers to collaborate on making the traveling experience to be a great moment for all to enjoy.

Media's Role Applied When Promoting Tourism to Chinese Nationals

The media serves as a platform for disseminating information, education, or entertainment to the targeted audience but how the message is to be delivered depends on the facts that have been gathered for planning (Underberg-Goode, 2014). The promotion of tourism is an approach with a specific goal or aim in mind; however, without any purpose or mission stated then promotion is done for its own sake (Kim et al., 2017) thus wasting time and resources which could have been put for other good use and being insincere to Chinese tourists who are looking for an ideal place to spend their vacation. With the intentions of Chinese tourists coming for rest and relaxation, as well as to enjoy the cultural recreation, natural environment, and activities that give them a chance to go shopping, it is important to utilize the information for designing the content in the media that will grab their attention and interest of where to go and what to do.

Discussion & Conclusion

No matter the form of promotion being distributed through the media the most important thing is that the facts and information of what Chinese travelers like and dislike should be accurate as possible. The contents within the media should aim for generating a high appeal of interest that is worthwhile and pleasurable, as well as being financially reasonable for the travelers coming from the mainland. However, the role of the media can only be effective in promoting tourism to the Chinese tourists as the skills, abilities, and talents that are being demonstrated by the stakeholders who demonstrate a professional passion in developing tourism for all travelers to have an equal access to enjoy everything that is offered (Chang, Backman, and Huang, 2014). In conclusion, although it may seem relevant to gather only the information that describes what the Chinese tourists like to see and do there is still a lot of work that needs to be researched upon to get a closer understanding of why certain activities and events pursued are highly sought after. While the huge number of tourists from China may fill up the coffers for the local community's economy in theory the idea is to get a good quality number of repeated tourists who truly know what they want when making vacation plans (Kumar Rathorea, Chand Joshib, and Vigneswara Ilavarasan, 2017). The foreknowledge on these Chinese visitors gave a better insight to develop the right accommodations for them so they can admire the effort on making them feel that the northern region of Thailand is their second home.

Summary

This study examined how the role of media should be applied when promoting tourism to Chinese tourists who are interested in traveling to Thailand. The work attempted to address the purpose of the work by asking how the media contents should be applied in promoting tourism towards Chinese travelers, how the information should be presented in the media, and providing a proposal for developing an appropriate media. With the analysis, the authors of this work believe that it is significant to utilize the information for designing the content in the media that will grab Chinese tourists' attention and interest on where they want to go and what they want to do there.

Recommendation

This work is limited with the data that draws on describing and illustrating how the Chinese travelers take part in sites and events that really appeal to their needs and interest. In follow up to this study, a case study for each separate occasion with sample/focus group would be needed for triangulation to truly discover what the Chinese travelers' value are when they immerse themselves in the occasion. This would assist the traveling sites and tour facilities to design much better services catered to the Chinese travelers' interests as well as providing a strong credibility on media communication for promoting tourism towards for future tourists from the mainland who want to come to northern Thailand for a vacation.

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