

Destination Branding Strategy towards Competitive Positioning in Destination Marketing

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Abstract

Globalization creates a level playing field for today's destination marketing. A destination can be more competitive if it can connect with communities of tourists and stakeholders for co-creation. This is the conceptual paper of the literature reviews in Ph.D. dissertation^[1], which aims to (1) collect the theories and approaches of tourism and destination branding case, to (2) to study the potential of integrated brand development to promote tourism in Hua Hin under the context of Thailand 4.0. This is the collection of approaches: destination management system, tourism destination life cycle, tourism carrying capacity, sustainable tourism and destination branding. Moreover, the challenges of destination branding toward Thailand 4.0 and a case study of Ranong also have been reviewed in this article.

Keywords: destination branding, destination management, destination marketing

Introduction

Tourism industry has been a major role in the global economy, which has driven the overall economy in each country. Currently, the tourism situation has changed constantly, according to the world situation and consumer behavior. Thailand's tourism industry has to adapt to the changes and the market needs in order to maintain and develop the national tourism capabilities. (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017)

The marketing environment is challenging in Thailand due to the tourists are more skilled and more specialized with technologies. Consequently, the tourist behavior is more complex. Whereas, other ASEAN countries and around the world have developed the new attractions and the increasing of marketing investment in their marketing plans. Thailand is dealing with the deterioration of some natural resources destinations and the perception issue of Thailand's image.

According to the "Tourism 4.0" and "Thailand 4.0", have the consistent in the same direction as followed: (1) strengthen from the internal and (2) link to the global economy by focusing on strategy of technological implication and stylish design. The tourism prosperity establishment will drive the tourism system throughout the science, technology, culture and creativity. Moreover, the second national tourism development plan (2017-2021), aims to modify the "tourism community" to step into the innovative product design for both attractions and local products with the standard and local identity. The effective consumption of natural resources will create the balance between the economy, society and environment, together with the increasing of income and average expenditure per person from Thai and foreign tourists. Therefore, the risk management model will be operative by depending on less income from the global market and increasing the revenue from domestic tourists.

This conceptual paper was studying and focusing on how to develop the branding strategy for Hua Hin destination and comparing to Ranong branding guideline. Hua Hin is a diverse and key tourist destination, both regional and national. It is also a famous brand for the luxury resorts in the world market. Currently, it is likely to suffer from the deterioration of natural resources, environment and social issues. Additionally, the Thailand 4.0, the government has pushed for internal strengthening and the changes of the tourism form. The impact of these changes has a challenge to the development of integrated tourism brands and the strengthening of tourism brand values toward world tourism trends

Hua Hin, Prachuap Khiri Khan Province					
Year	Number of Thai Tourist	%	Number of Foreign Tourist	%	Total
2011	1,345,210	69.64	586,371	30.36	1,931,581
2012	1,860,449	71.46	742,859	28.54	2,603,308
2013	1,984,043	71.62	786,370	28.38	2,770,413
2014	2,161,675	73.01	793,239	36.97	3,045,229
2015	2,223,244	73.16	821,985	36.70	2,954,914

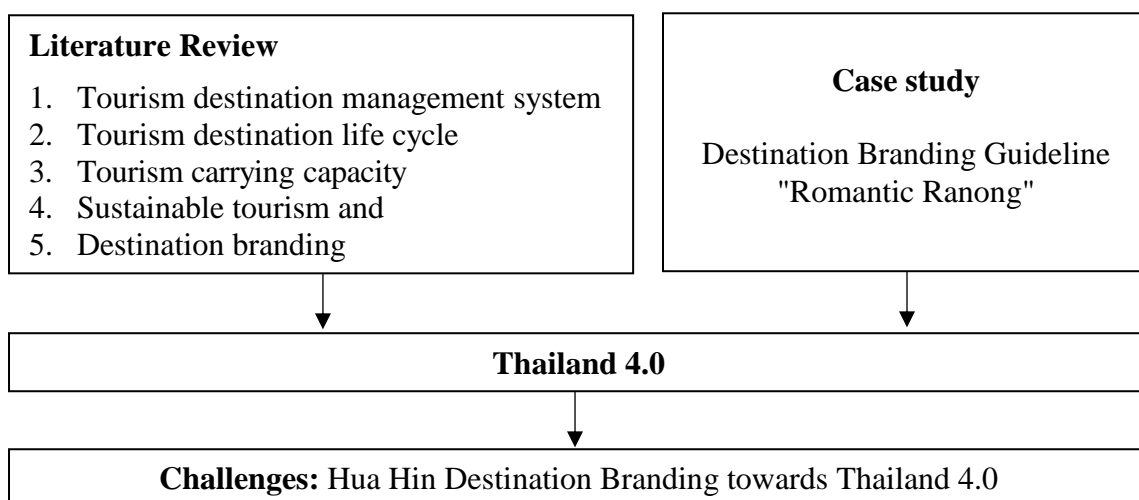
Figure 1. Tourist Number, 2011-2015
Source: Ministry of Sports and Tourism Thailand

Furthermore, the traditional marketing is unable to reach a variety of tourist needs in term of the access to target market and marketing budgets. Nevertheless, the challenges and the competition is more likely to increase so that the branding strategy is necessary for the destination marketing and destination management. Observably, the integrated branding strategy will direct the competitive positioning in destination marketing, which build reputation, brand image and recognition of destination. Especially, it will also add value to the destination and communicate to the tourist or target consumer. Particularly, the branding strategy from inside to the outside will create the market perception relevant to the globalization.

Objectives

1. To collect the theories and approaches of tourism and tourism branding case which are relevant, and focusing on development for Hua Hin tourism brand
2. To study the potential of integrated brand development to promote tourism in Hua Hin under the context of Thailand 4.0

Conceptual Framework



Literature Review

Destination Management System

World Tourism Organization defined "Destinations" as a physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries in which a visitor can spend an overnight. It is the cluster (co-location) of products and services, and of activities and experiences along the tourism value chain and a basic unit of analysis of tourism. A destination incorporates various stakeholders and can network to form larger destinations. It is also intangible with its image and identity, which may influence its market competitiveness. (World Tourism Organization, 2007)

Destination has various basic elements that attract tourists to destinations and meet the tourist needs on arrival. These basic elements can be divided into tourist attractions ('must see' or 'must do') and other elements (Cho, B. H., 2000). The developing attraction as destination must be a system that can promote the destination by pull factors. The development within the destination itself and continuous with well management will bring the sustainable development. Destination management requires the integration of multiple organizations with interests in common. The Destination Management Organization (DMO) should have a coordinated approach and activities under the corresponding strategy. DMOs should not take part to control partner activities but DMOs need to develop a high level of competence in the area of partnership management. Although, DMOs carry out marketing activities with more widespread in order to become more productive as strategic leader in the destination development.

Destination systems must have a key element that can attract the tourist to the destination. Primary elements are the natural resources, the history, the culture, the community activities and the secondary elements are such as the accommodation, the infrastructure, the transportation, various activities, the entertainment and the retail stores. The inputs have many important factors, which will stimulate the tourists: (1) Tourist expectations – they derive from a destination accessibility and linkage with convenience and promote as the tourist perception. (2) Creativity of the entrepreneurs and businesses - it is an important linking factor between the tourist expectations and the supporting elements. (3) Tourism labor skills – they are including their technical skills, communication skills and management skills, both the public and private sectors. (4) Investment from investors - the investment in the destination will contribute the development in various levels. Moreover, the government investment policies will contributed the investment from the private sector in the destination as well. The outcomes from the destination elements and the inputs will make impact on the destinations and the stakeholders: (1) Stakeholders' outcomes – there are the satisfactions of tourist, investors, and entrepreneurs. (2) Impacts on the environment - such as economic impact, social impact, environmental impact, ecological system, etc. Additionally, the external influences will be the tastes, interests of tourists, competition from other destinations, technology, investment regulations, population characteristics and the political situation. In conclusion, the potential of tourism destinations and the effectiveness in management can be assessed by studying the development results (outcomes). Besides, any changes on the inputs and external factors will affect the growth level of the destination development.

Tourism Destination Life Cycle

Butler (1980) described the evolution or tourism path, which began with the growth, the stagnation and the decline of popularity. The importance of this model is to find out the empirical data confirming the shape of the S model and being a revision for policy makers and

tourism planners. Tourism products are probably the dying products in the future and it cannot be re-circulated products again.

“Tourist attractions are not infinite and timeless but should be viewed and treated as finite and possibly non - renewable” (Butler, 1980)

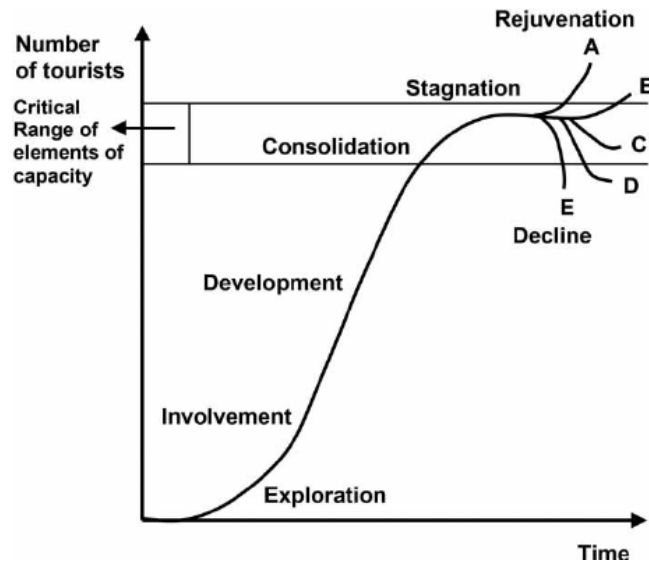


Figure 2: Hypothetical Evolution of a Tourist Area (Butler, 1980)
Source: Omar et al., (2014)

Butler described the decline of destination as the consequence of the overwhelm price competition, which was too competitive to cut prices and quality reduction until the tourists fled. The tourism destination life cycle is divided as follows.

1) Exploration stage: at this stage, there are no tourist facilities. The tourists need to share facilities with the local people. The possibility of getting to know the local people and getting a good tourism experience is at high level. However, the financial return to the tourism destination is still insignificant.

2) Involvement stage: initially, local people are very energetic in providing tourism facilities. The local people begin the advertisements to attract tourists and two-way communication is remaining high, which may have an impact on the lifestyle of tourism stakeholders. The tourism infrastructure and construction will be the pressure on government, such as the transportation and the local amenities.

3) Development stage: at this stage, the traditional destinations will be promoted by man-made attractions, such as natural parks with the educational center. Especially, the new development and new construction will transform the landscape. At this stage, some local people begin to reject to these changes. The local administrators may be involved in the planning and facility provision. Nonetheless, this approach may not be suitable for all locals. During high season, the tourist number may be larger than the local population and the labor market may need more non-local labor. The market has the potential for the supplementary industries, such as laundry, rental car and alternative food for the tourism industry.

4) Consolidation stage: during this period, the increasing rate of tourist numbers will be decreased. The total number of tourists is larger than the local population, and the economic size is tied up to tourism market. Consequently, a significant proportion of local people who are especially not involved in tourism, may not appreciate the number of tourists. The industry will respond to a declining growth rate with a broader advertising campaign and expanding the tourism season and new market target.

5) Stagnation stage: when the number of tourists reaches the peak and exceeds the tourism capacity, it will escalate the environmental issues, social issues and economic issues. For instance, the hotels generate a lot of wastewater from toilets, kitchens, laundries. In addition, other elements from businesses in tourism industry already occur naturally in seawater. In this stage, the destination has become a well-known and recognized area, but it has become a problem in sustainability. As a result, there are various local conferences, consultations, and discussions to find the solutions to maintain the number of tourists. Many start-up businesses are likely to start out over natural attractions and cultural attractions. The tourism shape will change into mass tourism businesses.

6) Rejuvenating stage: in the final stage, two cases may occur in the destination. If the destination is not collapse, it will rejuvenate in either case as follow:

6.1 Collapse Case

- Lands and properties in the destination are more competitive price. The constructions that were built for tourism in the past, they probably change to non-tourism product and the tourism destination will change to other areas.
- Local people are able to purchase tourism products at a lower price because of the downturn in tourism.
- Tour operators are competing to reduce the price of facilities to a low level, then it will become the vicious circle of tourism.

6.2. Rejuvenating Case: there are many alternatives to rejuvenate again.

- Construct the new man-made attractions at the destination, for example, the casino and the theme park.
- Take advantage of previously unused natural resources in tourism.

Butler admitted that it is possible to have a permanent attraction in some destination, which does not collapse. For example, Niagara Falls or some of man-made attractions such as Disneyland where are continuous the improvement and the development as the entertainment tourism. Therefore, there are various efforts on developing tourism destinations through different perspectives, such as the social theory called "*Actor-Network Theory: ANT*". The characters or actors in this theory are divided by their roles and relationships with other characters. For example, instead of dividing the tourists by races, genders or incomes, there are more focusing on the behaviors and relationships with other characters in the destinations. This theory assumes that a variety of networks has built and controlled the tourism destinations. The associating with various characters has created the networks. Then, the roles and behaviors of these characters will change in the same direction, and the characters may be either human animal or things.

However, these networks are constantly changing because of the internal change in the network. For example, there are more people running the same type of business in the destination, then there probably will establish the new law enforcement in the area, etc. Moreover, the network may change because of the new meaning of the destination and then create a new network, which the new network makes the old network to adapt in order to stay connected with the new network.

Tourism Carrying Capacity

Carrying capacity has referred to the growth ability or the responsive ability at the maximum capacity level. Significantly, the environment at this maximum level must still be capable to maintain or operate, and without the potential for damage or risk to health, wellbeing, environment, and its components, including human beings. If it reach over this

maximum level, the environment will be destroyed at no recuperation capacity stage. (Theerayuth, 2010)

B. S. Tselentis (2011) defined as “the maximum number of people that may visit the tourist destination without causing destruction of the physical, economic, and socio-cultural environment and unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors’ satisfaction”.

The study of Tourism Carrying Capacity has divided into 4 areas as followed:

1) Physical Carrying Capacity defined as the maximum number of tourists that does not destroy the natural and man-made physical environment, including the facilities and the services at the destination.

2) Environmental Carrying Capacity defined as the maximum number of tourists that does not diminish the environmental system and the ecological system, such as fresh-water quality, seawater quality, air and waste management.

3) Social Carrying Capacity defined as the maximum number of tourists that does not diminish the pleasure and the impression of tourists. Including, this maximum level does not establish the negative impact on the local population.

4) Economic Carrying Capacity defined as the level of development that the economy can continue to function appropriately with no conflicts between all stakeholders. Especially, at this level must not affect investment, livelihoods and economic activity of the local population.

In conclusion, these capacities are varied and different as the regions, type of attractions, activities and timing. Additionally, the capacity considerations of the criteria and the factors are also different depending on the size of the areas, community conditions, infrastructure needs such as water use, waste management, landscape preservation, including tourist expectations as well. Besides, it also includes the ability or opportunity of managing and controlling the increasing of potential impacts because of the tourist arrivals.

Therefore, the study of tourism carrying capacity needs to consider the relevant factors before deciding on the best and the most appropriate level of different management systems. Lastly, the final decision process of tourism carrying capacity must be aware of the relationship between the factors and the selection of effective specifications.

Sustainable Tourism

UN World Commission on Environment and Development defined the “*Sustainable Tourism*” which is a concept associated with the Brundtland Report (1987). The definition reads as: ‘Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (Telfer, 2012)

Sustainable development defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), sustainable development has emerged as the guiding principle for long-term global development. Consisting of three pillars, sustainable development seeks to achieve, in a balanced manner, economic development, social development and environmental protection.

UNWTO definition of sustainable tourism:

Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

Thus, sustainable tourism should:

1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural resources and biodiversity.

2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to intercultural understanding and tolerance.

3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.

Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them. (UNWTO-UNEP, 2004)

Tourism Authority of Thailand (1998) defined the sustainable tourism as the tourism with the resource management under the context of the economic, social and aesthetic needs. At the same time, it can maintain the ecological integrity of the necessary ecological processes, biodiversity and sustainable tourism development support system

Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (2017) DASTA defined the sustainable tourism as the tourism that balance the development of three dimensions, which are economy, society and environment through the participation of all sectors to bring the prosperity of local communities in the special tourism area. Tourism is the source of income as a tool to preserve the cultures, the traditions, the decent way of living and a tool to protect the environment. The benefit takers from sustainable tourism development are the tourists, the destination and the entrepreneurs.

Observably, the sustainable tourism has driven by the demand for changing and the developing of tourism in four types:

1) Needs of the environment and natural resources conservation: it has extended extensively throughout the world, both local and global levels. It has aimed to further the prevention and solution to the world crisis, especially the ecological preservation for biodiversity.

2) Needs of the tourism market in education and learning: the tourists who have spent their free time on tourism and leisure as the primary in the early period have paid their attentions on learning about the nature and the conservation. Therefore, the tourism market has adjusted itself to meet the changing demands of tourists.

3) Needs of changing the tourism forms by the tourists: some tourists did not satisfied with the tourism resources in a repetitive routine and wanted to develop a diversified tourism model by comparing the abundance of historical tourism resources with the degradation of current tourism resources.

4) Needs of human development: the concept of decentralization, benefits and co-management in the management and conservation of natural resources and the environment of the local has raised so that the local community needs to increase their potential and capability to meet the tourist needs and the tourist attentions.

In summary, this study has shown the definition of sustainable tourism as a tourism form with an appropriate management of tourism resources while satisfying the needs of tourists and resource owners at the destination.

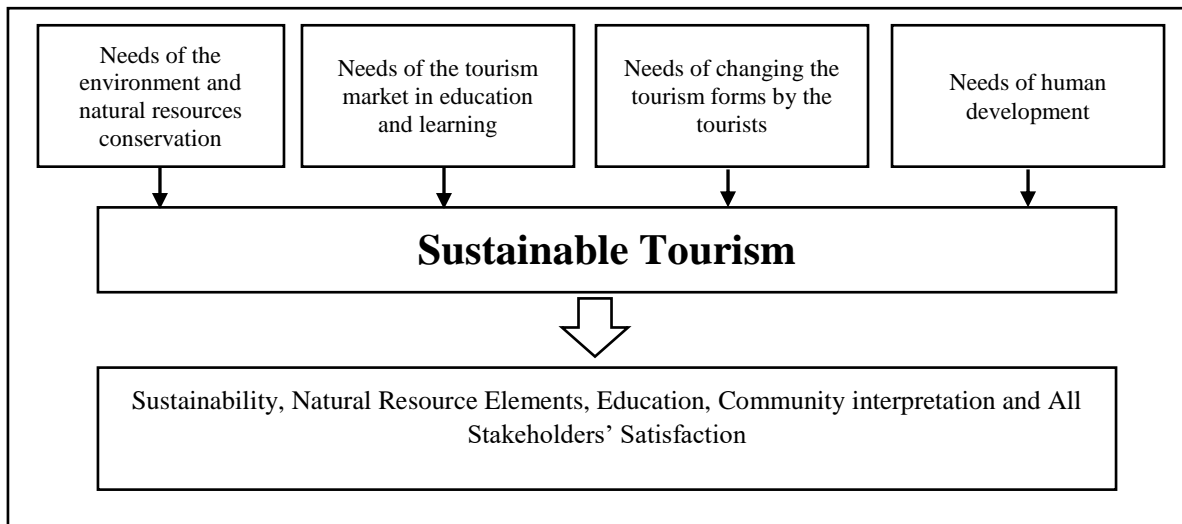


Figure 2. Sustainable Tourism Approach

Destination Branding

The concept of destination branding is similar to the concept of product branding because the destination is a form of product. The definitions have broader scope for the changing of marketing practices in the global tourism situations.

Ritchie and Ritchie (1998) defined the term of "Destination Brand" as the name, symbol, logo, or graphic, which represent the destination identity or differentiate the destination from others. The destination branding is a mechanism that motivates tourists to visit the destination and creates an experience memory toward the brand offers. (Blain, 2005)

Allan (2004) suggested that the destination brand should emphasis on giving the tourists with the destination recall, the destination attractions, the destination identity and the destination quality, which will direct to a sustainable brand. Additionally, the brand needs to communicate to the global market.

Blain et al. (2005) commented that the destination branding has the following process:

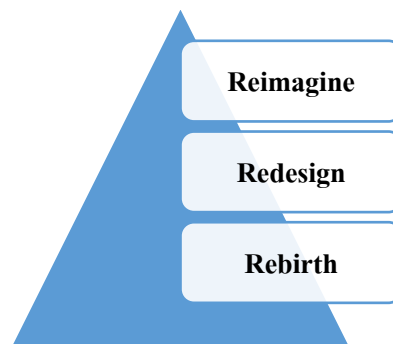
1. Finding the destination identity or characteristics, including creating the name, the symbol or the image.
2. Presenting the tourism types as promising so that the tourists have a decent memory of the destination.
3. Encouraging the tourists to enjoy and recall the destination.

Understandably, the guideline of destination branding should be in the consistent direction with a strong nation brand. The destination brand has to offer what brand can do because it must comply as promising. Moreover, the destination brand must represent a good image or reputation of the country and the brand must be built for the tourists' familiarity and acceptance. Therefore, the image or reputation of the country is an important factor in encouraging tourists to choose the destination. The framework of destination branding strategy should be a conceptual framework by a brand image creating as an important element in the effective branding strategy.

A Case Study of Ranong: Destination Branding Guideline as "Romantic Ranong"

Initially, the marketing concept for "Romantic Ranong" brand building has developed from the cooperation concept of all stakeholders in sustainable tourism management in order to distribute the benefits equally and a positive effect on society, economy and environment.

Moreover, the practical approach has based on the integrated function of all stakeholders .To make this branding concept possible is to create a sense of the value of tourism resources in Ranong and to find out the brand identity for the sustainable branding.



“3 Rs” Principle : Reimagine -Redesign – Rebirth

Reimagine: new look, new imagination, new definition. Recently, the destination marketing development has changed from traditional marketing system, which the only quantitative side is an emphasis on the increasing number of tourists. Accordingly, the destination marketing has focused on a sustainable integrated marketing, which the qualitative side is an emphasis on the tourist quality and the tourism benefits of all sectors and all stakeholders as the values. The sustainable tourism concept has applied to the tourism businesses, which has focused on the responsibility toward the effective usage of limited resources and generating returns and the organizational profits. Besides, the social and cultural impact, such as the extravagant expression and the cultural disrespectful, the society and the stakeholders need to take responsibility in terms of natural life, the environment, especially the direct impact of business operations and benefits from the public resources.

Redesign: branding. The destination branding has designed by the local participation of all ages, a wide range of occupations, both government and private sectors. The intention of creating the good tourism products and the changing from the traditional marketing system have unlocked the branding perspective. Firstly, it has begun with searching the destination highlights and finding out the accurate target with the tourist behaviors matching to the destination personality. The creative ideas of destination branding from the perspectives of local people and researchers are able to deliver the brand image and brand emotion according to the principles of branding. It has called as *Modern Marketing, Neuromarketing, Sensory Marketing, and Content Story Telling*, which based on the concept of 'Feel Then Think'. It makes sense by using the right-brained to communicate and the left-brained to create. The brainstorming with diversified groups focusing on creating common sense, sense of ownership is an attempt to communicate relevant to the responsibility of resources usage and to create a brand culture with a brand promise in reality.

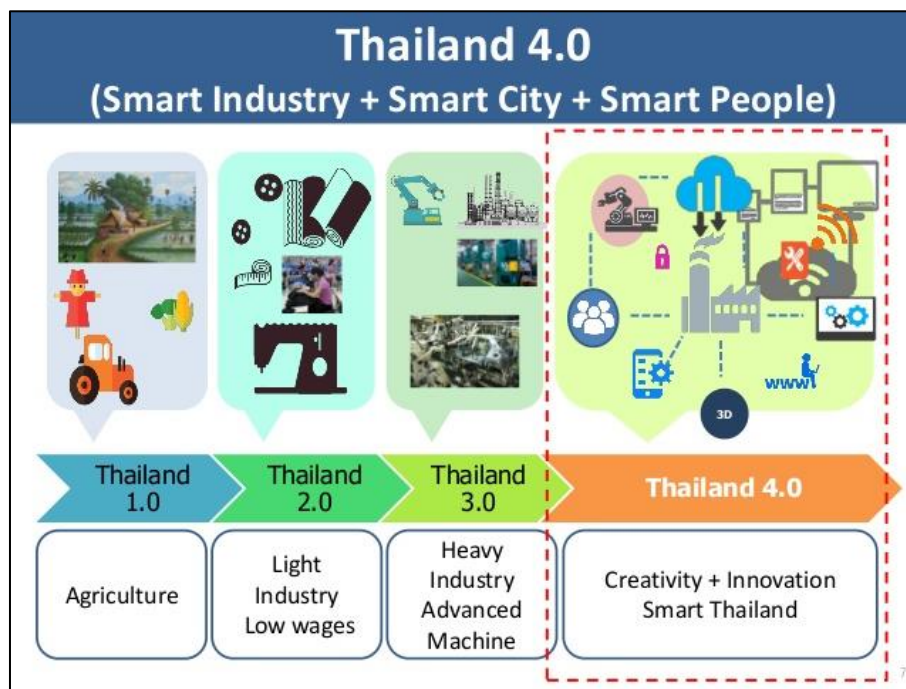
Rebirth: do everything worthwhile. The brand launched by the local people as the film through the online media for a week with more than 7,000 views. The value of doing everything worthwhile is the love of Ranong people merging into a short tourism documentary film, which emphasis on the tourism value. The destination branding at this level has required more time and focused on the exist resources rather than changing the tourism products. The tourism products with the indicative brand of Ranong and the Tourism Authority of Thailand has communicated through the local people. The 'Romantic Ranong' branding concept is one of the tourist intentions to promote for the society and the country.

Although Hua Hin tourism has been successful in the increasing number of tourist and the revenue. At the same time, the current tourism situation has been constantly changing, according to global circumstances and tourist behavior. Hua Hin has to adapt itself to the

changing world and plan to develop in line with market demands. Apparently, as a case study of Ranong, the co-creation of destination branding and tourists are great value. This will be practical and applied to the Hua Hin destination, which will rejuvenate in alternatives.

Towards Thailand 4.0

Thailand 4.0 is an economic model that aims to achieve economic prosperity, social well-being, human values and environmental protection. These goals will be achieved through raising competitiveness in four main sectors. Firstly, in the agricultural sector, Thailand 4.0 calls for the transformation of traditional farming to “smart farming.” Secondly, traditional SMEs will be transformed into “smart SMEs.” Thirdly, where the economy had long been sagged with low value services, Thailand 4.0 wants the country to focus on “high value services.” Fourth, unskilled labor will be transformed into “skilled labor.” These challenges include “a middle income trap”, “an inequality trap”, and “an imbalanced trap”.



Source: <https://www.thailand-business-news.com>

The Thailand 4.0 model will change the country’s traditional farming to smart farming. Traditional SMEs to smart enterprises, and traditional services to high-value services, under the concept of “less for more” rather than “more for less.”

Tourism industry has been one key sector in this economic model. Therefore, the tourism development strategy need to consider and apply as follow as this economic model. Moreover, branding strategy is the alternative tool, which can lead the tourism industry to be the creativity and innovation smart tourism concept.

Challenges of Destination Branding

Brand value is the value of the brand's ability to process and meet the needs of the consumer. It is a combination between the brand performance and the consumer engagement based on the consumer perception and brand creditability through the relationships in the value chain. Then, this response will change to be the brand value in the form of products and services

or platforms that consumers are willing to pay by money or something in the equal value. Moreover, it depends on the brand's core business.

Therefore, the destination branding strategy must be consistent with the marketing strategy in each era. Besides in today's society is the digital era that value comes before price. The participation has been significant for tourists to accept the value before visit and experience the destination. More participating of tourists is able to get more opportunity of destination brand acceptance. The levels of involvement with destination brand value are divided into three major types:

1. **Engagement:** the participation to meet their own individual needs or engagement is the creation of personal relationships to reach specific needs.
2. **Endorsement:** the engagement with outstanding co-values can create new tourism products and services from other new values or new ideas. The additional value between brand and tourist can become the new business in the destination.
3. **Empowerment:** the participation in the level of co-creation or participating process is about being good fellowships and creating something together.

Besides, the brand behavior is vital to the brand's long-term sustainability that the destination brands and tourists are living together in the society. The destination branding needs to think and act quickly to take a competitive advantage. The destination management organizations that focus on offering differentiated tourism products and services with strong brand identity and take the first position in the market will be the competitive destination.

Conclusion

Obviously, the traditional marketing is unable to compete in the global tourism market because the challenges and the brand competition is more likely to increase so that the branding strategy is necessary for the destination marketing and destination management. Additionally, branding 4.0 has started with bringing brand to life with identity.

As a result, if the successful destination brand has a vibrant personality, the destination brands will begin to build relationships with the tourists. The internal stakeholders value their quality of life as part of the destination brand, while the external stakeholders need the specific branding. Noticeably, the destination brand needs to build good relationships with the external stakeholders as friends. Therefore, having a good relationship and having a stakeholder is perceived and linked to the brand value of destination as the basis of successful brand in digital society.

Currently, Hua Hin tourism development has a challenge for branders and marketers who need to understand the changing context of digital society. However, the successful destination branding strategy need to be sustainable and this will be more challenging part for the tourism strategic planner. The sustainability is a matter of balance that all relevant sectors and all stakeholders should focus on and be involved in destination branding strategy. Integrated destination branding strategy is critical for the genuine sustainability, which all sectors and all stakeholders need to engage in integrated and inclusive responsibilities under a context of common goals toward a sustainable society.

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