

# Communication Strategy for Tourism in ASEAN

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## ABSTRACT

This study is aimed to investigate the communication strategies that support the tourism of among the 9 members of ASEAN. The information gathered from this study will be compared and developed the communication strategies in Thailand. The researcher collected the data and analyzed from related documents including the dept interviews of tour guides and business operators in Thailand. The results showed that the members of ASEAN had applied the communication strategies for tourism to develop the communication which included marketing communication strategy, brand communication strategy and public relations communication strategy.

**KEYWORDS:** communication strategy tourism ASEAN

## Introduction

In the year of 2015, the 10 countries as the members of ASEAN have stepped into ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) which caused the region becoming large economic group that able to increase the negotiation in global trading and economy. In addition, all countries in ASEAN pay attention on the tourism industry to generate economic growth of their countries and the region. Therefore, the communication industry strategy is one of the methods that every country gives the priority.

Moreover, The World Tourism Organization (World Tourism Organization) expects Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos are tourist attractions, where to grow with high rate and should be watched. Whereas Indonesia is a country with the largest tourism industry in Asian around 8,836 US dollars and was ranked in 29th of the world in terms of market size. So, Thailand stays among competitors who have strengthened more in tourism when we consider about competitiveness in the tourism industry.

In addition, Singapore announces the tourism promotion under a policy “Your Singapore” by emphasizing on a service center of global financial and being important ports of the region, according to a publish report “Doing Business” of the World Bank, which first ranks Singapore as a country for an easy to run business in several years from all 185 ranking (Thailand is 18th ranking). The Singapore government has a policy to promote Medical Tourism by using the selling point to be a destination for high quality medical care in order to attract foreign tourists who have high purchasing power.

Malaysia is another country in Asian which are highly successful in their campaign to promote

and develop the tourism industry in the year 2011. It can invite tourists to come to Malaysia around 24.7 Million people and earn revenue around 19,600 Million US\$. The Malaysian government realizes the importance of tourism industry so it plans and prepares tourism in a systematic and continuous way by entrusting to Ministry of Art Cultures and Tourism to take care of it. This is the factor that makes Malaysia a success

For Vietnam, this country relies on leader of marketing operation and communication to promote cooperation of Asian Tourism which facilitate Vietnam to promote and introduce Vietnam Tourism in Asian countries and others outside the region. More importantly, Vietnam is trying to reach an important goal to create an ASEAN as a meeting center for foreign tourists. It gains successful in generating interest to tourists. It increases the number of tourists to visit for travelling with growth rate 6.4% and business trip around 110,000 tourists with an increasing rate 0.9%. The Chinese are tourists to travel to Vietnam most.

In the year 2015, Thailand and 9 neighborhood countries turns to be fully associated members of ASEAN community. Tourism is a priority sector under the AEC Blueprint commitments. The opening of service markets for tourism of ASEAN members under an agreement of ASEAN service (AFAS) is a 7th series. This is an “opportunity and challenging” of Thailand tourism industry in being fully associated member of ASEAN community. If the government considers priority to prepare in the development of human resources, communication strategies and public relations on tourism in order to support this free opening and provide support to private sectors in all aspects. Those can build



confidences among tourism operators in the tourism industry of Thailand.

For this research, the researcher interested in studying communication strategies that are used to support the tourism industry of 9 ASEAN member countries which are Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Philippines, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar in order to present the preparedness of supporting the tourism and to create the competitive advantages in the tourism industry in ASEAN.

## Purposes

1. To study the strategies that are used to support the tourism in the members of ASEAN among 9 countries.

2. To study the requirement to develop the communication strategy for tourism in Thailand in order to contribute to the development of tourism in Thailand.

3. To analyze and propose the development of the communication strategies for tourism in Thailand.

## Literature Review

The concept of branding tourism by Berry (1999) cited in Chuleerat Bankietkul (2001) that Brand is important for operating the business in long-term and also for communicating with consumers in the market effectively. In the case that the Brand is well known, recognized, and accepted from the consumers in the market, it would be easy for the business to promote or communicate with the target consumers easily. Tourism industry is of the important business since it generates income to the country. Therefore, it is necessary to communicate the Brand which consists of 4 characteristics; (1) the differences of do-

mestic tourism (2) the supporting and promote to be well-known (3) create the emotion relationship which causes the trust, intimacy and passion and (4) create the domestic tourism brand which is confident and strong relation to the tourists in the country. The concept of branding tourism by Blain et al (2005) The CAI (2002) is the experience of the tourists toward tourist locations and tourist attractions. It uses a branding creation process under the context of tourism, both in tourist location and service businesses which are related to tourism. It combines various strategies which are associated with the brand in order to make differentiate and clarity for tourist attractions as positive image of 11 products and services from those sites. Brands of tourist attractions are related and compliance to location's name which represented the physical appearance of those tourist attractions.

The Gnoth (2007) looks that tourism brand differs from ordinary product brands because it covers all related businesses of those tourist attractions (Umbrella Brand). It allows all related tourism operators to use quality and qualifications of those tourist attractions to make marketing communication. Thus, tourism branding is a process to develop an identity and a unique unlikely from rivals' sites. Tourism brand has a goal to collect all related to those tourist locations or countries and finally presents an overview of tourist locations' identity.

Tourism brand expresses in the form of products and services which are related to tourism such as agriculture, sport activities, arts, technology, celebrity, attraction, etc. Those arises from tourist attraction to let tourists or targets feel and perceive in a positive manner toward tourist at-

tractions. So, marketer is required to understand needs and perception of consumers or tourists in seeking playgrounds which can respond to their needs comprehensively. The successful tourist attractions always the location in minds and hearts of consumers or tourists (Uhrenholt, 2008).

For the purpose to create a brand of tourist attractions, they require to have a destination identity which are differentiated, remembers able as basically. Then, they should create brand communication to tourists by using destination image and destination personality.

KamolRattanavirakul (2006) is discussing the marketing industry today that are making use of the integrated marketing communication IMC (Integrated Marketing Communication) as mostly used tool to expect results of interest in selling news of products and motivating target consumers make quickly purchase as most as they can. IMC means the selection of suitable communication tools more than one type to mix for continued use as most effective. They are including personal selling, public relations, direct sales, event marketing, advertising, exhibitions, training, packaging design, word of mouths.

The tourism market has changed and a trend to promote tourism from government sector are likely to study the characteristics of the target groups, such as, younger travelers; business working woman is a new traveler group who requires uniqueness; travelers who love healthy, etc. The modern distribution channel needs to use more information technology. It cannot avoid using email, internet marketing; according to the changing of traveler's behavior. Communication tools such as advertising materials and brochures turn to be a virtual digital system and directly

submit to consumers through internet system. They can view the data and details via computer anywhere or anytime.

VichanSaiorn (2014), the Tourism Development to Prepare the Support of AEC: The Sustainable Tourism proposed in the article that all 10 ASEAN countries had considered that the service sector and tourism industry have pay an important role in the strategy of the region's economic growth with the development of ASEAN that is diversity in cultural, social and historical tourism place. As a result, the ASEAN had set the target of liberalizing the trades and services (tourism is included in the services) and prepared the plan and other agreements in order to reach the goal of establishing the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015. Therefore, it is necessary for Thailand to develop the tourism especially the sustainable tourism which consist of 6 characteristics; (1) being the tourism attractions in all types and places (2) being the tourism that focus on value and unique in each attraction (3) being the tourism that responsible for resources and environments (4) being the tourism that the tourists gain the knowledge and experiences related to nature and culture (5) being the tourism that return to the tourism businesses in long-term and (6) being the tourism that advantages to the local community and return the benefits to tourism resources and local environments. College of Innovation (2010), ASEAN Tourism Market Strategy Plan (2011-2015), was occurred from the collaborations and agreements between the ASEAN Tourism Organizations and ASEAN Competitiveness Enhancement (The ACE Project) which the budgets are supported from United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This project



was operated during the year of 2010. It consisted of the general analysis of ASEAN tourism, the visions and organization structure of the ASEAN tourism market development. The operations and main details of the plan consist of; The current situation analysis and the trend of tourism industry marketing in the region. The definition of the target market of ASEAN. The development of tourism products and services regarding to 4 main products that stated in the ASEAN Tourism Strategy Plan; (1) Culture (2) Nature (3) Community-based (4) Water tourism. The creation of ASEAN brand. Define the consumer distribution channels. Establish the marketing and communication teams between the members of ASEAN to be responsible for the implementation of the plan. Objectives To study the strategies that are used to support the tourism in the members of ASEAN among 9 countries. To study the requirement to develop the communication strategy for tourism in Thailand in order to contribute to the development of tourism in Thailand. To analyze and propose the development of the communication strategies for tourism in Thailand.

## Benefits of the Project

1. Information of the communication strategy in every countries of ASEAN.
2. Information of the communication development strategy requirement for the tourism in Thailand.
3. The method for the communication strategy development in Thailand in both short-term and long-term.

## Research Methodology

Communication strategy for tourism in ASEAN has applied the qualitative research method.

## Scope of The Research

1. The scope of this research is the implementation of documents that related to 9 ASEAN countries (historical documents during 2011-2014). The research resources are from the university, ministry, bureau, department and various institutions across the country and international.
2. The scope of target groups consists of tour guides and related entrepreneurs in Thailand.

## Data Collection

1. The data collection and documents use to analyze the related information with the 9 ASEAN countries (historical documents during 2011-2014). The research resources are from the university, ministry, bureau, department and various institutions across the country and international.
2. The depth interview of tour guides and entrepreneurs in Thailand.

## Results and Discussion

The results from the study of the communication strategy for tourism in ASEAN can divide the countries that define the communication strategy to promote the tourism into 4 groups as followed; 1) the countries that define the communication strategy for promoting the tourism completely with the product development, differentiation strategy and marketing strategy. There are Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines and Vietnam. 2) The countries that define the communication strategy mainly to increase the number of tourists with the differentiation strategy and marketing strategy but do not focus on the product development. There are Indonesia, Cambodia and Laos. 3) Brunei, which is the country that not focusing on the communication strategy for promoting tourism.

And 4) Myanmar, is the country that just begin to plan the tourism marketing strategy, promote the product and develop the service quality for tourism. However, the communication strategy for

tourism is not clearly defined.

**The results from the study are presented in the table below;**

ASEAN Country	Communication Strategy
Malaysia	Malaysia focus on public relations to encourage foreign tourists spend more time in Malaysia. And expand market share and potential new tourists and apply the communication strategy on the campaign of Malaysia Truly Asia to communicate on the variety of attractions, the tourism patterns and various cultural. Moreover, to develop via the several communication channel through the main media such as television commercials. The communication through online social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Tagline for the advertising promotions such as Truly Dramatic and Truly Extravagant. The tourism plan will be organized every month throughout the year.
Singapore	It launched a tourism brand “Your Singapore” to represent the strength of Singapore as a tourist destination offering visitors a variety of experiences, which tourists can customize for their needs. It also sets an image of Singapore as a Modern City and full of inspiration. “Your Singapore” is derived from “Uniquely Singapore” and released .The proactive communication strategy with the application namely “Your Singapore Guide” on the mobile phones that can be downloaded without any costs. It cooperates with global business partners, American Express, Singapore Airlines and Starbucks in order that the tourists will be able to quickly access to the information of Singapore. There are also special events to promote the major exhibitions. The Singapore Tourism Board also uses a digital system as the core to promote and enhance the delivery of marketing communications. It can follow-up result from communication from www.yoursingapore.com which can respond to immediate use.
Philippines	The brand communication strategy by developing the Philippines’ tourism brand namely “It’s more fun in the Philippines”. The government has supported the brand communication strategy to be well-known with the slogan namely “More Fun in the Philippines” and use the campaign song for the tourism in Philippines. Furthermore, there is also the activity participation across country such as The International Tourism Bourse at Berlin to promote the tourism plan.



ASEAN Country	Communication Strategy
Vietnam	The communication strategy in marketing communication, public relations communication and brand communication with the slogan and tourism symbols in order to promote the tourism in Vietnam during 2012-2015 “Vietnam – Timeless Charm” and branding the tourism product for the tourism marketing communication.
Indonesia	In the year 2011, the Indonesian government has made. “Indonesia’s Economic Development Master Plan 2011-2025, or, an abbreviated plan MP3EI” to guide the country’s development. It aims to make Indonesia as the country with the most economic size in first ranked for tenth of the world in the year 2025. It sets strategies to develop economic structure in 8 areas including agriculture, mining, energy, industry, fisheries and tourism. For the communication strategy with the brand communication development namely “Wonderful Indonesia” to promote the special economic zone of tourism. In addition, it also focuses on the promotion to increase the number of tourists, the development of tourism website and the events to promote the tourism in Indonesia among ASEAN countries.
Cambodia	Cambodia communication strategy supports the use of media including television, newspaper, magazines, the activity participations and exhibitions. It also promote to government communication via website and social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Google.
Laos	There are the advertising plans and tourism promotions by the establishment of the councils to support marketing and tourism in public and private sectors. There is also the Road Show to participate in the international tourism events.
Brunei	The communication strategy via mass media such as radios, televisions, brochures, posters, and banners including the website which is the only channel that focuses on providing the important information for the tourists.
Myanmar	There are the new marketing strategy and define the market positioning in Myanmar in global market. There is the product promotion and services quality. The promotion of tourism by mass media such as radio news, televisions, brochures, posters, and banners including the website which is the only channel that focuses on providing the important information for the tourists

## Recommendations

1. The government should give the priority on the development of the communication strategy especially the online communication strategy, brand communication strategy and marketing communication strategy which are important for the tourism situations in ASEAN. Moreover, it should also support to every departments that relate to the tourism.

2. The government should be responsible for the tourism. The tourism promotion should be collaborated and extended with the public sectors and local governments tightly.

3. The government should define the methods of development, supporting and assistance to the medium and small-sized enterprises seriously and substantially.

4. The government should support and strengthen knowledge and understanding of foreign languages, history, geography, culture and national art for the tour guides and operators, as well as professionals who involved in promoting the tourism. In addition, it should also support the potential of communication for tourism in ASEAN to have more potential and strengthened.

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