THE APPLICATION OF STIMULUS-ORGANISM-RESPONSE PARADIGM: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THAILAND'S DESTINATION IMAGE AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS

Ariyaporn Nunthiphatprueksa

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Ariyaporn Nunthiphatprueksa
International College,

.... Major Advisor
(Assistant Professor Sid Suntrayuth, Ph.D.)

The Examining Committee Approved This Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Management).

.... Committee Chairperson
(Assistant Professor Pornpun Prajaknate, Ph.D.)

.... Committee
(Assistant Professor Sid Suntrayuth, Ph.D.)

.... Committee
(Chalermporn Siriwichai, Ph.D.)

.... Dean
(Associate Professor Piboon Puriveth, Ph.D.)

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ABSTRACT

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Author	Ariyaporn Nunthiphatprueksa
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The role of the tourism industry has been well recognized in the development of the nation. The tourism industry not only contributes to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but it also has positive social impacts for locals (e.g. access to essential services, development of transportation and infrastructure, direct and indirect employment and pride in local culture and history). Therefore, tourism is important to a nation with rich resources for travel like Thailand. Even though sustainable tourism is successful, several challenges remain for Thailand, for example the increasing number of destinations worldwide, the rising dominance of new markets, major changes in tourist behaviors, and the proliferation of technology and online media. Social media is ever increasing its penetration globally, and tourism, as a very information sensitive industry, is inevitably affected. Social media has become an important source of tourist information and has changed the way destination marketing organizations (DMOs) compete on a global scale.

This research, therefore, investigates the relationships between social media, Thailand's destination image and behavioral intentions. The objectives of this study are twofold. The first objective is to examine Thailand's destination image as perceived by international tourists and to study how social media contributes to the formation of destination image. The second objective is related to the implications of the results as it aims to provide insight information about the roles of social media for destination marketing organizations, policymakers and tourism businesses.

In order to achieve these research objectives, the conceptual framework is developed based on the Stimulus-Organism-Respond (S-O-R) paradigm together with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Quantitative research is conducted to determine

the relationships between the variables. The variables in this study are information quality in social media as a stimulus (operationalized by intrinsic quality, contextual quality, representational quality and social quality), destination image (operationalized by cognitive image and affective image), and behavioral intentions (operationalized by revisit intention, WOM intention and e-WOM intention). From 550 questionnaires distributed, 410 usable responses were returned, giving a response rate of 74.6%. In order to verify the hypothesized relationships, several statistical analyses were employed including reliability tests, exploratory factor analysis, Pearson's correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis.

The empirical results indicated that all dimensions of information quality were significant predictors of cognitive image, with the exception of social quality. Out of all variables, representational quality exhibited the strongest power in predicting cognitive image. Unexpectedly, the relationship between information quality and affective image was not observed. In addition, cognitive image positively influenced affective image. As supported by TPB, both cognitive and affective destination image were found to be significant predictors of behavioral intentions; revisit intention, WOM intention, and e-WOM intention. Regardless of the type of behavioral intention, cognitive image showed a higher predictive power than affective image. Revisit intention was also found to be a predicting variable for both WOM and e-WOM intentions. The higher the level of revisit intention, the greater the likelihood of WOM and e-WOM.

These results confirmed the application of the Stimulus-Organism-Response paradigm and the Theory of Planned Behavior in an e-tourism context. In order to ensure the effectiveness of tourism information in social media, attention should be given to intrinsic quality (accuracy, completeness, objectivity, reliability and originality), contextual quality (amount of data, relevancy, timeliness, ease of understanding and value added), and representational quality (conciseness, accessibility and consistency). In terms of policy recommendations, a number of suggestions were made including the equal promotion of digital network infrastructure across the nation, the development of integrated tourism information across sectors, the enforcement of the legal structure, investment in human capital, and collaboration between stakeholders.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

An overview of this thesis is presented in Chapter one, which consists of six sections: the background of the study, the significance of the study, the statement of the problems, the objectives of the study, the scope of the study, and finally, the limitations of the study. The background of the study provides brief information and justifications for the investigated variables which are tourism in Thailand, social media and their interrelationship. The expected benefit and contributions of the research are fully discussed in the significance of the study section. The statement of problems (from both academic and practical perspectives) are presented, which leads to the presentation of the research gaps. Then the two objectives are highlighted in the next section. The scopes and limitations of the research area are also addressed.

1.1 Background of the Study

Travel and tourism, one of the world's largest economic sectors, has been used as a way to boost national revenue for a long time (Turner, 2017). Globally speaking, there is a consensus that acknowledge the significant role of tourism in the development of nations and Thailand is no exception. It not only contributes to GDP but also has a positive social impact for locals (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005). Such favorable social consequences include access to essential services and transportation, and encourage pride in local culture. Therefore, tourism is the backbone of countries with rich travel resources. Thailand has always been ranked as one of the world's top holiday destinations and is seen as one of the top players in the tourism industry (Carter, 2013). It reached its peak in 2013 when Bangkok became the top destination based on the number of international arrivals, beating cities such as London and Paris (Master Card, 2016b).

Thanks to its enormous appeal, including delicious gourmet food, warm weather, welcoming locals, lush jungles and tropical islands together with rich culture, tourism

in Thailand has shown healthy growth despite several crises and unexpected situations ranging from political instability, terrorism, disease outbreaks, and natural disasters. In 2016, tourism in Thailand contributed US$36.7 billion accounting for 9.2% of total GDP and almost 2.5 million jobs across the nation (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017b). Looking ahead, tourism is expected to contribute USD76.9 billion or 14.3% of total GDP by 2027 (WTTC, 2016). The number of international arrivals to Thailand has increased four-fold in 17 years, from 9.6 million in 2000 to 32.5 in 2016 (Trading Economics, 2017).

Competition in the tourism industry is getting more intense. Not only has the number of new tourist attractions increased as a result of governmental strategies and tactics, but another major concern is the change in tourist behavior. The number of independent travelers, mainly from the Millennial generation, who favor an individualistic travel approach, has continued to climb (Staff, 2010). Young travelers are the fastest growing segment in international tourism, representing more than 23% of over one billion visitors travelling outside their home country each year (Burkhard, 2016; World Tourism Organization, 2016a). With unique travelling characteristics, millennial spend more money and time making youth travel an exceptional economic force (Mohn, 2016). Millennials are internet-savvy, forever connected, and social media obsessed. They use internet and social media not only for inspiration and research, but also to share their travel experiences (Wong, 2016).

The penetration of social media is ever increasing globally. The number of worldwide active social media users in 2016 was over 2.3 billion, and half the world's population were expected to have access to the Internet by 2018 (Kemp, 2016). It has become an important information source and makes marketing strategies and communication more effective when carefully used with traditional media. There are now difficulties in maintaining a competitive advantage by simply using traditional communication channels; newspapers, magazines, and television. The role of social media has received increasing attention from both scholars and practitioners. The interaction between tourist destinations and tourists (especially the way they search and share information) has emerged in the context of tourism information quality and makes it even more challenging.

Information from social media is essential for tourists prior to their actual visits (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Social media is being used as a tool that allows users to research travel information, compare prices, and share travel experiences. Destinations leveraging social media to their destination products are more likely to compete successfully in such an aggressive climate (Buhalis, 2000; Fotis, Buhalis, & Rossides, 2012; Martín & Bosque, 2008). Not surprisingly, more and more governmental agencies and destination marketing organizations (DMOs) have employed social media and have found ways to create a favorable destination image that encourages positive behavioral intentions, for instance actual visits, repeat visits, and the intention to recommend.

Destination image plays a vital role as far as destination marketing and related activities are concerned. A large body of tourism literature suggests that destination image is, not solely but significantly, the antecedent of tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Ibrahim & Gill, 2005; Mao & Zhang, 2014; Zhang, Fu, Cai, & Lu, 2014), intention to visit/revisit (Alvareza & Campo, 2014; Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2016; Stylos, Bellou, Andronikidis, & Vassiliadis, 2017; Toudert & Bringas-Rábago, 2016; Whang, Yong, & Ko, 2016), destination choice (J. G. Choi, Tkachenko, & Sil, 2011; Jenkins, 1999). Prior to an actual visit, the image of a given destination is conceived differently by different tourists. A destination with a positive image is more likely to be selected than one with a negative image (Siriporn & Youngsoo, 2010). The understanding of destination image is thus important to the nation to enable it to create effective marketing strategies to attract its targeted segments.

Even though the role of social media, destination image and behavioral intention have been studied extensively over time, only limited evidence has been made about an holistic view of the given variables. To study human actions and behavior, Mehrabian and Russell's Stimulus-Organism-Response model (S–O–R) is relevant. The S–O–R model is widely used in the study of psychology and human behavior (Peng & Kim, 2014). It is stated that human behavior (response) is influenced by the environment (stimuli) whereas the emotional state of an individual's mind (organism) mediates the relationship between the environment and human behavior (Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2001). Research on the S–O–R model appears in various methodological

domains, especially in marketing and consumer behavior studies, yet the research does not evaluate social media effects across study conditions in a tourism context. Therefore, this research aims to use Mehrabian and Russell's Stimulus-Organism-Response model (S-O-R) to examine the interaction between the stimulus of social media, consumers (perceived destination image), and response (behavioral intention). To reach a conclusion, the paper will address the influence of social media on Thailand's destination image and behavioral intentions.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The study is significant both in an academic and managerial sense. While most tourism literatures are concerned with destination image and its after-effects, limited researches have been conducted to investigate the formation of destination image by focusing on social media. Understanding what forces and factors influence destination image formation and how they impact tourists' intention to revisit would be benefitial. While destination image has been examined by various scholars, there seems to be a lack of studies that link destination image and social media with tourists' behavioral intentions. The research is also academically significant since it helps in confirming the appropriate use of the S-O-R model to explain the interrelationships between social media, destination image, and behavioral intentions. Therefore, this study will extend theoretical knowledge on destination image, social media and tourists' behavioral intentions. This study extends academic destination image literature, but it also provides holistic outlook related to social media, destination image, and behavioral intentions.

"Destinations that were perceived to be very dangerous lost millions of visitors, while countries with a positive safety image benefitted very heavily from this switch" (Berlin, 2016, p. 5). This study is beneficial in identifying how Thailand's destination image influences tourist re-visiting and recommendations. By examining the image held by travelers, the overall destination image of Thailand can be altered to ensure that it matches tourist expectations. Therefore, the significance of this research is in providing tourism organizations and agencies with a destination image strategy and by making sustainable tourism successful. This would provide direction and

frameworks for both policymakers and practitioners to envision an appropriate destination image. Additionally, it enables stakeholders to identify the competitive edge of a destination.

Under intense global competition, it is increasingly important to create a unique and favorable destination image. Therefore, this study is valuable in regard to tourist perceptions and behavioral intentions and leads to the development of an effective tourism-marketing strategy for Thailand. The acquisition of information from traditional media differs from online platforms (Biswas, 2004); shared information can shape the destination image in various ways. This study provides insights for marketing managers into how to use social media as a marketing tool to promote a destination. Image formation has been thoroughly examined while the study of the impact of social media remains nascent.

Most organizations base their success on the prediction of behavioral intention, especially the desire to repurchase. Repeat visits are key to success. Many researchers reported a higher proportion of repeat visitors than first time travelers (Kozak, 2002; MariaEllis, Kruger, & Saayman, 2010; Som & Badarneh, 2011). Therefore, the behaviors and perceptions of repeat visitors must be understood by those involved in the management of the tourism industry to sustain Thailand's image as a premier destination. Additionally, having knowledge of behavioral intention and destination image can create lifelong relationships between repeat visitors and the destination, leading to further visits and greater loyalty.

Even though destination advertising is able to influence perceptions of a destination, the cost of advertising through traditional media is considerably high (Levine, 2015). It is also evident that tourists have become less responsive to traditional media. Consequently, social media marketing, which is much cheaper than other available forms of advertising, has gained momentum in promoting destinations. Therefore, this paper significantly contributes to economic performance and the improvement of advertising by tourism-related organizations.

The current national reform is centered on the Thailand 4.0 policy as a key mechanism driving a value-based and innovation-driven economy (The Government Public and Relations Department, 2017). Many, if not all, industries have been urged to adjust not only to comply with the Thailand 4.0 development plan, but also to survive in a rapidly changing environment (especially shifting consumer behavior and preferences, in regard to which, innovation and communication technology has become even more critical). The investigation of mobile communication technology platforms in this study allows key policymakers and related parties to have a clearer picture of the capability of social media to drive tourism in Thailand and be aligning with the Thailand 4.0 initiative. Therefore, innovation and communication technology can be utilized effectively as it is supported by governmental institutions, large-sized tourism enterprises and small local tourism service providers. A combination of strengths from within (e.g. culture, natural resource, and national identity) and connection to the global marketplace would establish a successful path for tourism industry as proposed in Thailand 4.0 roadmap.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the field of tourism in a Thai setting. From a practical perspective, destination marketing organizations need to know how to use social media as an underlining concept for their marketing strategies and activities. The significance of the study is summarized in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 The Significance of the Study

The Significance of the Study		
Academic Significance	Managerial Significance	
	Firm Level	Society Level
− Extending tourism literatures by focusing on social media as the antecedent of destination image. − Providing an holistic outlook related to social media, destination image, and behavioral intentions. − Confirming the appropriate use of the S-O-R model to explain the interrelationship between social media, destination image, and behavioral intentions.	− Providing tourism organizations and agencies a destination image strategy and making sustainable tourism a success. − Providing insightful information to marketing managers on how to use social media as a marketing tool to promote a destination. − Contributing to economic performance and advertising activities and the improvement of tourism-related organizations. − Having knowledge of behavioral intention and destination image can create lifelong relationships.	− By addressing the images held by travelers, Thailand's destination can be altered to ensure that it correctly highlights tourist demand. − Enabling policymakers to visualize destination's competitive edge in competing with a pool of competitors. − Laying a successful path for the tourism industry as proposed in the Thailand 4.0 roadmap.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The growth of the tourism industry brings striking challenges in marketing tourist destinations and in being competitive (Gollan, 2016). As new tourist destinations spring up, communication technology advances and tourist preferences and behaviors rapidly change, selling a destination becomes more complex and problematic. Even though Thailand has acknowledged the increase in international arrivals in the past years, the GDP generated by tourism still has plenty of room to grow, and several problems still exist. Firstly, tourism's contribution to the growth of the GDP has fluctuated (Koonnathamdee, 2013). The emergence of the SAR outbreak in 2003, civil unrest in 2009-10 and 2014, severe flooding in 2014, acts of terrorism in August 2015, the loss of King Bhumibol Adulyadej in late 2016 all affected tourism (Beirman, 2016; Cendrowski, 2015; Cripps, 2016). Secondly, even though numbers are increasing, tourism to Thailand is heavily dominated by Chinese tourists and so-called "zero-dollar" tours (Fernquest, 2016). Zero-dollar tours mean that most of the money stays in China and local communities gain little economic benefit from such visitors although local resources are exploited (Farrell, 2016). Tourism and the image of Thailand are both affected by unpredictable occurrences and uncertainties. Co-operative marketing for a destination by related stakeholders to present an appropriate destination image is a necessity.

A tourism destination will inevitably experience the product lifecycle and, without proper management, will, at some point, reach its declining stage. As a consequence, maintaining positive attributes that encourage tourists to travel to Thailand is no longer an easy task (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 2014). Image is even more crucial for an intangible product, such as tourism since tourists have no chance of experiencing the destination prior to their actual visit. The primary image of a destination is formed as soon as tourists search for destination information, with which marketers can present the destination image (Wilkie and Dickson, 1985). Image plays a critical role in destination determination while social media is a significant source of information affecting destination image in today's competitive environment. Social media can also lead to favorable behavioral intentions in the future. In order to market a destination

effectively, an in-depth understanding concerning with the way the message is being conveyed to its target segment is required.

Academically speaking, even though tourism literature has confirmed a positive relationship between destination image and consequent behaviors, there has been relatively little research regarding the relationships between social media, destination image and behavioral intentions in a Thai context.

1.4 The Objectives of the study

The objectives of this empirical research can be divided into two major parts. The first objective is to determine international travelers' image of Thailand and to identify the important attributes of social media in regard to destination image. This study intends to extend the knowledge on the Stimulus-Organism-Response model (S–O–R) and its application in a tourism context.

The second objective of this study is to provide insightful information in regard to the role of social media for destination marketing organizations, tourist administration, and tourism marketers. Based on the purposes of this study, the influence stimulus (social media), organism (perceived destination image), and response (behavioral intention) are examined. This can provide benefits from the management perspective to policymakers and practitioners in the tourism industry.

1.5 The Scope of the Study

Since this research primarily explores the stimuli of social media and its impact on overall destination image and behavioral intention, other forms of traditional media are excluded from the study. The intention to revisit and the intention to recommend (WOM and e-WOM) are the two constructs representing behavioral intentions. The study is limited to a Thai context and international tourists who have used social media for travel purposes before or during a trip to Thailand. As this study is focused on those who have actually been to Thailand, only first time visitors and repeat visitors are counted. However, virtual travelers who have never travelled to Thailand but only 'travel' via the internet are, therefore, eliminated from the study.

1.6 The Limitation of the Study

There are a number of noteworthy limitations in this study. First of all, since a quantitative approach is employed, it is less possible to explore insights into tourist perceptions of the given variables. Regarding methodology, probability sampling is better in terms of generalizability. However, probability sampling is not practical as time and cost constraints exist. Therefore, non-probability sampling is employed in this research. Notwithstanding, personal bias in the sample selection process may arise. Another constraint is the number of variables employed in the study. Social media is the only antecedent of perceived destination image; however, other variables concerning travel and destinations are also critical. Only favorable behavioral intentions are taken into consideration in the investigation. Unfavorable instances, such as the intention to complain and the intention to create negative word-of-mouth, are not involved.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Two begins with an overview of tourism in Thailand. The current situation in the industry and the traveler profiles are presented in the Thai tourism outlook section, followed by national tourism policy and the future of the tourism industry. Additionally, related theories and concepts are introduced. Specifically, Stimulus-Organism-Response theory, Social Media as a Stimulus, Destination Image as a Response, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and Behavioral Intention as a Response are reviewed respectively. The interrelationships between concepts are presented as well. The proposed hypotheses are concluded in the conceptual framework section.

2.1 Tourism in Thailand

2.1.1 Thailand Tourism Outlook

The tourism landscape has been continuously reshaped for a long time, and changes are likely to continue in the immediate future as well. By 2027, the tourism sector is expected to have a significant economic impact as it is likely to outperform the global economy and surpass other major global economic sectors including financial and business services, manufacturing and retail and distribution (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2017a, 2017b). As of 2017, the tourism sector of every global region shows strong positive growth. South East Asia is becoming the world's fastest growing tourism industry (with the highest expected annual growth of 7.3%). Like never before, tourism has become absolutely critical to countries in the South East Asia region. Thailand will heavily rely on tourism as one of the major industries to increase national income, and tourism will continue to be a very important source of income for the nation in the future. The significance of tourism to the country, therefore, makes this study significant and worthy of investigation to gain further insights into the context of tourism.

There has been a steady increase in the number of international visitors over the years, from 14 million international tourists in 2009 to nearly 29.8 million foreign tourists in

2016 (WTTC, 2016). Consequently, Bangkok was the world's most visited destination by international visitors in 2016 (Master Card, 2016b; Millington, 2016). Taking forecasted annual growth of South East Asia into consideration, the numbers of international tourists and locals will be equal for the first time in 2020, by which time 41.5 million international visitors will be welcomed.

It is not only the number that counts; Thailand also benefits in terms of its financial health. Thailand became the world's sixth largest tourism earner, behind the United States, China, Spain, France, and the United Kingdom with US$ 44.6 billion recorded in 2015. Thailand has enjoyed a solid 16% increase since 2014 (UNWTO, 2016). To date, Thailand has appeared in many global rankings (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 International Tourism Rankings for Thailand

No	Year	Ranking	Number of Contestant	Award	Key Figure	Source
1	2016	Bangkok, 1st rank	100	Global Destinations Cities Index 2016	21.47 million arrivals	Master Card (2016b)
2	2016	Ranked 15	184	Total tourism contribution to GDP	20.6%	WTTC (2016)
3	2015	Ranked 35	141	Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report	Scored 4.26	World Economic Forum (2017)
4	2015	Ranked 11	141	International Tourist Arrivals	29.9 million	UNWTO (2016)
5	2015	Ranked 6	141	International Tourist Receipts	$44.6 billion	UNWTO (2016)

Based on the information provided in the Second National Tourism Development Plan (2017-2022), international tourists were much more satisfied with destinations in Thailand than other countries in the region (scoring 4.6 out of 5) (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017a). However, the number of positive comments and reviews on online platforms was relatively low (120 positive comments per 1,000 travelers), as compared to Australia, the leading country in the Asia Pacific region in terms of the positive reviews from international arrivals (718 positive comments per 1,000 travelers). Even though Thailand stands out in terms of tourist satisfaction, many issues need to be addressed, including environmental sustainability, safety and security, health and hygiene, and the negative image of the country.

Regarding international tourist profiles, more than half of international tourists were from ASEAN, following by Europeans and Americans respectively. In particular, the top-five list of foreign visito*r*s were Americans, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Laotians Malaysians, and Russians, albeit in a different order in the past five years (Department of Tourism, 2016). It should also be mentioned that Chinese tourists have been the largest group of international arrivals in Thailand for years. Chinese tourism is now the dominant force in Thai tourism since the number of Chinese tourists has considerably increased. It was reported 4.6 million, 7.9 million, and 8.75 million Chinese travelers visited Thailand in 2014-2016, respectively (Department of Tourism, 2016). Even though the arrival of Chinese tourism represent a burden to local resources and cause tensions resulting from tourist behavior, they are the world's top spender on overseas trips (Zhen, 2017). On average in Thailand, Chinese tourists spent USD180 daily, whereas the average spending for other visitors was USD148 (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017b).

The types of tourism classified by purpose include business/professional and pleasure purposes. Because Thailand has various resources, it is capable of offering a broad range of tourism to the international market. The most notable forms of tourism in Thailand are MICE tourism, ecotourism, wellness and health tourism, cultural tourism, golf, wedding and honeymoon, and gastronomy. *MICE tourism* (meeting, incentive, convention and exhibition) is one of the major branches of tourism in Thailand. In 2016, over a million international MICE travelers were served and generated USD 3.01 billion in revenue (Thailand Exhibition and Convention Bureau, 2017). Mice visitors are the most promising segment with greater dollar spending per day compared to other tourists. On average MICE visitors spend USD 2806 per trip on average, nearly 20 times higher than normal leisure travelers (Oxford Business Group, 2017). Recently, MICE visitors have become a promising segment.

In regard to wild jungles, tropical beaches, and diverse natural resources, Thailand has long established *ecotourism* opportunities. Recently defined by The International Ecotourism Societies (2015), ecotourism is "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education". Generally speaking, ecotourism not only generates

financial returns and direct employment for local communities, but the local environment and culture are properly conserved as well. Ecotourism has gained considerable popularity, so local government has used it as a promotional tool for tourism in Thailand. Ecotourism was included in the national economic and social development plans from 1997 to 2011. However, the theme of most recent national economic and social development plans (2012-2016) has changed towards experience-based tourism, and no updated strategies for a nationwide ecotourism plan have been made since then (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017b).

Thailand has also earned a global reputation for *wellness and health tourism* and has become a medical hub in Asia. On average, the number of overseas patients visiting Thai hospitals has increased by 10.96 % per year from 2009, and makes up 0.4% of Thailand's GDP (Thailand Board of Investment, 2016). Wellness and health tourism still receives much attention from local government, The "Visit Thailand Enhance Your Healthy Life" program was launched to boost this tourism segment in late 2016 (Ministry of Public Health, 2017).

Since competition between nations in the tourism industry is relatively intense, those destinations with strong uniqueness can differentiate themselves from their competitors.   Cultural tourism is a way to one to establish such uniqueness. Cultural tourism is growing in importance in Thailand. As Thailand is the only nation in ASEAN that has never been colonized by westerners, its history and long established culture remains truly Thai. Such cultural features give Thailand a cutting edge in the cultural tourism segment, allowing visitors to have distinct and authentic experiences feeling that cannot take place elsewhere. With a focus on the Thailand 4.0 policy, a mechanism for national reform, cultural tourism has become more important than ever (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017b). The Thailand 4.0 tourism roadmap identifies SMART tourism as a main pillar to deliver high quality travel experiences to travelers. Therefore, a greater focus is placed upon national culture, identity, and the unique appeal of Thailand as a means to promote Thailand as Asia's creative and culture hub (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017b).

Apart from the MICE, ecotourism, wellness and health, and cultural tourism sectors, other tourist segments are also worth mentioning. Based on their high spending, niche markets (tourists who have a specific travel need and purpose) have always maintained a key position in Thailand's tourism industry. Priority niche markets are golf and wedding & honeymoon clusters. Thailand has enjoyed rapid growth in the number of golf tourists and has become a world-class golfing destination. As of 2013, golf tourism contributed US$125 million to the national economy while in 2015, 800,000 golfers were welcomed (Siegel, 2016). This made Thailand the world's third most popular golfing destination after Spain and the United States (Fagan, 2016). The nation continues to promote itself as a world golfing destination, and Thailand is becoming a global golf tourism leader.

The kingdom has been ranked as one of the world most popular romantic destinations for *weddings and honeymoon.* This sector was regarded as important enough to be included in the national tourism campaign "Weddings Away – Amazing Thailand" in 2015 (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2015). The wedding and honeymoon segment covers broad types of activities including the selection of wedding venues, pre-wedding photography, wedding ceremonies and cultural weddings, honeymoon, and wedding anniversaries. With the worldwide reputation of Thai hospitality and the fine quality of accommodation and wedding facilities, Thailand is positioned as a world class wedding destination that appeals to foreigners.

Despite political conflicts and the threat of violence, the global economy is recovering. A positive global economy is forecasted (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2015). Based on statistical evidence, half of the luxury purchases are made by travelling consumers (either from shops in the city or at the airport), and these purchases are dominated by consumers from emerging countries (Deloitte, 2017). This indicates the development of *luxury tourism.* This brings opportunities for several industries, and tourism is no exception. Thailand is now gearing up for luxury tourism by providing higher quality hospitality services and tourism products.

The preference for luxury holidays and experience are valued more than tangible items (cars and jewelry for instance) (Koumelis, 2013). Since late 2015, the

government aimed to promote Thailand as a luxury leisure destination. The advertising "Luxury Society Asia: Amazing Thailand Luxury: Where Life Rules Everything" was aired under the concept of discovering 'Thainess' through a luxury experience. This not only attracts wealthy travelers, but it has altered consumer perceptions. It is no longer limited to being friendly and local; a luxury lifestyle also comes into the play when projecting Thailand's destination image. The large number of customized luxury experiences can strengthen Thailand's tourism by focusing on the delivery of creative tourism, promoting quality and niche tourists as proposed in the Thailand 4.0 initiative.

The rich culinary scene undoubtedly makes *food tourism* in Thailand a global attraction. Local restaurants, fine dining experiences, street food, local markets and supermarkets, and cooking class are examples of food tourism. In 2010, culinary culture was one of the main themes of tourism promotions in Thailand which were aimed at foreigners (Royal Thai Embassy, 2011). Even though Thai cookery has been a part of tourism for years, it became even more important in 2017 as the Tourism Authority of Thailand turned its attention to cuisine and developing the "Thailand Live Gastronomy" marketing campaign (The Nation, 2017).

Almost 65% of international arrivals revealed that they were primarily attracted by Thai food. This is reflected in the way cuisine plays a critical role in shaping holiday experiences and has become a key tourism attribute. Food tourism has a key role in developing sustainable tourism as it is a gateway into Thai culture through visual appeal, flavors, and the eating environment. Equally important, once travelers return home, past eating experience and impressions can influence their revisit intention (Ryu & Han, 2009).

Food tourism is an effective mechanism to reduce income gaps between the rich and the poor since the more tourists spend on their food, the more money goes to local communities both directly and indirectly (Figure 2.1). The introduction of the first Michelin guide Bangkok in late 2017 highlights the fact that Bangkok is one of the major dining capitals in Asia.

Direct

Indirect

Jobs

Traveller

Travellers pay
directly to ...

These are supplied by...

Both of which create jobs...

hotels, Institutional kitchens, fast food restaurant, takeaway food facilities, full service restaurant, street food vendors, ready to eat food, cafés, drinking establishments

outside goods and services such as marketing and PR, cleaning and maintenance, energy providers, food production, design and print etc. which pay salaries, wages, profits, and taxes

Figure 2.1 How Money is Transferred from Tourist to Local Community (focus on food business)

Source: World Travel and Tourism Council (2017a)

Despite the success of Thai tourism, Thailand has faced serious problems regarding tourist confidence, security and safety over time (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2008). In the World Economic Forum (2017) Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index, Thailand was the second-to-last nation in South-East Asia in terms of safety and security. Thailand's safety and security index was 4.0 while the average was reported at 5.2. Such occurrences, including political instability, natural disasters, and disease have negatively impacted the hospitality industry across the nation. The kingdom itself has been plagued by many of negative incidents over a decade.

The first South Thailand insurgency occurred in 2004, when ethnic and religious alienation was believed to be the root cause of the ongoing warfare in the four southernmost provinces, Songkhla, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. Even though the bloodshed has not been in the capital city, tourism suffered from the series of explosions and cost several thousand innocent civilian lives. To date, such violence still continues. International tourists are not the direct target of terrorism; however, 20% of planned trips were cancelled by foreign travelers in 2006. Tour operators and local tourism businesses were damaged as evidenced by the significant drop in tourism receipts (Positioning Magazine, 2006). Despite the continue upheaval, tougher security is urgently needed in order to maintain the appetite to travel for both locals and foreigners.

Civil commotion and acts of terrorism across the country have continued for several decades. Thailand's tourism sector has remained strong despite such uncertainties; however, the ongoing violence is sure to cast a dark shadow over the tourism industry. The major occurrences in the last decade that deterred tourism include the New

Year's Eve bombing (Bangkok, 2006), airport seizures (Bangkok, 2008), political unrest (Bangkok and greater metropolitan area, 2006-2014), a series of bombings (Bangkok, 2012, 2016, 2017), and nationwide and widespread city flooding (2011 and 2017). Apart from aforementioned issues, in 2015, the suspicious death of two British tourists brought disgrace not only to Surat Thani (home of Turtle island, which has been dubbed 'Death Island' on social media) but also Thailand as a whole because of the way the case was conducted (Maxwell, 2017).

Such events create a huge loss for tourism and have knock-on effects in terms of economic activity.   Broadly speaking, a reduction in tourism receipts and the number of international visitors are good indicators of the effects of such issues. Additionally, trip cancellations are also evident as well. Table 2.2 provides detailed information about major events affecting tourism in Thailand and their impact on the tourism industry. Even without this statistical evidence, destination image and tourist perceptions have clearly been significantly and unfavorably altered, and there may be consequential damage in addition to the direct economic impacts.

Table 2.2 The Summary of Major Events Affecting Tourism in Thailand

Year	Incident	Location	Damage	Impact on Tourism
2004-present	South Thailand insurgency	Songkhla Pattani Yala Narathiwat	Death; 6,543 (as of 2015) Injured; 11,919 (as of 2015)	− 2006; Trip cancellation by 20% of foreign and 30% of local tourists − Tourism receipt decreased to USD 334 million (-16%) in 2005
2006	New Year's Eve bombings	Bangkok	Death: 3 Injured: 38	− 5.8% growth rate drop in the first quarter of 2007
2008	Airport seizures	Bangkok and metropolitan	Injured: 11	− 402 flights affected − Tourism industry suffered losses for USD2.2 billion
2009	Thai political unrest		Injured: over 120	− Arrivals decreased to 14.1 million (-3.43%) − Tourism receipt decreased to USD1.5 billion (- 11.19%)
2010	Thai military crackdown		Death: 91 Injured: over 2,100	
2011	Thailand floods	Nationwide	Death: 815 People affected: 13.5 m	− Temporary travel warning for Thailand issued by 15 nations − 70% group tour cancellation − Number of arrival was 18.8 million (-4.6 % decrease from expectation)
2012	Bangkok bombings	Bangkok	Injured: 5	− Annual tourism growth rate dropped from 20.67% to 15.98% (-4.69%)
2014	Shutdown Bangkok		Death: 28 Injured: 825	− Temporary travel warning for Thailand issued by 66 nations − Arrivals decreased to 24.81 million (-6.54%) − Tourism receipt decreased to USD3.3 billion (-5.8%)
2014	Mae Lao earthquake	Chiang Rai	Death: 1 Injured: 32	− Temporary travel warning for Thailand issued by 5 nations
2015	Erawan Shrine bombing	Bangkok	Death: 20 Injured: 125	− Tourist arrivals country have fallen to 70,000 per day (-17.6%) soon after the incidents
2015	Beach murder	Surat Thani	Death: 2	− No significance impact on number of arrivals and tourism receipt but Thailand's image was damaged. − Safety and security index was 3.75 (Asia average = 5.6)
2016	Thailand bombings	Phuket Trang Hua Hin Surat Thani	Death: 4 Injured: 36	− 10% room cancellation from international tourists − 50% room cancellation from locals
2017	Bomb blast at Bangkok hospital	Bangkok	Injured: 24	− No significance impact on number of arrivals and tourism receipt but Thailand's image was damaged.
2017	Widespread city flooding		N/A	

Source: Department of Tourism (2016), Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2017b)

2.1.2 National Tourism Policies

National tourism policy has been promoted by separate key organizations, primarily the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and the Department of Tourism under the Ministry of Tourism and Sports. TAT, formerly known as the Tourist Organization of Thailand (TOT), was founded in 1952 and has played a critical since then. TAT, a state enterprise working under the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, is mainly responsible for promoting Thailand's tourism industry domestically and internationally. In so doing, TAT develops proactive marketing communication strategies covering both traditional media and digital media in order to increase market share in the global market. From a broader perspective, TAT not only supports co-operation between public and private establishments, but also ensures a unified strategy with the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, making Thailand a tourism hub of ASEAN (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2017). The marketing campaigns of TAT from 2000-2017 are summarized in a table below (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Tourism Authority of Thailand's Marketing Campaigns

Year	Marketing Campaign	Conceptualization
2000-2001	Amazing Thailand: Enchantment for the Next Thousand Years	• Highlighted theme: national culture and heritage, traditional way of living, culinary delights, shopping and recreational facilities
2002	Amazing Thailand: Amazes the World	• Theme products for greater diversity • Feature new tourism niche products; admirable shopping opportunities, distinctive health and spa services and world-class golf and sports facilities
2003-2004	Amazing Thailand: Unseen Thailand	• Market local tourists • Focus on quality and first time international visitors • Encourage domestic trips by local travelers
	Unseen Treasure	• Market foreign tourists • market extraordinary areas of the country • recovering Thailand's safe and healthy image from SARS outbreak in 2003
2005	Amazing Thailand: Happiness on Earth	• Focus on niche market from international tourists • Highlighted theme: hospitality of Thais
2006	Amazing Thailand: Thailand Grand Invitation	• Celebrate the 60-year reign of King Bhumibol Adulyadej • 60 mega-events all year round
2007	Amazing Thailand: Seven Amazing Wonders	• Regrouped core national tourism products into a seven-point package; Thainess, treasure products, beaches, nature, health and wellness, trendy, and festivities

Year	Marketing Campaign	Conceptualization
2008-2009	Bustling Thai Tourism, Burgeoning Thai Economy	• switching from market international tourism to domestic tourism • stimulating local tourists by using celebrity endorsement
2010-2012	Amazing Thailand, Always Amazes You	• To increase the number of repeat visitors
2013-2014	Amazing Thailand: It Begins with the People	• Emphasizes warm welcome characteristics of Thais hospitality
2015	Discover Thainess	• Emphasizes the country's unique cultural assets together with the hospitable character of locals • make Thailand a unique destination
2016	Quality Leisure Destination through Thainess	• Enhancing Thailand's image as a destination for the quality tourist segment • Focus on niche and luxury markets • highlights quality measured by visitor receipt, length of stay, and overall quality of the visitor experience
2017	Unique Thai Local Experiences	• Continues enhancing quality leisure destination image by offering unique Thai experiences • Highlighted theme: Creative Tourism

The "Amazing Thailand" campaign was first introduced to tourists worldwide in 1998; however, the concept was changed to "Thai experience" in 2015. Building on the success of the TAT campaign, the number of international tourists has demonstrated a remarkable quantum leap. As of 2016, 29.8 million tourists from around the world visited Thailand, which was a 287% increase from 1998 (7.7million international arrivals) (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017b). To date, TAT has developed tourism policy and marketing plans related to the national tourism strategy initiated by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (2017) issued key policies and plans for 2017 as 1) developing the tourism technological system or E-Tourism; 2) improving international competitiveness and human resource capability; 3) minimizing roadblocks to make Thailand a tourism hub of ASEAN by promoting cooperation domestically and internationally at all levels; 4) developing proactive marketing strategies aiming for new market as well as niche segment; 5) promoting tourism as a key mechanism to tackle national economic problems by providing jobs and income to locals.

The Department of Tourism under the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, formed in 2002, plays an essential role in shaping the success of national tourism. It manages all tourism affairs including the tourism business, tourism sites and service development (Department of Tourism, 2016). After global economic crises, local livelihoods and Thailand's tourism suffered from economic depression, political unrest, and changing climate and environment. In 2012, the first National Tourism Development Plan by Ministry of Tourism and Sports was initiated and was in force until 2016. It held to the Sufficiency Economy principles in order to constitute a sustainable tourism plan for the nation by creating an 'immune' tourism system. In 2017, the second National Tourism Development Plan was issued. However, the focus was slightly different. It now focused on creating a sustainable foundation and remedying key issues related to national tourism development, including the quality of destinations, products, and human resources. Equally important, the preparation of the tourism industry in the information technology era was also taken into account. A synopsis of the National Tourism Development Plan is presented in Table 2.4. The second National Tourism Development Plan was lucid. The objectives and its key performance indicators along with concrete strategies were thoroughly interpreted. If situations follow the plans and strategies, tourism in Thailand will, again, get back on track in terms of its performance and proper tourism management.

The linkage between the Second National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) and this study lies in the reinforcement of online and social media. Since one of the key objectives of the second NTDP is to target niche tourism segments, online marketing channels and social media are recommended as means of promoting Thailand's tourism products to niche segments. Additionally, the government also plans to educate tourists and change tourists' perception towards safety. Since safety and security, together with tourist confidence about Thailand, are of concern, social media and online channels (e.g. TAT and official airline websites and social media) play a critical role in promoting Thailand as a safe place to visit. The development of travel technology also allows the government and related bodies to improve perceived tourism quality by encouraging tourists to share their travel experience in Thailand,

especially in areas with a negative image, by using social media and online channels so that a global audience can be reached in a short period of time.

Since existing online tourism platforms are not widely used by either travelers or tourism service providers, partly due to the limited information that is available through such media, the government also has a scheme to create a more attractive online presence in order to project the unique value of Thainess to the world. Digital, online, and C2C (consumer-to-consumer) marketing is being considered and such technology will provide the main communication channels in the light of shifting tourist preference from offline to online information.

In sum, the use of online and social media in delivering tourism marketing activities to related stakeholders including the public and private sectors, can be used as a supplement to traditional media in promoting Thailand as a world class destination as portrayed in the National Tourism Development Plan Volume 2 (2017 – 2021).

Table 2.4 Comparing and Contrasting National Tourism Development Plans (NTDP)

		NTDP I				NTDP II			
Year		2012-2016				2017-2021			
Vision		Thailand is a quality destination and is capable of internationally competing in the tourism sector. It can create and distribute income, fairly, equitably, and sustainably.				Thailand is the world leading quality destination. It is growing equitably based on Thainess, to promote the sustainable development of the economy, society and income distribution.			
Goal Objectives Result	**Goal**	Higher competitive capability	Higher tourism receipts by focusing on value added activities	Creating and distributing income sustainably	**Goal**	Becoming a quality tourist attraction to enhance competitive capability	Sustainably adding economic value to tourism sector	Creating equal income and benefit distribution to all levels and areas	Creating sustainable tourism based on Thai identities
	Objectives	Tourism competitive index increasing by 5 ranked.	Tourism income increased by 5% each year.	8 tourist segments were improved.	**Objectives**	– No. of tourism standard certificate is increased by 5% / year – Tourism competitive: World's top 30, ASEAN's top 7 – Level of confidence in tourism product ≥90%	– Tourism income increased by 10% each year – Number of domestic tourism increased at least 3% per year	– The growth rate of domestic tourism is increased by 3% each year. – The income of province with less than 1m travelers per year is increased 12% per year.	– The awareness of Thainess of international and local tourist is increased. – Become world's top 10 in cultural and entertainment tourism digital demand – Improve at least 10 ranks in environmental sustainability indices
	Result	Achieved	Achieved	Achieved	**Result**	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress
Development Strategy		– Improving basic infrastructure and facilities for tourism – Developing and rehabilitating tourist attractions for sustainable tourism – Developing tourism products and services – Improving confidence index – Promoting co-operation between public/private sectors, and residents for the better management of tourism resources				– Developing and sustaining tourist attractions, tourism products and services – Improving infrastructure and facilities preparing for the anticipated growth – Improving human resource capability and enhance – Balancing tourism in Thailand through niche market, promote Thai experience, and improve confidence index – Integrating tourism management and promote international collaboration			

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2017b)

2.1.3 The Future of Thailand's Tourism Industry

Although global uncertainties negatively affect the tourism industry, including terrorist attacks, political unrest, world financial crises, natural disasters, and disease outbreaks are on the rise, international arrivals are expected to grow 3-4% (920 million people) annually. The number of international visitors is predicted to reach 1.6 billion by 2020 (UNWTO, 2016). Additionally, Asia is soon to be the top destination choice for travelers. For all of these reasons, Thailand is likely to benefit from this forecast. Yet, in future years, several challenges and opportunities lie ahead.

The economy is a major force, as far as shifts in tourist behavior are concerned. Non-resident tourists have become price driven customers seeking value-for-money travel choices. Specifically, they are more likely to 1) spend less time searching for travel information and making decisions; 2) make reservations in advance 3) travel domestically or to countries in the same region; 4) travel according to special interests (health and wellbeing tourism, spiritual tourism, sports tourism, MICE); and 5) be more environmentally and culturally concerned (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017b; World Tourism Organization, 2016a). With the strong presence of history and culture in the kingdom, Thailand has great potential to draw tourists from around the world. However, with numerous new destinations together with fierce marketing promotions from international rivals, Thailand is inevitably inviting difficulties. In order to increase the number of arrivals and to capture the changing trends of tourist behavior, priority should be given to the development of tourism products and how to promptly market a destination to a global audience.

Communication technology advancement is becoming an area of growing concern in many industries and tourism is no exception. Even though online media and internet applications have been seen as a mega trend for decades, they still serve as a critical communication landscape. Online platforms have become tools for differentiation and value creation for tourism products (Kiráľová & Pavlíčeka, 2015). This brings about changes in communication methods for both the demand and supply sides of tourism. Tourists depend heavily on online media and user-generated content prior to their actual visits. For establishments, virtual communication makes it possible to perform marketing activities including marketing their destination products, raising awareness,

and instigating and enhancing customer relations. Therefore, the success of tourism industry is more and more reliant on information technology as it can strengthen a destination's marketing strategies (Leung, Law, Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013). To sum up, information technology is central in achieving sustainable tourism in Thailand by integrating digital innovations with high value services in line with the Thailand 4.0 Policy.

Since Thailand has sought more international collaboration opportunities with foreign countries, mainly to simplify administrative rules and have greater access to resources, its future is highly related to regional co-operation. A strong alliance with key partners, especially with ASEAN Economic Community member states (AEC), paves the way for the kingdom to be ASEAN's tourism hub (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017b). As a benefit of AEC, tourists can enjoy visa free travel within ASEAN countries, which means a larger pool of tourists is available. Partly as a byproduct of AEC, there has been a huge influx of Muslim tourists traveling to Thailand. The number of visitors from Muslim countries in ASEAN (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore) rose by 31.24% (Department of Tourism, 2016). Additionally, the number of Muslim tourists in ASEAN is expected to hit 25.9 million by 2020 (14% increased from 2010) (Kettani, 2010). Thailand, the second most popular destination for Muslim tourists, has a bright future to serve the Muslim segment (Master Card, 2016a). However, collaboration between AEC countries is a doubled-edge sword, with both favorable and unfavorable expected effects. While enjoying the benefits of new networks, there are also growing burdens and a more competitive environment. Integration can create advantages for the countries that are well-prepared; however, slower-moving and less competitive nations face problems. In regard to the Muslim segment, Thailand still has plenty of room to grow in terms of Muslim, or Halal, tourism product development (including Halal accommodation, Halal certified food services, Halal flights, and religious-related activities. Therefore, regulatory bodies should address these tourism opportunities and challenges.

As uncertainty negatively affects travel decision-making and destination choice for individuals, the effects of global risks and uncertainties play an important role in

tourism (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2008). Local bodies have anticipated certain situations that could affect tourism in Thailand including disease outbreak risk, global economic uncertainty, conflict and terrorism (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017b). A number of diseases are caused by global climate change and are likely to spread into new geographical areas. Worldwide, Malaria killed 160,000 a year and this figure will double in the next 17 years (Organization, 2016). ASEAN countries have a higher risk of Malaria and diarrhea epidemics. Thailand, a country with poor sanitation and hygiene quality, is no exception. Making the situation worse, there have been other epidemics; the SARS outbreak in 2003-2004; Avian influenza (H5N1) in 2003-2005; the Flu virus (H1N1) in 2009-2010, the Ebola virus disease in 2014–2016, the Zika virus disease in 2015-2016, Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS) in 2015 and Influenza A in 2016. In the last decade such epidemics have had significant effects on international public health, the economy, international investment and tourism (Bereau of Emerging Infectious Diseases, 2017). It is uncertain how related organizations can find a balance between the disclosure of information and issuing warnings without having negative impacts on tourist arrivals.

Another source of concern for the future of tourism is with global economic uncertainty. The number and the expenditure of international visitors is partly determined by the strength of the national and international economy. Global economic problems during 2001-2007 kicked off the severe financial depression in 2009 (The World Bank, 2017). Global GDP in 2009, with the biggest drop in history, sharply fell to USD 60 trillion, which in terms of annual growth was -1.74 %. Again in 2015, the world economy lost USD 4.37 trillion. The oil price is unquestionably involved in the global economy. After reaching global oil's highest price in 2012 (USD109.45/barrel), within four years, it was almost three times lower and hit USD40.68 in 2016 (The Statistics Portal, 2017a). However, by 2040, the oil price is predicted to go as high as USD 92 (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, 2016). Tourism activities (transportation, accommodation, and recreational activities) much rely on oil consumption. Economic uncertainty together with the wild swings in world oil prices, mean that the tourism industry will face further volatility.

Tourist behavior may change accordingly and people may become more conscious about spending on travel.

Terrorism is also becoming an area of growing concern. Major terrorist events in recent years include the 2015/2016 Paris attacks, the 2016 Berlin attack, the 2016 Brussels bombings, the 2016 Jakarta attacks, 2016/2017 the Istanbul attacks, and the 2017 London attack. Even the world is developing fast, regrettably, terrorism is increasing. The statistics show a 650% increase in terrorism deaths in developed countries in 2015 (Global Tourism Index, 2016). Regardless of the motivations underlying terrorism, there are immediate effects on tourism including accommodation and tour cancellations. One of the greatest negative effects of terror attacks on tourism is the damage to the perceptions of destination image, about which serious consumer reactions are provoked. Since it is statistically reported that terrorism worldwide is on the rise (Muggah, 2016), challenges wait for policymakers to reassure and provide rapid responses to improve the damaged image.

Despite some issues, Thailand's tourism industry has great growth potential. The future of tourism in Thailand is at least partially determined by the strengths and weaknesses of its current policies and performance. Additionally, Thailand has been ruled by a military government (the National Council for Peace and Order) for a few years, so confidence about arrivals is in doubt. Therefore, the development of tourism policy by the government and its related bodies must be well crafted in order to address the given challenges.

2.2 Related Theories

2.2.1 The Theory of Stimulus-Organism-Response

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded on the application of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) paradigm by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). However, the S-O-R framework was originally rooted in environmental psychology (Mehrabian & Russel, 1974) and extended from Stimulus-Response (S-R) theory in behaviorism (Moore, 1996). The original model of the behaviorism study discovered that the learning process occurs through a combination of stimulus and response in the form of animals' simultaneous reactions. From the S-R perspective, such resulting

behavior can arise as a result of certain stimuli without any interventions (for instance thinking or feeling,). The S-O-R paradigm was a well-received addition since the complexity of human mental activities was disregarded by the S-R framework. Therefore, the extension of human internal mental evaluation led to the development of the S-O-R paradigm.

The significance of Mehrabian and Russell's model has been widely accepted in past literatures, especially those relating to consumer behavior and consumer marketing. The application of the S-O-R model was first done in the context of traditional retail stores; however, it has been recently extended to an online context or e-servicescape (Njeguš et al., 2016). The model is simple and presents linear relationships between constructs. The S-O-R model reveals that external inputs from the environment (Stimulus) triggers internal emotions (Organism) which lead to resulting behavior (Response) (Figure 2.2). Based on this model, consumers may respond in a different way to given cues based on their internal primary emotional reaction.

Environmental Stimuli	→	Emotional States: Pleasure, Arousal, Dominance	→	Response Behaviors: Approach/Avoidance
Stimulus		Organism		Response
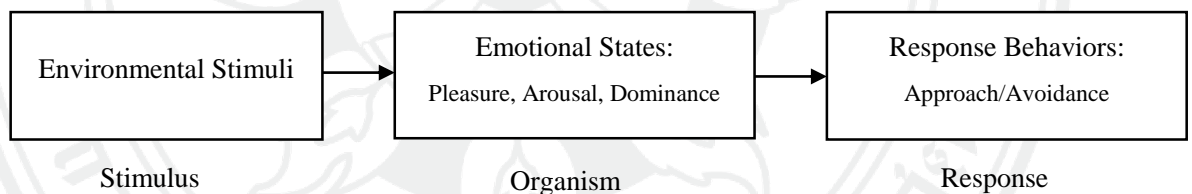
Figure 2.2 The Original S-O-R Model

Source: Mehrabian and Russell (1974)

A stimulus, as an independent variable, refers to an external environment cue affecting consumer perceptions towards a product or service. Stimulus initially investigated how a physical retailing store environment, including both visual and non-visual conditions, affect a consumer's attitude and leads to certain behaviors (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Russell, Ward, & Pratt, 1981). However, the online environment is a form of communication technology that is becoming more advanced these days. To date, a number of literatures have applied the S-O-R model to investigate the relationships between human-computer interactions and purchase intention (Hu, Huang, Zhong, Davison, & Zhao, 2016). The atmosphere of online platforms created

by service providers is treated as a stimulus, for example, the official website of establishments, in contrast to offline store conditions. Therefore, in this study, social media is employed as a stimulus; in particular, an antecedent of consumer perceptions of destination image.

Regardless of the business, information quality is one of the antecedents in establishing a positive image which leads to ongoing relationships with end users (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). The understanding of customer perceptions towards information quality in social media is an accurate way to determine their future behavior. Information quality has been studied as a stimulus in shaping travelers' perceptions and resulting behaviors; however, the sub-dimensions of information quality were differently evaluated depending on the research focus. The full details are presented under 2.2.1.1 Social Media as Stimuli section.

The second construct in the S-O-R framework is *organism,* which symbolizes the internal state of individuals (both cognitive and affective evaluation). It is regarded as a potential mechanism that affects the strength of a relationship between a stimulus and a response (academically speaking, organism is a mediating variable) (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Eroglu et al., 2001). With reference to the cognitive dimension, it is defined as "mental processes and states, and includes attitudes, beliefs, attention, comprehension, memory, and knowledge" (Eroglu et al., 2001, p. 181). In the present tourism context, a cognitive evaluation concerns issues related to how tourists interpret information provided from various sources as well as their personal experience from actual site visits, and so forth. The original model of S-O-R conceptualized an organism as consisting of continuum of three affective emotional dimensions; pleasure-displeasure, arousal-non-arousal, and dominance-submissiveness (PAD emotional state model). With PAD, all emotions are represented (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Based on the work of Rodgers and Thorson (2012), pleasure is defined as the degree to which people feel happy and good in a situational surrounding which is subject to personal preference in regard to the environment. Arousal, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which a person is excited in a given situation. Dominance is reflected as feelings of control that an individual has over a situation.

Even though the tri-dimensional conceptualization of the organism explains the human internal state of mind well, only the pleasure and arousal dimensions are applied in a wider range of situations since an exact interpretation of dominance and its role regarding cognitive and affective evaluation is yet to be made (J. Y. Lee, 2009; Russell et al., 1981). Many studies applying the PAD scale revealed weak influence of dominance and verified that it is less significant than pleasure and arousal (Chebat & Michon, 2003; Kuppens, 2008; Mattila & Wirtz, 2006; Russel & Prat, 1980; Russell et al., 1981). The less predictive power of dominance means that is has received less attention from scholars in the study of emotional response. In addition, dominance is yet to be proved to be widely useful and is therefore omitted. In this study, only pleasure and arousal remain in the conceptual framework as the principal affective components of emotional state.

To complete the S-O-R model, the *response* factor addresses the external outcomes of consumers who were impacted by stimuli (and mediated by organisms). As proposed in the original model, resulting responses are largely triggered by individuals' emotional evaluation (organism). Two major behavioral responses to environmental stimuli were studied; approach and avoidance. Approach behavior is elicited by a positive reinforcing environment and reflected in terms of a positive response that is exhibited by individuals in a given setting. The examples of approach behaviors include, but are not limited to, a desire to stay in the environment, willingness to explore the environment, willingness to have social interaction with others in the environment, and returning to the environment (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). At the other extreme, a negative reinforcing environment reflects avoiding behaviors. The examples of avoidance behaviors are opposite to the aforementioned conditions; for example, the desire to leave and detachment from the environment, avoiding interacting with others, and a sense of anxiety and boredom. Even though the S-O-R model in a tourism context has been widely adopted across different settings, there is no consensus in relation to the constructs under study. Table 2.5 presents the contribution of the S-O-R model in the tourism industry from past literatures.

Table 2.5 The Application of the S-O-R Paradigm in Tourism and Related Industries

Authors (Year)	Research Setting	Stimulus	Organism	Response	Methodology	Result
Offline Environment (as stimuli)						
Jang and Namkun (2009)	Full service restaurant, The U.S.	Product quality Atmospherics Service quality	Positive emotion Negative emotion	Behavioral intention	290 valid questionnaires, from customers who were waiting for checks after dinner, were analyzed through SEM.	Atmospherics and service function (as stimuli) enhance positive emotions while product attributes act to relieve negative emotional responses.
J. Y. Lee (2009)	Community festivals and events in Texas	Festival atmospherics (ambiance; spatial layout functionality; sign, symbols and artifacts)	Emotion Satisfaction Commitment Attachment	Place loyalty Festival loyalty	Onsite and follow-up self-administered questionnaires were distributed during three community festivals in Texas. Data were analyzed through SEM.	Festival atmospherics had a positive (indirect) effect on festival loyalty via positive emotions, festival commitment, and festival satisfaction, which in turn positively influenced place loyalty.
Chang, Shu, and King (2014)	Two major theme parks in Taiwan	Facility aesthetic Layout and placement Point of purchase and human	Utilitarian value Hedonic value	Re-visitation behaviors	Preliminary interview with theme park manager then questionnaire was developed and collected at the main exit of selected theme parks.	The more theme park visitors perceive physical surroundings as novel, the higher the level of perceived utilitarian and hedonic value and the stronger their intention to revisit.

Authors (Year)	Research Setting	Stimulus	Organism	Response	Methodology	Result
Forrest (2014)	Natural and cultural history museum located in Adelaide, Australia.	Design appearance Spatiality Information rate	Annoyed-Please, Despairing-Hopeful, Depressed-Contented, Sleepy-Wide awake, Relaxed-Stimulated, Calm-Excited, Guided-Autonomous, Submissive-Dominant, Cared for-In control	Museum visitor experience (behavioral engagement)	Phase 1: qualitative exploration of exhibition environments Phase 2: Quantitatively measure perceived atmosphere in selected settings Phase 3: study of the relationship between perceived atmosphere and visitor experience	Vibrancy is the strongest predictor of affective, cognitive and behavioral engagement. Spatiality is a predictor of a sense of relaxation in the exhibition environment. There is a negative correlation between Order and a sense of cognitive overload.
Rajaguru (2014)	Seoul, Korea	Visual effect Vocal effect Celebrity effect	Tourism intention	Visitation	360 Thai travelers were given a questionnaire at Incheon Airport. SEM was employed for data analysis.	Visual and vocal effects from Korean motion pictures influence tourism intention and actual visit.
Wu, Li, and Li (2014)	Janfusan Fancyworld (themepark), Taiwan	Interaction quality Physical environment quality Outcome quality Access quality	Emotional value Functional value Theme park image Experiential satisfaction	Revisit intention	Three focus group interviews were firstly conducted. Next, self-administered questionnaires were collected on site to verify proposed hypotheses.	There are 4 dimensions and 11 subdimensions of experiential quality perceived by theme park visitors. Physical environment quality is identified as the most primary dimension of experiential quality.

Authors (Year)	Research Setting	Stimulus	Organism	Response	Methodology	Result
Peter and Anandkumar (2016)	Shopping Festival, Dubai	Mall amenities, staff service, product attribute, mall atmospherics, cleanliness and spaciousness, store attribute, safety	Shopping experience	N/A	Surveys were distributed to International (English speaking) tourists who visited Dubai during DSF 2013	Store attribute, mall atmospherics, safety, mall amenities, product attribute and staff service positively influence tourists' shopping experience
C. Tan (2017)	Chiang Rai, Thailand	Tour-guide roles (communication, social, instrumental, interactional, care role)	Perceived values of destination experiences Attitude and Satisfaction	Revisit intention	Questionnaire-based survey was conduct and distributed to 116 students before their fieldtrip stated.	The role of tour guides can set to create the mindful state of perceptual functioning of the tourists and positive outcomes.
Su and Swanson (2017)	Visitors to Yuelu Mountain, Hunan, China	Perceived destination social responsibility	Positive emotion Negative emotion Destination identification	Environmentally responsible behavior	Of 800, 539 completed responses were collected from visitors on field.	Positive/negative emotion and destination identification mediate the effect of perceived destination social responsibility and environmentally responsible behavior.

Authors (Year)	Research Setting	Stimulus	Organism	Response	Methodology	Result
Online Environment (as stimuli)						
S. E. Kim, Lee, Shin, and Yang (2014)	Sina Weibo (social media platform), China	Tourism information quality in social media (content cues, non-content cues)	Cognitive image Affective image	Conative image	Surveys were distributed to Chinese Sina Weibo users who are following the official page of Gyeonggi Tourism Organization (South Korea). 212 valid surveys were returned and analyzed through PLS.	Content cues and web page design as a non-content cue are positively related with cognitive and affective images, which lead to a conative image.
Abdullah, Jayaraman, and Kamal (2016)	Interactive Hotel Website (Malaysia)	Perceived website interactivity (two-way communication, responsiveness, user control, sociability, customization, demonstrability)	Customer perceived value (monetary benefit, non-monetary benefit, and security & privacy)	Hotel website revisit intention	Data was collected from hotel customers who have visited hotel websites.	It is predicted that perceived website interactivity will influence customer perceived value. Customer perceived value construct will mediate the relationship between the perceived website interactivity and website revisit intention.

Authors (Year)	Research Setting	Stimulus	Organism	Response	Methodology	Result
Ali (2016)	Hotel website (country; N/A)	Hotel website quality (usability, functionality, security & privacy)	Perceived flow	Customer satisfaction Purchase intention	Online questionnaire was used to test proposed hypotheses and distributed through reputable consumer panel company. 441 set of responses were usable and analyzed by SEM.	Hotel website quality impacts customers' perceived flow, satisfaction and purchase intention.
Njeguš, Živković, and Ilijevski (2016)	Hotel website (Serbia)	Website design Website content Product presentation Security Personalization Responsiveness	Affective States Cognitive States	Visit the website Revisit the website Purchase intention	Master's students at Singidunum University were the samples of the study. Online survey was quantitatively conducted in 2015.	Website design has a significant impact on service quality perception. Hotel interiors produce higher PAD emotions than hotel exterior
Douglas (2017)	Destination website emotional design model for romance-related leisure travelers	Website environmental cues (non-verbal emotional and verbal emotional cues)	Affective response Cognitive	Approach (browse longer, online purchase, revisit website) Avoidance (leave website)	A questionnaire was grounded on results from focus group interview with leisure travelers who use destination websites to plan romance related vacations.	Female romantic travelers were more influenced by social and aesthetic W.E.D. features over their male counterparts.

Authors (Year)	Research Setting	Stimulus	Organism	Response	Methodology	Result
Islam and Rahman (2017)	Online brand community (Facebook, India)	Online brand community characteristics (information quality, system quality, virtual interactivity, rewards)	Customer engagement	Brand loyalty	430 valid surveys were collected from active Facebook users (students at Indian university) and analyzed through SEM.	All online brand community characteristics positively influence customer brand engagement (information quality and virtual interactivity are the strongest influencer). Customer engagement also positively impacts brand loyalty.

Based on information provided in Table 2.5, the S-O-R paradigm has been applied in different contexts in various countries, from offline to online environments, and from tourism to leisure activities. However, the consensus for the variables used either as a Stimulus, Organism or Response is not given since these can be reasonably altered based on the research focus and objectives. Regarding the results, most of the stimuli exhibited a positive influence on travelers' emotional evaluation which then created a chain effect of emotional response on behavioral intentions.

However, the resulting behaviors of individuals vary with the stimuli. Offline and online environments may have different impacts on a given response. Since there is a lack of physical presence in a virtual environment, maintaining consumer interest in online channels is a major challenge especially when the information available on an online platform is unsatisfactory. The benefit of an offline environment, in contrast with the online environment is that travelers can use all of their senses (sight, taste, smell, touch, and hearing) to enhance their interaction and selection. In an online environment, for instance social media, the only bridge between the tourism service provider and potential travelers is the screen of a device. This enables them only to see and hear, and to assess the significance to the visual presentations of all online platforms. Therefore, there is a need to understand the online environment and its after-effects on consumer emotions and behavioral intentions.

Even though this paper has a similar concept to many of the previous researches by employing the S-O-R model as the backbone of the study, the paper is valuable and different from existing studies in many ways. Regarding the research context, only a small number of researches have investigated the tourism industry in Southeast Asian nations. Bearing in mind the importance of destination attributes and characteristics, this study therefore applies S-O-R theory in a Thai tourism context. As exhibited in Table 6, the application of the S-O-R model is limited when it comes to the study of social media and destination image. This research is similar to the work of S. E. Kim et al. (2014) as both employ the S-O-R model as a foundation of the paper with information quality in social media as the stimulus, destination image as the organism, and behavioral intention as the response. However, this paper greatly extends the results of the previous study. By considering distinctive features of social media, the

differences between the information quality dimensions used in traditional sources of information and social media were discovered. Therefore, this paper aims to provide better insights and implications as far as the information quality of social media is concerned since the original work of S. E. Kim et al. (2014) did not focus on those differences.

    2.2.1.1 Social Media as a Stimulus

     1) Social Media in Tourism Context

Destination image is shaped by many factors, in common with other dimensions of consumer perception. The role of social media in the tourism sector has become increasingly important. As social media usage in consumer's daily lives will continue to dramatically change the tourism business, social media will play a significant force in driving Thailand's hospitality and tourism industry, especially when it is supported by the Thailand 4.0 policy which aims to push innovation in the tourism sector. To date, social media has become a priority in marketing a destination and has received broad attention from the public and private sectors.

Because internet networking has revolutionized, and will continue to revolutionize, communication in the tourism industry, it has received great attention from both practitioners and academics. Information technology has developed and so has the tourism industry. In 1999, the traditional website (Web 1.0) was a supply-driven platform enabling tourism service providers to create static online brochures and transactional e-commerce (Noti, 2013). Regardless of the benefits of the application of Web 1.0, various limitations did not make traditional online communication very effective. Web 1.0 was originally set to be a read-only platform used for passive viewing of content, and therefore, the interaction between sites and users was limited (Fuchs et al., 2010). However, communicative internet platforms were developed in 2005 (Minić, Njeguš, & Ceballos, 2014). The arrival of Web 2.0 totally changed not only the way internet platforms are designed and used, but also how consumers perceive and consume tourism-related products. Web 2.0 delivers more interactive experience to online users and has become a demand-driven communication platform (Eftekhari, Barzegar, & Isaai, 2010).

The variety of social media applications and platforms have caused difficulties in reaching a consensus about the definition of social media. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61) described social media as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideology and technological foundations of Web2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content". Social media appears as a virtual community (D.-H. Shin, 2010; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010); an internet-based application (Chung & Koo, 2014; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Obar & Wildman, 2015; Schegg, Scaglione, Liebrich, & Ahmad, 2008; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010); creates consumer-generated content such as comment, post, photo/video sharing through online interaction (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Law & Buhalis, 2010; Lon Safko, 2009; Obar & Wildman, 2015; Ružić & Biloš, 2010). The definitions of social media as presented in related literatures have several commonalities; 1) social media is (currently) Web 2.0 internet-based applications, 2) user generated content is a key element of social media, 3) individuals and groups of active users create their user profile for selected platforms or applications and such profiles are maintained by social media services, 4) with the use of social media, social networks are developed by linking established individual profiles with those of others.

This study, therefore, takes social media as "an online medium of communication that can be accessed through desktop computers, mobile technology, and wireless communication enabling a global audience to connect with individuals or groups of users in order to enhance social interactions and collaboration, share and consume opinions, ideas, contents, discussion and experiences through text, digital photo and video and live streaming".

The types of social media were classified according to their features and functional commonalities. The various forms of social media are social networks or online communities (Facebook, MySpace, RenRen, Tripadvisor, LinkedIn) photo/video sharing sites or media sharing sites (Flickr, PhotoBucket, Youtube), blogs and microblogging tools (Twitter, Blogger), Social tagging (Digg), social bookmarking sites (Delicious), and social knowledge sharing (WikiTravel) (Akar & Topçu, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Leung et al., 2013; Parra-López, Bulchand-Gidumal, Gutiérrez-Taño, & Díaz-Armas, 2011; Schaffer, 2015). To date, the most popular

social media platforms are Baidu Tieba, Facebook, Google+, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat, Tumblr, Twitter, WeChat, Weibo, and YouTube.

Until mid-2017, there were more than 2.8 billion active social media users worldwide (Hutchinson, 2017). This indicates that almost 40% of the global population (which is estimated to be 7.5 billion people), and 71% of internet users have access to social media sites (eMarketer Report, 2017). This massive number of global active users is expected to continuously grow and reach 2.95 billion users by 2020 (The Statistics Portal, 2017c). This projected statistic provides an interesting insight into social media user penetration. While a declining number of digital users from developed countries is evident, Asia-Pacific (APAC) has become the dominant social media users, especially South and Southeast Asia. Additionally, APAC has 62% growth in social media users (where Chinese alone represents over 46%) (eMarketer Report, 2017). The key global social platforms (as of September 2017) are presented in Figure 2.3.
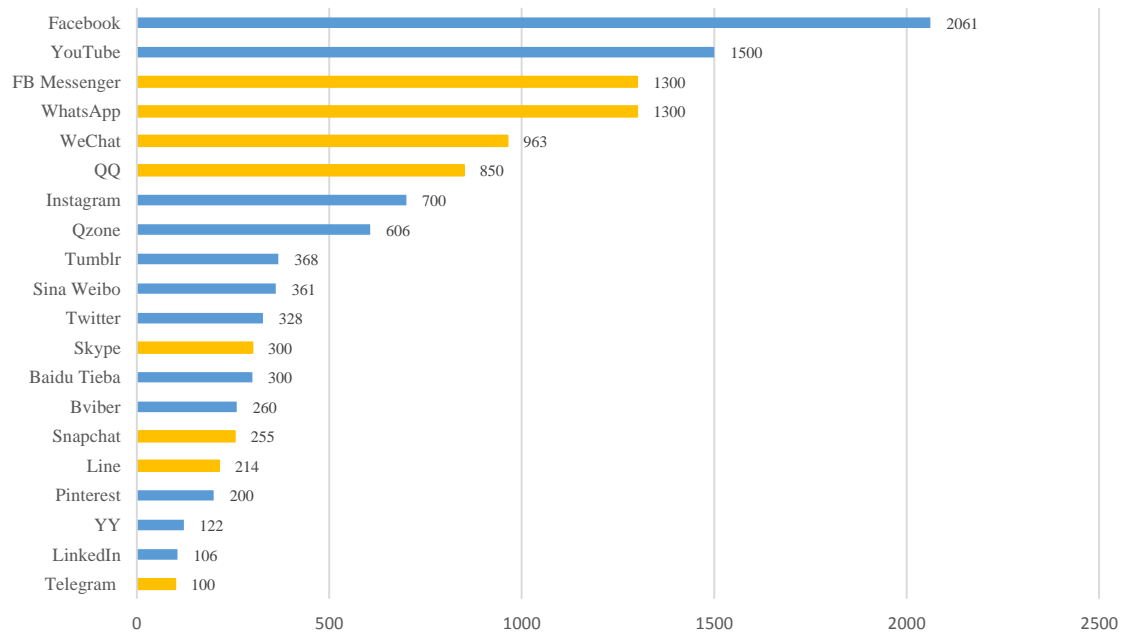
Figure 2.3 Active Users of Key Global Social Platforms (in millions)

Source: (The Statistics Portal, 2017c)

Communication between users and sites, Business-to-Business, Business-to-Consumer, Consumer-to-Business and Customer to Customer communication, has been facilitated and eased by social media. Social media not only facilitates tourists in obtaining travel information and interacting with tourism establishments conveniently at low cost, but has also become an interactive global marketing tool in the tourism industry as well. More specifically, social media creates virtual travel communities allowing people with a travel purpose to search for travel information and share experiences verbally and visually. In other words, tourism marketers and organizations no longer have exclusive control over their tourism products and services since customers are involved through social media too. With the strong capability of social media, tourism-related organizations can benefit. Online presence, with proper management, allows organizations to engage more potential tourists and may lead to actual site visits (Leung et al., 2013). Considering its importance, the application of social media for both the demand and supply side of tourism will be discussed next.

Regarding the tourism context, social media can be effectively used by consumers at different stages; before, during or after the trip. Before the actual visit takes place, the evaluation of destinations is hardly evaluated because of the lack of direct experience. Tourism is high-priced, high-involvement, and unique, so social media used in the decision-making process is essential as it can reduce the risk of uncertainty and making wrong choices and allows access to other travelers' experiences (Jeng & Ferenmaier, 2002; Kyung-Hyan, Gretzel, & Zach, 2011; Traylor, 1981). For all these reasons, the tourism industry is information-intensive in nature (Jeng & Ferenmaier, 2002). The information search process and recommendation by those who have already visited the site are, therefore, very influential (Buhalis, 1998). Some user-generated content available in social media, unlike corporate communication media where content is paid for, makes social media a reliable information source. Additionally, information available on social media has become a key travel-planning resource. It helps to inspire potential tourists by providing opportunities to research, plan, compare, and book prior to their actual visit (Heyl, 2017). Interestingly, over 80% of leisure travelers used the internet as a planning resource (D.-H. Shin, 2010).

The growing importance of smartphones and 24/7 connections is so clear that internet access has become almost compulsory for the travel and hospitality industry allowing customers to connect with an online community free of charge. No less important, travelers use social media extensively during and after the trip. While experiencing a destination, social media provides the means for users to socialize, share text, photos, and videos in real time and to connect online to their peer network. In addition, sharing on social media while travelling has become a great tool to remember and keep travel experiences. Unlike the pre-visit stage, social media used during the trip mainly involves searching for information related to weather, restaurant reviews and activities (Minazzi, 2014). The role of social media has remained significant even when tourists have already returned to their home country. Social media is an influential mechanism as far as electronic word-of-mouth and experience sharing is concerned. Positive and negative online reviews, as well as posting so-called throwback memories, continue after the trip as well. Regardless of the period of social media use, from a psychological perspective, some people use social media to express their identity, image and to deal with feelings of social disconnection because peer acceptance and relationship can be developed (Seidman, 2013).

In regard to the supply side of the tourism sector, social media plays a significant role in many aspects of destination marketing. Since travelers are more engaged with social media, it provides opportunities for tourism managers and authorities to effectively embrace this online platform for practical purposes especially in the marketing landscape. The major applications of social media for tourism service providers comprise promotional activities, communication tools, and product distribution channels (Munar, 2012). By way of explanation, social media brings about the promotion of tourism and related activities and this helps tourism organizations to market a destination accordingly (Akehurst, 2009; Chan & Guillet, 2011; L. Huang, Yung, & Yang, 2011). At present, the photo-sharing platform Instagram, for example #inlovewithswitzerland, #travellingindonesia, #fjordnorway, and #visitsingapore, sets the best example for other destination marketing organizations to promote a destination. In addition, direct connection and constant two-way communication with a global audience can be achieved regardless of

location and time zone differences (Akehurst, 2009; Chan & Guillet, 2011; Pantelidis, 2010). Social media also serves as a direct distribution network for tourism products and services and e-commerce activities (e.g. online booking) (Akehurst, 2009; Chan & Guillet, 2011). Even more important, since users have become media contributors too, establishments have little direct control over content. Reputation and bad reviews should be monitored and managed to maintain a positive image while minimizing unfavorable ones (Sigala, 2012).

With the numerous benefits of social media, some issues for destination marketing organizers arise. Examples of such concern include the distinction between traditional corporate culture and social media culture, the lack of knowledgeable personnel and the different platforms across cultures and nations (Munar, 2012). Additionally, the lack of in-depth understanding about tourism information dimensions in social media obstructs the sustainable development of social media capability in the tourism sector.

2) Tourism Information Quality in Social Media Platforms

Recently, there is growing awareness about the importance of social media, yet little is known about how social media cane be used effectively when it comes to the tourism sector. It is therefore necessary to investigate the attributes of tourism information in social media and its effects on destination image. While social media is a rich information source, information quality judgment has emerged since users are exposed to variable and irregular information (Arazy & Kopak, 2011). However, in order to make the best use of information quality, S. E. Kim et al. (2014) stated that focus should be given to consumers', in particular tourist viewpoints rather than from a data perspective. Data quality is more related to technical implications such as the intervention and interference of a system leading to data deficiencies. Supported by many literatures, information quality evaluated by consumers, not by the system itself, influences the purchase of products (Kahn, Strong, & Wang, 2002; Y. W. Lee, Strong, Kahn, & Wang, 2002). Therefore, this research will employ the mainstream and widely recognized framework developed by R. Y. Wang and Strong (1996) as a way to investigate the impact of information quality in a tourism setting.

With reference to information quality in a social media context, fitness of use including user characteristics, function, and environment are highlighted (Ge &

Helfert, 2007). Information quality in a social media context is defined as the degree to which information is suitable for doing a specified task by a specific user, in a certain context (Fahame, Ahmad, Guy, & Wasana, 2013). The dimensions of information quality are typically identified as various dimensional concepts rather than a uni-dimensional concept. Information quality is divided into four quadrants; intrinsic quality, contextual quality, representational quality, and accessibility quality (R. Y. Wang & Strong, 1996). It is also worth pointing out that different sub-dimensions of information quality are used depending on the context and purpose. *Intrinsic quality*, independent of context, implies that tourism information has quality in its own right. It is the degree to which the information is accurate, believable, reliable, and presented by a creditable source. *Contextual quality* is the extent to which information adds value, and is relevant, timely, complete and sufficient. *Representational quality* covers the consistency and concise representation of information. *Accessibility quality* focuses on how information is accessed and secured.

As a result of social media's distinctive features, borderless accessibility, global audience reach, and ease of use, information quality slightly differs from tradition information systems (Agarwal & Yiliyasi, 2010; Baeza-Yate, 2009). Since some research has revealed a lesser relevance for accessibility quality in the social media context, only three dimensions remain in the social media context; intrinsic quality, contextual quality, and representational quality. However, accessibility is not totally excluded from the model but rather put under the umbrella of representational quality. Although it is yet included in the information quality framework, the *social quality* dimension is considered as an influential factor as far as social media is concerned.

The addition of *originality* as a sub-dimension of contextual quality in a social media context could be reasonably explained. Originality is related to the quality of being original and independent (Ang, Leong, Lee, & Lou, 2014). With increasing numbers of social media users on the supply side, duplication of content inevitably occurs. On the other hand, the originality of the presentation of information benefits both the content generator and consumers and offers opportunities for learning and interactivity to users worldwide. As for businesses, originality, as proved in many

advertising and marketing literatures, can enhance consumer attitudes, recall of the advertising idea, purchase intention, and the motivation to process information (Arthur, Goldenberg, & James, 1995; Hoon & Low, 2000; Smith, MacKenzie, Yang, Buchholz, & Darley, 2007). Therefore, originality is considered as important and worthy of investigation.

It is assumed that content, in particular travel information, is more effective when social media users are highly engaged (Jiang, Luo, & Kulemeka, 2016). However, questions may arise regarding the possible antecedents of social media engagement. It is widely accepted that engaged users are those who maintain a high level of online activity including clicking, viewing, liking, commenting, and sharing (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009). Such behaviors continue when the audience is fully aware, has a certain level of social presence, and participates in real-time conversations with others (Jiang et al., 2016). Additionally, travel consumers may not only use social media as a means for information-oriented activities but they also engage in virtual communities as well (P. Wang, Zhang, Suomi, & Sun, 2017).

Even more important, information reliability could be enhanced through real-time interactions between social media users and businesses as well. Therefore, social relationship-related variables partially advance the quality of information. Based on the study of P. Wang et al. (2017), two constructs could be included in social quality; social presence and social interaction. Information quality and its description in a social media context is presented in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6 Information Quality in a Social Media Context

Dimension	Indicators	Description; Degree to which information is
Intrinsic quality	Accuracy	correct and free of errors
	Completeness	of sufficient breadth and depth
	Objectivity	unbiased
	Reliability	trustable and from a good source
	*Originality	new and not copied from others sources
Contextual quality	Amount of data	an appropriate quality or amount is presented
	Relevancy	applicable for task in hand
	Timeliness	sufficiently up-to-date
	Ease of understanding	clear without ambiguity and easy to comprehend
	Value added	beneficial and provides advantages to users

Dimension	Indicators	Description; Degree to which information is
Representational quality	Conciseness	compactly represented without being overwhelming
	Consistency	presented compatibly in the same manner
	Accessibility	easily and quickly retrievable
*Social quality	*Social interaction	allows a user to initiate active communication
	*Social presence	allows a user to experience others as being psychologically present

Source: (S. E. Kim et al., 2014; P. Wang et al., 2017; Zhu, 2009)

* Items were added by author

By identifying the impacts of information quality in a social media context, this study focuses on all four dimensions; intrinsic, contextual, representational, and social quality. The justification is that travel consumers are exposed to all dimensions when they search, plan, organize, and evaluate information quality through social media. Any exclusion may not be capable of providing insightful investigation. Additionally, the addition of the social quality dimension may be significant. From an academic perspective, after thoroughly reviewing information quality and social media in a tourism context, no research has studied all of the information quality dimensions together, but rather specifically examined the sole impact of the contextual quality of social media on destination image. Therefore, this gap can be filled.

2.2.1.2 Destination Image as an Organism

Since the first studies in the early 1970s, the definition of destination image (used interchangeably with tourist destination image) was provided by researchers from different fields owing to the fact that destination image is multidisciplinary and has been adopted in different areas, including social and environmental psychology, consumer behavior, marketing, anthropology, sociology, geography, and semiotics. Based on the study of Gallarza, Saura, and García (2002), destination image is "complex, multiple, relativistic and dynamic". As there are different sets of attributes, the context and focus of the destination image make it difficult to provide a widely accepted definition.

The most cited definition of destination image was provided by Crompton (1979) as "the sum of all beliefs, ideas and impressions that people associate with a destination". In later years, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) found that the formation of destination image by individuals also was also shaped by the characteristics of a

person. Although personal characteristics and beliefs are incomplete but significant antecedents of destination image, it is likely that what travelers know and feel is based on their way of thinking and consequently varies. However, some authors found that destination image is rather a mental depiction of a destination (Alhemoud & Armstrong, 1996; Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 1996; Seaton & Bennett, 1996). From this viewpoint, it could be reasonably concluded that people are likely to have the image of a destination in mind even before a visit has been made. In contrast, Bigne, Sanchez, and Sanchez (2001) argued that the image of a destination is based on a subjective interpretation of reality by individuals. However, this has since been criticized as it is not always the case that the image and the reality are related. Therefore, it is less important for the destination image to represent reality as it is merely a personal, mental portrayal of a destination. Whilst H. Kim and Richardson (2003) stated that a tourist destination image is a set of impressions, beliefs, ideas, expectations, and feelings a person has towards a place, which have been accumulated over time, J. G. Choi et al. (2011) stated that destination image is not only made by those who have actually visited a place. It is also established by both those who have visited other similar destinations and non-visitors who aware and exposed to travel information, but have never traveled to that particular destination as well. Kaur, Chauhan, and Medury (2016) recently defined destination image as a current perception and view tourists have toward a destination taking into account the fact that the destination image is subject to change and is differently perceived over time. What travelers perceive and have in mind prior to their visit may be inaccurate.

Based on the discussion above, destination image, in this study, refers to an interactive set of personal normative beliefs, perceptions, expectation, ideas, impressions, and feelings towards a given destination by different individuals (both visitors and non-visitors), which can change over time.

Despite the difficulty in defining destination image, a number of researches found a relationship between destination image and the use of social media (as an independent variable) (Diposumarto, Purwanto, & Ramdan, 2015; Eusébio & Vieira, 2013; Hays, PAge, & Buhalis, 2013; S. E. Kim et al., 2014; Leung et al., 2013; Stepaniuk, 2015; Tamajón & Valiente, 2017); the intention to visit/revisit (Abodeeb, 2014; Alcañiz,

García, & Blas, 2009; Bigne et al., 2001; C.-C. Chen, Lai, Petrick, & Lin, 2016; Diposumarto et al., 2015; Eusébio & Vieira, 2013; Kani, Aziz, Sambasivan, & Bojei, 2017; Stylos et al., 2017; Stylos, Vassiliadis, Andronikidis, & Andronikidis, 2016; Tavitiyaman & Qu, 2013); the intention to recommend (Alcañiz et al., 2009; Bigne et al., 2001; Eusébio & Vieira, 2013; Tavitiyaman & Qu, 2013); satisfaction (Bigne et al., 2001; Eusébio & Vieira, 2013; Kani et al., 2017); and loyalty (C.-F. Chen & Phou, 2013; Folgado-Fernández, Hernández-Mogollón, & Duarte, 2017; Zhang et al., 2014). The research results are so significant that related stakeholders (including interested scholars from the tourism field, destination marketers, destination marketing organizations, managers, other authorities and policymakers take destination image and its components very seriously. Consequently, successful marketing strategies are effectively planned and lead to favorable actions by consumers. Considering its importance, destination image has become one of the key differentiators that enable a destination to have a competitive advantage over competitors. The more positive the image travelers have about a destination, the greater the chance of a destination being selected and for travelers to have positive future intentions.

The typology of destination image is presented in various ways. The possible ways to classify destination image are primary vs. secondary image and cognitive vs. affective image; however, these classifications are not independent of one another. The primary and secondary image was defined and explained by Phelps (1986). *Primary image* is derived from the personal experience of an actual site visit. A traveler holds a primary image after an actual visit has been made, which means that the primary image is acquired from the recall of a personal traveling experience. The *secondary image* is perceived before travelling to a destination, where a consumer interprets and perceive the destination image through the lens of others prior to having an actual travel experience themselves. This notion was supported by the work of Mansfeld (1992) in which the organic (informal) vs. induced (formal) image was discussed as sub-dimensions of secondary image. While non-commercial information is a major contributor to the organic image, the induced image is derived from exposure to the information conveyed by commercial organizations. Considering both primary and secondary images, personal experience and the source of information are major

variables affecting the formation of a destination image. However, this will be discussed later in this paper in the destination image formation section.

Destination image is also derived from the cognitive and affective evaluation of a person. A cognitive evaluation is what one knows and affective evaluation is how one feels. In regard to a holiday destination, a *cognitive image* refers to an interrelated set of beliefs, knowledge, attitude, and understanding of individuals towards an object, in particular a destination. The cognitive image is then evaluated in terms of the attributes and resources of a tourist attraction (Goodall & Ashworth, 1995). Examples of cognitive evaluation are attractiveness, the characteristics of locals, value for money, and gastronomy. On the other hand, the *affective image* represents how people feel and the emotions created by a tourist destination (Keller, 1993). Pleasure and arousal are examples of the latter variable. If the head represents the cognitive image, the heart represents the affective image. The cognitive component was proved to have considerable influence on and to be related to the affective image (Lin, Morais, Kerstetter, & Hou, 2007; Russel & Prat, 1980; Ryan & Cave, 2005). Therefore, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of how people assess a destination, the cognitive and affective components should be investigated separately (Russell & Pratt, 1980). In line with this notion, more recent research approaches investigate the effects of both the cognitive and affective dimensions of destination image.

1) Destination Image Components

Bearing in mind the importance of the characteristics of a destination, if differentiation is not apparent, competitors can imitate and then reduce the strategic flexibility. Therefore, the components of destination image must be investigated. The dimensions of destination image model were modified based on product image research (MacInnis & Price, 1987). Specifically in a tourism context, these existing dimensions are applicable in a destination image concept even if each variable requires a different interpretation (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Destination image is sourced from both attributes and an holistic impression. An *attribute* is a feature, quality or characteristic of an object such as natural resources, climate, accommodation facilities, restaurants, and historical and cultural attractions.

However, an *holistic impression* is either an imaginary or mental visualization of a place as well as a general description of the place.

To make dimensions of a destination image more complete, four sub-dimensions of the attribute-holistic impression image were proposed (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Martineau, 1958); functional and psychological characteristics, and common and unique characteristics. On the one hand, *functional characteristics* refer to the functional utilities of any object perceived by a consumer to be easier to observe and measure. On the other hand, *psychological characteristics* are the more intangible characteristics of a destination. While the functional characteristics are more tangible, psychological are not. Gallarza et al. (2002) suggested some possible functional and psychological image elements which are presented in Figure 2.4.

A third dimension has been added to the destination image model, which is common vs. unique characteristics. A c*ommon characteristic* refers to the features that can be easily compared and evaluated for different destinations. An example of a common characteristic is price level, or the climate of a destination. A *unique dimension* refers to the unique or special features, events or feelings, such as the Songkran festival in Thailand, or La Tomatina in Spain.

Functional

Various activities
Landscape, Surrounding
Nature
Cultural attractions
Nightlife and entertainment
Shopping facilities
Information available
Sport facilities
Transportation
Accommodation
Gastronomy
Price, value, cost
Climate
Relaxation vs. Masslife
Safety
Social interaction
Residents' receptiveness
Originality
Service quality

Psychological

Figure 2.4 Attributes of Destination Image

Source: Gallarza et al. (2002)

Regardless of the titles given to the destination image components, it is clear that overlap exists between them since one may have an impact on the other. For example, an individual's perception of the attributes of a particular destination might be shaped by the overall impression an individual holds (holistic impression). At the same time, such holistic evaluation is usually grounded on a multifarious number of attributes. There is also not a clear distinction between functional and psychological characteristics. This makes the classification of image components complex. For example, it is difficult to tell if "gastronomy" should be considered as a functional attribute or, on the other hand, a psychological attribute. Therefore, the conclusion can be made that any of the perceptions and determinants can be placed at various points along the continuum.

When considering these items in a dimensional model, many components of destination image appear, such as the *functional-attribute image* (the price level, the efficiency of the transport system); *functional-holistic image* (the mental picture of the physical characteristics of a destination; mountainous, landscape); *psychological-attribute image (g*eneral safety, welcoming locals); and the *psychological-holistic image (*general feelings individuals have towards the intangible attributes of a destination; the atmosphere and romance of the setting). It is also noted that the common-unique dimension is also included in each destination image component, based on the degree to which travel consumers perceive its common-unique characteristics. Figure 2.5 presents all of the components of destination image.
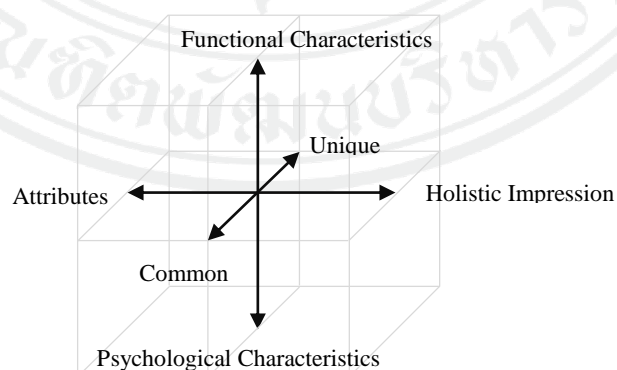
Figure 2.5 Components of Destination Image

Source: Echtner and Ritchie (1993)

2) Destination Image Formation

The idea of consumer image formation was initially developed by Reynolds (1965) and has been since widely applied in the marketing field. Image formation is described as a mental construct development based on a few impressions which comprise the total impression. The source of information is universally accepted to be one of the key antecedents in constructing an image and in turn affecting a choice of destination.

Based on the early research of Gunn (1972), a seven-stage theory was introduced by breaking down destination image formation into seven sequential steps; accumulation, modification, decision, travel, participation, return travel, and new accumulation. The first stage of destination image formation is the "*accumulation* of mental images of a place". This stage occurs before an actual site visit has been made, therefore, destination image is formed by the mental evaluation of individuals. However, such evaluation is grounded on general knowledge accumulated from media, news, and personal connections (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). In this early stage, an *organic destination image* is established because no active information search or site visit has yet taken place.

Later, "the *modification* of images through research prior to the decision to travel" takes place. An i*nduced image* is now formed (Jenkins, 1999). In order to make any decisions related to travel, a person is now exposed to information presented by all of the image formation agents; therefore, a perceived destination image is modified as a result of the intentional disclosure of information. However, in this second stage, the image formation of a first time visitor and a repeat visitor is slightly different in terms of information source. The decision of the first time visitor is solely made based on bounded rationality, where the decision of an individual is limited by the information they have but excludes personal experience (the available sources of information are later fully discussed under Gartner's framework) (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

Repeat visitors, since they have traveled to a destination before, may experience changed perceptions in this stage. It should be noted that an induced image is embedded in prospective travelers' minds until the latter stages of destination image

formation. The determinants of destination image before an actual visit was investigated by (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) (Figure 2.6)
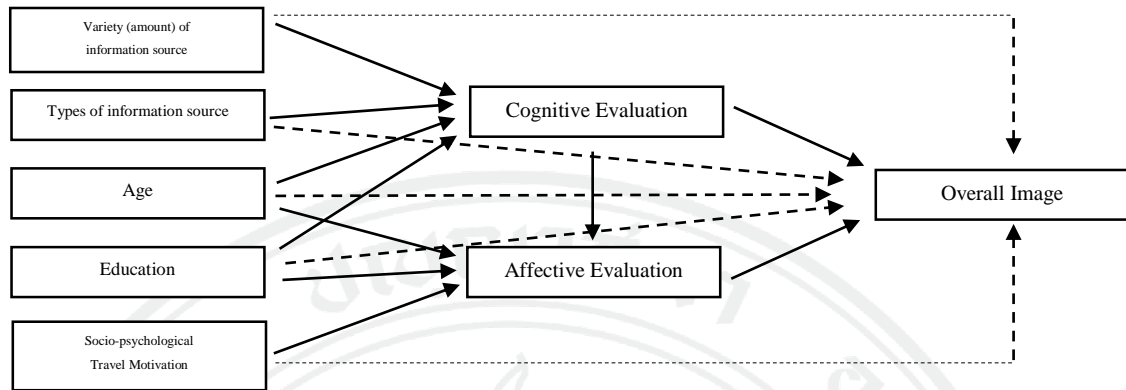
Figure 2.6 Path Model of the Determinants of Tourism Destination Image Before an Actual Visit
Source: Baloglu and McCleary (1999)

There is also the "*decision* to travel based on image efficiency, anticipated experience but kept within time, money, and other constraints". Simply speaking, destination choice is based on available resources and travel constraints, as well as the perceived destination image an individual holds. Once a final decision is reached, the "*travel* to an attraction" is taken into consideration. Once a traveler arrives at a place, "*participation* or *experience* at the destination" becomes a key element that transforms the induced image into a *modified-induced image*. The modified-induced image is a result of personal experience and an actual visit. However, the modified-induced image continues to change as an ongoing process even when travelers have already returned to their home country. That is to say, "*return travel* allows reflection and evaluation when discussing experiences with fellow travelers" and "the occurrence of *new accumulation* then influences the destination image. If an actual site visit is better, or at least equal to, the destination image formed at an earlier stage, the destination image will be positively changed. Once the image has improved, there is a likelihood for a first-time visitor not only to become a repeat visitor in the future but also to generate positive word-of-mouth (Díaz-Martín, Iglesias, Vázquez, & Ruiz, 2000). Potential visitors increase the chance of visiting when they are exposed to positive recommendations, while negative word-of-mouth can worsen the destination image held by potential visitors (Crick, 2003). Figure 2.7 is a summary of the stage theory of destination image. After reviewing the stage theory, the key implications are as follows:

- image is a continual process involving organic, induced, and modified-induced image;

- image is modified through the traveling process; before, during, and after a visit;

- image is altered by different information sources;

- different images are held by different types of visitor; non-visitors; potential visitors; first time visitors; and return visitors.
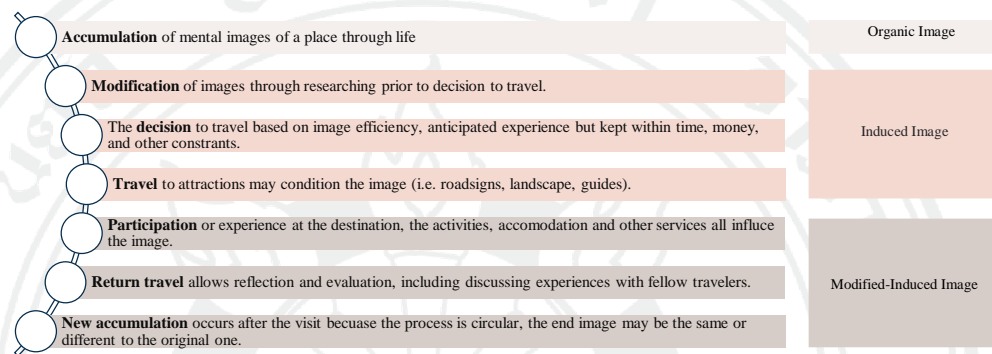
Figure 2.7 The Stage Theory of Destination Image Formation   Source: Gunn (1972)

However, Gartner (1993) argued that destination image is formed independently based on different sources of information, which are also known as image formation agents. The introduction of eight image formation agents was based on the degree to which projected information is controlled by promoters and perceived to be credible by receivers. The eight typologies are overt induce I, overt induced II, covert induced I, covert induced II, autonomous, unsolicited organic, solicited organic, and organic.

Overt induce I refers to travel information delivered from traditional adverting media from destination promoters, television, newspapers, billboards, brochures, and radio. With the purpose of pushing a destination to target travelers, establishers then have complete control over information and the projected destination image through organization-created content.   However, a critical concern of this image formation agent is strongly related to the creditability of the information as perceived by receivers. Many travel consumers found the advertising under overt induce I to be over exaggerated and did not count it all as reliable (S. M. Choi & Rifon, 2013). However, the information dissemination from the supply side of tourism is not limited only to destination marketing organizers, promotional information from travel

intermediaries also directly and indirectly influences the image of a destination as well. Therefore, *overt induced II* is also evident and comprises promotional materials provided by tourism intermediaries including tour operators, wholesalers, and organizations. Brochures from tour operators and travel guidebooks best illustrate overt induced II. However, it should be pointed out that the communication of tourism intermediaries is mainly used to enhance profits. As a way to successfully compete, the ways a destination is presented may differ. Consequently, the destination image is purposefully manipulated. Still, creditability issues remain since the information is passed off to the audience with a hidden agenda, in particular, to increase sales.

As a means to improve creditability, covert induced I and covert induced II are employed. The information of these two image formation agents are provided as recognizable endorsements or by a third-party via traditional advertising. A key distinction is that if travel consumers are fully aware that the information conveyed is a part of promotional activities, it is then regarded as *covert induced I*. On the other hand, *covert induced II* refers to when travel consumers are unaware of the promotional effort behind the information. While a celebrity spokesperson is an example of covert induced I, an unbiased article by a travel writer for a newspaper is an example of covert induced II. By using covert induce I and II, readers are lured by the imprecise connection between projected image and promotional activities. Creditability is, therefore, increased (Wahab & Pigram, 1977).

The *autonomous* image formation agent is an independently produced document regardless of marketing or related promotional purposes, for example, news, film, popular culture, drama series, and music. An autonomous agent is a mass communication media that can reach a mass audience to a short period of time. Additionally, this agent is viewed to be relatively unbiased compared to advertising materials, and therefore, greater creditability is perceived. Generally speaking, while a person is consuming news or a film, for instance, a destination image is also created as a by-product. The study of Gartner and Shen (1992) recognized the significance of news on consumer perceptions after the Tiananmen Square event. The impacts of film on viewers' perception was also investigated, and the research results showed that the scenery, landscape, and cultural attractions of a destination in the film may shape

travel motivation and change viewers' perceptions (Hudson, Wang, & Gil, 2011). Additionally, with a large audience exposed to such information, an autonomous agent is able to change the destination image in a short period of time compared to other means.

The power of word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth is great. Regardless of product types and industry, consumers rely much more on organic sources of information. *Unsolicited organic* is unrequested information from an acquaintance and knowledgeable source. Even when a person receives travel information without prompting, a destination image may be heavily influenced by such materials whereas *solicited organic* refers to requested information from an acquaintance or a knowledgeable source, for example, experience sharing with family and friends. This is a critical image formation agent as far as the information search and decision making process is concerned. Both types of agent are very high in terms of creditability. However, the solicited organic component is the most critical determinant and benefits the financial health of a destination. The last element of image formation is *organic*. Unlike other aforementioned sources of information, the organic component comes from an actual visit rather than receiving information provided by others. An image is then formed in one's mind during a visit. Since the person has now become an information source themselves, the creditability is high (Wahab & Pigram, 1977). The figure below (Figure 2.8) illustrates the level of control establishments have over communicating information and the degree of perceived information creditability held by receivers.

Level of Control   Level of Creditability

Overt Induce I
Overt Induced II
Covert Induced I
Covert Induced II
Autonomous
Unsolicited Organic
Solicited Organic
Organic

Figure 2.8 Image Formation Agents and Characteristics   Source: Gartner (1993)

Even though the framework of Gunn and Gartner demonstrated that image was built differently based on the information received and its sources, the main distinction between these two notions is evident. While Gunn proposed that image formation is a process in which each of the stages takes place in a certain order, Gartner stated that the image is constructed independently by each of the image formation agents and actively influences the destination image through the whole process of the formation.

It is widely accepted by numerous researches by academics and practitioners that the formation of destination image is mainly achieved as a result of personal factors as well as stimulus factors (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Consistent with this, both variables from the demand side (i.e. travel consumer-related factors) and the supply side of tourism (i.e. organization-generated contents) are strongly related to destination image formation. However, the image created and delivered is not always perceived in the same way by consumers. Variations may occur as a result of information distortion either in the information transfer process or the emotional state of the receiver. The destination image formation framework developed by Baloglu and McCleary (1999) also came into the mainstream as far as destination image formation is concerned. This framework focused on personal factors and stimulus factors (Figure 2.9).

Figure 2.9 General Framework of Destination Image Formation

Source: Baloglu and McCleary (1999)

These two forces, however, are subjective. It means that if any of variation in a given variable exists, different evaluations in the image formation process emerge immediately afterwards. *Personal factors* are unique characteristics that a perceiver

has, including psychological factors (values, motivation and personality) and social factors (age, education, marital status, and others). Regardless of whether psychological or social factors influence a consumer, the cognitive perception is affected. In turn, the perception of the environment is likely to be influenced by such antecedents and result in a perceived image. Undoubtedly, people from different backgrounds, which include culture, lifestyle, and social class, have different perceived images.

In contrast, *stimuli factors* consist of several sources of information, previous direct experience, and distribution. Even though personal factors are very important in the formation process, in the absence of available information, forming a perceived image is hardly possible. Therefore, external stimuli have a great impact upon destination image which is equal to personal forces. It is also necessary to be aware that personal direct experiences of a destination are critically important as far as the evolution of destination image is concerned (Lopes, 2011). Taking personal experience into account, an image can be formed without commercial information. Therefore, the formation of a destination image can happen before, during, and after the site visit, and alters throughout the various formation stages.

        2.2.1.3 The Relationship between Social Media and Destination Image

Destination image and social media have become a topic of interest not only in tourism literature but for business practice as well. A number of studies have a revealed a significant relationship between these two variables from different perspectives. For example, Xiang and Gretzel (2010) revealed that lot of travel information is derived from social media, and search engines likely direct potential travelers to social media sites. Information provided in social media is considered more comprehensive. To date, social media is being used as an effective mechanism to create positive destination images and is becoming more popular as a primary online source of travel information. Lim, Chung, and Weaver (2012) conducted a qualitative research investigating perceived image of Las Vegas by analyzing the text in electronic video content in YouTube generated by both consumers and destination brands. The key results revealed that consumer-generated content significantly influences destination image as much as content delivered by marketers. However,

consumer-generated content is better to draw attention from the public than content generated by marketers. Tham, Croy, and Mair (2013) also found that electronic word-of-mouth in social media platforms is playing an essential role in strengthening the creditability of information since it disseminates content from multiple perspectives and thus, enhances the visibility of the destination image.

Ghazali and Cai (2014) identified key actors in social media sites including suppliers (tourism business), consumers (prospective tourists), and third parties. The interaction between these three parties on social media sites influences traveler consumers' perceived cognitive and affective image forming, which in turn leads to a favorable conative image or behavioral intentions. Y. C. Chen, Shang, and Li (2014) and S. E. Kim et al. (2014) highlighted the importance of information quality on social media platforms. Cognitive image and affective image are influenced by the content cues and web page design of social media site (S. E. Kim et al., 2014). However, Y. C. Chen et al. (2014) confirmed that some components of information quality on selected social media platforms are positively related to behavioral intentions, in particular the intention to visit.

Therefore, the hypotheses are proposed as follows:

H1a: The intrinsic quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the cognitive image of a destination.

H1b: The intrinsic quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the affective image of a destination.

H2a: The contextual quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the cognitive image of a destination.

H2b: The contextual quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the affective image of a destination.

H3a: The representational quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the cognitive image of a destination.

H3b: The representational quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the affective image of a destination.

H4a: The social quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the cognitive image of a destination.

H4b: The social quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the affective image of a destination.

2.2.1.4 The Relationship between Cognitive Image and Affective

Image

Having said that the overall image of a particular destination is established by a combination of cognitive and affective image, cognitive image also leads to the affective evaluation of an individual. Even though these two concepts are distinct, they are hierarchically related. Many research papers found that cognitive attributes are engaged in affective reactions (Gartner, 1993; Russell & Pratt, 1980; Russell et al., 1981) and, still, this notion has been used as a basis for literatures. As debated by S. E. Kim et al. (2014), such a relationship between cognitive and affective evaluation also exists in the tourism social media context. It is generally accepted that cognitive image is formed prior to the affective image. Based on the social media context and image formation, it is possible that users form a destination image when they are exposed to travel and destination information available on social media platforms. Later, feelings towards a destination are created and, if positive feelings are aroused, actual behavior will favour. Therefore, the hypotheses are proposed as follows:

H5: The cognitive image is positively related to the affective image of a destination in social media.

2.2.2 Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior is utilized in this study to access the psychological evaluation of travelers' intention to perform a set of future behaviors. The Theory of Planned Behavior has been widely adopted in the study of consumer behavior. TPB was grounded on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975). The main thesis of TRA indicates how individuals behave as a result of their intention which is determined by their existing attitude and subjective norms. It is suggested that a stronger intention precedes a greater likelihood that one would actually perform a certain behavior. Although the theory has been broadly applied, there has been some criticism. A major criticism is the lack of complete volitional control. Even though TRA recognizes the importance of attitudes and social norms, the degree to which one has volitional control over future behavior was neglected. Generally speaking, the

degree to which people realize that they can perform or control behaviors can impact behavioral intention.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB hereafter) was then introduced. Later in 1985, the third determinant of intention, *perceived behavioral control*, was added, which made it a better predictive tool in explaining human behavior. TPB, as a successor of TRA, similarly demonstrated the interaction between consumers' attitude and how it shapes and influences human behaviors in the future (Ajzen, 1985). TPB proposed that human behavior is influenced by the intention to perform; however, such an intention is guided by three main factors 1) attitude towards the behavior; 2) subjective norms, and 3) perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). From a TPB perspective, it is hypothesized that a more favorable attitude, positive subjective norms and higher perceived behavioral control will indicate greater resulting intention and behavior (Rhodes & Courneya, 2005). Additionally, a mutual effect among this set of antecedents exists as well (attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control influence each other). The models of TRA and TPB are presented in Figure 2.10. Each of the constructs and their interrelationships are discussed in the following paragraph.

Even though there are the number of studies suggesting the extension of TPB, since the addition of other variables could enhance the predictive power of TPB and make the model more powerful in predicting behavioral intention, this study is limited to understanding tourists' behavioral intention rather than modifying or extending the theory. Being more specific, the focus of this paper is on "*attitude*" as the antecedent of behavioral intention because destination image (both cognitive and affective image) is strongly related to attitude toward the behavior but not to subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Therefore, the original model of TPB is employed in this study to evaluate the relationship between perceived destination image and the resulting behavior.
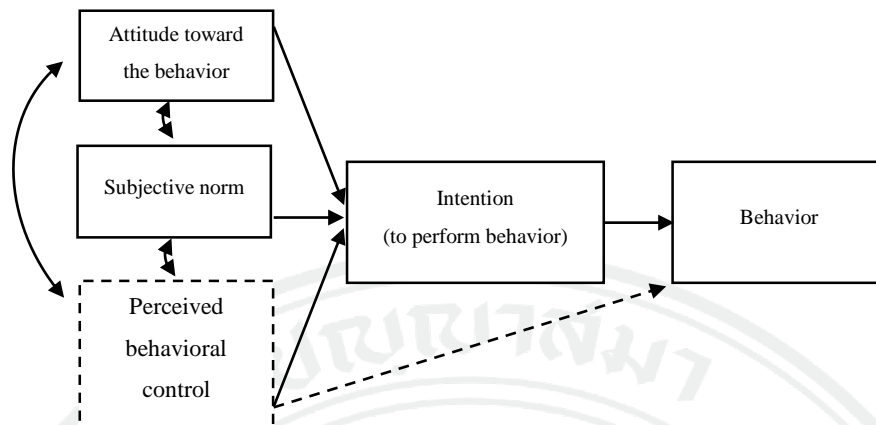
Figure 2.10 Theory of Reasoned Action Theory of Planned Behavior

Source: Ajzen (1991, p. 182)

Note: Dash line represents the extension of TPB

Attitude toward the behavior is one of the central factors in determining behavioral intention and behavior. As in the original theory of TPB, attitude is defined as a person's evaluation of conducting the specific behavior in question. The bi-dimensional view of the attitude provides both positive and negative evaluations. Once individuals believe that performing a behavior (behavioral beliefs) would in turn create positive results, a positive attitude is formed and vice versa. Accordingly, a higher level of favorable attitude predicts greater behavioral intention while a negative attitude tends to reduce the intention to perform the behavior (Taylor & Todd, 1995).

An attitude in a tourism context, either favorable or unfavorable, is established by multiple travel experiences and learning, which responds in a consistent way towards a destination, a perceived tourism product and service attributes (Moutinho, 1987). As already discussed in 2.2.1.2, Destination Image as an Organism, travelers' attitude consists of two major components which are cognitive and affective. While cognitive attitude refers to the knowledge and belief a traveler holds about a destination, the affective component implies feelings and emotions towards a tourist product. It is also worth mentioning that attitude is positioned as the most important factor in predicting behavioral intentions Y. C. Huang (2009). In this case, the target behaviors include

the revisit intention, WOM intention and e-WOM intention. Aligning with the objectives of this study, only attitude towards the behavior is taken into account as far as TPB is concerned.

The second determinant of behavioral intention is *subjective norms*. A subjective norm is labeled as a perceived social pressure to perform (or not to perform) a behavior. In other words, the tendency for an individual in engaging a specific behavior is influenced by recognizable opinions and expectations from other important referent individuals (Y. H. Shin & Hancer, 2016). Several studies have confirmed the positive influence of subjective norms on behavioral intentions and verified that a greater the positive subjective norms people possess, the stronger their intention to perform a behavior (M.-F. Chen & Tung, 2014; Han et al., 2010; Taylor & Todd, 1995; Tonglet, Phillips, & Read, 2004).

The third conceptually independent construct determining intention is *perceived behavioral control*. It is described as "the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). However, individuals' perceptions towards the skills and resources required to perform a behavior are taken into the consideration as well. The more individuals are able to have control over resources in order to conduct a particular behavior, the more likely they will engage in such a behavior, which leads to stronger behavioral intention (M.-F. Chen & Tung, 2014).

2.2.2.1 The Application of Theory of Planned Behavior in Tourism Research

TPB has been applied in different research contexts, and tourism is also one of the main ones. This section provides an outlook of the application of TPB in previous tourism studies by focusing on the research in a past decade. The uses of TPB in a tourism context are summarized in Table 2.7.

As exhibited in Table 8, the application of TPB has been verified across research contexts regardless of destinations, the nationality of target samples, and the classification of tourism. The consensus of research results has verified the relationship between the key drivers of future behavior (as proposed in TPB; attitude towards behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control) and behavioral

intention (mainly the intention to revisit). Even though the results from previous studies are aligned, the original TPB can still be used as a supporting theory in forming the basis for the hypotheses of this study. It appears that the application of TPB in the Thai tourism industry has been limited in recent years, especially in regard to social media and destination image.

Another justification for the use of TPB and the use of destination image as an attitude toward a destination also lies in the limitations of previous tourism studies. Even though the application of destination image as an attitude has been frequently presented in tourism research utilizing TPB, only the affective component was studied (as evidenced in Table 2.7). This study will, therefore, provide a better insight regarding the attitude of tourists towards a destination by including the cognitive dimension in the study.
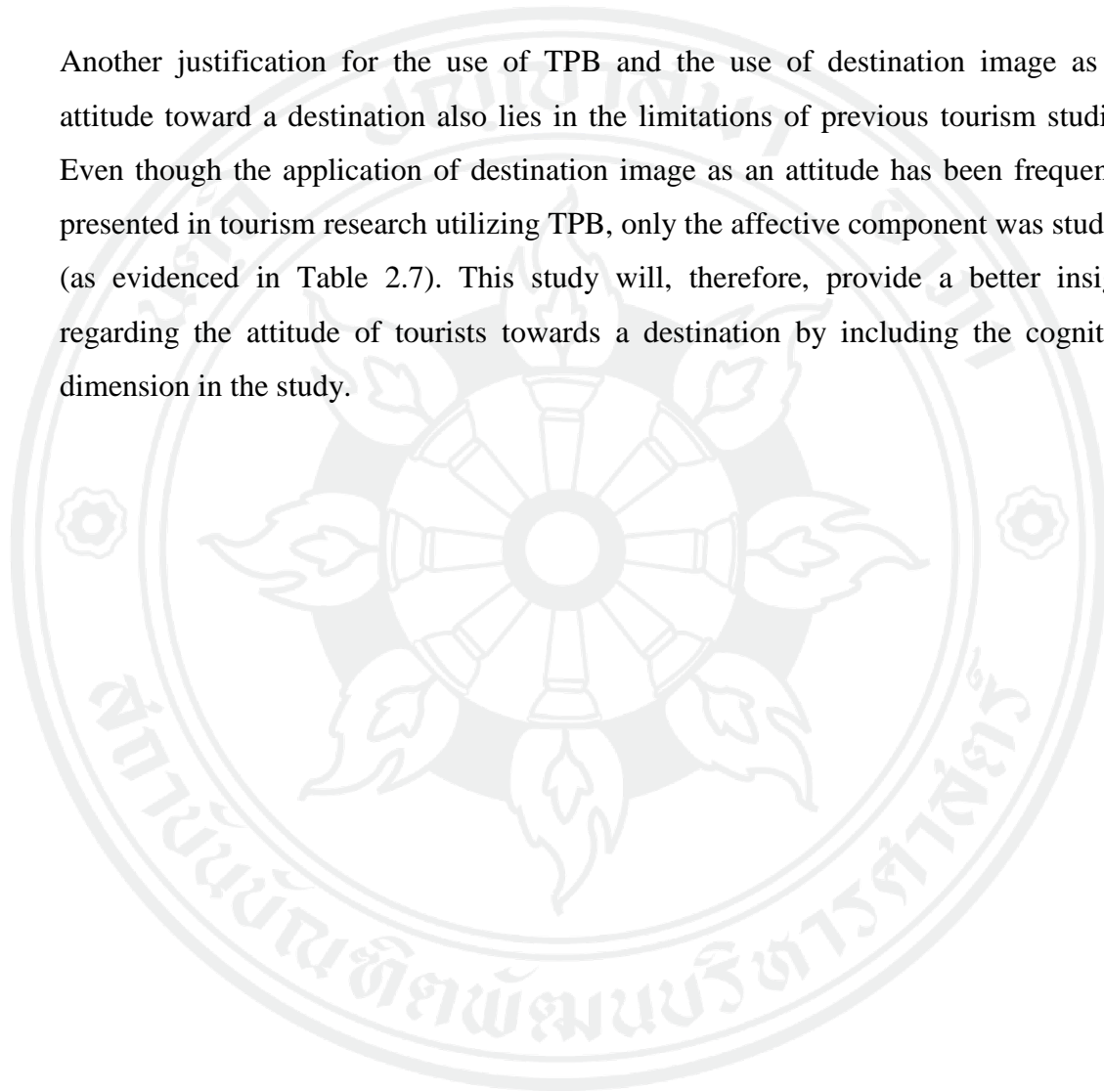
Table 2.7 The Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior in Tourism Context

Authors (Year)	Attitude towards Behavior	Subjective Norm	Perceived Control	Behavioral Intention	Methodology	Result
Lam and Hsu (2006)	Affective evaluation (enjoyable–unenjoyable; positive–negative; fun–boring; pleasant–unpleasant; and favorable–unfavorable)	Groups or individuals whose views might influence respondents' selection of Hong Kong as a travel destination	How easy or difficult an individual thinks it is to visit Hong Kong.	Behavioral intention of choosing Hong Kong as a travel destination	Questionnaires were given at Hong Kong International Airport to Taiwanese travelers. Of 299 from 480 responses were usable and analyzed by SEM.	Attitude, perceived behavioral control, and past behavior were related to behavioral intention for choosing a travel destination.
Sparks (2007)	Emotional attitude (food and wine involvement, core wine experience, destination experience, personal development)	The influence of family or reference group in taking a wine holiday.	Personal behavioral control in relation to taking a wine tourism holiday (money, time)	Intention to take wine trip within 12 months	Of 3,500 Australian respondents from marketing list company, 1,089 responses were valid. EFA, CFA and SEM were used in analytical process.	There was no linkage between emotional attitude and intention to visit a wine destination. Subjective norms and perceived behavioral control exhibited direct effects on a tourist's intention to visit a wine region.

Authors (Year)	Attitude towards Behavior	Subjective Norm	Perceived Control	Behavioral Intention	Methodology	Result
Han, Hsu, and Sheu (2010)	Attitude of travelers while staying at green hotel (bad-good; undesirable-desirable; unpleasant-pleasant; foolish-wise; unfavorable-favorable; unenjoyable-enjoyable; negative-positive)	The degree to which significant others think staying at a green hotel is a proper behavior, one's perceived social pressure to visit a green hotel would increase with his/her motivation to comply	The degree to which individual holds control over staying at green hotel.	Customers' intentions to visit a green hotel.	3,000 questionnaires were randomly distributed to U.S. hotel customers by market research company, 428 valid responses were returned. Data were analyzed by using CFA and SEM.	TPB model has a better predictive power for intention than the TRA. It was revealed that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control positively affected intention to stay at a green hotel.
Quintal, Lee, and N.Soutar (2010)	Attitudes toward visiting Australia (six semantic differential scale items (e.g., unenjoyable–enjoyable; bad–good)	The opinions of others towards their Australia visitation.	The level of control a tourist has before/ during a trip to/in Australia.	Intention to visit Australia	Data were quantitatively collected from three Asian countries (South Korea, China, and Japan) using questionnaire. 1,187 valid responses and proposed hypotheses were analyzed by path analysis.	Attitudes toward visiting Australia of Japanese were significant (while there was no significance among Chinese and South Korean). Subjective norms and perceived behavioral control significantly impacted on intentions in all country samples

Authors (Year)	Attitude towards Behavior	Subjective Norm	Perceived Control	Behavioral Intention	Methodology	Result
Mohammad Reza Jalilvand and Samiei (2012)	Attitude toward Iran as a tourism destination (bad-good; worthless-valuable; unpleasant-pleasant)	The opinions of important people in relation to Iran visitation.	Individual's self-confidence in his or her ability to travel to Iran (ease of visit, and resources)	Intention to travel to Iran	SEM was applied to the examination of the influences of eWOM on attitudes towards visiting Isfahan, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and travel intention by collecting data from 296 inbound tourists.	eWOM has a significant impact on attitudes toward visiting Isfahan, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intention to travel.
M. Lee, Han, and Lockyer (2012)	Attitude of medical tourists visiting Korea (undesirable-desirable; unpleasant-pleasant; foolish-wise; unenjoyable-enjoyable)	The influence of others on Japanese tourisst to travel to Korea for medical treatment.	The degree to which one can gain access to Korea and whether one can afford to receive medical treatment based on external resource constraints.	Intention to travel to Korea	A total of 237 usable responses were collected from Japanese tourists through an entry/exit point at international airports in Korea. Data were analyzed via structural equation modeling.	The positive relationship between three antecedents in TPB and behavioral intention were found.

Authors (Year)	Attitude towards Behavior	Subjective Norm	Perceived Control	Behavioral Intention	Methodology	Result
Alonso, Sakellarios, and Pritchard (2015)	Perceived Importance of visiting heritage buildings	The degree to which significant other influence heritage building visitation.	Perceived preparedness in visiting heritage building (time, money)	Intention to visit heritage buildings	383 usable responses were analyzed using T-Test and Anova to evaluate differences between/among gender, age, distance travelled, or reason for visiting.	The findings confirm the validity and impact of attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on behavioral intention.
Ziadat (2015)	Attitude of tourist in visiting Jordan (exciting, important, pleasant, good idea)	The influence of friend and family in engaging future Jordan visitation.	Tourist's possession of the opportunities and resources needed to engage in the behavior	Revisit intention to Jordan	304 respondents from 20 hotels in the middle region of Jordan were distributed the questionnaires and returned valid responses.	The relationship between tourist attitude and subjective norm were significant and positive on revisit intention.
Suid, Nor, and Omar (2017) * Conceptual paper	Attitude towards Islamic attributes at destination	Perceived social pressures that influence inbound Muslim travelers.	Perception towards the existence or absence of any resources or opportunities that are necessary in making decision to return to Malaysia for future trip.	Revisit intention to Malaysia	The respondent for this study will include all Inbound Muslim travelers. Data will be collected at the international airport of Malaysia. Data will be analyzed by using multiple regression analysis.	N/A

2.2.2.2 Behavioral Intention as a Response

Behavioral intention has continued to receive increasing attention from academics and practitioners for over a decade. Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) described behavioral intention as a perceived likelihood that an individual will engage in a certain way in the future. The significance of behavioral intention has long been acknowledged, as it allows businesses to predict consumers' behavior so that corresponding marketing strategies can be developed effectively. The study of behavioral intention was further developed from social psychology; in particular, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) were employed (Yuzhanin & Fisher, 2016). It is worth pointing out that TPB was an extended study of TRA by which perceived behavioral control was taken into account and made the prediction of behavioral intention stronger. The main principle of these schools is that behavioral intention and actual behavior are determined by the attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control an individual possesses (T. H. Lee, 2009). Central to the tourism context, behavioral intention is a critical element for sustainable tourism success especially for a mature holiday destination. The phenomenon of repeat visits is crucial for such places. In Thailand for instance, over 65% of international tourists are repeat visitors (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017b). At the operational level, revisit intention and recommendation intention are commonly used to measure destination loyalty (Martin Oppermann, 2000). Each of the dimensions is discussed in the section below.

1) Revisit Intention

Specifically in a tourism context, behavioral intention includes revisit intention and recommendation of a destination (used interchangeably with word-of-mouth) (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu, 2010; T. H. Lee, 2009; Thiumsak & Ruangkanjanases, 2016; Wahyuningsih, 2012; Yuzhanin & Fisher, 2016). *Revisit intention* is a desire or willingness to make a repeat visit to the site again in the future (Cole & Scott, 2004). The research conducted by Thomas (1994) revealed the outstanding financial benefits of marketing to existing customers over acquiring new clients. That is to say, the expenditure was five times lower to maintain current customers than to obtain new ones, while a 5% increase in the customer retention rate would increase company profit from 25% to 95% across various industries. Specifically, repeat visitors are a

desired market because, at a destination to which they return, they are more likely to have a longer stay, to create positive WOM, and to be intensively involved in consumption activities (Lau & McKercher, 2004; Martin Oppermann, 1998). Not only does a destination gain financial benefits from repeat visitors, but repeat visitors also act as one of the reliable sources of information by informally promoting a destination to their friends, family and acquaintances. As a result, repeat visitors act as a force to facilitate establishments to minimize the marketing cost as well as improve their financial health through visitors' spending. Moreover, the stronger intention a person has, the greater the likelihood to perform the behavior again in the future. Therefore, the underlying significance of revisit intention encourages tourism-related businesses to give precedence to it since it is considered as a major source of long-term profitability for tourism businesses. However, even though behavioral intention makes it possible to predict future actions, it is not a guarantee that such behaviors will occur. Referring back to the types of visitor, first time vs. repeat visitor, the formation of revisit intention for these two are dissimilar. While the revisit intention of first time visitors is mostly shaped by the perceived performance of a destination, promotion efforts by service providers plays a challenging role in encouraging returning visitors to present a positive impression and promote new activities or new attractions (Um, Chon, & Ro, 2006). The relationship between destination image and revisit intention is fully explained in a latter part of this literature review.

2) Recommendation of a Destination (Word-of-Mouth and Electronic Word-of-Mouth)

Westbrook (1987) defined Word-of-Mouth as "informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services and/or their sellers". In a tourism context, consumers who have visited a destination are likely to act as free word-of-mouth advertising agents by informally communicating with their peers and possibly bringing potential consumers to a product or service in the future. With the high credibility people attach to this referral marketing, the power of interpersonal communication has been well recognized in the marketing field. Especially in the tourism business, the spread of word-of mouth (WOM) has become the most influential and predominant information source in constructing destination image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Hanlan & Kelly, 2004).

The intangible nature of tourism products creates difficulties and ambiguities in consumers' decision making process. Therefore, the tourism industry relies heavily on WOM and to a greater extent than other industries (Ishida, Slevitch, & Siamionava, 2016).

Apart from traditional WOM where informal communication between people occurs face-to-face, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) has been highlighted with the emergence of communication technology in today's digital era. The major difference between WOM and e-WOM lies in the media used. E-WOM, unlike traditional WOM, is hosted online through cyberspace, for instance, instant messages, websites, blogs, online communities, reviews sites, and social networking sites (Ishida et al., 2016). E-WOM is more desirable than traditional WOM in terms of the span and speed of the information dissemination as well as the size of the global audience reached therefore having a greater impact on the decision making process than the traditional WOM (Jeonga & Jang, 2011). Despite the benefits e-WOM brings, e-WOM is not always better than face-to-face communication. Traditional WOM has more creditability than both government-sponsored content and e-WOM since the interaction between friends, colleagues, family and relatives involves stronger ties (Cox, Burgess, Sellitto, & Buultjens, 2009). In studying the after-effects of destination image on recommendation intention, the combination of traditional WOM and e-WOM should be investigated.

2.2.2.3 The Relationship between Destination Image and Behavioral

Intention

The behavioral intention of tourists is partially shaped by the perceived image of a destination. In the review of related literatures, the interrelationship between destination image and behavioral intention was found to be strongly supported (Allameh, Pool, Jaberi, Salehzadeh, & Asadi, 2014; C. F. Chen & Tsai, 2007; Court & Lupton, 1997; Pratminingsih, Rudatin, & Rimenta, 2014; Rittichainuwat, Qu, & Brown, 2001; W. K. Tan & Wu, 2016; Walker et al., 2013). Court and Lupton (1997) conducted a quantitative study with 903 local tourists in the US state of New Mexico. The major conclusion was that a favorable image for a tourist destination as a byproduct of direct experience positively influenced the intention to revisit. That is to

say, people who have visited and had a positive travel experience, given the chance, are more likely to return.

The relationship between these constructs has been verified in a Thai setting by Rittichainuwat et al. (2001). The research result revealed that among seven classifications of Thailand's destination image; social and environmental problems, safe travel destination, adventure activities and scenic natural beauty, rich culture, good-value cuisine and hotels, easy access, and good shopping, only good-value cuisine and hotels positively increased the likelihood of travelers' returning to Thailand whereas social and environmental problems showed a negative relationship with revisit intention. The other five dimensions in the study had no significant impact on such behavior.

The path of "destination image-trip quality-perceived value-satisfaction-behavioral intentions" was investigated with Taiwan as the research setting by C. F. Chen and Tsai (2007). This research collected quantitative data from local tourists in 2004. It revealed that all four destination image features of Taiwan; destination brand, entertainment, nature and culture, and sun and sand, had a direct impact on behavioral intentions (i.e. revisit intention and recommendation intention). It is clear that the role of destination image is not only limited to the traveler's decision making process, but also takes part in the post-purchase behavior of tourists.

Walker et al. (2013) investigated the destination image of South Africa by using the 2010 FIFA World Cup as a research context. A total of 6,606 usable questionnaires were returned by international travelers in fieldwork. It revealed that both FIFA perceptions and event image significantly impacted revisit intentions and WOM. It appears that hosting a mega event, like the World Cup, significantly contributes to the success of tourism after the event and WOM plays a significant role as a promotional agent. Similar empirical research was later conducted to investigate sport tourist destination image in 2014 by (Allameh et al.). From a pool of 886 usable surveys randomly collected from active tourists in Iran, revisit intention was significantly influenced by perceived destination image, perceived quality and perceived value.

The direct effect of image, in particular Bandung – Indonesia, on revisit intention was also found by Pratminingsih et al. (2014). With the appealing characteristics of the city, natural resources, welcoming locals, gastronomy and entertainment, repeat visitors were attracted. It is worth mentioning that such positive perceptions of a destination encourage tourists to repeatedly select the same destination for future visits. Moving from Indonesia to Hong Kong, 493 questionnaires were collected from both previous and first time visitors by W. K. Tan and Wu (2016). The research found that the intention to revisit was positively determined by both the cognitive and the affective image of a destination. However, the cognitive image had no significant role in motivating non-visitors to visit Hong Kong while it was considered significant for previous visitors. Affective image, on the other hand, significantly influenced non-visitors' revisit intention. Therefore, different marketing approaches are necessary to attract different types of visitors.

Many researches across different counties have shown direct and indirect effects of destination image on destination loyalty. In this sense, destination image is recognized as an antecedent of destination loyalty that is capable of explaining the post-purchase behavior of tourists including the intention to revisit and WOM. Therefore, the hypotheses are as follows:

H6a: The cognitive image of a destination is positively associated with revisit intention.

H6b: The affective image of a destination is positively associated with revisit intention.

H7a: The cognitive image of a destination is positively associated with WOM.

H7b: The affective image of a destination is positively associated with WOM.

H8a: The cognitive image of a destination is positively associated with e-WOM.

H8b: The affective image of a destination is positively associated with e-WOM.

2.2.2.4 The Relationship between Revisit Intention and

Recommendation Intention

Travelers cannot experience a destination prior to their actual visit, so WOM and EWOM are essential sources of travel information (Chi & Qu, 2008). However, the relationship between revisit intention and recommendation intention has been investigated in only a limited number of researches. Oh (1999) discovered a strong direct relationship between these two concepts in the context of luxury hotels in Northeastern US. Out of 545 valid responses, it was revealed that travel consumers with a strong intention to revisit a destination are likely to make recommendations to friends, family, and other potential travelers as well. Bigne et al. (2001) found a bidirectional relationship between intention to return and willingness to recommend the destination. This implies that the intention to visit has a great impact on recommendation intention and vice versa. In 2013 it was again verified that the higher the likelihood of future visits lead to a greater likelihood of recommendation (Eusébio & Vieira, 2013). Therefore, the hypotheses are as follows:

H9a: The greater the likelihood of revisit intention, the greater the likelihood of WOM.

H9b: The greater the likelihood of revisit intention, the greater the likelihood of e-WOM.

2.2.3 Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

As proposed in the prior sections, the hypotheses of this study are grounded on the Theory of Stimulus-Organism-Response as well as the Theory of Planned Behavior. Figure 2.11 presents the conceptual framework and the interrelationships between variables (social media, destination image and a set of behavioral intentions) are also presented. A total of eight hypotheses, as supported by related theories and a number of previous studies, are proposed.
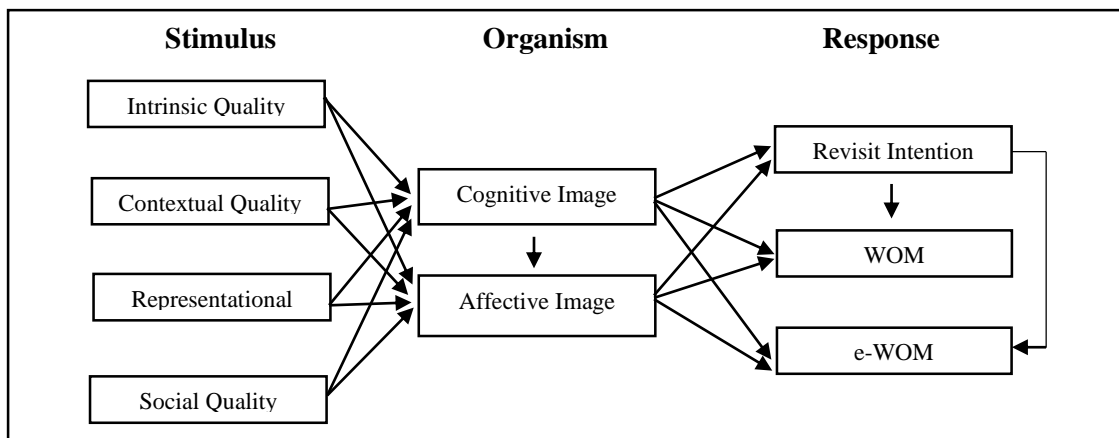
Figure 2.11 Conceptual Framework

H1a: The intrinsic quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the cognitive image of a destination.

H1b: The intrinsic quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the affective image of a destination.

H2a: The contextual quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the cognitive image of a destination.

H2b: The contextual quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the affective image of a destination.

H3a: The representational quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the cognitive image of a destination.

H3b: The representational quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the affective image of a destination.

H4a: The social quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the cognitive image of a destination.

H4b: The social quality of tourism information in social media is positively associated with the affective image of a destination.

H5: The cognitive image is positively related with affective image of a destination in social media.

H6a: The cognitive image of a destination is positively associated with revisit intention.

H6b: The affective image of a destination is positively associated with revisit intention.

H7a: The cognitive image of a destination is positively associated with WOM.

H7b: The affective image of a destination is positively associated with WOM.

H8a: The cognitive image of a destination is positively associated with e-WOM.

H8b: The affective image of a destination is positively associated with e-WOM.

H9a: The greater the likelihood of revisit intention, the greater the likelihood of WOM.

H9b: The greater the likelihood of revisit intention, the greater the likelihood of e-WOM.
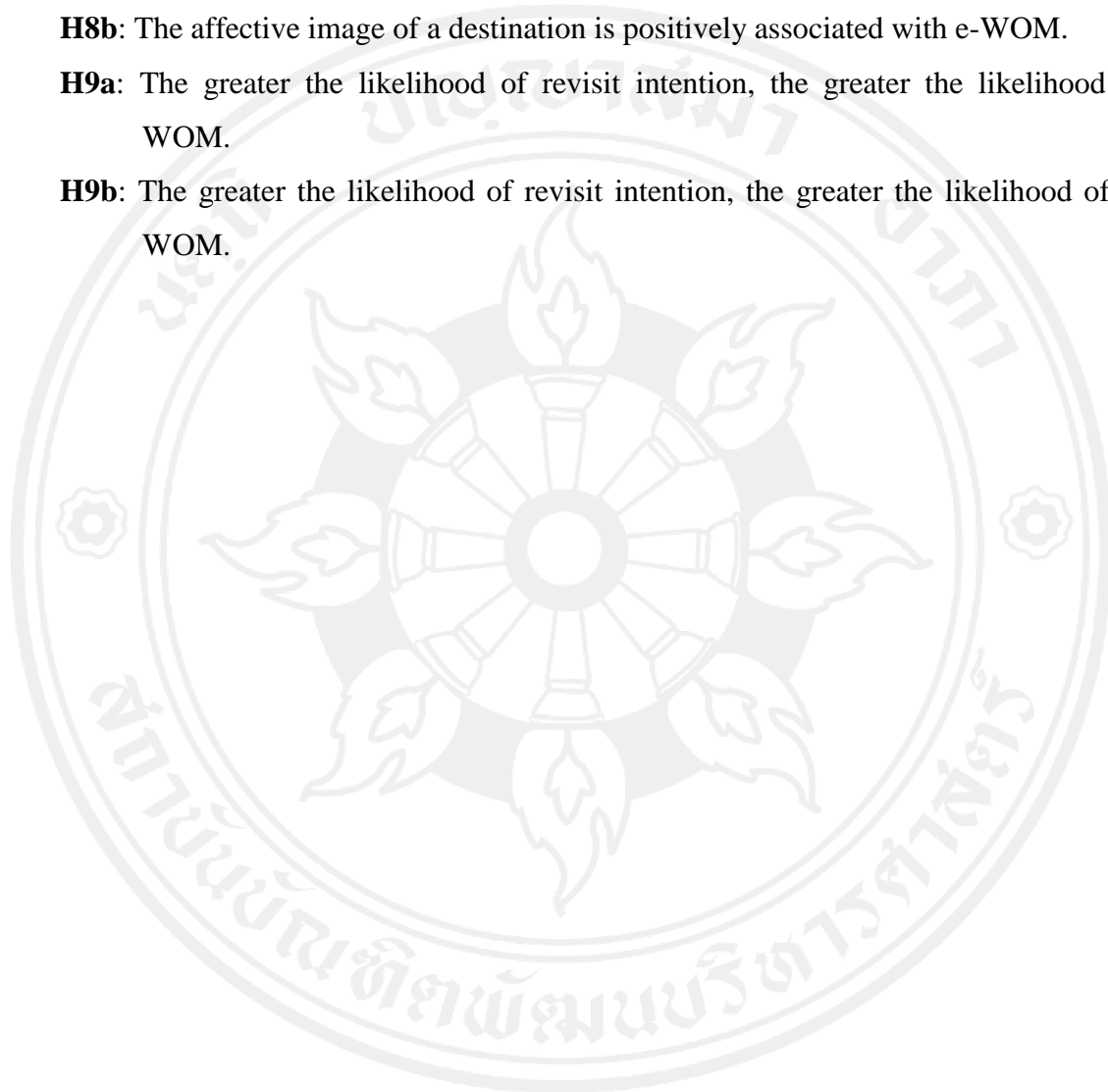
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three provides key information regarding the research methodology, and comprises eight sections. It begins with the research design, discussing the research paradigm and how the research is conducted. The justifications for the population, sample size and sampling method are presented in the sampling plan part. Next, the data acquisition method is discussed. The discussion related to construct measurement, the control variables, the back translation technique, pilot testing and the analytical approach are presented, respectively.

3.1 Research Design

Regarding the research design of this study, primary quantitative data will be collected through a questionnaire. Grounded on the positivist and deductive schools of thought, quantitative approaches are commonly used to measure and analyze causal relationships between constructs. Quantitative study is ubiquitous and frequency used as far as social science research including marketing, economics, sociology, and political science is concerned. Quantitative research is not only capable of quantifiable comprehension of human behavior, motivation and attitude but can be generalized to a larger population as well (Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009). The research instrument employed in this study is a researcher-administered questionnaire. Unlike a self-administered questionnaire, the questionnaire is summarized by fieldworkers after getting verbal responses from participants. The key benefits of such a questionnaire is that extra explanation can be given to respondents since the fieldworker or researcher is available at the site. In particular, a researcher-administered questionnaire enables a higher response rate and the completion of entire questionnaire (Kirby, Greaves, & Reid, 2006).

Indeed, such an instrument enables a researcher to gather quintessential data from a big population in a short time and at relatively low cost. In pursuance of answers to

the research questions, questionnaires will be designed to ascertain respondents' perceptions of social media, destination image as well as behavioral intentions. Therefore, the approach selected is the most suitable to yield generalizable and unbiased results.

3.2 Sampling Plan

3.2.1 Population and Sample Size

According to the definition given by Kolb (2008), the research population is the total number of units from which data can potentially be collected. The intended population of this study is, therefore, limited to international tourists currently traveling in Thailand. However, getting responses from every foreign tourist goes beyond the bounds of possibility. The sampling size must be justified. There are different justifications for the appropriate size of the sample. One accepted the minimum number of 100 samples, while others proposed that 200-500 is more appropriate when it comes to data analysis (Kent, 2007; Wilson, 2006).

However, the sample size for this study is acquired from the simplified formula suggested by (Yamane, 1967). The equation is $= \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$; where *n* represents the targeted sample size, *N* is the known population size, and *e* is the level of precision or acceptable sampling error (noted that a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error is employed in this study). Having applied the formula, the sample size is 400 respondents. The number of international tourists as of 2016 is separated by region visited and the proportions are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 The Proportion of International Tourists by Region

Region	International Tourists	Percentage (%)	Sample size
Bangkok	20,689,273	31.07 %	124
Central	3,909,969	5.87 %	23
North	4,595,317	6.90 %	28
North East	1,475,492	2.22 %	9
East	10,100,950	15.17 %	61
West	1,987,325	2.98 %	12
South	23,841,182	35.8 %	143
Total	**66,599,508**	**100 %**	**400**

3.2.2 Sampling Method

Samples can be selected based on two major sampling methods, probability and nonprobability sampling. For probability sampling, each unit of population has an equal chance of being selected (non-zero probability), while nonprobability sampling refers to the way samples are selected utilizing certain criteria and the subjective judgment of the researcher (Neuman, 2009). Even though probability sampling is more desirable in terms of the population's representativeness, several limitations make it difficult in this study. Since the members of the population in this study are heterogeneous in terms of characteristics, probability sampling may lead to population representativeness issues. Additionally, probability sampling is only possible subject to the condition that a sampling frame with a full list of the entire population is available (Kent, 2007).

To ensure the representativeness of the population being studied and to minimize random sampling errors, two-stage restricted judgmental sampling is appropriate. Specifically, quota sampling is firstly used by which international tourists (as a research population) are divided into strata based on the regions visited, and then the mutually exclusive subgroups can be formed. It is worth pointing out that Thailand itself is divided into different sets of regions based on purpose and the responsible agency. However, this study will follow the clustering of the Department of Tourism since it provides adequate tourism statistics. Consequently, judgmental sampling is adopted. Subjects from each subgroup are selected based on certain criteria while taking into consideration the proportion determined earlier.

Regarding judgmental sampling approach, participants are international tourists and have used social media prior to or during their trip, who are currently traveling in Thailand regardless of the regions visited. Those who are traveling for business purpose are also disqualified since they are considered to be in a specific segment and may require a separate investigation. Respecting the age of respondents, participants are limited to those who are at least 18 years of age. This is to ensure that parental influence in the decision making process and destination choice is minimized, and true perceptions can be discovered. These representatives are selected because they travel and experience Thailand in reality, as opposed to virtual visitors who only

'travel' to Thailand online. Therefore, true perceptions and attitudes are more suitable for investigation than those of virtual visitors or from the memories of those who have already returned to their home country. Additionally, it would be beneficial for respondents to have diverse demographic backgrounds in terms of travel patterns and preferences.

3.3 Data Acquisition Method

The questionnaire will be handed to international tourists at popular tourist attractions across the kingdom. The justification for the selected sites is based on the number of international visitors who visited the attraction in 2016 (the latest available statistics from the Ministry of Tourism and Sport), the recommendations of Tourism Authority of Thailand and well-known travel website companies, including TripAdvisor and Expedia. Since destination image is complex, diverse types of tourist attraction must be taken into consideration. Therefore, questionnaires will be distributed in different destination categories ranging from cultural heritage to nature and wildlife, from places of worship to recreation and entertainment, from educational places to shopping venues, from spa and wellness to suburban living. The distribution of questionnaires by location and the targeted sample is summarized in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Questionnaire Distribution

Region	City	Location	Targeted Sample
Central	Bangkok	The Grand Palace	124
		Siam Paragon	
		Ratchadamnoen Boxing Stadium	
		China Town	
	Ayutthaya	Ayutthaya Historical Park	23
	Samut Songkhram	Amphawa Floating Market	
North	Chiang Mai	Chiang Mai Zoo & Zafari	28
		TCDC	
	Chiang Rai	Wat Rong Khun	
North East	Nakhon Ratchasima	Wang Nam Khiao	9
East	Chonburi	Pattaya	61
	Trad	Ko Chang	
West	Praprachuap Khiri Khan	Huahin Beach	12
South	Phuket	Phuket island	143
		Old Phuket Town	
	Krabi	PhiPhi Island	
	Surat Thani	Samui Island	

To ensure that results from the collected questionnaire are not biased towards one nationality, the number of responses from each country should reflect the percentage of international visitors. The accepted responses are limited to ±3% of the given proportion. Table 3.3 summarizes the international arrivals to Thailand in 2016 by region.

Table 3.3 International Arrivals to Thailand in 2016 by Region

Region	Percentage	Accepted Range of Response
ASEAN	26.81%	95-119
China	26.77%	95-119
Europe	18.69%	63-87
Other in East Asia	13.06%	40-64
South Asia	4.73%	7-31
The Americas	4.32%	5-29
Oceania	2.81%	0-23
Middle East	2.29%	0-21
Africa	0.53%	0-14

100%

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2017b)

ASEAN: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam
Europe: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Eastern Europe, and others
Other in East Asia: Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Taiwan
South Asia: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and others
The Americas: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, USA, and others
Oceania: Australia, New Zealand, and others
Middle East: Egypt, Israel, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, U.A.E., and others
Africa: South Africa and others

3.4 Construct Measurement

In constructing the questionnaire for this research, the measurement items from existing studies were adopted. In so doing, reliability and validity would be, at least, preliminarily verified. The instruments comprise quantitative questions measuring all variables included in the study; information quality, the cognitive and affective

attributes of destination image, revisit intention and recommendation intention, as well as respondents' demographic profile.

The information quality of social media was evaluated by using existing instruments developed by several scholars (Boo & Kim, 2013; Fox & McEwan, 2017; Haridakis & Hanson, 2009; Kaur et al., 2016; S. E. Kim et al., 2014; Y. W. Lee et al., 2002; Mercanti-Guérin, 2008; P. Wang, 2015). With four major aspects of social media's information quality, fifteen sub dimensions are accessed; *Intrinsic quality* (accuracy, completeness, objectivity, reliability, and originality), *Contextual quality* (amount of data, relevancy, timeliness, ease of understanding, and value added), *Representational quality* (conciseness, consistency, and accessibility), and *Social quality* (social interaction, and social presence). Three to four statements are used to evaluate each construct.

A six point Likert scale (with no neutral answer) is used to measure the information quality of social media, destination image and behavioral intention. The study of Garland (1991) revealed the impact of social desirability, by which a socially desirable response is falsely given as it would be viewed positively by others, as opposed to selecting answers that truly reflect individual perceptions. This can be minimized if mid-point responses are eliminated from the measuring scale. Additionally, cultural differences play an important role in responses to a Likert scale. For instance, the midpoint is more frequently selected by Chinese and Japanese than Americans (when positive and negative emotion is, most of the time, indicated) (J. W. Lee, Jones, Mineyama, & Zhang, 2002). It is suggested that construct validity could be improved when even a response scale is being used (J. W. Lee et al., 2002). Therefore, a six point Likert scale is employed in this study. In sum, to study the information quality of social media, respondents were asked to think about the last social media platform they had visited and to what degree they agreed or disagreed with a set of given statements based on six point Likert scale for 51 items. The measurements of the information quality of social media are summarized in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Measurement of Tourism Information Quality in Social Media

INTRINSIC QUALITY			
Indicators	Question	α	Original Measurement
Accuracy	The travel information obtained from social media is correct.	.91	Y. W. Lee et al. (2002)
	The travel information obtained from social media is accurate.		
	*The travel information obtained from social media is free of error.		
Completeness	The travel information obtained from social media includes all necessary values.	.87	Y. W. Lee et al. (2002)
	The travel information obtained from social media is sufficiently complete for my travel needs.		
	The travel information obtained from social media covers the needs of my travel purposes.		
	The travel information obtained from social media has sufficient breadth and depth for my travel purposes.		
Objectivity	*The travel information obtained from social media was not influenced by the feeling of content generator.	.72	Y. W. Lee et al. (2002)
	The travel information obtained from social media is based on facts.		
	The travel information obtained from social media is objective.		
	The travel information obtained from social media presents an unbiased view.		
Reliability	The travel information obtained from social media is believable.	.89	Y. W. Lee et al. (2002)
	The travel information obtained from social media is of undoubtful credibility.		
	The travel information obtained from social media is trustworthy.		
	The travel information obtained from social media is credible.		
Originality	The travel information obtained from social media takes up an idea that has not been used elsewhere.	.78	Mercanti-Guérin (2008)
	The travel information obtained from social media is different from others.		
	The travel information obtained from social media is unique.		

CONTEXTUAL QUALITY			
Indicators	Question	α	Original Measurement
Amount of data	The travel information obtained from social media is of sufficient volume for our needs.	.76	Y. W. Lee et al, (2002)
	The amount of travel information obtained from social media match our needs.		
	The amount of travel information obtained from social media is neither too much nor too little.		
Relevance	The travel information obtained from social media is relevant to my travel.	.94	Y. W. Lee et al, (2002)
	The travel information obtained from social media is in accordance with my purpose to travel.		
	The travel information obtained from social media appropriate for planning the trip.		
	The travel information obtained from social media is applicable to our trip.		
Timeliness	The travel information obtained from social media is quite new.	.97	Kim et al. (2014)
	The travel information obtained from social media is continuously updated.		
	The travel information obtained from social media is quickly provided necessary information for the trip.		
Ease of understanding	The travel information obtained from social media is easy to understand.	.90	Y. W. Lee et al, (2002)
	*The travel information obtained from social media is required less effort to interpret.		
	The travel information obtained from social media is easy to comprehend.		
Value added	The travel information obtained from social media is effective for planning a trip.	.96	Kim et al. (2014)
	The travel information obtained from social media is useful for planning a trip.		
	The travel information obtained from social media is helpful for planning a trip.		

REPRESENTATIONAL QUALITY			
Indicators	Question	α	Original Measurement
Conciseness	The travel information obtained from social media is formatted compactly.	.88	Y. W. Lee et al, (2002)
	*The travel information obtained from social media is presented briefly but comprehensive.		
	The representation of the travel information obtained from social media is compact and concise.		
Consistency	The travel information obtained from social media is consistently presented.	.83	Y. W. Lee et al, (2002)
	The travel information obtained from social media is presented in the same format.		
	*The structure of the information provided is conformity.		
Accessibility	The travel information obtained from social media is easily retrievable.	.92	Y. W. Lee et al, (2002)
	The travel information obtained from social media is easily accessible.		
	The travel information obtained from social media is quickly accessible when needed.		
	The travel information obtained from social media is easily obtainable.		

SOCIAL QUALITY			
Indicators	Question	α	Original Measurement
Social interaction	Social media allows me to belong to a group with same interests as mine.	.92	Haridakis and Hanson (2009)
	Social media enables me to enjoy asking and answering other peoples regarding travel purpose.		
	Social media enables me express myself freely regarding my own travel.		
Social presence	This social media makes it seem like the other person is present.	.91	Fox and McEwan (2017)
	This social media makes it feel like the person I'm communicating with is close by.		
	This social media makes it feel like other people are really with me when we communicate.		
	This social media allows me to determine if someone is really "there" when communicating.		

The second part of the questionnaire aims to determine Thailand's destination image, by investigating both cognitive and affective perception holding by international tourists. After conducting a thorough literature review, it suggested that all aspects

and dimensions of Thailand, as a destination, should be taken into account as far as cognitive evaluation is concerned. By measuring *cognitive image* of a nation, natural attraction, infrastructure, tourist attraction, cultural history and art, safety and security, social environment, value for money are operationalized as major destination attributes. The cognitive image is measured by existing instrument based on the study of Chen & Tsai (2007), Kaur et al. (2016), and Martín & Bosque (2008). Respondents are asked to rate a degree to which they agree upon 25 statements on a six point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The measurement of Thailand's destination image (cognitive) is summarized in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Measurement of Thailand's Destination Image (Cognitive)

COGNITIVE IMAGE			
Indicators	Question	α	Original Measurement
Natural Attraction	Good climate	0.79	Kaur et al. (2016)
	Scenic beauty		
	Unique flora and fauna		
	Green cover		
Infrastructure	Excellent transport facilities	0.69	Kaur et al. (2016)
	Variety of foodservice		
	Less pollution		
	*Organized infrastructure		
Tourist Leisure and Recreation	Best shopping centers	0.76	Kaur et al. (2016)
	Adventurous sites and activities		
	Amusement recreation		
	Local cuisine and food outlet		
Cultural History and Art	Monument and buildings	0.72	Kaur et al. (2016)
	Famous handicrafts		
	Rich customs and religion		
Safety and security	Stable political environment	0.77	Kaur et al. (2016)
	Less crime rate		
	Safe secure		
Social Environment	Hosts and friendly residents	0.77	Kaur et al. (2016)
	Easy to converse (engage in conversation)		
	Good civic sense (get involve with locals)		
	Good quality of life		
Value for money	Economical mode of transportation	0.70	Kaur et al. (2016)
	Good price for accommodation		
	Appropriately prices shopping merchandise		

Affective image, on the other hand, is measured by seven pairs of attributes representing the respondents' emotional state of mind towards a destination. The construct measurements were based on the study of Stylos et al. (2016). The items included unpleasant-pleasant, gloomy-exciting, distressing-relaxing, negative-positive, unenjoyable-enjoyable, unfavorable-favorable, and boring-fun. The score for borrowed instrument was reported at 0.92, so internal consistency is therefore achieved. Respondents were asked to rate Thailand as a tourism destination for those seven pairs of affective images by using a six bipolar scale; for example, the value 1 indicates very unpleasant and 6 indicates very pleasant. Table 3.6 presents the measurement of affective image.

Table 3.6 Measurement of Thailand's Destination Image (Affective)

AFFECTIVE IMAGE			
Indicators	Question	α	Original Measurement
Affective Image	Unpleasant-pleasant	0.92	Stylos et al. (2016)
	Gloomy-exciting		
	Distressing-relaxing		
	Negative-positive		
	Unenjoyable-enjoyable		
	Unfavorable-favorable		
	Boring-fun		

Behavioral intention is operationalized by three sub-constructs including intention to revisit, WOM intention and e-WOM intention. The measurements of intention to revisit and intention to recommend were adapted from Stylos et al. (2016), Sauiden et al. (2017), and Papadimitriou, Kaplanidou, and Apostolopoulou (2015). The rating of these items was done with a six-point scale ranging from "highly disagree (1)" to "highly agree (6)". In addition, e-WOM is measured by a questionnaire originally developed by Lo and Lin (2017) and Sohn (2009). Respondents are asked to rate their willingness to spread information about Thailand in social media by using a six-point bipolar scale including "unlikely/likely," "improbable/probable," and "impossible/possible". The measurement of behavioral intentions is summarized in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Measurement of Behavioral Intentions

BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS			
Indicators	Question	α	Original Measurement
Revisit intention	In recent years, if I plan for an outbound travel, I will visit Thailand.	0.93	P. Wang (2015)
	If I plan a trip to Asia, I will visit Thailand.		
	In short, I think Thailand is a good place deserving visit.		
WOM	According to my knowledge about Thailand, I will recommend my friend to travel to Thailand.	0.90	P. Wang (2015)
	I will share my knowledge about Thailand with my friends.		
	I will recommend Thailand as a destination if my friends are planning a travel to Asia.		
e-WOM	I will share information with others online to help others making travel decision.	0.89	Boo and Kim (2013)
	I will share information with others online so that I can tell people about my travel experience in Thailand.		
	Going online is the easiest way to share my Travel experience in Thailand.		

3.5 Control Variables

In addition to the main independent variables of the study, some constructs were controlled as they may have an influence on the dependent variables and the research results. Even though the control variables are not the primary interest of the research, it is worth studying them as latent relationships. Additionally, the demographic profiles of respondents are recognized as an important control variable as far as the study of country image is concerned (Mohammad Rez Jalilvand, Samiei, Dini, & Manzari, 2012). Therefore, the control variables of this study include gender, age, occupation, monthly income, nationality, past experience in Thailand, and travel arrangement method. These seven control variables were measured as follows. *Gender* was measured with a dummy variable (Male=1, Female=0). *Age* was measured on an ordinal scale by giving range of ages (from below 18, 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60 and older). *Occupation* was measured nominally in five occupation categories (students, employees, self-employed, retired and others). *Monthly income* was measured using an ordinal scale with five monthly income range options; less than USD$500, USD$500-$1,000, USD$1,000-$2,000, USD$2,000-$3,000, over USD$3,000. *Nationality* was measured nominally by which respondents were free to write down the answer to the given question. *Past experience in Thailand* was measured with a dummy variable where first time visitor=1 and repeat visitor =2.

Travel arrangement method was measured by a nominal scale, and the available alternatives were given.

3.6 Back Translation Technique

Since this study involves international respondents, a back translation technique is necessary. To minimize language errors as well as to improve translation accuracy, two versions of the instrument (English and Chinese versions) are employed. The English questionnaire is distributed to respondents from different countries and nationalities since it is the most common global language. The justification for having Chinese questionnaire is that first, Chinese has become the second most spoken language, second to English, with 1,100 million native speakers and 982 million speakers worldwide (The Statistics Portal, 2017b), and second, the proportion of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand in recent years has significantly increased. It is likely that this study will involve a large number of Chinese respondents. The application of a Chinese questionnaire will ease and speed up the data collection process.

The English questionnaire was constructed from original measurements from previous studies. A back translation was employed, first, to translate the English questionnaire into Chinese, by an expert with a bachelor degree in Chinese Literature (Chinese Language Teaching) from Beijing Language and Culture University (Class of 2014) and scored 935 on the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). Another independent translator then translated the Chinese questionnaire back into English (without having seen the original English version). The second translator was a knowledgeable individual who had an undergraduate degree in International Economics and Trade from the University of International Business and Economics (Class of 2014: Beijing, China) and scored 760 on the TOEIC test. Two different sets of input language questionnaires were then given. The comparison between those two sets of English questionnaires makes it possible to amend the Chinese questionnaire if input sentences were not found to be correct. On the other hand, if they are identical, the accuracy of such translation is confirmed and both the English and Chinese questionnaires are ready for the pilot test.

3.7 Pilot Test

A preliminary study is conducted prior to the actual data collection process. The pilot test aims to evaluate and verify the usability of instruments and this leads to more reliable results. A pilot test allows the author to know whether there is any ambiguity and to ensure the clarity of instructions, word choices, typographics, sentences, questionnaire formatting, or any other issues so that the questionnaire could be altered accordingly before the data collection process is fully operated. A reliability test is conducted to evaluate the degree to which the questionnaire is free from random error. The reliability test of this pilot study, as presented in Table 3.8, was above the threshold value of 0.7 as recommended by Nunnally (1978).

Regarding the appropriate size of the sample in pilot test, the rule of 10% of the targeted sample as suggested by Connelly (2008) was followed. Therefore, 40 participants took part in the pilot testing. Specifically, an equal number of English and Chinese questionnaires were distributed to international tourists in Bangkok. As mentioned earlier, the main purpose of the pilot test is to verify the instrument usability, not for data analysis. All of the pilot respondents were excluded from the actual data analysis. It is reasonable to collect data in the most convenient location, Bangkok. Once adjustments were made in accordance with the recommendations resulting from the pilot testing, the research tool proved to be effective for this study.

Table 3.8 The Result of Pilot Study's Reliability Test

Information Quality in Social Media

Intrinsic Quality	α	Contextual Quality	α
Accuracy	.784	Amount of data	.824
Completeness	.825	Relevance	.897
Objectivity	.834	Timeliness	.754
Reliability	.903	Ease of understanding	.875
Originality	.892	Value added	.895

Representational Quality	α	Social Quality	α
Conciseness	.873	Social interaction	.811
Consistency	.884	Social presence	.886
Accessibility	.915		

Destination Image

Cognitive Image	α	Affective Image	α
Natural attraction	.745		.954
Infrastructure	.710		
Tourist leisure and recreation	.796		
Cultural history and art	.754		
Safety and security	.812		
Social environment	.829		
Value for money	.860		

Behavioral Intentions

	α
Revisit intention	.906
WOM intention	.898
e-WOM intention	.771

3.8 Analytical Approaches

The collected data are analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). A series of statistical analyses were conducted in this study to test to the proposed hypotheses.

Descriptive statistics are employed to analyze the basic information of the respondents provided in the fourth part of the questionnaire. For nominal scale item (gender, professional occupation, nationality, country of residence, past experience in Thailand, travel arrangement method, purpose of travel, reason for choosing Thailand as a destination, reason for using social media for traveling purpose), typical descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages were employed. The ordinal variables (age and monthly income), similar to the nominal level variables, are analyzed by using frequencies and percentages since the use of mean, standard deviation, and other parametric statistics is not appropriate.

With reference to inferential statistics, where population information is predicted by statistics and information is collected from sample pool, *Multiple Regression Analysis* is used to test all proposed hypotheses by setting the level of significance at 0.05 (95% confidence level and 5% margin of error). The selected analysis approach enables the estimation of relationships between variables. Additionally, *Confirmation Factor Analysis* (CFA) is also utilized to verify the existence of a relationship between the observed variables and to verify the consistency of the hypothesized measurement model as it was based on previous researches and theories.
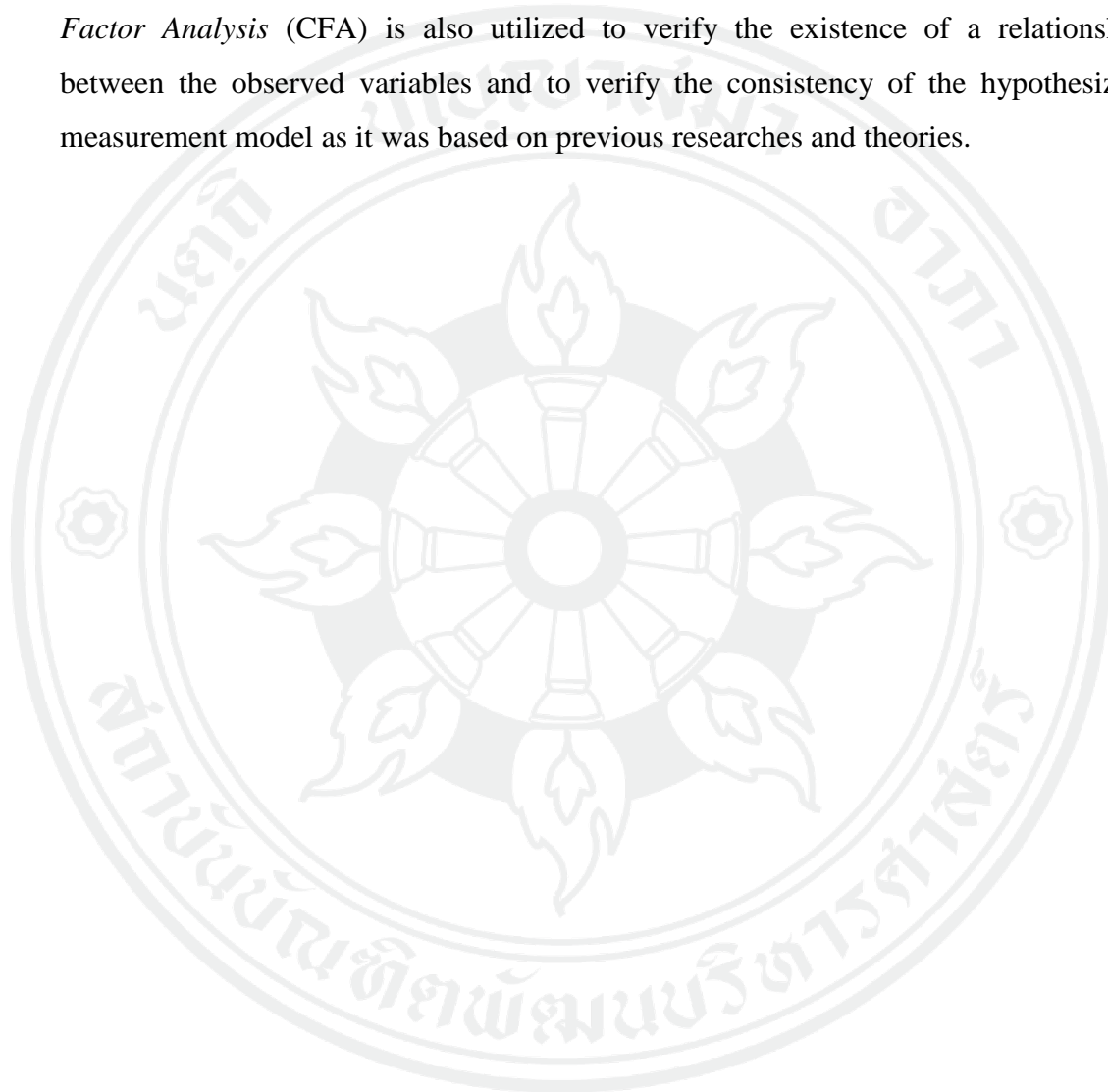
CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of empirical data is presented in this chapter. The response rate is described in the first section followed by the demographic profile of respondents. The third section presents the tests of reliability. The fourth section reports construct validity in which Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is presented. Thereafter, the full results of hypothesis testing are presented. The conclusion of data analysis is summarized in the last section.

4.1 Response Rate

Of 550 distributed questionnaires, 471 questionnaires were returned. After screening the collected data, 61 set of surveys were found to be incomplete. These questionnaires were disregarded. Therefore, only 410 responses were valid and used in the hypothesis testing process. From the number of usable responses returned, a response rate of 74.55% was achieved.

4.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic variables of respondents were analyzed through descriptive statistics. The ratio of males and females in this study is approximately equal (male = 203, female = 207). Even though the ages were ranged from below 20 to 60 and older, the age of respondents is clustered between 20 and 39 (68.8%). Regarding their professional occupation, a significant majority of participants are either employees or self-employed (65.1%), followed by students (19.3%), retired (8.8%) and others (6.8%) respectively. Precisely two-thirds of respondents were first timers (n=249, 60.7%), the rest were repeat visitors who had travelled to Thailand before. In terms of average monthly income, more than half of the respondents had an average monthly income of $500-$1,000 and $1,000-$2,000 with only 0.5% per cent difference

between the two while almost 20% had $3,000 monthly income, and less than 12% earned less than $500 per month.

Though the proportion of respondents in terms of nationality is explained in section 3.3, some variation (within acceptable range) arose in the actual data collection process. ASEAN and Chinese tourists were expected to dominate the study; however, it is clear from Table 4.1 that almost half of the respondents were European (n=172, 42%), followed by the Americas (15.6%), nationalities in ASEAN (17.3%), Chinese (12%), nationalities in East Asia (8%), nationalities in Oceania (2.7%), nationalities in South Asia (1.2%), and nationalities in the Middle East (0.5%). However, none was African. Even though the nationalities of respondents were slightly different from expectations, there are many possible explanations. First, tourists from the Americas and Europe are among the top spenders while travelling in Thailand. The total expenditure per tourist in Thailand in 2016 shows the Americas and Europe spent $2,067 on average while ASEAN and Chinese spent only $1,149 (Vanhaleweyk, 2017). Regardless of the financial contribution tourists brought to Thailand, various segments of tourists should be taken into a consideration as well. In order to create sustainable tourism success and make Thailand a year-round destination for the global market, a better understanding of international tourists from various countries (not only the top nationalities visiting Thailand) would provide better insights into the implications. The respondents' profiles in this study are not dominated by tourists from one region (the highest percentage, European, is 42%), so the actual proportions of respondents are likely to be acceptable.

Respondents were asked about their travel arrangement method and three options were presented; personally arranged/ DIY tour, group package tour, personal group tour and other (e.g. government-sponsored visit). Over half of the respondents personally arranged the trip to Thailand (56.1%), a quarter traveled by personal group tour (25.9%), a small minority were on group package tours (15.4%), and only an insignificant number arranged their travel by other means (2.7%).

Participants were allowed to select their travel purpose from options presented in the questionnaire. From a pool of 716 responses, holiday, leisure and recreation stood at

45.67%, which is the majority travel purpose. The other alternatives ranged between 3 and 10%; shopping, visiting friends and family, education and training, nightlife, extreme activities, health and medical care, business, religion and pilgrimages, and transit, respectively (the sort order is descending).

Similarly, multiple answers were allowed for the reasons for using social media for travelling as well. From seven reasons listed in the questionnaire, a total of 1,123 answers were examined. The majority of respondents used social media either for planning the trip/research (18.52%) or finding information about restaurants, hotels, activities, places to visit (17.99%), with less than a 1% difference between the two. Respondents also used social media to inspire (15.05%), reading reviews posted by others (13.62%), keeping memories (11.75%), finding deals and buying travel product (e.g. flight, hotel, shows) (11.58%), and sharing their travel experience (11.49%). The additional information about respondents is reported in Table 4.1.

In regard to social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram, Google+, Twitter and WhatsApp were the top five applications that respondents used before and during their trips to/in Thailand (22.04%, 14.84%, 10.10%, 8.60% and 8.43% respectively). In addition, other messenger applications were also popular among respondents, especially those from Asia, including WeChat (6.58%), Line (3.95%) and QQ (3.51%) and KakaoTalk with 0.35%. Additionally, Pinterest, Snapchat, Tumblr, Weibo, TripAdvisor, Youku Tudou and LinkedIn had between 10 and 40 users.

Table 4.1 Demographic Profile

Variable	Item	n	%	Variable	Item	n	%
Gender	Male	203	49.5	Nationality	ASEAN	71	17.3
	Female	207	50.5		China	49	12
Age	Below 20	18	4.4		Europe	172	42
	20-29	163	39.8		Other in East Asia	36	8.8
	30-39	119	29		South Asia	5	1.2
	40-49	47	11.5		The Americas	64	15.6
	50-59	32	7.8		Oceania	11	2.7
	60 and older	31	7.6		Middle East	2	0.5
Occupation	Students	79	19.3		Africa	0	0
	Employee	192	46.8	Income/month	< $500	49	12
	Self-employed	75	18.3		$500-$1,000	114	27.8
	Retired	36	8.8		$1,000-$2,000	112	27.3
	Other	28	6.8		$2,000-$3,000	58	14.1
Type of visitor	First time visitor	249	60.7		>$3,000	77	18.8
	Repeat visitor	161	39.3				

Variable	Item	n	%
Travel arrangement	Personally arranged /DIY trip	230	56.1
	Group package tour	63	15.4
	Personal group tour	106	25.9
	Other (i.e. government-sponsored visit)	11	2.7
*Purpose of travel	Visiting friend and family	58	8.1
	Holidays, leisure, recreation	327	45.67
	Education and training	53	7.4
	Health and medical care	35	4.89
	Religion and pilgrimages	30	4.19
	Shopping	63	8.8
	Extreme activities	42	5.87
	Nightlife	52	7.26
	Transit	23	3.21
	Business	33	4.61
*Reason for using social media for travelling	Inspiring	169	15.05
	Planning the trip/research	202	17.99
	Finding information	208	18.52
	Reading reviews posted by others	153	13.62
	Finding deals and buy travel products	130	11.58
	Sharing your travel experience	129	11.49
	Memory keeping	132	11.75

Note: * multiple answers were allowed.

Social Media	n	%	Social Media	n	%
Facebook	251	22.04	Youtube	8	0.70
Instagram	169	14.84	Vimeo	6	0.53
Google+	115	10.10	Goiboibo	4	0.35
Twitter	98	8.60	KakaoTalk	4	0.35
WhatsApp	96	8.43	Reddit	4	0.35
WeChat	75	6.58	Booking	4	0.35
Line	45	3.95	Duckduckgo	4	0.35
QQ	40	3.51	Renren	3	0.26
Pinterest	39	3.42	Vkontakie	3	0.26
Snapchat	39	3.42	Vine	2	0.18
Tumblr	30	2.63	Find Penguin	2	0.18
Weibo	29	2.55	TripMaster	2	0.18
TripAdvisor	27	2.37	Odnoklassniki	1	0.09
Youku Tudou	15	1.32	Routard.com	1	0.09
LinkedIn	12	1.05	Map.Me	1	0.09
Flickr	9	0.79	Rantapallo	1	0.09

n = 1,139 (multiple answers were allowed.)

4.3 Reliability Test

Since all investigated constructs were made up of multi-item rather than single-item scales, the internal consistency of the questionnaire must be firstly evaluated prior to any further analysis. This would help to verify that all of the items in the questionnaire reliably measure the same construct. The internal consistency was, therefore, accessed through the use of Cronbach's alpha analysis.

After conducting the analysis, there were two items removed from information quality in social media. The deletion were based on the score of *Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted* since it would make the questionnaire more reliable by achieving an acceptable reliability value of 0.7 (Pallant, 2010). Being more specific, "The travel information obtained from social media is free of error" measuring accuracy as a sub-dimension of intrinsic quality, and "The structure of the information provided is conformity" measuring consistency as a sub-dimension of representational quality were disregarded and excluded from further analysis. The reliability for each construct was then improved from .675 to .701 and from .687 to .707. However, all of the other items were retained. Consequently, the overall Cronbach's alpha value for information quality in social media is above the acceptable value of 0.7. The full results of the reliability test for this construct are provided in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Reliability Analysis of Information Quality in Social Media

INTRINSIC QUALITY

Construct	Items	α	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Accuracy	The travel information obtained from social media is correct.	.675	.589
	The travel information obtained from social media is accurate.		.466
	The travel information obtained from social media is free of error.		**.701***
Completeness	The travel information obtained from social media includes all necessary values.	.801	.765
	The travel information obtained from social media is sufficiently complete for my travel needs.		.730
	The travel information obtained from social media covers the needs of my travel purposes.		.775
	The travel information obtained from social media has sufficient breadth and depth for my travel purposes.		.734
Objectivity	The travel information obtained from social media was not influenced by the feeling of content generator.	.833	.790
	The travel information obtained from social media is based on facts.		.821
	The travel information obtained from social media is objective.		.786
	The travel information obtained from social media presents an unbiased view.		.754
Reliability	The travel information obtained from social media is believable.	.767	.736
	The travel information obtained from social media is of undoubtful credibility.		.694
	The travel information obtained from social media is trustworthy.		.687
	The travel information obtained from social media is credible.		.725
Originality	The travel information obtained from social media takes up an idea that has not been used elsewhere.	.734	.665
	The travel information obtained from social media is different from others.		.662
	The travel information obtained from social media is unique.		.613

CONTEXTUAL QUALITY

Construct	Items	α	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Amount of data	The travel information obtained from social media is of sufficient volume for our needs.	.754	.681
	The amount of travel information obtained from social media match our needs.		.628
	The amount of travel information obtained from social media is neither too much nor too little.		.707
Relevance	The travel information obtained from social media is relevant to my travel.	.773	.772
	The travel information obtained from social media is in accordance with my purpose to travel.		.717
	The travel information obtained from social media appropriate for planning the trip.		.681
	The travel information obtained from social media is applicable to our trip.		.700
Timeliness	The travel information obtained from social media is quite new.	.753	.672
	The travel information obtained from social media is continuously updated.		.587
	The travel information obtained from social media is quickly provided necessary information for the trip.		.732

Ease of understanding	The travel information obtained from social media is easy to understand.	.730	.636
	The travel information obtained from social media is required less effort to interpret.		.612
	The travel information obtained from social media is easy to comprehend.		.680
Value added	The travel information obtained from social media is effective for planning a trip.	.765	.724
	The travel information obtained from social media is useful for planning a trip.		.660
	The travel information obtained from social media is helpful for planning a trip.		.668

REPRESENTATIONAL QUALITY			
Construct	**Items**	**α**	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
Conciseness	The travel information obtained from social media is formatted compactly.	.763	.721
	The travel information obtained from social media is presented briefly but comprehensive.		.615
	The representation of the travel information obtained from social media is compact and concise.		.706
Consistency	The travel information obtained from social media is consistently presented.	**.687**	.595
	The travel information obtained from social media is presented in the same format.		.390
	The structure of the information provided is conformity.		**.707***
Accessibility	The travel information obtained from social media is easily retrievable.	.843	.837
	The travel information obtained from social media is easily accessible.		.778
	The travel information obtained from social media is quickly accessible when needed.		.766
	The travel information obtained from social media is easily obtainable.		.787

SOCIAL QUALITY			
Construct	**Items**	**α**	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
Social interaction	Social media allows me to belong to a group with same interests as mine.	.733	.631
	Social media enables me to enjoy asking and answering other people regarding travel purpose.		.618
	Social media enables me express myself freely regarding my own travel.		.690
Social presence	This social media makes it seem like the other person is present.	.868	.846
	This social media makes it feel like the person I'm communicating with is close by.		.818
	This social media makes it feel like other people are really with me when we communicate.		.822
	This social media allows me to determine if someone is really "there" when communicating.		.839

The same rationale and analysis were also employed to determine the internal consistency of cognitive destination image. Though most items appeared to be worthy of retention, some items were removed since they were below the suggested value of 0.7. The removal of "food service" from infrastructure and "economical mode of transportation" from value for money would increase the Cronbach's alphas to 0.679 and 0.695, respectively. Although these scores are below the Cronbach's alpha of 0.7, it is only a slightly variation. Therefore, these two items do not need to be removed at this stage and remain in this study.

Even though safety and security and social environment achieved a satisfactory result for internal consistency, the removal of "stable political environment" and "host and friendly residents" was considered based on the Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted, these two items helped to improve the reliability of the scale. (from .752 to .766, and from .724 to .749, respectively).

However, all of the items measuring "tourist leisure and recreation" were removed from the study not only because the reliability value was much lower than the suggested value of 0.7, but also because none of the deletion of items could help to achieve the target score.

For the affective dimension of destination image, seven items were included in the analysis. The empirical value of the scale appears to have good internal consistency. Therefore, all of the items measuring affective destination image are worthy of retention, resulting in a decrease in the alpha if deleted. The full reliability analysis of destination image is presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Reliability Analysis of Destination Image

COGNITIVE IMAGE			
Construct	**Items**	**α**	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
Natural Attraction	Good climate	.725	.716
	Scenic beauty		.610
	Unique flora and fauna		.621
	Green cover		.703
Infrastructure	Excellent transport facilities	**.615**	.475
	Variety of foodservice		**.679***
	Less pollution		.561
	Organized infrastructure		.403

COGNITIVE IMAGE			
Construct	**Items**	**α**	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
Tourist Leisure and Recreation	Best shopping centers	**.581**	.558
	Adventurous sites and activities		.432
	Amusement recreation		.505
	Local cuisine and food outlet		.543
Cultural History and Art	Monument and buildings	.712	.628
	Famous handicrafts		.543
	Rich customs and religion		.666
Safety and security	Stable political environment	**.752**	**.766***
	Less crime rate		.617
	Safe secure		.612
Social Environment	Hosts and friendly residents	**.724**	**.749***
	Easy to converse (engage in conversation)		.578
	Good civic sense (get involve with locals)		.568
	Good quality of life		.727
Value for money	Economical mode of transportation	**.693**	**.695***
	Good price for accommodation		.532
	Appropriately prices shopping merchandise		.588

AFFECTIVE IMAGE			
Construct	**Items**	**α**	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
Affective Image	Unpleasant-pleasant	.903	.902
	Gloomy-exciting		.891
	Distressing-relaxing		.891
	Negative-positive		.886
	Unenjoyable-enjoyable		.884
	Unfavorable-favorable		.883
	Boring-fun		.886

For behavioral intentions, three sub-concepts were operationalized; revisit intention, WOM intention, and e-WOM intention. Every item remained in the study since acceptable reliability was achieved. Table 4.4 presents a full analysis of the reliability tests for behavioral intention.

Table 4.4 Reliability Analysis of Behavioral Intentions

BEHAVIORAL INTENTION			
Construct	**Items**	**α**	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
Revisit intention	In recent years, if I plan for an outbound travel, I will visit Thailand.	.776	.657
	If I plan a trip to Asia, I will visit Thailand.		.620
	In short, I think Thailand is a good place deserving visit.		.792
WOM	According to my knowledge about Thailand, I will recommend my friend to travel to Thailand.	.837	.792
	I will share my knowledge about Thailand with my friends.		.761
	I will recommend Thailand as a destination if my friends are planning a travel to Asia.		.767
e-WOM	I will share information with others online to help others making travel decision.	.776	.724
	I will share information with others online so that I can tell people about my travel experience in Thailand.		.647
	Going online is the easiest way to share my Travel experience in Thailand.		.721

4.4 Construct Validity

To evaluate the quality of operational measurements in terms of validity, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was employed in this study. However, before performing factor analysis, the suitability of data for factor analysis must be first evaluated. The benchmark criteria for suitability are that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) index should be .6 or above, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity value should be significant (.05 or smaller) (Pallant, 2010). After prescreening data suitability, each construct in this study reached a minimum requirement by which all KMO values exceeded the suggested KMO value of .6 and Bartlett's reached a significant value of .05. Therefore, the factor analysis is considered appropriate. A summary of the KMO and Bartlett's Test for the constructs is presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Information Quality in Social Media

Items: **Intrinsic quality**	No. of items	KMO	Bartlett's	Items: **Contextual quality**	No. of items	KMO	Bartlett's
Accuracy	2			Amount of data	3		
Completeness	4			Relevance	4		
Objectivity	4	.926	.000	Timeliness	3	.935	.000
Reliability	4			Ease of understanding	3		
Originality	3			Value added	3		

Items: **Representational quality**	No. of items	KMO	Bartlett's	Items: **Social quality**	No. of items	KMO	Bartlett's
Conciseness	3			Social interaction	3	.855	.000
Consistency	2	.861	.000	Social presence	4		
Accessibility	4						

Destination Image

Items: **Cognitive Image**	No. of items	KMO	Bartlett's	Items: **Affective Image**	No. of items	KMO	Bartlett's
Natural attraction	4						
Infrastructure	3						
Cultural history and art	3	.831	.000		7	.912	.000
Safety and security	2						
Social environment	3						
Value for money	2						

Behavioral Intentions

Items: Behavioral Intention	No. of items	KMO	Bartlett's
Revisit intention	4		
WOM intention	3	.849	.000
e-WOM intention	3		

Once items were verified in terms of suitability for factor analysis, factor extraction and factor rotation were conducted. There are several approaches to extract the number of factors; however, the most commonly-used techniques are principal components, unweighted least squares, generalized least squares, maximum

likelihood factoring, image factoring, and alpha factoring (Pallant, 2010). Promax rotation allows for correlation between constructs, reflecting the nature of social science research in which the constructs under study are normally associated in practice (Costello & Osborne, 2005). In addition, Promax is extremely useful when it comes to larger data sets compared to Direct Oblimin (Pett, Lackey, & Sullivan, 2003). Therefore, principal component analysis together with Promax were utilized in this study.

However, some items were removed from the study after running factor analysis. Items with low factor loading (less than .4), and items with moderate factor loading on different components (cross-loading issues) were deleted. As a result, the total variance explained index of each construct was increased (Jr., Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014; Pallant, 2010). Table 4.6 presents the details of factor analysis for information quality in social media and its explanation is presented in the following section.

Table 4.6 Factor Analysis for Information Quality in Social Media

Information Quality: Intrinsic Quality					
	Completeness	Objectivity	Originality	Accuracy	Reliability
Sufficiently complete for my travel needs	.873				
Sufficient breadth and depth	.709				
Includes all necessary values	.704				
Objective		.800			
Present unbiased view		.773			
Not influenced by feeling of …		.518			
Different from others			.817		
Unique			.728		
Correct				.903	
Accurate				.715	
Believable					.922
Trustworthy					.883
Total Variance Explained	42.469	8.835	5.929	4.924	4.116

Information Quality: Contextual Quality	Relevance	Timeliness	Value Added	Ease of Understanding	Amount of Data
In accordance with my travel purpose	.715				
Appropriate for planning the trip	.701				
Applicable to our trip	.694				
Quite new		.740			
Continuously updated		.662			
Helpful			.748		
Useful			.577		
Effective			.524		
Easy to comprehend				.773	
Easy to understand				.672	
Required less effort to interpret				.664	
Sufficient volume					.812
Neither too much nor little					.733
Match our needs					.522
Total Variance Explained	44.055	6.834	5.837	5.362	5.054

Information Quality: Representational Quality	Conciseness	Accessibility	Consistency
Compact and concise	.598		
Formatted compactly	.555		
Briefly presented but comprehensive	.537		
Quickly accessible		.871	
Easily accessible		.861	
Easily obtainable		.844	
Consistently presented			.844
Same format			.765
Total Variance Explained	45.091	14.944	7.894

Information Quality: Social Quality	Social presence	Social interaction
The person I'm communicating with is closed by	.885	
Someone is really there when we communicate.	.872	
Other people are really with me when we communicate	.856	
Other person is present	.750	
Belong to a group		.896
Enjoy asking and answering		.814
Express myself freely		.679
Total Variance Explained	53.125	16.273

The 17 items of intrinsic quality were tested with principal components analysis. For *intrinsic quality*, the presence of five components with eigenvalues over 1, explained 42.47%, 8.84%, 5.93%, 4.92% and 4.12% of variance, respectively (completeness, objectivity, originality, accuracy and reliability). However, the performance of the Promax rotation revealed that some variables had strong loadings and some were loading on more than one component. Variables in the latter case, therefore, were removed.

The deleted items were; the travel information obtained from social media …
1. is *free of error* (factor loading = .346)
2. *covers the needs of my travel purpose* (factor loading =.385)
3. is *based on facts* (factor loading =.308)
4. is *credible* (factor loading =.323)
5. takes up an idea that has *not been used elsewhere* (with a high loading on component 1 (.518) and component 2 (.470)

After such deletions, the factor loadings for intrinsic quality ranged from .518 to .922. In sum, from 17 items, only 12 items remained in the study as intrinsic quality dimensions of information quality in social media.

As expected, the principal component analysis with a Promax rotation of 16 Likert scale questions revealed five components for *contextual quality* (relevance, timeliness, value added, ease of understanding and amount of data), which explained 67.14% of the variance. When items with cross loading issues "the travel information obtained from social media is *relevant to my travel purpose"* (.492 and .496 on component one and two) and low loading ("the travel information obtained from social media quic*kly provided necessary information* for the trip", 0.393) were excluded, the analysis yielded fourteen factor solutions, with factor loadings between .522 and .812.

For *representational quality*, initial eigenvalues indicated three factors (conciseness, accessibility, and consistency) with 45.09%, 14.94%, and 7.89% of the variance respectively. "The travel information obtained from social media is *easily retrievable*" was removed because it had high loadings on more than one component (.522 and

.434), and as a result, eight items remained in the study (factor loadings were from .537 to .871).

For social quality of information quality in social media, the principal component factor analysis of seven items using Promax was conducted. It clearly revealed two component solutions explained a total of 69.4% of the variance in which component 1 (named as social presence) contributed 53.13% and component 2 (named as social interaction) contributed 16.27%. With both components, all variables had a strong loading substantially on one component (with factor loadings between .896 and .679).

Table 4.7 Factor Analysis for Destination Image

Destination Image: Cognitive	Infrastructure	Social Environment	Natural Attraction	Safety and Security	Value for Money	Cultural History & Art
Organized infrastructure	.801					
Less pollution	.779					
Transport facility	.695					
Good civic sense		.609				
Easy to converse		.587				
Flora and fauna			.746			
Green cover			.721			
Scenic beauty			.696			
Safe secure				.870		
Less crime rate				.801		
Appropriate merchandise price					.737	
Good price for accommodation					.607	
Famous handicrafts						.658
Monument and building						.594
Total Variance Explained	27.759	10.911	5.799	5.278	4.892	4.426

Destination Image: Affective	Affective Image
Favorable	.844
Enjoyable	.838
Fun	.825
Positive	.818
Relaxing	.781
Exciting	.776
Pleasant	.692
Total Variance Explained	63.654

For the *cognitive dimension* of destination image, the factorability of the 25 items was examined using principal component extraction. Promax rotation recommended a six-factor solution. These six components were labeled as infrastructure, social environment, natural attractions, safety and security, value for money, cultural history & art. The initial eigenvalues indicated that the first factor explained 27.76% of the variance, following by 10.91%, 5.80%, 5.28%, 4.80%, and 4.43% respectively. As presented in Table 4.6, factor loadings ranged from .587 to .870. Items with factor loadings below .4 (*rich custom and religion* = .325 and *good quality of life* = .358) were removed. In addition, *good climate* was highly loaded on component two and three (.400 and .570) and was therefore excluded from the study. The results of this analysis left 14 items for further analysis.

For the *affective destination image,* principle component extraction of the seven items using Promax rotations was conducted. As expected, only one component was revealed which explained 63.54% of the total variance. Factor loadings for all items had primary loadings over .6 (.692-.844) and no cross-loading was evident. The factor analysis for affective image is presented in Table 4.7.

For behavioral intentions, the factor loading matrix is presented in Table 4.8. The three component solution explained a total of 73.56% of the variance, with WOM intention contributing 47.21%, e-WOM contributing 15.07%, and revisit intention contributing 11.27%. To facilitate in the interpretation of these three components, Promax rotation was performed. "*In short, I think Thailand is a good place deserving a visit*" was removed, as there were cross loading issues on component one (.689) and three (.546). This resulted in eight items (with factor loadings from .804 to .902) retained in the study for further data analysis.

Table 4.8 Factor Analysis for Behavioral Intentions

Behavioral Intentions	WOM	e-WOM	Revisit
I will recommend Thailand as a destination…	.897		
I will share my knowledge about Thailand…	.875		
According to my knowledge about Thailand, I will…	.809		
I will share information with others online to help…		.841	
Going online is the easiest way to share my travel…		.830	
I will share information with others online so that I…		.804	
In recent years, if I plan for an outbound travel, I…			.902
If I plan a trip to Asia, I will visit Thailand.			.861
Total Variance Explained	47.214	15.068	11.274

4.5 Hypothesis Testing

4.5.1 Correlation Analysis

The data obtained from questionnaires were analyzed by IBM SPSS Statistics 21. Before testing the hypotheses, correlation analysis (also known as bi-variate correlation) was conducted. In so doing, the interrelationships between pairs of variables proposed in the research framework were estimated. The following Table (Table 4.9) shows the correlation results from the Pearson correlation coefficient analysis.

Table 4.9 Correlation Analysis

Constructs	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
(1) Intrinsic quality	1								
(2) Contextual quality	.758**	1							
(3) Representational quality	.640**	.776**	1						
(4) Social quality	.460**	.548**	.571**	1					
(5) Cognitive image	.554**	.614**	.606**	.416**	1				
(6) Affective image	.115*	.109*	.088	.072	.238**	1			
(7) Revisit intention	.269**	.201**	.178**	.162**	.375**	.337**	1		
(8) WOM intention	.080	.135*	.126*	.073	.292**	.307**	.481**	1	
(9) e-WOM intention	.219**	.224**	.212**	.278**	.258**	.204**	.385**	.415**	1

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed)

As shown in Table 4.8, correlations were computed between nine concepts; four dimensions of information quality in social media, two dimensions of destination image, and three for behavioral intention. The correlations between all constructs

were found to be positive. The results suggest that 32 out of 36 correlations were statistically significant, (either at 0.05 or 0.01 significance level) and correlation coefficient scores (r) ranged from .072 to .776.

The correlations between affective image with two dimensions of information quality (representational and social quality) were not significant (r=.088 and .072 respectively). Additionally, the correlations of WOM intention with intrinsic quality (r=0.080) and with social quality (r=0.073) were not significant as well. The magnitude of these four associations was found to be very weak since the correlation coefficient values were.10 to .29 (Cohen, 1988)

In general, the results suggest that:-

- Once tourists perceive higher tourism information quality provided in social media in one dimension (e.g. intrinsic quality), they tend to perceive higher tourism information quality in other dimensions (e.g. contextual, representational, and social quality), and vice versa;
- Four dimensions of information quality in social media were found to be significantly positively correlated with cognitive destination image, while only intrinsic and contextual quality of information quality are significantly correlated with affective image;
- All dimensions of information quality in social media are significantly positively correlated with behavioral dimensions, with the exception of intrinsic/social quality and WOM intention.
- Cognitive and affective destination image are moderately correlated.
- Three sub-dimensions of behavioral intentions are positively correlated.

Even though inter-item relationships can be evaluated by simply using correlation analysis, several limitations arise as far as hypothesis testing is concerned, not only because the explanation of cause-effect relationship goes beyond the capability of correlation analysis, but also because correlation analysis only enables the investigation of one-on-one relationships at a time. To test the proposed hypotheses effectively, multiple regression is therefore necessary.

4.5.2 Overview of Respondents' Perception

Before reaching to the final process of data analysis, multiple regression, the overview of respondent' perceptions towards information quality in social media, destination image and behavioral intention were investigated. This section, therefore, summarizes the descriptive statistics (mean and SD) for each of the constructs being studied. Table 4.10 reports the descriptive analysis for information quality in social media. Both the dimensions and the sub-dimensions of information quality were rated higher than 4 (with standard deviations ranging from 0.78 to 0.99). This implies that a significant majority of respondents "somewhat agree" with the given statements concerning the tourism information they obtained from social media.

Table 4.10 Overview of Respondents' Perception towards Information Quality

Intrinsic Quality	Mean	σ	Contextual Quality	Mean	σ
Reliability	4.37	0.78	Value added	4.54	0.77
Accuracy	4.36	0.78	Ease of understanding	4.53	0.74
Completeness	4.33	0.84	Relevance	4.42	0.76
Objectivity	4.20	0.96	Timeliness	4.40	0.93
Originality	4.17	0.99	Amount of data	4.28	0.83
Representational Quality	**Mean**	**σ**	**Social Quality**	**Mean**	**σ**
Accessibility	4.53	0.80	Social interaction	4.57	0.77
Conciseness	4.41	0.81	Social presence	4.34	0.92
Consistency	4.19	0.95			

Regarding destination image, descriptive analysis was employed for both the cognitive and affective destination image. As presented in Table 4.11, the results clearly show that the respondents have more positive cognitive attitudes towards Thailand as a tourism destination, in terms of natural attractions, cultural history and art, and value for money than the social environment, safety and security, and infrastructure. Even though the top three scores for perceived cognitive image were slightly higher than the others, there is no a significant difference (the difference between the average scores is 0.67). On average, international tourists "agreed" that they have a positive affective image during their trip to Thailand, with the highest scores for being positive and fun. However, they tended to feel less relaxed and excited when travelling around.

Table 4.11 Overview of Respondents' Perception towards Destination Image

Cognitive Image	Mean	σ	Affective Image	Mean	σ
Natural Attraction	4.78	.76	Positive	5.10	.99
Cultural history and art	4.65	.83	Fun	5.10	.93
Value for money	4.61	.78	Favorable	5.09	.92
Social environment	4.59	.86	Enjoyable	5.08	.96
Safety and security	4.32	.93	Pleasant	5.03	.97
Infrastructure	4.11	.99	Relaxed	4.98	.99
			Excited	4.97	.97

For behavioral intentions, respondents showed solid agreement for WOM, revisit and e-WOM intentions, respectively. The descriptive analysis showed that the respondents rated their intentions more than 4.5, where 4 represents slightly agree and 5 represents agree. Table 4.12 presents the results for the descriptive analysis of behavioral intention.

Table 4.12 Overview of Respondents' Perception towards Behavioral Intentions

Behavioral Intention	Mean	σ
WOM intention	4.99	.75
Revisit intention	4.71	.88
e-WOM intention	4.56	.82

4.5.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

All hypotheses proposed were verified with multiple regression analysis. The significance of the hypothesized relationships was measured by explained variance (adjusted R square), beta coefficient (β), and significance level (p-values). Of the seventeen hypotheses, twelve relationships were statistically significant while the rest of the hypothesized relationships were not. The results of the hypothesis testing are summarized in Figure 4.1. The full explanation is provided in the following paragraph.
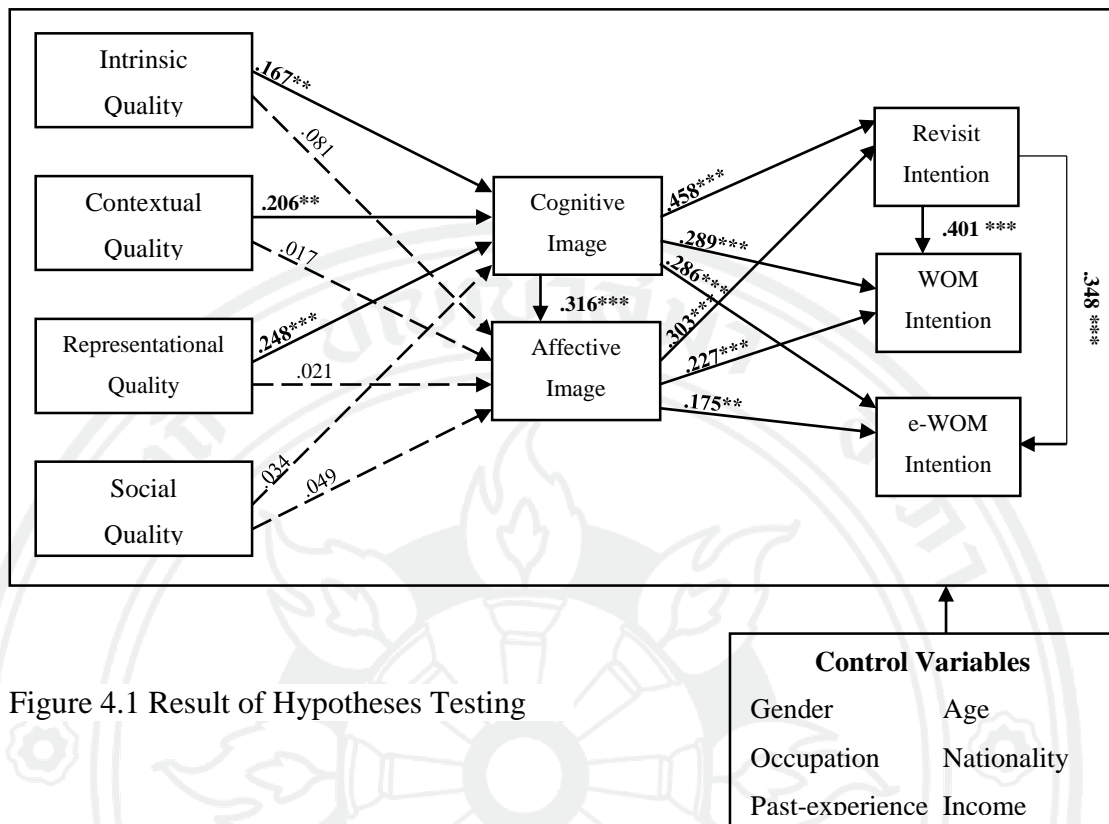
Figure 4.1 Result of Hypotheses Testing

4.5.3.1 The Relationship between Information Quality in Social Media and Destination Image

Multiple linear regression was used as a predictive tool to explain the cognitive destination image based on four sub-dimensions of information quality in social media including intrinsic, contextual, representational and social quality (note that gender, age, occupation, nationality, past-experience, income, and travel arrangement method was controlled). Multicollinearity was not violated in this model as the VIF was valued between 1.583 and 3.707, which is lower than the cut off of 10. A significant regression equation was found $F(11,398)=29.025$, $p<.000$, with an adjusted R^2 of .430. All aspects of Information quality in social media were statistically significant predictors of cognitive destination image, with the exception of social quality. Additionally, representational quality recoded a higher beta value ($\beta=.248$, p < .000) than both contextual quality ($\beta=.206$, p < .005), and intrinsic quality ($\beta=167$,

p < .005). Therefore, H1a, H2a, H3a were supported, while H4a was not statistically supported. Table 4.13 presents the results of multiple analysis.

Therefore, the prediction of cognitive image is

Cognitive Image = 1.447 + 0.167 (intrinsic quality) + 0.206 (contextual quality) + 0.248 (representational quality) + 0.035 (social quality)

Table 4.13 The Multiple Regression Analysis of H1a, H2a, H3a, and H4a

#H	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
(constant)		1.447	6.912	**.000**	
H1a	Intrinsic quality → Cognitive image	.167	3.248	**.001**	**Support**
H2a	Contextual quality → Cognitive image	.206	3.152	**.002**	**Support**
H3a	Representational quality → Cognitive image	.248	4.633	**.000**	**Support**
H4a	Social quality → Cognitive image	.035	.929	.353	Not supported
	Control Variables				
	Gender	.075	1.694	.091	
	Age	.025	1.153	.250	
	Occupation	.011	.451	.652	
	Nationality	.001	.051	.960	
	Income	.014	.733	.464	
	Past-experience	-.033	-.725	.469	
	Travel arrangement method	.020	.789	.431	
	R^2	.445			
	Adjusted R^2	.430			
	Regression	11			
	Residual	398			
	F	29.025			

In contrast, the result of the multiple regression analysis investigating the influence of information quality in social media on affective destination image was different since no significant relationship was observed. The multiple regression model with all four predictors produced adjusted R^2 = .044, F(11, 398) = 2.692, p < .002. As shown in Table 4.14, all dimensions of information quality in social media were not statistically significant. Multicollicarity problems were not found (highest VIF was 3.707). Of the four information qualities, intrinsic quality makes the largest contribution (β= .081), following by social quality (β=.049), representational quality (β=.021), and contextual quality (β=.017). However, these contributions were not statistically significant. Age, nationality and travel arrangement method, used as control variables, exhibited significant coefficients. The negative beta coefficient of age means that the value for affective image tends to be higher for younger rather than older adults.

Additionally, nationality and travel arrangement method were also found to be significant in explaining affective image.

The prediction of affective image is

Affective Image = 3.876 + 0.081 (intrinsic quality) + 0.017 (contextual quality) + 0.021
(representational quality) + 0.049 (social quality)

Table 4.14 The Multiple Regression Analysis of H1b, H2b, H3b, and H4b

#H	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
(constant)		3.876	10.920	**.000**	
H1b	Intrinsic quality → Affective image	.081	.930	.353	Not supported
H2b	Contextual quality → Affective image	.017	.150	.881	Not supported
H3b	Representational quality → Affective image	.021	.237	.813	Not supported
H4b	Social quality → Affective image	.049	.782	.434	Not supported
	Control Variables				
	Gender	-.024	-.320	.794	
	Age	**-.076**	**-2.093**	**.037**	
	Occupation	.033	.821	.412	
	Nationality	**.062**	**2.769**	**.006**	
	Income	.065	1.945	.053	
	Past-experience	-.036	-.469	.639	
	Travel arrangement method	**.108**	**2.547**	**.011**	
R^2	.069				
Adjusted R^2	.044				
Regression	11				
Residual	398				
F	2.692				

4.5.3.2 The Relationship between Cognitive Image and Affective

Image

Multiple linear regression analysis was also used to develop a model for predicting tourist's affective destination image from their cognitive destination image (including all control variables). Multicollinearity was not detected since all VIFs in this regression analysis were lower than 1.5. The predictor model was able to account for 9.3% of the variance in affective destination image, $F(8, 401) = 6.243$, $p < .000$, adjusted $R^2 = .093$. As shown in Table 4.14, cognitive image had a statistically significant relationship with affective image ($\beta=.316$, $p < .000$). However, these contributions were not statistically significant. The predictive power of the control

variables was similar to Table 4.15 in that age, nationality and travel arrangement method were significant.

Therefore, the prediction of affective image is

$$\text{Affective Image} = 3.238 + 0.316 \text{ (cognitive image)}$$

Table 4.15 The Multiple Regression Analysis of H5

#H	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
(constant)		3.238	9.813	**.000**	
H5	Cognitive image → Affective image	.316	5.070	**.000**	**Supported**
	Control Variables				
	Gender	-.050	-.688	.492	
	Age	-.084	-2.402	**.017**	
	Occupation	.032	.829	.407	
	Nationality	.061	2.816	**.005**	
	Income	.062	1.931	.054	
	Past-experience	-.022	-.294	.769	
	Travel arrangement method	.101	2.459	**.014**	
	R^2	.111			
	Adjusted R^2	.093			
	Regression	8			
	Residual	401			
	F	6.243			

4.5.3.3 The Relationship between Destination Image and Behavioral Intentions

The influence of destination image on tourist's revisit intentions was examined. Table 4.16 summarizes the analysis results. As presented in Table 4.15, both the cognitive and the affective destination image positively and significantly influence tourists' revisit intention. This indicates that those with positive perceptions towards Thailand, a tourism destination, tend to have higher revisit intentions in the future. The multiple regression analysis model with two predictors produced adjusted $R^2 = .232$, $F(9, 400) = 14.743$, $p < .000$. Even though both are statistically significant, cognitive image exhibited a larger contribution than affective image (β=.458, .303 respectively).

Additionally, gender and past-experience were the only two significant control variables.

Therefore, the predictive revisit intention model is

Revisit Intention = 0.517+ 0.458 (cognitive image) + 0.303 (affective image)

Table 4.16 The Multiple Regression Analysis of H6a and H6b

#H	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
(constant)		.517	1.325	.186	
H6a	Cognitive image → Revisit intention	.458	6.719	**.000**	**Supported**
H6b	Affective image → Revisit intention	.303	5.716	**.000**	**Supported**
	Control Variables				
	Gender	.199	2.567	**.011**	
	Age	.013	.355	.723	
	Occupation	.029	.712	.477	
	Nationality	.017	.745	.457	
	Income	-.050	-1.451	.148	
	Past-experience	-.295	3.684	**.000**	
	Travel arrangement method	.032	.726	.468	
	R^2	.249			
	Adjusted R^2	.232			
	Regression	9			
	Residual	400			
	F	14.743			

Multiple regression analysis was employed to evaluate the cause-effect relationship between destination image (cognitive and affective) and WOM intention. See Table 4.17 for the summary of results. Similar to previous results, every predictor had a significant correlation with WOM intention. The predictive model accounted for 16.6% of the variance in WOM intention, $F(9, 400) = 10.074$, $p < .000$, adjusted $R^2 = .166$. After running collinearity diagnostics, the presence of multicollinearity was not observed (all VIF values in the model were less than or equal 1.60, well below the cutoff point of 10). The beta coefficients for the two predictors were cognitive image ($β=.289$, $p < .000$); affective image ($β=.227$, $p < .000$). Gender, as the only control variable, also affected the formation of WOM intention in addition to destination image.

Therefore, the predictive WOM intention model is

WOM Intention = 2.161+0.289 (cognitive image) + 0.227 (affective image)

Table 4.17 The Multiple Regression Analysis of H7a and H7b

#H	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
(constant)		2.161	6.230	**.000**	
H7a	Cognitive image → WOM intention	.287	4.771	**.000**	**Supported**
H7b	Affective image → WOM intention	.227	4.812	**.000**	**Supported**
	Control Variables				
	Gender	.226	3.282	**.001**	
	Age	-.043	-1.311	.191	
	Occupation	.033	.895	.372	
	Nationality	.030	1.458	.146	
	Income	.052	1.727	**.085**	
	Past-experience	.017	.232	.817	
	Travel arrangement method	.021	.537	.592	
	R^2	.185			
	Adjusted R^2	.166			
	Regression	9			
	Residual	400			
	F	10.074			

Finally, multiple regression analysis was employed, not only covering the two facets of destination image, but also including the control variables as well. As shown in Table 4.18, the linear combination of cognitive image and affective was significantly related to e-WOM intention, $F(9, 400) = 6.425$, $p < .000$. It should be noted that multilinearity was not evident (VIF values were below 1.6). The multiple correlation coefficient was .107, which indicates that approximately 10.7% of the variance of e-WOM intention was accounted for by the linear combination of cognitive and affective destination image.

Moreover, occupation and income played a significant role as control variables in this analysis. It showed that different professional occupations had different levels of e-WOM intention. The negative beta value of income ($β=.084$) indicated that people

with less income were more likely to spread WOM in cyberspace than those with higher income.

Therefore, the regression equation for predicting e-WOM intention is

e-WOM intention = 2.139 + 0.286 (cognitive image) + 0.175 (affective image).

Table 4.18 The Multiple Regression Analysis of H8a and H8b

#H	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
(constant)		2.139	5.433	**.000**	
H8a	Cognitive image → e-WOM intention	.286	4.160	**.000**	**Supported**
H8b	Affective image → e-WOM intention	.175	3.276	**.001**	**Supported**
	Control Variables				
	Gender	.115	1.471	.142	
	Age	.013	.356	.722	
	Occupation	.110	2.662	**.008**	
	Nationality	.023	.986	.325	
	Income	-.084	-2.426	**.016**	
	Past-experience	.091	1.129	.260	
	Travel arrangement method	-.026	-.599	.550	
	R^2	.126			
	Adjusted R^2	.107			
	Regression	9			
	Residual	400			
	F	6.425			

4.5.3.4 The Relationship among Behavioral Intentions

The final multiple regression analysis was performed to determine how well the intention to revisit predicted the WOM and e-WOM intention levels. The analysis is summarized in Table 4.19. The VIF scores indicated the nonexistence of multicollinearity issues since the VIF was below 1.60. Revisit intention explained a significant proportion of the variance in WOM intention (adjusted R^2 = .255, $F_{(8, 401)}$ = 18.495, p < .000) and e-WOM intention (adjusted R^2 =.159, $F_{(8, 401)}$ = 10.700, p < .000). Income was found to be a significant predictor of both WOM and e-WOM. This suggests that people with higher income are more likely to spread WOM and e-WOM when the revisit intention is high. In addition, gender is also significant in explaining WOM intention by having revisit intention as the

independent variable. As for e-WOM, professional occupation was a significant control variable as well.

The regression equation for predicting WOM and e-WOM intention is

WOM intention = 2.917 + 0.401 (revisit intention)

e-WOM intention = 2.856 + 0.349 (revisit intention)

Table 4.19 The Multiple Regression Analysis of H9a and H9b

#H	Path		β	t-value	p-value	Result
(constant)			2.917	13.504	**.000**	
H9a	Revisit intention → WOM intention		.401	10.705	**.000**	**Supported**
	Control Variables					
	Gender		.156	2.385	**.018**	
	Age		-.055	-1.756	.080	
	Occupation		.024	.688	.492	
	Nationality		.033	1.714	.087	
	Income		-.075	2.611	**.009**	
	Past-experience		-.011	-1.624	.105	
	Travel arrangement method		.017	.457	.648	
	R^2	.270				
	Adjusted R^2	.255				
	Regression	8				
	Residual	401				
	F	8.495				

#H	Path		β	t-value	p-value	Result
(constant)			2.856	11.351	**.000**	
H9b	Revisit intention → e-WOM intention		.349	7.964	**.000**	**Supported**
	Control Variables					
	Gender		.058	.769	.422	
	Age		.006	.169	.866	
	Occupation		.102	2.533	**.012**	
	Nationality		.025	1.120	.263	
	Income		-.067	-2.001	**.046**	
	Past-experience		-.020	-.248	.805	
	Travel arrangement method		-.033	-.766	.444	
	R^2	.176				
	Adjusted R^2	.159				
	Regression	8				
	Residual	401				
	F	10.700				

4.5.3.5 The Summary of Conceptual Framework Testing

Table 4.20 summarizes the results of all of the hypothesized relationships between variables. Of the seventeen hypotheses, twelve hypotheses were positively verified, resulting in the rejection of the other five proposed relationships. In general, the results indicate the following:

- Information quality in social media significantly influences cognitive image, with the exception of social quality.

- Information quality in social media does not significantly influence affective image.

- Cognitive image significantly influences affective image.

- Destination image (both cognitive and affective) significantly influences behavioral intentions (revisit, WOM, and e-WOM intentions).

- Revisit intention significantly influences both WOM and e-WOM intention.

Table 4.20 The Summary of Conceptual Framework Testing

#H	Path	β	p-value	Result
H1a	Intrinsic quality → Cognitive image	.167	**.001****	**Supported**
H1b	Intrinsic quality →Affective image	.081	.353	Not supported
H2a	Contextual quality →Cognitive image	.206	**.002****	**Supported**
H2b	Contextual quality →Affective image	.017	.881	Not supported
H3a	Representational quality → Cognitive image	.248	**.000*****	**Supported**
H3b	Representational quality →Affective image	.021	.813	Not supported
H4a	Social quality →Cognitive image	.035	.353	Not supported
H4b	Social quality → Affective image	.049	.434	Not supported
H5	Cognitive image → Affective image	**.316**	**.000*****	**Supported**
H6a	Cognitive image → Revisit intention	.458	**.000*****	**Supported**
H6b	Affective image → Revisit intention	.303	**.000*****	**Supported**
H7a	Cognitive image →WOM intention	.287	**.000*****	**Supported**
H7b	Affective image → WOM intention	.227	**.000*****	**Supported**
H8a	Cognitive image → e-WOM intention	.286	**.000*****	**Supported**
H8b	Affective image → e-WOM intention	.175	**.001****	**Supported**
H9a	Revisit intention → WOM intention	.401	**.000*****	**Supported**
H9b	Revisit intention → e-WOM intention	.349	**.000*****	**Supported**

Noted: 95% confidence interval; ** = p<.001, *** = p<.000

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter is primarily made up of seven distinct sections. A summary of the study is presented in the first section followed by a summary of the key findings in section 5.2. The discussion of the results is presented in section 5.3. In section 5.4, the contributions of the study are provided in which both academic contributions as well as managerial implications are highlighted. In section 5.5, policy recommendations for policy makers are suggested. Finally, the limitations and recommendations for future research are addressed in sections 5.6 and 5.7.

5.1 Summary of the Study

Before presenting the discussion of the findings, the main contents of the thesis are described. This empirical study has two major purposes: (1) to measure international travelers' destination image of Thailand and to identify the important attributes of social media in terms of destination image; (2) to provide insightful information in regard to the role of social media for destination marketing organizations, tourist administrators, and tourism marketers. In order to accomplish the objectives, this study follows two major theories in constructing a conceptual framework and hypotheses. The hypothesized relationships and conceptual framework are based on two major theories, the Stimulus-Organism-Response model (S-O-R) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Specifically, this paper studies the cause-effect relationship between information quality in social media (intrinsic quality, contextual quality, representational quality and social quality), destination image (cognitive and affective image) and behavioral intentions (revisit, WOM and e-WOM intentions). Regarding the research design, this quantitative study was conducted with data collected from international tourists across Thailand during October 2017 - January 2018. Of the 550 questionnaires distributed, 410 usable responses were returned, yielding a response rate of 75%. Finally, IBM SPSS Statistics 21 was employed in

the data analysis process. Descriptive statistics (including frequency, mean, SD, percentage) and inferential statistics (including exploratory factor analysis and multiple regression analysis) were operated effectively.

5.2 Summary of the Key Findings

5.2.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The findings indicate that there was an equal proportion of males and females, and the majority of respondents were in their 20s. Almost half of the respondents were employed (46.8%), and a large proportion of respondents had an average monthly income of $500 -$2,000. Additionally, two thirds of the respondents was first time visitors. Facebook, Instagram, Google+, Twitter and WhatsApp were the most popular social media platforms amongst the respondents. The top three regions were Europe, ASEAN, and the Americas (42%, 17.3%, and 15.6%, respectively). The most selected travel arrangement method was personally arranged/DIY trip (n=230). Holidays, leisure and recreation were ranked number one as the purpose to travel to Thailand (n=324, 45.67%). Additionally, the reasons for using social media for travel were finding tourism information, planning the trip/research, and inspiration (18.52%, 17.99%, and 15.05%, respectively).

5.2.2 Overview of Respondents' Perception

The findings of this study indicate that most respondents rated the quality of tourism information obtained from social media higher than 4.2, where four means "somewhat agree" and five means "agree". However, social quality received the highest average score of 4.46, followed by contextual quality ($\bar{x}$ =4.34), representational quality ($\bar{x}$ =4.38), and intrinsic quality ($\bar{x}$ =4.29), respectively.

Regarding the cognitive destination image, Thailand is positively perceived as a tourism destination that is full of natural attractions, cultural history and arts, and value for money. The less positive attributes they perceived were the social environment, safety and security, and infrastructure. However, no major difference was observed since the difference between the highest and lowest average score was less than 0.7. On average, international tourists "agreed" to have a positive affective

image during their trip to Thailand, with the highest scores for positive and fun ($\bar{x}$ = 5.10 for each).

For behavioral intentions, most of the respondents strongly intended to spread WOM and e-WOM and to revisit Thailand. The average score for behavioral intentions was 4.75.

5.2.3 The Relationships between Information Quality in Social Media and Destination Image

All information quality dimensions in social media were statistically significant predictors of cognitive destination image, with the exception of social quality. Representational quality reported a higher beta value (β=.248, p < .000) than either contextual quality (β=.206, p < .005), and intrinsic quality (β=167, p < .005). While H1a, H2a and H3a were supported, there is no enough evidence to support H4a.

In contrast, the results of the multiple regression analysis investigating the influence of information quality in social media on affective destination image were different since no significant relationships were observed. Therefore, it failed to support H1b, H2b, H3b and H4b.

5.2.4 The Relationship between Cognitive Image and Affective Image

Cognitive image had a significant positive relationship with affective image (β=.316, p < .000). Therefore, H5 was significantly supported.

5.2.5 The Relationship between Destination Image and Behavioral Intentions

Both cognitive and affective destination image positively and significantly influence tourists' revisit intention. Even though both were statistically significant, cognitive image exhibited a larger contribution than affective image (β=.458, .303 respectively). Similar to the previous result, every predictor had a significant correlation with WOM intention. The beta coefficients for the two predictors were cognitive image (β=.289, p < .000); affective image (β=.227, p < .000). Lastly, the linear combination of cognitive image and affective was significantly related to e-WOM intention as well (β=.401, .349, p < .000) Therefore, H6a, H6b, H7a, H7b, H8a and H8b were all significantly supported.

5.2.6 The Relationships among Behavioral Intentions

Revisit intention statistically influenced WOM intention (adjusted $R^2 = .255$, p < .000) and e-WOM intention (adjusted $R^2 = .159$, p < .000). However, the effect of revisit intention on WOM was higher than e-WOM since the values of the beta coefficient were .401 (p<.000) and .349 (p<.000), respectively. Therefore, both H9a and H9a were statistically supported.

5.3 Discussion of the Results

5.3.1 Reason of Using Social Media for Travel Purpose

The influence of tourism information quality in social media on perceived destination image was focused in this study. Based on the characteristics of respondents (in section 4.2), social media is used as a tool to find tourism information, to plan the trip/research, for inspiration, and to read reviews and posts by others. This implies that social media is, most of the time if not always, an influential source of information, especially for an information-sensitive industry like tourism. Furthermore, sharing personal detail-related activities (sharing your travel experience and memory keeping) was towards the bottom of the list. These empirical findings also reflect the changing global trend in the reasons for using social media. Valentine (2018) reported that social networks were not primarily used to keep in touch with acquaintances but have become a source for news consumption. As a result of privacy concerns in the virtual world, social media users show a strong downward trend in broadcasting personal information and content (e.g. pictures and posts) (Valentine, 2018). Based on this argument, social media is now more preferable as a passive activity rather than being used as active contribution platform.

5.3.2 Information Quality in Social Media and Destination Image

5.3.2.1 Intrinsic Quality and Cognitive Image

The empirical findings suggest that while several dimensions of tourism information quality in social media are positively associated with cognitive image, none statistically influenced tourists' affective image. This not only makes tourism information important, but how it is delivered is even more crucial because it can shape one's attitude towards the topic of interest. Further discussion on each tourism

information quality and destination image formation is presented in the following paragraphs.

First, the "intrinsic quality" of tourism information in social media affected cognitive image. The sub-dimensions of intrinsic quality include accuracy, completeness, objectivity, reliability, and originality. With the growth of tourism information sources, "*accuracy*" has become the most important element in obtaining quality information (Pertheban, Mahrin, & Shanmugam, 2015). By avoiding, or at least minimizing, inaccurate tourism information, it would help tourists, who are overwhelmed with a flood of information, in constructing positive destination knowledge. Moreover, official or owned social media platforms should not overlook the accuracy of tourism information, since giving incorrect information (even with corrective actions afterwards) potentially confused audiences and lead to cognitive dissonance (Lu & Gursoy, 2015).

Regarding information "*completeness*", it is likely that a complete set of tourist information available from a particular source would facilitate the formation of a positive cognitive image. Such all-in-one click information enables readers to access information about the places to visit, to-do-activities, where to eat, deals and coupons etc. Completeness of information, therefore, is a means for individual tourists to have better knowledge about tourism products and services, attributes, and destinations, which leads to a more favorable cognitive image.

Moreover, the degree to which tourism information is presented without bias (also known as "*objectivity*"), is capable of shaping what tourists know and think about Thailand as a tourism destination as well. Even though the science of emotion in marketing has been investigated for many decades, the deceptive use of such emotions in creating tourism-related content may lead to the formation of a negative cognitive destination image.

The administration of reliable tourism information from paid (e.g. advertising) and owned (e.g. official Facebook fan page) media is easily manageable, since a content generator is fully in charge of how content is presented. With the nature of social

media, however, users are involved and engage in delivering messages in one way or another for example, comments, posts, shares, mentions, and tagging. However, it is suggested that the receiver's attitude is subject to change, at different levels, based on the creditability of the source (Mccroskey, 2016). Specifically, the reliability of information is strengthened once tourism information is received from family, friends, or acquaintances. Therefore, it could be said that a person's attitude towards tourism attributes can be affected by the level of information reliability as well. From this perspective, the improvement of tourism information reliability can be used as a mechanism in providing credible information for potential tourists.

From a marketing perspective, originality and novelty in advertisements are used for various purposes, for example, strategies for consumer's attitude change and motivation to process information (Hoon & Low, 2000; Smith et al., 2007). This can be applied to tourism products as well as in other industries. Even though physical tourism attributes rarely change over time, the way these tourism products are addressed can alter prospect tourists' cognitive knowledge. Since the "*originality*" of tourism information allows potential tourists to take in information about a destination in more unique and innovative ways, the cognitive evaluation of these physical attributes can be positive.

5.3.2.2 Contextual Quality and Cognitive Image

The sub-dimensions of contextual quality include the amount of data, relevance, timeliness, ease of understanding, and value added. Even though tourism is a content-based industry, an overwhelming quantity of information causes confusion among potential tourists who are exposed to excess tourism information from various sources. The "*Amount of data*" is then crucial in determining information quality. Studies have suggested that such information overload causes the development of cognitive costs perceived by individuals, and eventually leads to avoidance intentions by consumers (Y.-C. Chen, Shang, & Kao, 2009; Ghose, Ipeirotis, & Li, 2014). With an overwhelming amount of information, tourists may search for tourism information in a less efficient manner. As a result, it negatively affects destination image formation. By presenting the right amount of data, neither too much nor too little, additional cognitive efforts and resources are minimized. It therefore facilitates

prospect tourists in establishing cognitive judgments about specific tourism products and Thailand as a tourism destination.

In terms of "*relevance*" (the degree to which tourism information is relevant and applicable to one's travel purpose), it is differently perceived because people's purposes on a trip are varied. Simply speaking, what one found to be highly relevant, may be irrelevant to another. Additionally, the study of Watts, Shankaranarayanan, and Even (2009) indicated that travel information on a specific tourism destination is highly relevant to those who plan to visit that destination. From this perspective, it could be said that the relevance of tourism information is a determinant of the cognitive evaluation of Thailand as a destination.

Social media allows global audiences to access information round-the-clock. Without doubt, the expectation of receiving up-to-date tourism information arises as far as finding live information from a real time social media platform is concerned. However, S. E. Kim et al. (2014) discovered that "*timeliness*" did not contribute much to the formation of cognitive image, since people may take it for granted that tourism information available on online channels is always updated. Schwabe and Prestipino (2005) argued that the timeliness of the information is significant especially for dynamic tourism information (e.g. event calendars) compared to static ones (e.g. a country's culture and history). Therefore, the knowledge related to tourism attributes and the destination can be built up based on the perceived timeliness of information.

The pool of available tourism information is irrelevant to perceive the "*ease of understanding*", since such availability does not always reflect the degree to which provided information is easily interpreted without ambiguity. The study of Cyr, Kindra, and Dash (2008) discovered in an Indian context, that once information provided on a website is unfavorably perceived, there is a high chance for consumer avoidance behaviors to occur. Also, if users found that the act of, and required effort in, understanding contents happens to outweigh the benefits from those broadcasting information, they give up their personal interest in absorbing information from that source (Foukis, 2015). To put it simply, a negative perceived ease of understanding of tourism information obtained from social media may lead to a negative formation of

cognitive destination image and vice versa. Therefore, by providing tourism information with a high level of ease of understanding would much facilitate individuals in structuring positive tourism knowledge and cognitive image.

With an abundant amount of tourism information, a tourist may access value added information in addition to general information without any value or application for end users. The relationship between *"value added"* quality and cognitive image lies in the fact that the value added information allows consumers to improve perceived information quality, so knowledge can subsequently be used more effectively in making their final decision (Eppler, 2006). It is likely that the more tourists find tourism information to be high in value added quality and to provide more advantage for their travel purpose, the better the cognitive destination image that is perceived. Based on this argument, value added information enables the formation of positive cognitive attitudes towards a destination.

5.3.2.3 Representational Quality and Cognitive Image

The third information quality dimension is representational quality. It is made up of conciseness, accessibility and consistency. Since representational quality is a significant determinant of cognitive image, each of the sub dimensions is discussed afterwards. "C*onciseness*" refers to the degree to which information is concisely presented without excess elements. Based on this empirical study, the results suggested that one way to help tourists in forming a positive cognitive image is by providing concise information in what is a heavy information load environment. Being precise in disseminating tourism knowledge not only leads to the improvement of information quality, but also keeps tourists interested in reading as well. Compactly presented information enhances a user's recognition and understanding of the message (Batini & Scannapieco, 2016). Therefore, representational conciseness also contributes to knowledge and positive judgments about a destination.

The impact of "*accessible*" information quality in the development of destination image was suggested. Accessibility (the degree to which e-tourism information is easily obtainable) is a precursor to the travel planning stage since it is a gateway for travelers to reach the required tourism information. It is, therefore, possible that accessibility affects the tourist decision making process since they are exposed to

information necessary for planning a trip (Vila, González, & Darcy, 2017). High quality tourism content is meaningless unless it is made accessible to the audience. The image as well as the branding of a destination can be strengthened by making information accessible whenever and wherever it is required.

The last sub-construct of representational quality is "*consistency*". Tourism information should be aligned throughout the content. The failure to organize such information makes the interpretation of tourism information more difficult. Equally important, one of the dissatisfactions of tourists was found to be the lack of consistency in professional travel guides (Tsegaw & Teressa, 2017). The study of Islamic e-tourism websites conducted by Samsi, Jamaluddin, Noor, Mohd, and Abdullah (2016) suggested a positive correlation between information consistency and usefulness and information satisfaction, even though a significant relationship was not observed. Having said that consistency and information satisfaction is related, a consistent e-tourism format could 1) encourage potential tourists to improve their internal cognitive evaluation; 2) improve the decision-making process; 3) strengthen approach behavior and intentions (i.e. stay longer on social media platforms and the intention to spread e-WOM by sharing tourism content). Therefore, it is clear that consistent tourism information leads to the formation of a positive cognitive image.

5.3.2.4 Social Quality and Cognitive Image

In this study, social quality is comprised of social interaction and social presence. However, the findings suggest that both sub-dimensions did not significantly contribute to the development of destination image. It is possible that a number of tourists use social media as a pathway to news and tourism information rather than seeking a space to project themself or to create interpersonal relationships in e-tourism channels (Shearer & Gottfried, 2017).

The study of Fernando (2007) and Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) also discovered that perceived social interaction in online communication was varied based on the purpose. People who have difficulties with face-to-face communication tend to use virtual space or an online communication platform for social interaction. On the other hand, people who find face-to-face communication satisfactory use online expression for informational activities. The result of this study, however, challenges previous

research. It suggests that text-based information, excluding any visual and sound impact, is not capable of social interaction enhancement. Social quality is, therefore, irrelevant to how tourists learn and evaluate the tourism attributes of a destination since user personality and internet used are different (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009).

5.3.2.5 Information Quality and Affective Image

The empirical findings suggested that information quality in social media did not statistically influence the development of tourists' affective image. Simply speaking, how tourists feel towards Thailand as a tourism destination is not impacted by the information that they are exposed to. Even though travelers' overall cognitive image is, either partially or totally, acquired from different sources of tourism information, the feelings of tourists is barely affected by such information. This lies in the fact that tourists would not really understand the feelings behind tourism information unless they have experienced the destination themselves. In addition, the formation of an affective evaluation is less important than the cognitive attitude when it comes to high-involvement situations, for example, tourism choices (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984).

The study of S. E. Kim et al. (2014), however, confirmed that some dimensions of information quality significantly affected the formation of affective image. Not only do value added, relevancy and interestingness as content cues have a positive influence on affective image, but it was also discovered that the amount the information, proposed as non-content cues, also exhibited a predictive power as well. Even though this empirical finding contrasts with S. E. Kim et al. (2014), these findings are consistent with the research conducted by Yamaguchi, Akiyoshi, Yamaguchi, and Nogawa (2015), which indicated a non-significant relationship between information and affective image in a Japanese context. It was explained that "information is a management factor, so sports tourism does not logically consider it to be a destination perspective." (Yamaguchi et al., 2015, p. 246).

5.3.3 Cognitive and Affective Destination Image

Destination image is made up of both the cognitive evaluation of tourism products as well as individual emotions created by a tourist destination. Using the human body as an analogy, the head represents the cognitive destination image while the heart acts as the affective one. Not only did the initial analysis show a positively significant

correlation between these two constructs, but the multiple regression analysis also revealed that cognitive image is an antecedent of affective destination image with a strong predictive power. In accordance with previous researches, the effect of cognitive image on affective destination image was validated (S. E. Kim et al., 2014; Lin et al., 2007; Russel & Prat, 1980; Ryan & Cave, 2005). This suggests that once tourists learn about a destination from various tourism sources, stronger positive feelings towards a tourism destination are produced.

5.3.4 Destination Image and Behavioral Intentions

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that destination image is the key predictor of tourists' behavioral intentions; revisit, WOM and e-WOM intention. The greater travelers conceive a positive destination image, the more it emotionally impacts their intentions to revisit, spread WOM and e-WOM. This result also verified the findings of previous researches in which the role of destination image on behavioral intentions was identified (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; C. F. Chen & Tsai, 2007; Lam & Hsu, 2006). Additionally, if a destination is strongly perceived in a positive way, the chance that tourists would return to the same destination in the future is considerably high (Moon, Ko, Connaughton, & Lee, 2013). Such revisit intention may come as a result of a positive emotional attachment with a destination which involves memories and experiences. Another possible explanation is that travelling back to a place is less time consuming when it comes to planning a trip. Furthermore, a sense of familiarity with a destination can also lead to a higher revisit intention, especially among those who are risk-averse, since tourists are ensured of travel satisfaction.

In regard to WOM and e-WOM, the unpaid spread of messages from person to person takes place. While WOM occurs through personal communication, e-WOM is transmitted through digital platforms. Regardless of how destination image is formed, it influences both the destination choice during their decision-making process and the after-the-trip behaviors of tourists (e.g. WOM and e-WOM) (C. F. Chen & Tsai, 2007). The results of this study are in line with the study of Prayogo and Kusumawardhani (2016), which suggested that the better the destination image, the greater the intention to revisit and share their travel experience. Therefore, it could be

concluded that tourists show a strong intention to spread direct travel experiences about a destination and then they become an influential source of customer-generated information when the destination image is positively perceived.

There are two major motives for sharing WOM and e-WOM about a destination. A tourist, who had direct experience of a destination, would create WOM or e-WOM for self-enhancement from talking about a destination with others. By providing tourist recommendations, people receive attention from potential travelers and project themselves as intelligent tourists with superior knowledge. Secondly, tourists may create their recommendation based on the willingness to help others in making decisions. From this perspective, either a positive or negative impression of the destination or destination image would also lead to WOM and e-WOM intention.

5.3.5 Behavioral Intentions

The findings of this study suggest interrelationships between tourists' future behaviors where the effect of revisit intention on WOM and e-WOM is highlighted. The findings of this study verified the results of previous researches which suggested that the higher the level of revisit intention, the greater the chance of a tourist spreading WOM/e-WOM (Bigne et al., 2001; Eusébio & Vieira, 2013; Oh, 1999)

5.4 Contributions of the Study

This empirical research utilized two major theories, the Stimulus-Organism-Response paradigm and the Theory of Planned Behavior, to investigate the hypothesized relationships between information quality in social media, destination image and behavioral intentions, with Thailand as the research context. The findings of this study provide key knowledge regarding information quality management in the tourism industry, which can be applied not only by destination marketing organizers but also by other agencies in the industry. Additionally, the findings make both academic and practical contributions. While such academic contributions can be perceived as a verification of theory in a specific industry and nation, the managerial contributions emphasize the policy recommendations for related bodies.

5.4.1 Academic Contributions

Since this research studied the effect of information quality in social media on perceived destination image and behavioral intentions, the findings added to the study of such constructs. Furthermore, the findings, to some degree, verified the results of previous researches. The empirical results suggest that three of four aspects of information quality; intrinsic quality, contextual quality and representational quality had a positive influence on the formation of cognitive image. The results also revealed representational quality to be the variable with the greatest effect on the development of cognitive image. Surprisingly, the results revealed no relationship between information quality and affective destination image. All interrelationships between destination image and behavioral intentions were also verified. Destination image was a determinant, with a strong predictive ability, of behavioral intentions, and revisit intention is also a good predictor of WOM and e-WOM intentions.

The key findings of this study also filled the literature gaps in several ways. First, to the best knowledge of the author, the application of the S-O-R model in social media, especially in a tourism context, has never been conducted. Therefore, this research greatly extends and verifies the use of the S-O-R paradigm across research contexts.

Secondly, social information quality in a social media context exhibited an unanticipated relationship as to what was primarily proposed. Even though no significant results were obtained for social quality and perceived destination image, there is a theoretical contribution. In this regard, the empirical results revealed that regardless of the information channel (either offline or online), the justification for information quality can be made by employing the same information quality assessment framework (intrinsic, contextual and representational quality).

Since a large number of studies have investigated the effect of WOM or e-WOM on revisit intention, limited research has studied the reverse causality. Nevertheless, this study verified the anticipated results as to the influence of revisit intention on WOM and e-WOM intentions. The findings have added to the literature in this area.

5.4.2 Managerial Implications

One of the objectives of this research was to provide insightful information in regard to the influential role of social media on destination image and the resulting behavioral intentions where the examined variables were found to have positive relationships. Regarding this point, it is therefore important for destination marketing organizers or related tourism businesses to adapt their strategies to suit the context.

The results firstly found intrinsic, contextual and representational quality of tourism information provided in social media to be the most important factors that influence cognitive destination image. In this regard, priority should be given to each of the components separately, so that effective implementation is enhanced. The managerial implications and strategies, which aim to enhance the effectiveness of "intrinsic" tourism information, are as follows.

E-tourism information in social media should reflect only the underlying reality of a destination without the content generator's bias or personal judgment so that "*accuracy*" can be improved. Moreover, content generators should bear in mind that seeking tourism information for different purposes and conditions requires various levels of accuracy. Therefore, providing very accurate tourism information may be unnecessary especially when it goes beyond tourists' ability to process the information. Simply speaking, different types of tourists require different levels of detail in tourism information, which is justified by their requirements. For example, tourists with a health condition may require greater accuracy in matters affecting their health.

Next, there are several ways of developing "*completeness*". First, destination marketing organizers should understand what kind of tourism information is expected to be collected, so that the difference between the expected and the actual tourism information can be minimized. In this regard, the completeness of tourism information is, hopefully, improved. Additionally, tourism information should be broadcast once all of the data are ready, unless potential tourists are informed that forthcoming tourism information is on its way.

Regarding "*objectivity*", reliable sources are suggested rather than using personal intuition. Tourism information should subject to a multi-tiered process of review so that personal experience and judgment can be minimized. Furthermore, the description of the physical and visible benefits of the tourism attributes of a destination should also be embedded. Where appropriate, supportive tourism information should be identified in cases where the "*reliability*" of the sources is questioned. The "o*riginality*" of tourism information can be developed by enhancing the level of creative skills as well as synthesizing current tourism information in a new way.

However, the success of information quality management is not only limited to intrinsic quality, but contextual quality must also be taken into consideration. The influence of contextual quality in social media for international tourists was proved to be a key predictor of cognitive destination image. In achieving a higher level of "contextual" tourism information, several strategies are suggested as follows.

It is likely that there are some difficulties for a destination rich in tourism resources in providing tourism information of an appropriate amount. Therefore, on the subject of the *"amount of data"*, it is suggested that tourism content should be appropriate in terms of quantity. In so doing, a series of interested subjects is presented rather than a long narrative. Each social media platform, however, has a different ideal length of post. For example, one of the statistics showed that a post in Facebook with less than 80 characters received 88% more engagement (Jackson, 2017). Therefore, a study on the optimal length for social media posts is strongly suggested.

In the regard to *"relevancy"* and *"value added"*, attention should be given to the initial design of tourism information, which should contain all elements of the information required by tourists. Therefore, the ability to provide applicable and useful tourism knowledge to prospective travelers relies on the discovery of tourists' needs even though relevant and value added tourism information about a destination is what tourists are attempting to obtain.

There is a bridge between the "*timeliness*" of tourism information and online communication platforms. With the fast-moving nature of social media, updated tourism information is undoubtedly expected. Data-driven decision making (i.e. destination choice) therefore requires information with the smallest differences between the time the information is captured by individuals and the time that real world events occur. It is highly recommended to reduce the lead time between tourism information creation and publication. In so doing, an appropriate number of people (for example copywriters, creative writers and graphic designers) should be considered. In addition, destination marketing organizers should not take the value of information for granted. In addition, there is a need for checking and refreshing information on a regular basis.

As tourists have different levels of English literacy, the complexity of language used may also affect tourists when they find tourism information too difficult to comprehend otherwise tourism information would fail to deliver what was intended. Regardless of the different levels of education targeted tourists have, the absence of jargon and technical language would improve the "*ease of understanding*" of tourism information. Additionally, a native proofreader should be used before circulating such information because the correction of grammatical errors and spellings would enhance the contents, and it would require less effort to understand.

The final variable influencing destination image is representational quality which comprises conciseness, accessibility and consistency. With an overwhelming quantity of information, not all of the contents are explored by the target audience. The statistics show that 55% of social media users spend less than 15 seconds reading a post (Read, 2016). Such a statistic suggests that tourism information should be short and concise in order to boost traffic in social media. On the other hand, the combined use of text and visual graphics (e.g. infographics, images or pictograms) can also result in improved "*conciseness*".

Tourism information should be made available to tourists whenever and wherever it is needed (i.e. *"accessibility"*). Constant investigation of accessibility barriers and corrective action must be conducted.

Furthermore, with 15% of the total world population living with a disability, UNWTO promoted the concept of universal accessibility in regard to tangible and intangible tourism product information (World Tourism Organization, 2016b). It is suggested that tourism information should be accessible to all people, including people with disabilities. In accordance with a rising global concern about accessible information in tourism, the design of tourism information should take disability conditions into account (for example using non-text content for those who have difficulties in functioning, or by using alternative multimedia, including sound, for visually impaired people).

Lastly, it is also important to maintain the "*consistency*" of aggregated tourism information derived from a particular social medium. An appropriate amount of time should be spent on improving format and content consistency.

In order to follow the suggestions, destination marketing organizers must have available resources so that improvements can be made. The main resources include, but are not limited to, people, time and information technology. Once tourism information quality in social media is improved, perceived cognitive destination image is then developed. Later, the affective image of a destination and tourists' behavioral intentions are positively affected. The chain effect among the variables, in this study, result from the information quality of social media. After applying these suggestions in the improvement of tourism information quality, a more favorable destination image and greater behavioral intentions are more likely.

Since cognitive image is easily observed and measured, this makes it possible for a destination to be promoted and marketed in a concrete and interpretive manner in regard to the uniqueness of tourism products and services. The unsurprising results revealed the fact that while international tourists enjoy the natural attractions, cultural history and art throughout the kingdom, Thailand is challenged by issues of safety and security. Improvements in such issues can be drivers of success in sustainable tourism. Local government and related organizations should be more proactive in warning and pointing out possible threats to international tourists' safety. Bad incidents, speedy recovery and transparency in criminal procedures should be evident.

Warning communications and corrective actions would enhance the reputation of Thailand as a tourism destination in international markets.

5.5 Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions derived from this study, this section includes policy recommendations related to information quality in social media in a tourism context. These recommendations are not only based on the discussion above, but also on the structures and current conditions of the industry. The effective implementation of policies is recommended as follows.

The Ministry of Digital Economy and Society should prioritize the digital network infrastructure and related investment throughout Thailand. This makes it possible for locals and international tourists to access tourism information and service seven in a less developed area where online network, most of the time, was found to be weak. It is recommended that the expansion of information and communication technology should be carried out equally nationwide. Not only major cities (e.g. Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket) and second tier cities are worthy of receiving governmental support, but tourism sites in outlying districts (lesser-known locations in other parts of Thailand) are also in need of innovation and technological support. In regard to this, sub-regional structures together with strategies and action plans should be established.

The development of national policies towards integrated tourism information across sectors should be carried out. The integration of tourism information from different key stakeholders (e.g. the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the Office of Tourism Advertising Department, the Tourist Organization of Thailand, Thailand Travel Agents Association, the Tourism Council of Thailand, and Destination Marketing Organizers), would help tourists to have a unified understanding of Thailand as a destination regardless of the source of information. Data integration from multiple sources can be achieved by assigning a clear tourism information role and responsibility to each unit. Furthermore, establishing a service unit, which is in charge of the process of information system integration, would also contribute to the good management of tourism information on digital platforms.

Additionally, the enhancement of the legal structure is highlighted. Since local government is aiming to push the country towards Thailand 4.0, several rules and regulations have already been revised in accordance with the nature of innovation-based industries, for example the Computer Crime Act (No.2) 2017. The law and regulations on digital technologies in Thailand are extensive but would be even greater if enforced. Thailand's government should strengthen the enforcement of false and misleading tourism information regulations to minimize tourist scams.

As far as the improvement of information quality is concerned, it is insufficient to have only technology infrastructure investment. Human capital ust also be developed. The government may use a wide range of approaches to educate people so that the value added tourism information presented in digital technology is effective. Human capital should be well-equipped in terms of digital information and tourism in Thailand can be promoted in the global market through digitally created tourist information.

Additionally, collaboration between stakeholders of tourism from both the public and private sectors, supporting industries and the local community (ranging from transportation, accommodation, sport and entertainment, souvenirs, food and beverage, human resources, and metropolitan police industry) should be examined. Although the goals of each industry are different, serving international tourists is a common goal when it comes to tourism activities. Such integration not only contributes to the pooling of resources, but greater business opportunities could also lead to a greater variety of tourism products for tourists. Although achieving cooperation between them is problematic for policy makers, inter-organizational relationships can be promoted by using a consortium approach. A consortium approach would minimize fragmented tourism information. Policymakers should be aware of the amount of money required to organize a consortium by taking into consideration the different subjects of interest, the number of expected participants, the venue and the timing of events. Once financial support is given on a regular basis, ongoing collaboration between organizations is feasible.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

A number of limitations have to be acknowledged. Since this quantitative empirical study was designed without any qualitative research elements, the varied interpretation of questionnaire items by respondents could possibly lead to unanticipated results. The information quality assessment framework used in this study focused on text-based information while visual design and other characteristics of social media (including pictures, visual design, sight, sound and motion) were disregarded. With reference to the sample group, only tourists who were travelling in Thailand were taken into consideration while prospective travelers who had not visited Thailand were not involved in the study. This means that the first-time segment requires subsequent investigation.

5.7 Future Research

Since the research context was limited to Thailand as a tourism destination, different destinations are highly recommended to verify hypothesized relationships by having information quality in social media as an independent variable. Additionally, the comparative study between or among destinations could strengthen and contribute more to the tourism literature. The result of this study can be extended by using qualitative approach, true intention towards a destination image can be even better explored. Taking social media components into consideration, apart from tourism information quality other non-content cues (i.e. social media design, the impact of sight, sound and motion) should be further investigated. The comparative study between content and non-content cues could benefit to both tourism and information technology literature as well as business practitioners in the industry.

Since this research found no significant relationship between social quality of tourism information provided in social media, further study is encouraged to add other dimension apart from text-based information (i.e. picture, webpage design, color and theme) in the research framework so that better insightful information can be given. Since the research context was limited to Thailand as a tourism destination, similar research at different destinations are recommended to verify the hypothesized

relationships by having information quality in social media as an independent variable. Additionally, comparative study between destinations could strengthen and contribute to tourism literature. The result of this study can be extended by using a qualitative approach so that true intentions in regard to destination image can be better explored. Taking social media components into consideration, apart from tourism information quality, other non-content cues (e.g. social media design, the impact of sight, sound and motion) should be further investigated. The comparative study of content and non-content cues could be of benefit to both tourism and information technology literature as well as business practitioners in the industry.

Since this research found no significant relationship between the social quality of tourism information provided in social media, further study is encouraged to add other dimensions apart from text-based information (e.g. pictures, webpage design, color and theme) in the research framework so that more insightful information can be acquired.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE IN ENGLISH

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this important questionnaire measuring Thailand's destination image for my Ph.D. thesis. The survey contains four parts and should take 10-15 minutes to complete. Please be assured that all answers you provide will be kept in the strictest confidentiality.

ICO NIDA
International College

Let we start with the simple question…

1. Have you used any of social media platforms prior to or during the trip in Thailand?
   ○ YES (continue to the next section)   ○ NO (end of the questionnaire)

2. BEFORE or DURING the trip to Thailand, you mainly found travel information from….
   (check all that apply)

Facebook   Flickr   Google+   Golbibo   Instagram   Kakao Talk   Line   LinkedIn   Odnoklassniki

Pinterest   QQ   Reddit   RenRen   Snapchat   Tumblr   Twitter   Vimeo   Vine

VKontakte   WeChat   Weibo   WhatsApp   Youku Tudou   Other:
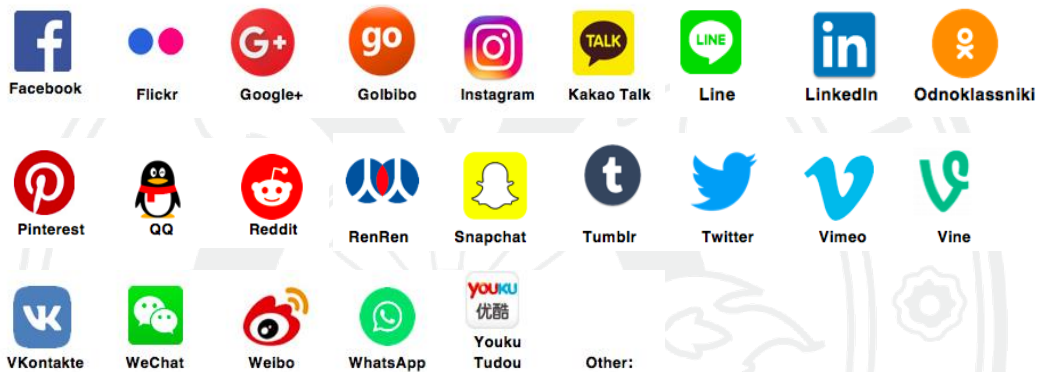
Part 1: Social Media

The following section is to understand your experience with social media platform that you used before/during the trip in Thailand. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Tourism information provided by social media platform of your choice is …

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1. The travel information obtained from social media is **correct**.						
2. The travel information obtained from social media is **accurate**.						
3. The travel information obtained from social media is **free of error**.						
4. The travel information obtained from social media **includes all necessary values.**						

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
5. The travel information obtained from social media is **sufficiently** complete for my travel needs.						
6. The travel information obtained from social media **covers the needs** of my travel purposes.						
7. The travel information obtained from social media has **sufficient breadth and depth** for my travel purposes.						
8. The travel information obtained from social media was **not influence by the feeling** of content generator.						
9. The travel information obtained from social media is **based on facts**.						
10. The travel information obtained from social media is **objective**.						
11. The travel information obtained from social media presents an **unbiased view**.						
12. The travel information obtained from social media is **believable**.						
13. The travel information obtained from social media is of **undoubtful credibility.**						
14. The travel information obtained from social media is **trustworthy**.						
15. The travel information obtained from social media is **credible**.						
16. The travel information obtained from social media takes up an idea that **has not been used elsewhere**.						
17. The travel information obtained from social media is **different** from others.						
18. The travel information obtained from social media is **unique**						
19. The travel information obtained from social media is of **sufficient** volume for our needs.						
20. The amount of travel information obtained from social media **match** our needs.						
21. The amount of travel information obtained from social media is **neither too much nor too little.**						
22. The travel information obtained from social media is **relevant** to my travel.						
23. The travel information obtained from social media is **in accordance with** my purpose to travel.						
24. The travel information obtained from social media **appropriate** for planning the trip						
25. The travel information obtained from social media is **applicable** to our trip.						
26. The travel information obtained from social media is quite **new**.						
27. The travel information obtained from social media is **continuously updated**.						
28. The travel information obtained from social media is **quickly provide** necessary information for the trip.						
29. The travel information obtained from social media is **easy to understand.**						

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
30. The travel information obtained from social media is required **less effort to interpret.**						
31. The travel information obtained from social media is **easy to comprehend.**						
32. The travel information obtained from social media is **effective** for planning a trip.						
33. The travel information obtained from social media is **useful** for planning a trip.						
34. The travel information obtained from social media is **helpful** for planning a trip.						
35. The travel information obtained from social media is **formatted compactly.**						
36. The travel information obtained from social media is **presented briefly but comprehensive.**						
37. The representation of the travel information obtained from social media is **compact and concise**.						
38. The travel information obtained from social media is **consistently presented.**						
39. The travel information obtained from social media is **presented in the same format.**						
40. The structure of the information provided is **conformity**.						
41. The travel information obtained from social media is **easily retrievable**.						
42. The travel information obtained from social media is **easily n accessible**.						
43. The travel information obtained from social media is **quickly accessible** when needed.						
44. The travel information obtained from social media is **easily obtainable**.						
45. Social media allows me to **belong** to a group with same interests as mine.						
46. Social media enables me to enjoy **asking and answering** other people regarding travel purpose.						
47. Social media enables me **express myself freely** regarding my own travel.						
48. This social media makes it seem like the **other person is present**.						
49. This social media makes it feel like the person I'm communicating with is **close by**.						
50. This social media makes it feel like **other people are really with me** when we communicate.						
51. This social media allows me to determine if **someone is really "there"** when communicating.						

Part 2: Destination Image

The following section is to understand your travel experience in Thailand.

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

From my perspective, I think Thailand is/offers ………

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)
1. Good climate						
2. Scenic beauty						
3. Unique flora and fauna						
4. Green cover						
5. Excellent transport facilities						
6. Variety of foodservice						
7. Less pollution						
8. Organized infrastructure						
9. Best shopping centers						
10. Amusement recreation						
11. Adventurous sites and activities						
12. Local cuisine and food outlet						
13. Monument and buildings						
14. Famous handicrafts						
15. Rich customs and religion						
16. Stable political environment						
17. Less crime rate						
18. Safe secure						
19. Hosts and friendly residents						
20. Easy to converse (engage in conversation)						
21. Good civic sense (get involve with locals)						
22. Good quality of life						
23. Economical mode of transportation						
24. Good price for accommodation						
25. Appropriately prices shopping merchandise						

When travelling in Thailand, I feel …

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	
Unpleasant							Pleasant
Gloomy							Exciting
Distressing							Relaxing
Negative							Positive
Unenjoyable							Enjoyable
Unfavorable							Favorable
Boring							Fun

Part 3: Behavioral Intentions

The following section is to understand your travel behavior in the future.
Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

In the future, I think….

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1. In recent years, if I plan for an outbound travel, I will visit Thailand						
2. If I plan a trip to Asia, I will visit Thailand.						
3. In short, I think Thailand is a good place deserving visit.						
4. According to my knowledge about Thailand, I will recommend my friend to travel to Thailand.						
5. I will share my knowledge about Thailand with my friends.						
6. I will recommend Thailand as a destination if my friends are planning a travel to Asia.						
7. I will share information with others online to help others making travel decision.						
8. I will share information with others online so that I can tell people about my travel experience in Thailand.						
9. Going online is the easiest way to share my Travel experience in Thailand.						

Part 4: Respondent Profile

Gender
- o Male
- o Female

Age
- o Below 20
- o 20-29
- o 30-39
- o 40-49
- o 50-59
- o 60 and older

Professional occupation
- o Students
- o Employee
- o Self-employed
- o Retired
- o Other

Nationality: _____

Country of residence: _____

Average monthly income
- o Less than USD $500
- o USD $500 - $1,000
- o USD $1,000 - $2,000
- o USD $2,000 - $3,000
- o Above USD $ 3000

Past experience in Thailand
- o First time visit
- o Repeat visit

Travel arrangement method
- o Personal group tour
- o Group package tour
- o Personally arranged/DIY tour
- o Other
  (e.g. government-sponsored visit)

Purpose of travel (for this trip)
- o Visiting friend and family
- o Holidays, leisure, recreation
- o Education and training
- o Health and medical care
- o Religion and pilgrimages
- o Shopping
- o Extreme activities
  (water rafting, sky diving, rock climbing, etc.)
- o Nightlife
- o Transit
- o Business
  (meeting, incentive, convention, exhibition)
- o Other:_____

Reason for using social for travelling
- o Inspiring
- o Planning the trip/ research
- o Finding information for restaurants, hotel, activities, places to visit
- o Reading reviews posted by others
- o Finding deals and buy travel products (i.e. flight, ticket, shows)
- o Sharing your travel experience with others during and after the trip
- o Memory keeping
- o Other:_____

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE IN CHINESE

此调查问卷是本人的博士毕业论文，内容关于泰国印象，共有4个部分。

大概10-15分钟结束问卷，此内容保密。

感谢您的支持。第一个问题是：

1. 当您来泰国之前或到泰国之后，有使用过社交软件吗？

    0   是（继续下题）   0   否 （调查结束）

2. 来到泰国的之前或之后您得到的大部分的旅游信息是从 ：（给相关的都打圈）
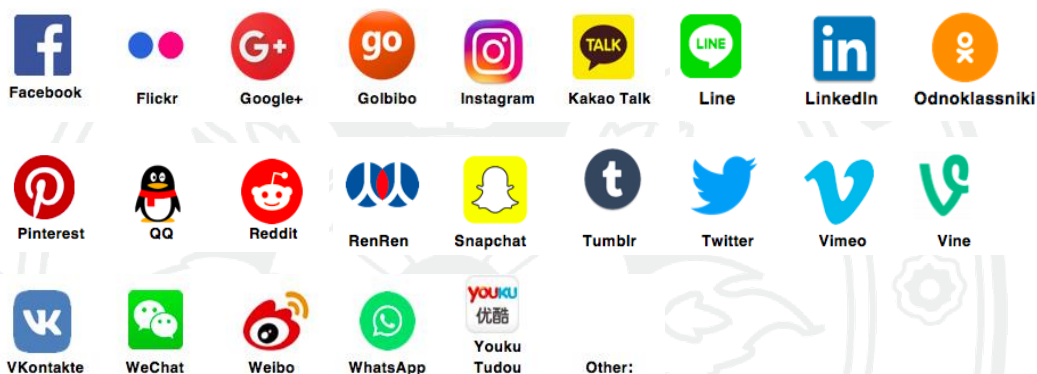
第一部分：社交媒体

其部分为了了解您来到泰国之前或之后使用社交软件的经历。请给以下问题打分。

您选择提供旅游信息的设计软件是：

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息是正确。						
2. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息是准确。						
3. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息是没有错误。						
4. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息包含了所有重要的东西。						

（表头：非常不同意 / 不同意 / 有些不同意 / 有些同意 / 同意 / 非常同意）

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
5. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息对我旅游需求充足。						
6. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息概括我旅游目的的需求。						
7. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息对我旅游目的拥有广度和深度。						
8. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息不受内容作者的情绪影响。						
9. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息为事实。						
10. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息是客观。						
11. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息是不偏不倚。						
12. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息是可信。						
13. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息的可信性不可疑。						
14. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息是可信任。						
15. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息有确实性。						
16. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息没在任何地方出现过。						
17. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息与其他通道不同。						
18. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息是与众不同。						
19. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息是足够。						
20. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息符合我们的需求。						
21. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息不是太多也不是太少。						
22. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息与我行程有关联。						
23. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息符合我旅游目的。						
24. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息适合行程计划。						
25. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息可适用在我们行程。						
26. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息较新。						
27. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息不停地更新。						
28. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息对我行程迅速地提供重要信息。						

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
29. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息容易懂。						
30. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息一目了然。						
31. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息对行程计划有效。						
32. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息对行程计划有用。						
33. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息对行程计划有帮助。						
34. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息拥有简洁的格式。						
35. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息简单但全面。						
36. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息的代表是紧凑和简洁。						
37. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息有一致性的表达。						
38. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息的表达有相同的格式。						
39. 信息的结构拥有一致性。						
40. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息容易检索。.						
41. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息容易取得。						
42. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息可在需要时迅速取得。						
43. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息容易获得。						
44. 社交媒体让我属于共同兴趣的群组。						
45. 设计媒体让我能够享受向其他人咨询与回答关于旅游的问题。						
46. 社交媒体让我自由地表达的旅行。						
47. 社交媒体显示其他人的存在。						
48. 社交媒体让我感觉到与我沟通的人是靠近的。						
49. 社交媒体让我感觉到当沟通时其他人是跟我一起。						
50. 社交媒体让我能确定沟通时有没有人在那里。						
51. 从社交媒体得到的旅游信息容易理解。						

第二部分：目的地印象

其部分为了了解您在泰国旅游的经历，请给以下的陈述句打分。

从我的角度，我认为泰国是／提供：

	非常不同意	不同意	有些不同意	有些同意	同意	非常同意
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1. 好天气						
2. 漂亮的风景						
3. 独特的植物和动物						
4. 绿色景						
5. 良好的交通设施						
6. 丰富的美食服务						
7. 少污染						
8. 有计划的基础设施						
9. 最佳购物中心						
10. 娱乐地点						
11. 冒险地方与活动						
12. 当地美食与餐厅						
13. 纪念馆与建筑						
14. 有名的手工业						
15. 浓厚的文化与信仰						
16. 稳定的政治						
17. 少率的罪行						
18. 安全						
19. 热情的主人						
20. 容易交谈						
21. 容易与当地人参与						
22. 良好的生活品质						
23. 经济型的交通						
24. 好价格的住宿						
25. 合适价格的购物商品						

当我在泰国旅游时，我感觉：

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	
不愉快							愉快
闷闷不乐							激动
忧愁							放松
消极							积极
不享受的							享受的
不喜欢的							喜欢的
无聊							好玩

第三部分：行为意向

此部分为了了解您将来的旅游行为，请给以下的陈述句打分。

未来，我认为：

	非常不同意	不同意	有些不同意	有些同意	同意	非常同意
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1.在未来的近几年，如有国际旅行计划，我会来泰国。						
2. 如有亚洲行程计划，我会来泰国。						
3. 总之，我认为泰国是个值得去的地方。						
4.根据我泰国的知识，我会向朋友推荐去泰国旅行。						
5. 我会把我泰国的知识分享给朋友。						
6. 如有朋友计划来亚洲旅游，我会推荐泰国。						
7 我会把信息分享在社交媒体，以帮助其他人做旅行计划。						
8. 我会把信息分享在社交媒体，以我告诉其他人关于我泰国的旅游经历。						
9. 使用社交媒体是分享我泰国旅游经历最简单的方法。						

第四部分：回答者资料

性别

- o 男
- o 女

年龄

- o 20以下
- o 20-29
- o 30-39
- o 40-49
- o 50-59
- o 60以上

职业

- o 学生
- o 公司员工
- o 个体户
- o 退休
- o 其他

国籍: _____

居住国家:_____

平均月收入

- o 低于500美金
- o 500-1000 美金
- o 1,000-2,000美金
- o 2,000-3,000美金
- o 超过3,000美金

泰国经历

- o 第一次
- o 有来过

选择在旅游方面使用社交媒体的理由是：

- o 鼓励的
- o 行程计划／研究
- o 寻找餐厅，酒店，活动，地点
- o 看其他人评论
- o 寻找优惠旅游产品（比如：机票，门票，表演）
- o 把自己在旅行当中或之后的经历分享给其他人
- o 保存记忆

旅行方式

- o 私人旅游团
- o 普通旅行团
- o 自由行
- o 其他（比如：政府赞助采访）

选择在旅游方面使用社交媒体的理由是：

- o 鼓励的
- o 行程计划／研究
- o 寻找餐厅，酒店，活动，地点
- o 看其他人评论
- o 寻找优惠旅游产品（比如：机票，门票，表演）
- o 把自己在旅行当中或之后的经历分享给其他人
- o 保存记忆

BIOGRAPHY

NAME   Ariyaporn Nunthiphatprueksa
ACADEMIC   Master of Science (2013)
BACKGROUND   International Business Management
                        Kingston University, United Kingdom

                        Bachelor of Business Administration (2012)
                        Hotel Management (International Program)
                        Silpakorn University, Thailand

                        Bachelor (2012)
                        International Hotel Management
                        Vatel Hotel and Tourism Business School, France
EXPERIENCES   Lecturer and Curriculum Committee
                        Silpakorn University International College

                        International Student Scholarship (2012)
                        Kingston University, United Kingdom

                        King Bhumibol Scholarships (2011)
                        Silpakorn University, Thailand