A STUDY OF INDEPENDENT CHINESE TOURISTS' POST-VISIT DESTINATION IMAGE OF PHUKET BASED ON USER-GENERATED CONTENT

[1]JIAMIN ZENG, [2]DANAITUN PONGPATCHARATRONTEP

College of Art, Media and Technology, Chiang Mai University
E-Mail: [1]zeng2483613716@gmail.com, [2]danaitun@yahoo.com

Abstract - This study aims to identify the image of Phuket by independent Chinese tourists on the post-visit stage. Web-based text mining has been used to content-analyze the narrative information of the sampled websites. The image was analyzed through three aspects-cognitive, affective and conative, then further study was taken to figure out the factors that influence Chinese tourists' satisfaction on the key components-attractions, entertainment, accommodation and restaurants. The result suggested that Phuket is positively accepted as a mature and developed destination with prominence on natural attractions. However, the critics are mainly about its over tourism.

Key Words - Content analysis, Destination image, Independent Chinese tourists, Online reviews, Phuket, Satisfaction, Text mining, User-generated content

I. INTRODUCTION

The five "s" of tourism- sun, sea, sand, surf and sex indicate the importance of coastal and marine environment which has become one of the fastest growing areas of the world's tourism industry. Islands are always the center of public interests and attractions of numerous tourists. Island tourism, in some extent, balanced the loss of jobs in agriculture and manufacturing with the compensation of economic growths and working opportunity come along with it [1][2].

Phuket, the biggest island of Thailand, was crowned by US News the seventh best place to go in 2018-19, possessing the second-best beaches in the world. As a major pillar of Phuket's economy, the tourism industry remains it's contributions and results in better roads, hospitals and public utilities. Mainland China has long become the major source market of the international tourists to Phuket. China is gaining prominence as the outbound tourism giant which spent nearly a fifth of the total tourism expenditure [3]. The world has witnessed the importance of Chinese tourists, consequently, island destinations such as Bali, Saipan, Mauritius, Seychelles and etc are competing to attract more Chinese tourists. Phuket, as the no.1 island destination Chinese tourists favored seems like having little comprehension about Chinese tourists.

Destination image is examined by researches and proved to positively influence destination loyalty and tourist's overall satisfaction [4]. To gain a better understanding of the Chinese tourists' perception should not only help Phuket maintain its competitiveness, but also necessary to improve the quality of travel experience in Phuket. Previous study have used a variety of materials for destination image, but the author argues that reviews which are comparatively short than travel notes actually present the recall of the travel experience and therefore illustrate the deep impression tourists held on a destination, are more holistic and appropriate. Independent tourists who are 60% of the overall outbound Chinese tourists are targeted in this research [5].

Therefore, to fill the gap in the research literature of Phuket, this study aims to evaluate the perceived destination image of Phuket by Independent Chinese tourists through online reviews. To be specific, the research objectives are;

1) to investigate the destination image of Phuket by Independent Chinese tourists.
2) to find out the factors that influence Chinese tourist' satisfaction on the key components of destination image.
3) to offer some implication for destination image planer based on the results of this study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Destination Image Formation Process

Although destination image is often used in the tourism research field, there is still no precise definition. Nevertheless, it is generally accepted as the perception, beliefs, ideas or impression a tourist hold on a destination [6], [7], [8],[9].

To understand the process of image formation is important for influencing the destination selection process of potential tourists, so as to find the elements that have an effect on their decision-making process. Two stages have been identified with the transfer of destination image. In the pre-visit stage, the perception of one destination is based on the information of non-commercial sources, such as the general media, education and others' opinions, thus

the image is organic [10]. When further effort has been made to gain information about some destinations, the image will be influenced by the more commercial information such as travel brochures and guidebooks. In this process, only destination with strongly positive image will stand out [11]. Until tourists visited the destination, in the stage of post-visitation, the image will be modified to primary or perceived image through the actual experience. The recent tourism literature seems to admit the importance of the rationality and emotionality on the development of image of a destination [12], as a result of three main components of destination image: cognitive, affective and conative destination image [13], [14], [15]. User-generated content

Internet has become one of the most effective means for tourists to seek travel-related information [16]. Internet and mobile technologies brought the opportunity for people to share their experiences on airline, hotel, restaurants, lodging and any other activities, resulting in the explosion of user-generated content.). UGC is considered an electronic form of word-of-mouth (EWOM) marketing that has traditionally been described as the way which a customer recommend an event that has created some extent of satisfaction to friends, relatives, and colleagues [17].

In the field of tourism, Traveler-generated contents(TGC) is the main source of gaining travel information and 90% of tourists trust online reviews for decision making and planning [18], [19].

B. Measurement of perceived/overall Destination Image

The construct process of destination image is complex and there is no existing standardized system for analyzing destination image and its components [20]. Researches mainly applied structured methodologies to study destination image. Semantic differential or likert type scales are most used in the measurement of destination image [21], [22]. The majority of them have focused on the common attributes components of destination image but have overlooked the holistic and unique aspects. Reference [23] have criticized the limitation and disadvantages of using predominant attributes to elicit tourists' perception of one destination.

Unstructured methodologies are more conducive to examine the holistic components of image and to capture the unique features. In recent years, the use of qualitative data—textual and/or pictorial materials are trending upward[24]. The approaches for analyzing textual messages in order to measure DI is borrowed from content analysis methodology which is developed in social sciences [25]. Sorting and categorization techniques are commonly accepted to identify the frequencies of certain words or concepts in textual materials that collected from open sources or generated in the research process from the participants and treat most frequent ones as variables, or dimensions, of the DI construct [20].

C. Text mining based online reviews analysis

Text mining has received a lot of attention as a method which saving time and effort for analyzing unstructured information, comparing to conventional approaches. It is characterized as a knowledge-intensive process of identifying and extracting useful information from textual documents by using a set of analysis tools [26]. Therefore, the process of text mining is a process of discovering knowledge based on co-occurrence relationships between concepts that extracted from the documents[26].

Text mining has been employed to various domains, such as tourism and hospitality management [27], [28]. Refernce [29] did a qualitative analysis using leximancer to study the destination image of China through travel blogs. Reference [30] used CATPAC II software to examine the online destination image by comparing national tourism organization's and tourists' perspectives. Studies about Chinese tourists are mainly carried out by Chinese scholars on Chinese destination, few touched the destination of other countries. ROST CM6, a text mining tool designed by Dr. Shen of Wuhan University and his team has been used to analyze travel contents by several researchers [31].

III. METHODOLOGY

This research has designed to be a two-phase study. The perceived destination image will be examined based on three components of image-cognitive, affective and conative. In the first Phase, the destination perception model was built through previous research attributes and the objectives of this research. To capture the cognitive components of the destination image that independent Chinese tourists have on Phuket, the cognitive image is measured through four attributes and 16 sub-attributes- tourism attractions(A1 Natural Attraction, A2 Historical Attraction), tourism activities(B1 Accommodation, B2 Entertainment, B3 Transportation, B4 Shopping, B5 Food & restaurant), social and economic environment(C1 Price level, C2 Architecture, C3 Climate, C4 Infrastructure , C5 Cleanliness, C6 Quality of air, C7 People, C8 Language), service(D1 Service quality). 1289 online tourist reviews about Phuket were collected from representative travel websites -Qyer.com and Lvyou.baidu.com.

The second Phase started after the main components of the destination image has been revealed according to the result of Phase 1. According to the result of Phase 1, tourism attractions, accommodation,

Restaurant and entertainment are the main components of the destination image of Phuket. To elicit the factors that have impact on tourists' satisfaction on the main components, the researcher chose different sources of data according to its representativeness. Web-based text mining has been used to content-analyze the narrative information of the sampled websites. Fig.1 shows research process.

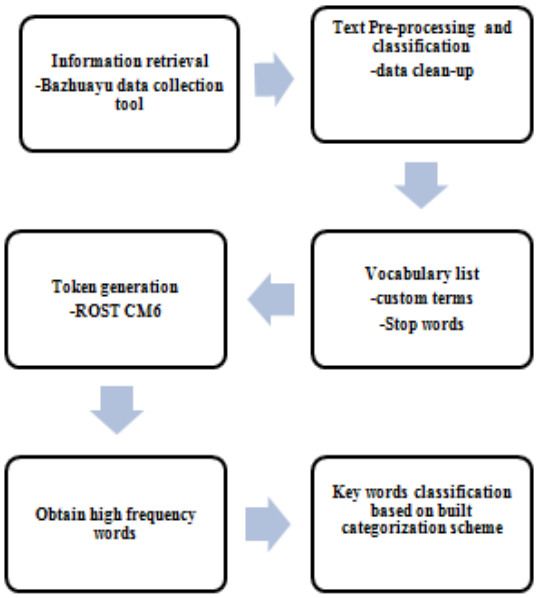


Figure 1: Process Map

IV. RESULTS

A. Destination image of Phuket
Cognitive Image Analysis

121 terms have been collected for further study. Terms with high ratio(>0.3%) have been classified with the aforementioned destination image construction scheme from four categories, Tourism Attractions(A), Tourism Activities(B), Social and Economic Environment(C) and Service(D).Key terms such as Phuket, Thailand and other irrelevant terms are not included in the classification. The author then calculated the ratio of the frequency of a term over the frequency of all collected terms. It was found that tourism attractions with the ratio of 43.96% is the biggest component of tourist's image, in which natural attractions was proved to be what Chinese tourists most impressed for. Beaches was found to be the most frequently referred key terms in natural attraction with more than 2 times the ratio of the second most commented term "Patong beach". The highly commented natural attractions are exhibited in Fig.1. Comparing to natural attractions, historic attractions received less attention, with only two terms have been discovered. Phuket town and Wat Chalong are famous for architecture.

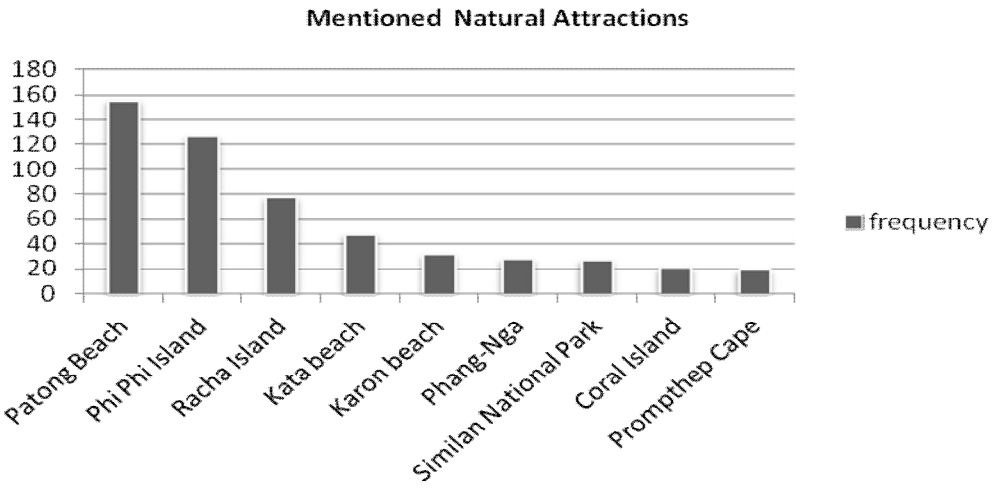


Figure2: Most Commented Natural Attractions

Referring to tourism activities, entertainment with a ratio of 10.18% is the most commented aspect. It is commonly perceived that Phuket has a diversity of entertainment activities and shows. Fig.2 shows the mentioned entertainment activities. Diving is the most popular term.

Accommodation ranks no.2 in the attribute of activity. Breakfast is the most mentioned term except "hotel", it may indicates the importance of it as a factor that have an effect on their satisfaction. Terms such as "facilities", "swimming pool", "location", "room" and "style of decoration" are also commented in the category of accommodation. Food and restaurant is the third most mentioned activity. It is not surprising that seafood is the most popular term and fruit the second.

The seafood market is recommended for fresh seafood but they seem to hold different opinion on the price. Patong is recommended for finding restaurants and it is the hub where most of the popular restaurants that attract Chinese tourists located. Some can not accept the thai-flavored cuisine like Tom Yum Goong. They

commented that the graphical menu with number on every dish makes the process of ordering food easier.

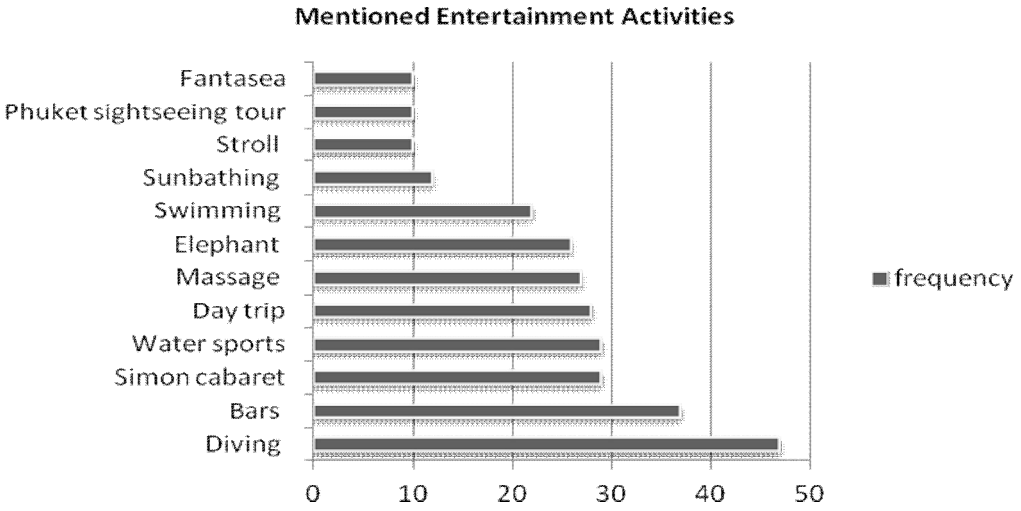


Figure3: Most Commented Entertainment Activities

Motorcycle is the most frequently used term on transportation. No.955 commented that " circling the island with a motorcycle is just exciting and wonderful." Yacht is a preferred water vehicle with an advantage of speed comparing to boat. Renting a car or sharing with others also are popular choice to visit around the main Phuket town. Shopping is the least reviewed sub-attribute in tourism activity. Key terms are "shopping" and "Jungceylon" which is a well-known shopping mall in Patong.

Social and economic environment and service are less mentioned. Tourists tend to think the price level of Phuket is slightly higher than before because of its popularity among Chinese tourists. Especially Patong beach, attracting more tourists than other attractions, is more expensive than other beaches like Kata and Karong beach. Local people are regarded as friendly and hospitable. The comments shows that Chinese tourists actually don't have much the problem of communication, they wrote that "you don't need to be fluent in English." or "people here can speak some Chinese, some are even fluent especially the tour guide."

Affective Image Analysis

The first two key words in table 1 shows the emphasis on the natural scenery of Phuket. " Bustling" is describing the nightlife of Bangla road with various bars and pubs. The fourth term is about the price of Phuket, it is less expensive than the popular Chinese island destination-Sanya, Hainan. Food was positively obtained as delicious.

Only a few negative key words shows their discontent on their journey. The critics are mainly about the developed tourism itself of being excessive. The truth is that tourists will be attracted by the popularity of a destination but when it is overpopulated, the natural beauty may be ruined by the crowds. Some felt regretful because they missed the chance to visit one wonderful attraction or activity that is appealing to them for reasons like weather, schedule or others.

Table 1: Top 5 Key Positive Affective Words

Key words	Frequency	Ratio
Gorgeous	77	8.52%
Beautiful	77	8.52%
Bustling	61	6.75%
Inexpensive	50	5.53%
Delicious	33	3.65%

Conative Image

37 comments talked about the intention of re-visitation, among which, 21 comments shows positive intention that they want to revisit Phuket. Those held negative attitude criticized the large number of Chinese tourists and that Phuket lost the pureness and quietness for its overdevelopment. The purposes of travelling to Phuket are mainly about spending a vacation here and that it is selected as a honeymoon destination.

B. Factors that influence the satisfaction of the key components of Destination Image of Phuket

Attractions& Entertainment

1085 online reviews of top 15 attractions and entertainment activities were collected from Mafengwo.com by the date between November, 2017 and April, 2018., the no.1 tourism websites in china according to the statistics of China webmaster on FEB, 2018. The result of text mining shows the implication that Chinese tourists care about the water quality and sand of the natural attractions most. Both of the beaches and the islands have sea water and sand in

their top key terms. For beaches, the critics lie in the "unclean sea water", "coarse sand', "too many Chinese tourists" and "garbage". Particularly, Patong beach is the most criticized among the three most popular beaches. Islands are criticized by being crowded, coarse sand, expensive water sports, unclean sea water, bad environment and long time of transportation. Among the selected natural attractions, Coral Island has the highest negative rate(3.79%).

Conforming to the result of Phase 1, the historic attractions in the top 15 are Phuket town and Wat Chalong. Architecture is the most referred term . Phuket town is pictured as a small town that has uniquely decorated shops and Sunday night market, is a place for taking wonderful photos. The negative comments are mainly about its lacking of activities, being boring and not modernly decorated. Wat Chalong is praised by its Thai Buddha style of architecture. It is covered by the color of gold, therefore tourists have the impression that it is a glittering golden temple. Tourists are impressed by the loud explosion of firecrackers when they are near or at Wat Chalong. They also mentioned about the 108 Buddha statues and relics in the temple. Critics indicate that it is small and commercialized, lost the pureness of a Buddha temple.

The top 2 entertainment activities are show-based, which indicate that excepting the beachside activities, watching shows is also prevalent. Simon Cabaret is the most popular entertainment activity in Mafengwo.com with the lowest negative rate. Shows in Phuket that are popular in Chinese tourists are Simon Cabaret and Phuket Fantasea, and both are commented as suitable for family. The other three are Patong night market, bars and Let's relax spa. Delicious food is the no.1 key terms in Patong night market. Night market is not something special in Phuket only, tourists who went to Chiang Mai before commented that the price is higher here. The spotlight of a night market is food here especially seafood and fruit. Phuket is famous of its night life, while the most mentioned key words are lady boys and those sellers who holding boards that is written with some information to attract tourists. Others think it is noisy and a wasting of time. Spa is also a must-do activity, except the spa shops around the street, some brand like let's relax actually earn a reputation of being high-end but having a rational and proper price among others. The environment and service are praised and positively commented while there are still complaints about the bad attitude of employees and improper pressures customers received in the process of doing spa. Aroma oil massage and traditional Thai massage are highly mentioned.

Accommodation

Ctrip.com has a big and complete data system, and it provides the categorized comments for the sake of an easier reading experience according to the key terms of reviews. Therefore, when customers viewing the comments section of a hotel, they can go to the categories on the top of the overall reviews and click the factor that they are interested in and read the relevant comments. Furthermore, the number of comments on each category present the frequency that the category is commented in the reviews of that hotel, thus it may indicates the importance of that category or factor to their satisfaction. The researcher extracted the categories and corresponding number of comments to analyze the factor that influence Chinese tourists' satisfaction.

Table2 :Top5 Key Factors that Influence Customers' Satisfaction

Key words	No of comments	Ranking
Environment	2006	1
Service	1844	2
Location	1801	3
Cleanliness	1425	4
Convenience of swimming	1128	5

Table2 exhibits the top 5 key factors. From Table2 , It is found that more than half of the collected attributes fall to factors such as "environment", "service", "location", "cleanliness" and "convenience of swimming". As previous researchers indicated [32], [33], room service and room cleanliness are basic attributes that hotel customers expect. In this research, factors such as environment, location, value for money, convenience of dining, room and quietness are also commonly referred. Towards on different level of hotels, the criteria of commenting hotel's performance will have different focus.

Three-diamond hotels:

The factor "house owner" is the no.1 most commented term and existed only in three-diamond hotels. House owner is, especially commented in hostels that are operated by Chinese owners, in this case, 3 out of the selected four 3-diamond hotels belong to that category. Therefore, Chinese customers have the chance to communicate with and receive service from the house owner, thus the attitude or performance of the house owner is an vital factor that affect customer's satisfaction. Tourists with a limited budget tends to focus more on the basic requirements of the living condition such as "cleanliness" and "room".

Four-diamond hotels:

Location is the most referred factor in four-diamond hotels following with environment. "convenience of swimming" indicates the feature that 4-diamond hotels, in the middle place, provides better facilities than 3-diamond hotels. "Value for money" is the fifth most used term that shows only in 4-diamond hotels which just in line with its pricing and target customers those who can not afford the high price of 5-diamond

hotel but want to have experience that better than 3-diamond hotels.

Five-diamond hotels:

Environment, unsurprisingly, is the most popular term on five-diamond hotels. Basic room facilities are not emphasized in high tier hotels but customers have a higher expectation to the service that they received. Breakfast is another significant factor customers judging the performance of the hotel. The taste and variety of breakfast are normally commented when customers mentioning breakfast. Coincidently, both 4 and 5 diamond hotels weigh the importance of swimming pool in the same position.

Restaurants

603 online comments from the top 10 most popular restaurants, which was written between November, 2017 and April, 2018 were gathered from the leading living information and trade platform-Dianping.com. The research selected top 10 key terms to identify the factors that influence customer's satisfaction at restaurants in Phuket through online reviews. Table3 concludes the chosen key terms.

Taste was found the most popular term which may indicate that it is the most important determent of customer's judgment on the performance of a restaurant. Service is the second most mentioned term in the result following by environment. Food itself is the highlight which includes its taste, freshness of materials, amount of food. Seafood is a particularly must-do experience in an island destination because people have the perception that near sea seafood is more fresh and delicious. Having Chinese speaking employees reduces the language barrier thus making customers especially those don't have confidence of speaking English more comfortable. Value for money or fairness of price is a psychological factor that has an important effect on customer's reaction to paid price [34].

Table3: Top 10 Key Terms of Restaurants

Attribute	Frequency	Attribute Ranking
Taste	287	1
Service	99	2
Environment	89	3
Freshness of material	64	4
Seafood	60	5
Chinese	56	6
Amount of food	42	7
Enthusiastic	31	8
Delicious	29	9
Value for money	23	10

CONCLUSION & LIMITATION

This study firstly uncovered the perceived image of Phuket and secondly the factors that influence independent Chinese tourists' satisfaction of its key components by analyzing textual information in Chinese travel websites. To conclude, Phuket conjures up the image of gorgeous natural scenery, white sand beaches, beautiful islands such as Phi Phi Island and Racha Island, crystal sea water and blue sky. It is mostly positively accepted as a mature and developed destination but also criticized as over tourism. Patong beach is accepted as the most developed area which some love its complete service system, others think it's been degraded by the development of tourism. The second biggest category is tourism activity. Entertainment is the most referred sub-attribute with most of the key terms, following by accommodation, food and restaurant and etc. Diving and bars are the top 2 most frequently mentioned key terms of entertainment which may suggest their places on tourists' images. The price of local products is not that expensive comparing to island in China but is higher than other Thai tourism destination. Food is delicious especially seafood.

Problems emerges when it comes to tourism development and natural environment. The development of tourism, to a large extent, relies on the appealing natural environment to attract tourists worldwide; while tourism will benefit the destination in economical way, it can also degrade the marine environment. The interdependency relationship between tourism development and environment needs a systematic destination management. Uncontrolled tourism, similar to the unconstrained growth of population, has the potential to originate its own destruction. A sustainable way for tourism development of Phuket must be implemented, in such a way that meeting the requirements of present island visitors and communities without giving in the ability of serving future tourists.

Different tier of hotel should apply different strategies to attract Chinese tourists. lower-tier like three-diamond hotels should highlight the service attitude of the house owner or reception when meeting the basic requirement of cleanliness and room. For four-diamond hotels, the emphasis should be on the location, environment and convenience for swimming. It is commented as the choice of value for money, so the environment and facility are better than budget hotels. Environment must be featured for five-diamond hotels, for destination like Phuket, sea view is one important part. Customers have high expectation towards on the service and breakfast, therefore, efforts should be made on these aspects.

Referring to restaurants, no matter what is the position, taste is an inevitable important factor to focus on, moreover, service and environment will add scores for the overall satisfaction, especially staff that can speak Chinese. When choose materials, seafood and freshness should be taken into consideration. Besides, the amount of food is also important part of evaluation.

There were some inherent limitations in this study. The generalizability of this study is limited for several reasons. First, only online reviews are counted, information sources such as travel notes or blogs are not included and thus may not present the complete understanding. Second, for Phase 2, the selected hotels, restaurants, attractions and entertainments are based on popularity which may change through the day and only a small portion of them have been sampled. Hence, future research should deep down every component and consider different sources of information.

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