FACTORS AFFECTING BEHAVIORAL INTENTION OF TOURISTS TO TRAVEL INTO LOCAL DESTINATIONS IN RAYONG PROVINCE, THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to explore the factors affecting behavioral intention of tourists to travel into local destinations in Rayong Province, Thailand and to examine destination personality, tourist connection with destination, and tourists’ behavioral intention to visit the local tourist attractions in Rayong province. In addition, the study explored on the influences from the self-brand connection as the transmission factor from destination personality to the behavioral intention for visitation.

Theoretical framework: Destination Personality consisting of (1) conviviality, (2) sincerity, (3) excitement influence Self-brand connections which lead to Behavioral intention of revisiting intention and recommendation intention.

Methodology: This was quantitative research that used questionnaire to collect data from 385 tourists. Data were analyzed by Structural Equation Model (SEM)

Results and conclusion: The destination personality and self-brand connection had the influences on the behavioral intention to visit the destination confirmed by the empirical results stating that the brand connection are the transmission factor of destination personality toward the behavioral intention to travel.

Research Implications: This study benefits the tourism industry in Rayong province to realize the behavioral intention of tourists to travel into local destinations in Rayong Province so they can improve their destination personality and brand connection in order to gain revisiting of tourists.

Originality value: This study presents the new knowledge of destination personality and tourist attraction brand connection that they are related and have direct influences on tourist intentions to revisit the place.

Keywords: Destination Personality, Behavioral Intention to Travel, Self-Brand Connection.

FATORES QUE AFETAM A INTENÇÃO COMPORTAMENTAL DOS TURISTAS DE VIAJAR PARA DESTINOS LOCAIS NA PROVÍNCIA DE RAYONG, TAILÂNDIA

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este estudo tem como objetivo explorar os fatores que afetam a intenção comportamental dos turistas de viajar para destinos locais na província de Rayong, Tailândia, e examinar a personalidade do destino, a conexão turística com o destino, e a intenção comportamental dos turistas de visitar as atrações turísticas locais na província de Rayong. Além disso, o estudo explorou as influências da conexão de marca própria como o fator de transmissão da personalidade de destino à intenção comportamental para visitação.

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Estrutura teórica: Destino Personalidade consistindo em (1) convivialidade, (2) sinceridade, (3) emoção influenciar conexões de marca própria que levam à intenção comportamental de revisitar intenção e recomendação intenção.

Metodologia: Foi uma pesquisa quantitativa que utilizou questionário para coletar dados de 385 turistas. Os dados foram analisados pelo Modelo de Equação Estrutural (SEM)

Resultados e conclusão: A personalidade de destino e a conexão de marca própria tiveram as influências sobre a intenção comportamental de visitar o destino confirmadas pelos resultados empíricos, afirmando que a conexão de marca é o fator de transmissão da personalidade de destino para a intenção comportamental de viajar.

Implicações da pesquisa: Este estudo beneficia a indústria do turismo na província de Rayong para perceber a intenção comportamental dos turistas de viajar para destinos locais na província de Rayong para que eles possam melhorar sua personalidade de destino e conexão de marca, a fim de ganhar a visita de turistas.

Valor da originalidade: Este estudo apresenta o novo conhecimento da personalidade do destino e da ligação da marca da atração turística que eles estão relacionados e têm influências diretas nas intenções turísticas de revisitare o lugar.

Palavras-chave: Personalidade de Destino, Intenção Comportamental de Viagem, Conexão AutoMarca.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Local tourism has more role in the local community, when tourism industry expands more economic activities near to the local livings in the community. Tourism does not concentrate in the large cities; distribution into the community would result on many local communities to prepare for the visitation of tourists. They would use tourism as the tool for economic and life quality development. Since it is believed that tourism is among the key sectors to help developing the community economy both in local and global level. Tourism has the major role for the national and regional economic growth (Sokhanvar, 2019).

Tourism destination has brought brand identity strategy to use more in order to boost up good reaction from consumers. Branding and forming differentiation are the key procedures to generate and remain with the competitive advantages. Brand personality has the role toward branding. Measuring on brand personality can be applied with destination personality measurement as well. Personality can be linked with destination both directly and indirectly. Destination personality has positive result toward the perceiving of the destination image and recommending intention since tourism destination can replace each other and there are high competitiveness in the world tourism market. Destination personality, then being considered as a practical guideline for destination branding and to form particular identity for the destination (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006).

Brand personality is the concept that indicates the individual characteristics of each person toward brand (Aaker, 1997). Personality of the leading brands would add preferences and brand usage thorough the promoting of trust and loyalty (Aaker, 1997). Therefore, it is a crucial marketing tool that would lead to the purchasing intention (Freling and Forbes, 2005), and to fasten the relationship with brand image (Escalas, 2004; Moliner et al., 2018). Under the competitive environment, forming close emotional relationship with customers would ensure that customers would select to buy or consume the products (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). On the tourism aspect, brand personality can be called as destination personality. It is to understand
on the tourists’ perception related to the destinations and forming specific identity for the destination (Ekinci and Hosany., 2006). With this symbolic characteristic, tourism destination is the key factor to attract the tourists and arouse their emotion and trust. Destination personality is the tool to separate the destination from the rivals and the key factor for purchase intention (Ekinci and Hosany., 2006). Destination identity can form differences and add values to such destination in order for the destination characteristics to be able to guarantee for the sustainability and become the further direction for innovation (Boksberger, et al., 2011). Destination personality consists of the characteristics that promote for tourists visitation to the next destination (Suryaningtyah. et al., 2020). Therefore, forming destination personality with interesting identity will be an effective marketing tool for the development and sustainably preservation of the destination. Apart from that, destination personality is another factor resulting on self-brand connection (Kumar, 2016); while brand connection is the key factor to promote the behavior of tourists to visit the destinations (Yang et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2022).

Rayong is the province that consists of integrated agricultural, tourism, and industrial potential. It has tourism diversity from beaches, sea, islands, mountains, waterfall, fruits garden, as well as fresh and clean seafood. There are total of 1,139 community enterprises in Rayong province (data on 23 November 2023) with 24 community enterprises that provide tourism services (Community Enterprise Registration and Information Group, 2023). Working on community enterprise is the crucial activity for the local economy system and life quality of people in order to strengthen the foundation in the area.

According to the National Economic and Social Development Plan No. 12 B.E. 2560 – 2564 based on the 2nd strategy, forming fairness and reducing inequality in the society, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives; therefore, put in place a strategy to improve the quality of life and create sustainability for the community enterprises. Thus, to be in line with the goal to eliminate hunger, achieving food security, and promoting toward sustainable agriculture according to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Also, with the significance of destination personality, self-brand connection is another marketing tool that results on visitation and the sustainable development of tourism destination.

The researcher interested to study on destination personality and self-brand connection of consumers that would result on the decision to travel. This would be beneficial and being a guideline for the tourism community enterprises, government units, or other tourism destinations to apply or consider to support on tourism business to sustainably drive forward the community economy.

Research questions for this study are:

1. Does destination personality factor have an influence on the behavioral intention to travel?
2. Does factor of destination personality have an influence on the self-brand connection?
3. Does destination personality have an influence on the behavioral intention to travel through self-brand connection?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brand Personality

Brand Personality can be defined as “group of human characteristics that connect to the brand” (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). It is the concept that indicates about the individual characteristics of a person toward brand (Aaker, 1997). Moreover, it is a concept that plays a role toward branding that can link consumer personality with the brand in which allows them to be able to remember and separate the brands. In the consumer perspective, brand with personality can present the complicate human personality sensation with much connected to product in all
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dimension (Xie and Lee, 2013); and consumers tend to buy products with more personal individualistic (Front and McCabe., 2017). In the past 10 years, the scholars had gathered the concept related to brand personality to study on the relevance and efficiency of tourist destinations under the framework of brand personality, so called destination personality (Ekinci and Hosany., 2006., Klabi., 2012. Usakli and Baloglu., 2011., Hultman et al., 2017). Destination Personality is the tool to differentiate the destination from rivals, and being the main factor to reflect the business image (Ekinci and Hosany., 2006). Tourist destination identity adds values and creates differentiation for the characteristics of the destination in line with innovation forming and to support for the further sustainability of such destination (Suryaningsih et al., 2020). Destination personality is a factor of deciding to visit such destination. In the selection of destination, tourists with different personalities would select different destinations; thus, it can be summed that destination personality is the factor to promote for the re-visitation of the tourists and to suggest the other to visit the place (Usakli and Baloglu., 2011., Yang et al., 2020). Also, this is the main factor toward the intention to visit the destination (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Suryaningsih et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2022). Therefore in this study, the researcher studied on destination personality affecting the behavioral intention to travel by the tourists.

On the issue of deciding to buy the consumption product, consumers have the tie with brand that can reflect their own identity and having the concept that right to their need. (Escalas and Bettman, 2003; Escalas, 2004; Cooper et al., 2010). This results on the consumers’ selecting brands and products that conform to their own image (Chaplin and John, 2005; Hankinson, 2004). Consumer’s self-congruity is the pairing between brand image, or brand personality with self-concept (Hosany and Martin, 2012; Sirgy and Su, 2000). This is self-brand connection which is the processing of self-conformance mechanism in form of setting for the mutual between consumer identity and brand personality (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2012). Consumers’ self-brand connection refers to the relationship that connects things from brand with the consumer concept (Escalas, 2004; Escalas and Bettman, 2005). Such relationship will help forming positive attitude with brand and connects consumers’ feeling with the brand, plus enhancing loyalty and products selection (Escalas, 2004; Naletelich and Spears, 2020; van der Westhuizen, 2018). Therefore, in the tourism business perspective, connection with brand affects the decision to visit to the destinations.

2.2 Self-Brand Connection

Self-brand connection is the connection that consumers form up between brand and self-identity. When consumers see more significance in such brand, consumers would more connect with the brand (Escalas, 2004). Sometimes, consumers need the brand that help them forming or showing their own concept as required (Escalas, 2004; Escalas and Bettman, 2005; Cooper et al., 2010). The relationship between self-brand connection and consumers will be more tightened when consumers use brand image or personality to communicate with the others (Escalas, 2004; Moliner et al., 2018). In the same way, when the brand image or personality conforms with the self-image, no matter in case of reality or in the ideal, self-brand connection tends to take place (Escalas and Bettman, 2005; Harrigan et al., 2018). Therefore, the hypothesis can be given that destination personality results on the self-brand connection. From the above theoretical concept, it can be concluded that self-brand connection is the transmission factor from destination personality to the behavioral intention to travel.

Therefore, from the literature review, the conceptual framework of this study can be summarized as follows.
3 METHODOLOGY

This study was quantitative research. The population in this study was the tourists who visited the local community tourism destination of Rayong in 2022. There were 385 samples in this study calculated the sample size by Cochran formula to find the infinite population with the confidence level of 0.95 or the deviation at 0.05 (Cochran, 1977). Simple Random Sampling was applied. Data collection used rating scale questionnaire that setting for the weighing criteria assessment in 5 levels based on Likert. The researcher analyzed to find the quality of tool by bringing draft of questionnaire to try-out with 30 samples and analyzed to find the confidence value. Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient was at 0.85, which was higher than 0.70. It meant this questionnaire was suited and credible. Research questionnaire was divided into three sections below.

1. Destination personality started in Brand Personality Scale: BPS in which developed by (Aaker, 1997) consisting of 5 dimensions of brand personality: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophisticated, and Ruggedness. The academics had studied on destination personality based on the brand personality concept by Aaker and applied to measure destination personality consisted of 3 dimensions: conviviality, sincerity, and excitement (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Ekinci et al., 2007; Zang et al., 2022).

2. Self-brand connection; this study assessed on self-brand connection consisting of 6 questions (Escalas, 2004; Harrigan et al., 2017).

3. Behavioral intention to travel; this study measured behavioral intention to travel in two issues: intention to revisit, and intention to recommend the others (Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou, 2015; Kim et al., 2018; Sharma and Nayak, 2018).

Data analysis and statistical used in this research were descriptive and inferential statistics to explain on risk management and balancing performance efficiency using average and standard deviation values. Confirmatory Factor Analysis: CFA was applied to confirm the factor in measurement model, while the Structural Equation Modeling: SEM was used to test on the relationship of parameters with the Maximum Likelihood Estimates or ML); plus, the significant statistical values were used to check on the conformity of such model (Weiser, 2020).

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher analyzed on the level of destination personality, self-brand connection, and behavioral intention to travel by Descriptive Statistics which were the average and standard deviation as can be seen in table 1. It was found that the result of destination personality was in high level at the average of 4.01 (S.D. = 0.59). Self-brand connection was in moderate level with the average of 3.09 (S.D. = 0.60), and the behavioral intention to travel was high at the average of 3.99 (S.D. = 0.58).
Table 1 average and standard deviation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Level of opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( \bar{x} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Destination Personality</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. conviviality</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. sincerity</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. excitement</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self- brand connection</strong></td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Able to identify with this tourism site</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Able to feel a personal connection to this tourism site</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Able to use tourism site to express tourists to other people</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. This site help tourists to become the person they want</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. This tourism suit tourists well</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. This tourism site reflects who the tourists are</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioral intention</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Revisit Intention</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Recommendation Intention</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ Analysis(2023)

4.1 Results of Relationship Analysis

According to structural equation model testing, it was found that the relationship was conformed to the empirical data. When considering on the criteria of conformity assessment of the original model and the empirical data, it was found that Chi-square Probability Level: CMIN-\(p\) was 29.292; Relative Chi-square: CMIN/DF was 1.575 at p-value of 0.053. Goodness of fit index: GFI was at 0.933 and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation: RMSEA was 0.054; while p-value must higher than 0.05 and CMIN/df must lower than 3. GFI must higher than 0.90 and RMSEA value must lower than 0.08. All the indexes passed the criteria, thus, it can be concluded that the relationship measuring model was conformed to the empirical data as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Empirical Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluating the Data-Model Fit</th>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>Analysis results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1( CMIN-(p) Chi-square Probability Level</td>
<td>(p&gt;0.05)</td>
<td>29.929 at (p = 0.053)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2( CMIN/df Relative Chi-square</td>
<td>&lt;3</td>
<td>1.575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3( GFI Goodness of fit index</td>
<td>&gt;0.90</td>
<td>0.933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4( RMSEA Root Mean Square Error of Approximation</td>
<td>&lt;0.08</td>
<td>0.054</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’Analysis(2023)

From the relationship testing by the Structural Model Results, it was found that destination personality had an influence on the behavioral intention to travel at the statistical level of \(\beta = 0.904\), \(t = 12.949\) and had an influence toward self-brand connection at the statistical significance level of (\(\beta = 0.714\), \(t = 6.769\)). As well, the result from the test of influence from Self-brand connection toward behavioral intention to travel was found with statistical significance level of influence (\(\beta = 0.229\), \(t =2.408\)). It can be summarized from the testing result that the research result supported hypotheses no. 1, 2, and 3 as can be seen from table 3.

Table 3 Structural Model Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(\beta)</th>
<th>S.E</th>
<th>(t)</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destination Personality</td>
<td>.904</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>12.949***</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Brand Connection</td>
<td>.229</td>
<td>.129</td>
<td>2.408*</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factors Affecting Behavioral Intention of Tourists to Travel into Local Destinations in Rayong Province, Thailand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination Personality</th>
<th>→ Self-Brand Connection</th>
<th>.714</th>
<th>.105</th>
<th>6.769***</th>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Note*\(p < 0.05\), ***\(p < 0.001\)

Source: Authors’ Analysis (2023)

According to hypothesis 4th that studied on self-brand connection which was the transmission factor between destination personality and behavioral intention to travel via testing on direct and indirect influence. As can be seen from table 4, it was found that destination personality had indirect influence on behavioral intention to travel (0.163). In addition, the testing on the influence of transmission variable using the method of Sobel Test (Soper, 2015) found that the statistical value of Sobel Test was at 3.436 (P-value = 0.00). From the statistical result, it can be summed that hypothesis 4th was acceptable. Destination personality had an influence on the behavioral intention of the tourists to travel through the factor of self-brand connection which was part of the transmission factor (Partial Mediation) (Joseph F. Hair, et al., 2014).

Table 4 Model Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Self-Brand Connection</th>
<th>Behavioral Intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct Effect</td>
<td>Indirect Effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination Personality</td>
<td>.435</td>
<td>000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Brand Connection</td>
<td>000</td>
<td>000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ Analysis (2023)

According to the study, the factor affecting the behavioral intention of the tourists to travel into the local destination in Rayong province found that the destination personality was the factor influencing on the behavioral intention to travel of the tourists. The higher the destination personality is outstanding, the more the behavioral intention of the tourists to visit. This study showed that destination personalities differentiated destinations in the local community of Rayong. It attracted the tourists with the influence over the preference. Destination personality such as conviviality, sincerity, and excitement had an influence over the behavioral intention to travel by the tourists (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Suryaningsih et al., 2020; Usakli and Baloglu, 2011; Yang et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2022; Alrawi, F., & Nssaif, H., 2023). Another factor affecting the behavioral intention to travel was the self-brand connection in which conformed to the previous researches (Escalas, 2004; Naletelich and Spears, 2020; van der Westhuizen, 2018; Pandey et al, 2023). This showed that the more the feeling of consumers conformed to the brand, the more the tourists love the destinations. This resulted on their intention to revisit and recommend. The charm and identity of the community...
destinations in Rayong also conformed to the tourists’ identity which led to good attitude toward destinations. This would result on well perception and good result for the behavioral intention to travel of the tourists.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Results from this study support for the suggestion that the tourists connect their own personality with the destination when seeking for the satisfied travelling experiences and they tend to choose the area that direct with their personality (Murphy et al., 2007). When the destination personality conforms to self-image, they would feel connected with the destination (Escalas and Bettman, 2005; Harrigan et al., 2018). This study reflects that as the tourists connect themselves with the destination, it is the transmission factor with influence from destination personality toward the behavioral intention of the tourists to travel as well.

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