



Strategic development model of communication channels to strengthen the secondary destination image: A comprehensive research study of Ratchaburi, Thailand

Revita Saisud

Graduate School, Stamford International University, Phetchaburi 76120, Thailand

Article Info

Article history:

Received 07 June 2024

Revised 26 February 2025

Accepted 01 April 2025

Available online 01 September 2026

Keywords:

communication channels,
Ratchaburi,
secondary destination image,
strategic development model,
Thailand

Abstract

This study investigates the role of communication channels in shaping the secondary destination image of Ratchaburi Province, Thailand. The research examines the expectations, perceptions, and demographic characteristics of Thai tourists, comparing pre- and post-experience insights to determine the most influential communication channels. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates quantitative analysis through a questionnaire-based survey ($n = 400$) and qualitative insights from stakeholder interviews ($n = 10$). Key findings indicate that while demographic characteristics have minimal influence on initial expectations, they significantly impact post-experience perceptions. Additionally, a strong correlation exists between perceptions and repeat visitation likelihood. A comprehensive SWOT analysis provides an in-depth strategic perspective, assessing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats from both tourists' and stakeholders' perspectives. These insights inform the CREATIVE model, a strategic framework comprising 8 key components designed to enhance destination branding and optimize communication strategies for secondary destinations. This research offers a practical guide for policymakers, tourism boards, and local businesses in developing effective communication strategies, ensuring Ratchaburi strengthens its competitive positioning. The study acknowledges limitations, including the need for broader stakeholder perspectives, challenges related to seasonality and external disruptions such as pandemics, and the necessity for sustained studies to assess long-term branding effectiveness. The originality of this study lies in its holistic strategic development model, integrating community engagement, cultural preservation, sustainable tourism practices, economic development, and cultural exchange, contributing to the long-term competitiveness and resilience of secondary tourism destinations.

© 2026 Kasetsart University.

E-mail address: revita.saisud@stamford.edu (Saisud, R.).

<https://doi.org/10.34044/j.kjss.2026.47.3.06>
2452–3151/© 2026 Kasetsart University.

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Tourism serves as a fundamental pillar of global economic growth, with destination branding playing a pivotal role in shaping competitiveness and attractiveness in an increasingly crowded market (UN Tourism, 2023). A well-established destination brand enhances visitor engagement, fosters loyalty, and sustains long-term tourism growth (Pike, 2002).

The propagation of digital media, social networks, and online travel platforms has fundamentally altered how tourists engage with and perceive destinations (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Modern travelers rely heavily on user-generated content (UGC), influencer marketing, and interactive engagement to inform their travel choices.

By leveraging communication channels strategically, this research contributes to the broader discourse on destination marketing, sustainable tourism, and stakeholder engagement, with implications extending beyond Ratchaburi to similar emerging tourism markets.



Figure 1 Ratchaburi tourist map
Adapted from Saisud, R., Bunjongmanee, P., & Louang-on, A. (2023).

Literature Reviews

Destination branding refers to the strategic process of creating a unique and appealing image to attract tourists and establish long-term competitive advantages (Pike, 2008). Kotler et al. (1993) assert that branding extends beyond marketing campaigns to encompass community engagement, cultural identity, and governance frameworks. The rise of digitalization and social media platforms has revolutionized branding strategies, allowing for real-time audience engagement, interactive storytelling, and personalized marketing experiences (Govers & Go, 2009). Secondary tourism destinations often face challenges in visibility and recognition, as they compete with established primary tourism hubs (Pike, 2009). Ritchie and Crouch (2003) and Garbelli and Gabriele (2021) highlight that effective destination branding requires leveraging local cultural and environmental assets, while strategically addressing infrastructure and accessibility gaps. A well-positioned secondary destination can differentiate itself through authenticity, niche tourism offerings, and sustainable development strategies.

Communication channels play a key role in shaping tourists' decision-making processes (Uysal & Fesenmaier, 1994). This study categorizes communication into four key dimensions: Public Relations (PR), including official tourism campaigns and promotional events; Personal Communication, such as word-of-mouth recommendations and local interactions; Mass Communication through print and broadcast media; and Contemporary Culture, involving digital platforms, influencer marketing, and user-generated content (Boley et al., 2017). Tourism research integrates diverse theoretical perspectives to examine consumer behavior and destination image formation. Foundational studies by Crompton (1979) and Pearce (1982) explore tourist motivation and decision-making processes, forming the basis for understanding how individuals perceive and interact with destinations. These concepts interconnect with tourism infrastructure elements such as transportation, accommodation, attractions, and activities (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009; Mill, 1990).

Tourism, as conceptualized by Goeldner and Ritchie (2009), emerges from complex interactions between tourists, businesses, government bodies, and local communities. Similarly, Gee et al. (1989) emphasize the role of travel in crafting memorable experiences, reinforcing the importance of strategic destination positioning (Mill, 1990). Pike (2008) further

refines this concept, identifying six key components of a successful tourism destination: Attractions, accessibility, accommodation, activities, amenities, and available packages. Kozak and Decrop (2008) underscore the importance of trust-building and brand identity development to ensure long-term visitor engagement. Kotler et al. (1993) and Pike (2009) further discuss how destination branding strategies influence tourist perceptions and destination selection.

This study also incorporates behavioral and psychological frameworks essential for understanding consumer engagement in tourism. Horner and Swarbrooke (2020) and Palmer (2012) examine tourist decision-making processes, highlighting how factors such as motivation, personal values, and perceptions shape destination preferences. Mooij (2010) explores the concept of cultural values, while Bernstein (2000) emphasizes the role of perception as a critical component in shaping the tourist experience. Weaver and Lawton (2014) provide insights into repeat tourism behavior, while Engel et al. (1990) and Fishbein and Ajzen (2009) introduce theoretical models explaining how beliefs and attitudes impact travel decisions. Further, studies by Chon et al. (1999) and Matos et al. (2015) examine how destination image formation affects consumer behavior.

Sustainability is a key concern in tourism branding, with Chen and Tsai (2007) and Oliver (1999) emphasizing the role of sustainability practices in fostering destination loyalty. Sustainable tourism requires an integrated approach, balancing economic growth, environmental protection, and cultural preservation to enhance destination resilience. This literature review synthesizes key theoretical perspectives on destination branding, consumer perception, and communication strategies, establishing a strong foundation for this study. By leveraging digital communication channels, strategic branding, and stakeholder collaboration, secondary destinations like Ratchaburi can enhance their competitive positioning in the tourism industry. The integration of insights from destination branding theory, tourism behavior models, and strategic communication frameworks provides a robust analytical lens for examining the impact of communication channels on destination image formation.

This study contributes to bridging the research gap by offering a comprehensive analysis of communication strategies in secondary tourism destinations, reinforcing the importance of data-driven, stakeholder-oriented branding approaches for long-term success.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to examine Thai tourists' demographic characteristics, expectations, and perceptions of communication channels that influence Ratchaburi's secondary destination image. The comparison between pre-experience expectations and post-experience perceptions provides critical insights into the effectiveness of various communication channels in shaping tourist engagement.

The quantitative component involved a survey questionnaire administered to 400 tourists who had visited Ratchaburi. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Statistical models, including regression analysis and importance-performance analysis (IPA), were employed to assess the relationship between tourists' expectations, perceptions, and communication channels.

The qualitative component consisted of semi-structured interviews with 10 key stakeholders, including representatives from tourism boards, local businesses, and policymakers. This aspect followed a thematic analysis framework, coding responses into SWOT dimensions (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) to gain a deeper understanding of industry perspectives on communication channel effectiveness.

Sampling and Data Collection

A purposive sampling technique was utilized to ensure that the selected respondents represented a diverse range of Thai tourists visiting Ratchaburi Province. The sample size of 400 respondents was determined based on Cochran's (1977) formula for survey-based research. Additionally, 10 key stakeholders were selected through expert sampling, ensuring a well-rounded qualitative analysis of communication strategies from industry professionals.

The survey instrument underwent rigorous validation, including an Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC = 1.00) conducted by field experts to ensure content validity. Reliability testing was also performed, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .984, indicating a high level of internal consistency among survey items.

Research Instruments

The research utilized a structured questionnaire designed to capture tourists' pre-visit expectations

and post-visit perceptions regarding communication channels. The questionnaire was divided into 4 sections: (1) demographic characteristics—gender, age, income level, and travel frequency, (2) expectations of communication channels—pre-visit exposure to marketing materials, tourism advertisements, and word-of-mouth recommendations, (3) perceptions of communication channels—post-visit evaluation of the effectiveness of communication strategies, (4) tourism behavior and repeat visitation likelihood—assessment of overall satisfaction and intent to revisit.

For qualitative analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 stakeholders, including representatives from tourism offices, hospitality sectors, and digital marketing agencies. The interviews explored how communication channels contribute to brand positioning and destination competitiveness.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and IPA. Descriptive statistics provided an overview of tourists' demographics and responses, while regression analysis identified significant predictors of perception shifts. The IPA framework enabled a comparative analysis of communication channel performance, highlighting key areas requiring strategic improvement.

The qualitative data were processed using thematic analysis, with responses categorized into SWOT dimensions to evaluate industry perspectives on communication effectiveness. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings allowed for a comprehensive understanding of communication channels' role in shaping the secondary destination image.

This study contributes to strategic development in tourism marketing by identifying key communication channels that influence tourists' engagement with Ratchaburi's secondary destination image. Through a data-driven, stakeholder-informed approach, the findings provide valuable insights for enhancing tourism promotion strategies in emerging travel destinations, as illustrated in [Figure 2](#).

The demographic characteristics of the respondents participating in this study are presented in [Table 1](#).

Results

Quantitative Results and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: Different characteristics have different levels of expectation (Table 2)

The t-test and One-Way ANOVA (F-test) were applied to examine variance among population means, with effect size measures (Cohen's d and eta squared, η^2) included to assess the magnitude of observed differences. The results indicate that overall, tourists with different demographic characteristics had no statistically significant differences in their expectations regarding communication channels for promoting secondary cities in Ratchaburi Province ($p > .05$). However, residence location significantly impacted expectations ($F = 3.92$, $p = .009$, $\eta^2 = .04$), suggesting a small but meaningful effect. Post-hoc comparisons using Scheffe's method confirmed that tourists from urban areas exhibited significantly different expectations than those from rural regions. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is not supported overall, but geographic segmentation plays a role in expectation differences.

Hypothesis 2: Different characteristics have different

levels of perception (Table 3)

A t-test and One-Way ANOVA (F-test) revealed that demographic characteristics such as age, education level, occupation, income, and residence significantly influenced perceptions of communication channels for promoting secondary cities in Ratchaburi Province ($p < .05$). The effect sizes ranged from $\eta^2 = .03$ to $\eta^2 = .07$, indicating small to moderate effects. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Hypothesis 3: Expectations differ from perceptions (Table 4)

An Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) technique was employed to compare average expectation and perception scores. The results indicate that expectations regarding communication channels for promoting secondary cities in Ratchaburi Province significantly differed from perceptions ($p = .000$). All 4 communication dimensions (public relations, personal communication, mass communication, and contemporary culture) showed statistically significant differences ($p = .000$) between expectations and perceptions. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Hypothesis 4: Expectations are correlated with repeat visitation (Table 5)

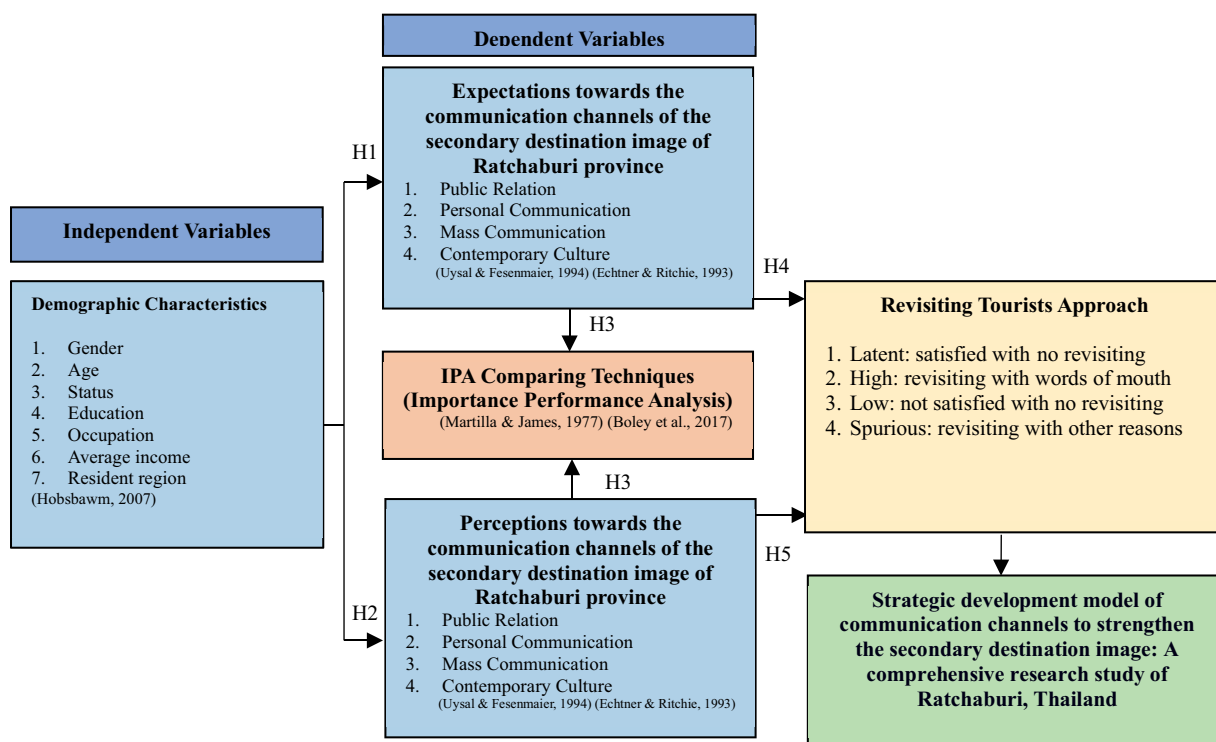


Figure 2 Research framework

Adapted from Saisud, R., Bunjongmanee, P., & Louang-on, A. (2023).

Table 1 Tourists' demographic characteristics ($n = 400$)

	Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	150	37.50
	Female	250	62.50
Age	Less than 21 years	32	8.00
	21–30 years	181	45.30
	31–40 years	111	27.80
	41–50 years	61	15.30
	51–60 years	7	1.80
	More than 61 years	8	2.00
Marital Status	Single	243	60.80
	Married	124	31.00
	Separated/Divorced	33	8.30
Education Level	Below bachelor's degree	181	45.30
	Bachelor's degree	193	48.30
	Master's degree	23	5.80
	Doctoral Degree	3	.80
Occupation	Student	59	14.80
	Employee	203	50.70
	Government/ State enterprises officer	41	10.30
	Private business owner	54	13.50
	Freelance	35	8.80
	Housewife/husband	8	2.00
Average Income per month	Less than 15,001 baht	215	53.80
	15,001–30,000 baht	130	32.50
	30,001–45,000 baht	39	9.80
	45,001–60,000 baht	11	2.80
	60,001 baht and over	5	1.30
Residence	Bangkok Metropolitan Region	55	13.80
	Central Region	126	31.50
	Northern Region	26	6.50
	Northeastern Region	29	7.20
	Eastern Region	14	3.50
	Western Region	58	14.50
	Southern Region	92	23.00

Table 2 Comparing expectations levels to demographic characteristics[illegible]

Table 3 Comparing perception levels to demographic characteristics

Communication channels	Demographic characteristics						
	Gender	Age	Status	Education	Occupation	Income	Residence
1. Public relation	.017*	.014*	.100	.002*	.000*	.002*	.024*
2. Personal communication	.125	.004*	.730	.023*	.000*	.053	.014*
3. Mass communication	.614	.039*	.038*	.261	.000*	.156	.058
4. Contemporary culture	.514	.002*	.053	.072	.000*	.031*	.051
Summary of perception	.108	.002*	.158	.013*	.000*	.027*	.028*
Summary of hypothesis	Not supported	Supported	Not supported	Supported	Supported	Supported	Supported

Table 4 Comparative analysis of average expectation levels and perception

Comparative analysis of average expectation levels and perception towards communication channels	Statistical measures		
	$\bar{x} 1 - \bar{x} 2$	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Pair 1 Public relation	.17313	5.082	.000*
Pair 2 Personal communication	.26500	7.871	.000*
Pair 3 Mass communication	.18812	5.154	.000*
Pair 4 Contemporary culture	.24500	6.913	.000*
Overall	.21781	7.492	.000*

Table 5 Relationship between expectations and repeat visitation

Communication channels	Repeat visitation	Summary of hypothesis
1. Public relation	.000*	Supported
2. Personal communication	.000*	Supported
3. Mass communication	.63	Not supported
4. Contemporary culture	.333	Not supported
Summary of expectation	.000*	Supported

A Chi-Square Test found a statistically significant relationship between expectations of communication channels and tourists' intention to revisit ($p < .05$). Specifically, public relations and personal communication showed the strongest relationships with repeat visitation. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is supported.

Hypothesis 5: Perceptions are correlated with repeat visitation (Table 6)

A Chi-Square Test revealed that all four

communication dimensions (public relations, personal communication, mass communication, and contemporary culture) were significantly related to tourists' intention to revisit ($p < .05$). The strongest correlations were observed in public relations and personal communication, reinforcing the importance of interactive and reputation-based communication strategies in influencing return visits. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is supported.

The verification results of the research hypotheses are presented in Table 7. The findings indicate that most hypotheses are supported, except for H1, which is

Table 6 Relationship between perceptions and repeat visitation

Communication channels	Repeat visitation	Summary of hypothesis
1. Public relation	.000*	Supported
2. Personal communication	.000*	Supported
3. Mass communication	.000*	Supported
4. Contemporary culture	.000*	Supported
Summary of perceptions	.000*	Supported

Table 7 Verifying of research hypotheses

	Hypotheses	Supported	Rejected
H1	Different characteristics have different levels of expectation.		√
H2	Different characteristics have different levels of perception.	√	
H3	Expectations differ from perceptions.	√	
H4	Expectations are correlated with repeat visitation.	√	
H5	Perceptions are correlated with repeat visitation.	√	

rejected. Specifically, H2 and H3 confirm that differences in characteristics influence perception levels and that expectations significantly differ from perceptions. Furthermore, H4 and H5 demonstrate that both expectations and perceptions are positively correlated with repeat visitation. Overall, these results highlight the important role of perceived experiences and expectations in shaping tourists' behavioral intentions.

Qualitative results: Assessing the SWOT analysis from stakeholder perspectives regarding the secondary destination image of Ratchaburi, Thailand (Table 8)

SWOT Analysis from Stakeholder Perspectives

Strengths: Ratchaburi boasts a rich cultural heritage and strong local identity, which serve as foundational assets for enhancing its secondary destination image. The province's diverse landscape, including natural attractions and agricultural tourism, provides multiple avenues for sustainable tourism development. Ratchaburi's geographical proximity to Bangkok strengthens its domestic tourism appeal, making it a convenient getaway destination. Additionally, community engagement and local participation in tourism initiatives contribute to a strong sense of place, fostering an authentic tourism experience that aligns with modern travelers' preferences. Tourism-supportive policies and government incentives further bolster Ratchaburi's positioning as an emerging secondary destination.

Weaknesses: Despite its strengths, Ratchaburi faces significant infrastructural and connectivity challenges. Limited air and rail transport options restrict accessibility for international and long-distance domestic tourists, reducing its competitiveness against better-connected destinations. Reliance on seasonal tourism also poses economic instability, as fluctuations in tourist arrivals impact local businesses. Additionally, digital marketing strategies remain underutilized, limiting the province's ability to reach broader target markets and enhance destination visibility. Stakeholder feedback highlights inconsistent promotional efforts across communication

channels, leading to fragmented branding messages that fail to establish a strong and unified destination identity.

Opportunities: Emerging domestic tourism trends present a promising avenue for growth. Increased interest in eco-tourism, cultural experiences, and community-based tourism aligns well with Ratchaburi's existing assets. The expansion of digital marketing strategies, including influencer collaborations, user-generated content, and targeted advertising campaigns, can significantly increase brand awareness and attract a broader audience. The potential introduction of integrated public transport solutions could enhance accessibility, making Ratchaburi more attractive to weekend travelers from major urban centers. Government initiatives promoting sustainable tourism and heritage conservation offer additional support for long-term tourism growth, ensuring that the province retains its unique cultural appeal while modernizing its tourism infrastructure.

Threats: The competitive nature of Thailand's tourism landscape presents significant challenges for Ratchaburi's secondary destination positioning. Established tourism hotspots such as Chiang Mai, Phuket, and Pattaya benefit from superior infrastructure and stronger international brand recognition, making it difficult for Ratchaburi to capture a substantial share of the tourism market. Economic fluctuations, including rising travel costs and inflation, may deter budget-conscious travelers. Additionally, environmental concerns and climate change impacts pose risks to natural attractions, necessitating sustainable tourism practices. Negative social media influence and misinformation could also affect tourists' perceptions, emphasizing the need for proactive digital reputation management and crisis communication strategies.

Undoubtedly, the SWOT analysis underscores critical areas for strategic intervention in Ratchaburi's tourism development. Addressing transportation and digital marketing limitations should be prioritized to enhance accessibility and global brand visibility. Investing in sustainable tourism initiatives and community-driven experiences will further strengthen Ratchaburi's appeal

Table 8 Interview summary of the representatives involved in planning strategies.

Topic/Questions	Interview results
1. The current destination image and Brand DNA of Ratchaburi province.	The current destination image among Thai tourists is popular to prefer domestic tourism. It features Brand DNA or unique characteristics such as being a dragon jar city that has developed to offer diversity in contemporary arts, a city of beauty (as per the slogan of Ratchaburi province), an agricultural city with green practices, a repository of royal knowledge, and diverse tourist attractions including nature, cultural arts, and the 8 ethnic tribes. Additionally, the new generation of entrepreneurs represented by YEC presents various activities that combine contemporary arts, such as running events that showcase cultures and arts.
2. Strengths of Ratchaburi province to enhance its destination image.	The city has never experienced major flooding incidents, making it a safe destination for agriculture. It is a must-visit location for arts and culture, as it is the birthplace of Ratchaburi's local arts. Additionally, tourists can enjoy accommodation, restaurants, drawing and sculpting activities, as well as pottery workshops. These workshops offer do-it-yourself (DIY) activities, souvenirs, and relatively affordable living costs.
3. Tourism potential of Ratchaburi province over the next 5–10 years (6As)	<i>Accessibility:</i> During the pre-arrival period, technology and business innovation facilitate decision-making and enhance travel experience. However, due to the remote nature of tourist destinations, private cars are essential for transportation. <i>Attraction:</i> The destinations offer both natural and man-made attractions with the potential to appeal to tourists of all genders and ages. <i>Amenities:</i> The development of tourist attractions leads to the establishment of public facilities and other conveniences to accommodate the increasing number of tourists. <i>Ancillary Services:</i> Technology and innovation systems ensure that various services at tourist attractions are modern and capable of meeting the tourists' needs. <i>Accommodation:</i> The increased and distributed number of accommodations enables the fulfillment of tourists' needs. <i>Activities:</i> There is a wide variety of activities suitable for families and Generation Y tourists, catering to all types of tourists and encouraging them to prolong their stay, resulting in repeat visits and word-of-mouth recommendations.
4. Policies and projects to promote destinations in Ratchaburi province	Most of the stakeholders recommend policies promoting sustainable community tourism and secondary destination through various event activities, as well as policies granting privileges to tourism operators in secondary destinations, such as sales promotion policies and TAT's secondary destination marketing stimulation policies. Additionally, projects to organize sports tourism activities. Challenges and obstacles include a lack of integration between sectors, access to needs, local behavior issues, tourist behavior, and budget constraints in the area.
5. Integrated communication channels for destination image.	<i>Public Relations:</i> The main goal is to raise awareness by creating engaging and easily understandable content. This content is then distributed through various communication channels, with a focus on media projects at both the local and national levels. <i>Personal Communication:</i> The emphasis is on integration to improve destination capabilities through responsive interactions that are based on genuine intentions. This can be quite challenging and involves the use of centralized media and collaborative communication formats. <i>Mass Communication:</i> It is aimed at presenting accurate, unaltered information and promoting the destination image through all mass communication channels. <i>Contemporary Cultures:</i> The focus is on creatively presenting history and customs that are adapted to the present context to encourage youth participation. Additionally, it involves showcasing the arts of Ratchaburi province in the decoration of tourist sites, streets, and local homes.
6. Recommendations	The focus of communication should be on inter-target group communication with accurate and rapid dissemination of information. Secondary destinations should have distinctive branding. To promote Ratchaburi province as the secondary destination, social media should be used as it is a fast and influential channel for spreading information, including through influencers. Regular meetings and joint field surveys of tourist attractions should be conducted. Continuous monitoring and evaluation should be carried out to drive further development. The budget should be allocated comprehensively to promote the destination. Collaborative content creation across all sectors is essential. Considering the benefits of high-speed rail projects is important. Tourist trains that follow tourism routes with tour guides should be made available.

to modern travelers. By leveraging its cultural heritage, expanding its marketing reach, and improving its infrastructure, Ratchaburi can transition from a lesser-known destination to a recognized secondary tourism hub in Thailand. Future research should explore sustained branding impact and evolving digital strategies to ensure sustained tourism growth.

The CREATIVE Model Components

The CREATIVE model offers a structured approach to enhancing Ratchaburi's secondary destination image through strategic communication. Each component plays a vital role in reinforcing tourism branding, stakeholder collaboration, and sustainable growth.

1. Co-creation (C): Interactive Destination Experience: Encourages stakeholder and tourist collaboration to create immersive and meaningful travel experiences. By integrating user-generated content (UGC), digital storytelling, and local engagement, destinations can foster deeper emotional connections and brand loyalty.

2. Responsibility (R): Sustainable and Ethical Tourism: Promotes eco-conscious tourism practices, ensuring minimal environmental impact and community well-being. Communication strategies should emphasize responsible travel behavior, cultural preservation, and sustainability-driven initiatives.

3. Engagement (E): Multi-platform Communication: Optimizes content dissemination through social media, influencer marketing, and AI-driven storytelling. Data-driven strategies enhance tourist interaction, destination visibility, and long-term engagement.

4. Authenticity (A): Cultural Identity and Experience: Showcases local heritage, traditions, and unique tourism assets to reinforce destination distinctiveness. Culturally rooted branding strengthens trust and emotional appeal, leading to higher visitor retention.

5. Trust (T): Credible and Transparent Communication: Enhances traveler confidence and brand reliability through accurate information, transparent messaging, and positive word-of-mouth marketing. Addressing safety, accessibility, and service quality fosters greater visitor trust.

6. Innovation (I): Smart Tourism and Digital Transformation: Leverages AI, big data, and virtual tourism solutions to create personalized, real-time engagement. Digital integration enhances destination competitiveness in a rapidly evolving travel landscape.

7. Validation (V): Data-Driven Decision-Making
Utilizes real-time market intelligence, consumer sentiment analysis, and competitor benchmarking to

refine branding strategies. A robust tourism database enables adaptive and evidence-based communication planning.

8. Execution (E): Policy Integration and Stakeholder Collaboration: Ensures alignment between tourism policies, communication strategies, and industry best practices. A tourist-centric governance model, involving both public and private sectors, enhances destination management efficiency.

The CREATIVE model, as illustrated in Figure 3, serves as a strategic blueprint for strengthening Ratchaburi's destination branding, integrating digital innovation, stakeholder collaboration, and consumer engagement to create a dynamic and sustainable tourism ecosystem. By aligning cutting-edge marketing strategies with responsible tourism practices, the model provides a scalable and adaptive framework that enhances destination competitiveness, visitor satisfaction, and long-term economic resilience. Its multidimensional approach ensures that Ratchaburi can effectively position itself as a distinctive secondary destination, fostering sustained tourism growth while preserving cultural authenticity and environmental integrity.

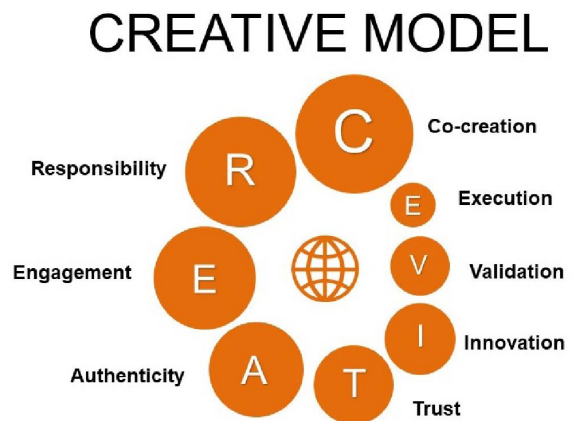


Figure 3 CREATIVE model of strategic development model of communication channels

Discussion

Indisputably, the findings underscore the critical role of communication channel optimization in strengthening the destination branding of secondary tourism markets. Aligning with prior research (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003), this study confirms that enhanced PR efforts, digital marketing innovations, and influencer collaborations

significantly shape tourists' brand perceptions and engagement. To address these dynamics, the CREATIVE model presents a strategic, action-oriented framework for policymakers and tourism stakeholders, integrating eight key components: Co-Creation, which fosters multi-stakeholder collaboration to enhance branding impact; Responsibility, ensuring sustainable tourism policies for long-term viability; Engagement, which strengthens interactive marketing strategies for deeper audience connection; Authenticity, preserving cultural heritage as a core branding element; Trust, building reliable and transparent communication networks; Innovation, leveraging AI-driven marketing tools for enhanced digital engagement; Validation, establishing continuous feedback loops to refine branding effectiveness; and Execution, implementing measurable branding success indicators to ensure long-term strategic growth. By applying this structured model, Ratchaburi can position itself as a competitive secondary destination, enhancing its tourism appeal, market differentiation, and brand sustainability in an increasingly digital-driven global tourism landscape.

Based on these findings, several strategic recommendations emerge. First, Ratchaburi Province should proactively strengthen its communication channels to enhance its secondary destination image. A cohesive tourism development plan, informed by research insights, will help attract high-value tourists who appreciate the province's cultural and natural heritage. Employing multi-dimensional models and integrating them into sustainable development strategies is essential for ensuring responsible tourism growth (Clayton, 2002).

Second, the Tourism Authority of Thailand and Ratchaburi Provincial Office must take a leading role in revitalizing Ratchaburi's tourism sector. Collaboration across tourism industry stakeholders can increase competitiveness in global markets by merging resources, sharing knowledge, and enhancing collective market power (Garbelli & Gabriele, 2021). These efforts must align with a strategic communication framework that effectively strengthens Ratchaburi's destination appeal. The provincial office should serve as a central hub for communication, fostering information exchange, experience sharing, and coordinated marketing efforts. The integration of both conceptual and practical strategies provides tourism marketers with valuable tools for developing data-driven marketing campaigns (Uysal & Fesenmaier, 1994).

Third, entities involved in tourism-marketing and strategic planning should incorporate big data analytics into their decision-making processes. Social media

platforms offer a rich source of consumer insights, allowing tourism boards to fine-tune their communication strategies (Liu et al., 2022). The integration of social media data, digital engagement analytics, and AI-driven marketing tools will support the formulation of comprehensive tourism management plans, helping Ratchaburi establish itself as a highly desirable cultural and ecological tourism destination.

Fourth, while opportunities for tourism growth exist, key challenges must be transformed into strategic opportunities. These challenges include governance over tourism facilities, natural and cultural asset protection, infrastructure improvements, environmental sustainability, and regulatory structures (Jugmohan et al., 2016). Addressing these concerns is crucial to developing a resilient and sustainable tourism industry.

Finally, community engagement is essential. Residents should be actively involved in promoting and educating others about Ratchaburi's tourism potential. This aligns with the growing recognition that community participation is vital for sustainable tourism success. Strengthening collaboration between academia, policymakers, industry stakeholders, and local communities ensures that tourism growth benefits all sectors equitably (Wondirad & Ewnetu, 2019). By fostering a shared vision and facilitating knowledge-sharing platforms, local communities can take an active role in tourism governance and branding initiatives. Essentially, strengthening the tourism image of Ratchaburi's secondary cities will enable residents and businesses to capitalize on the tourism sector's economic benefits while preserving the province's cultural and natural assets. Effective communication strategies can drive sustainable income, enhance destination competitiveness, and foster a thriving tourism industry.

Substantially, this research contributes both theoretical and practical insights into destination branding by offering an integrated strategic framework (CREATIVE model) for secondary destinations. Future research should explore sustained branding impact and evolving digital marketing strategies to ensure sustained tourism growth in Ratchaburi and similar emerging destinations.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study highlights the critical role of data-driven communication strategies in enhancing Ratchaburi's destination image, demonstrating that strategic communication efforts significantly influence tourists' perceptions and revisit intentions. The findings underscore

the importance of targeted branding approaches for secondary destinations, offering theoretical and practical implications for destination branding, tourism management, and stakeholder engagement. To maximize Ratchaburi's tourism potential, policymakers, tourism boards, local businesses, and community stakeholders must collaboratively implement strategic communication initiatives that leverage digital transformation and AI-driven marketing tools for real-time audience engagement.

To strengthen Ratchaburi's branding and tourism appeal, multi-stakeholder collaboration must be prioritized, integrating local businesses, policymakers, digital marketing experts, and community representatives into a cohesive tourism development strategy. Digital and social media strategies should be enhanced through social media analytics, influencer partnerships, and AI-powered marketing tools to improve brand visibility and engagement. Furthermore, sustainable tourism models must be developed, ensuring that cultural preservation and environmental sustainability are embedded into branding efforts to prevent the depletion of local resources. Tourism boards should optimize communication channels, deploying targeted marketing campaigns across digital, traditional, and experiential platforms to expand outreach and engagement. Community participation remains essential, as empowering residents in tourism planning and digital storytelling enhances authenticity and trust in branding strategies. Future research should conduct sustained studies to assess the long-term impact of communication strategies on tourist engagement and destination image retention, ensuring sustained branding effectiveness. Additionally, destinations must adapt to market fluctuations and external shocks, developing resilient tourism policies that mitigate the effects of seasonality, pandemics, and economic disruptions.

For future research, international tourist perspectives should be explored, comparing market segment perceptions of destination branding strategies. Further studies should also examine the impact of AI and big data analytics in shaping digital marketing effectiveness. Comparative analyses of secondary destinations in Thailand and other global regions will provide deeper insights into effective communication and branding frameworks. By leveraging innovative communication strategies and stakeholder-driven branding models, Ratchaburi can position itself as a competitive secondary destination, ensuring sustainable tourism growth and long-term economic resilience.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Funding

Internal Research Funding, Stamford International Research Funding, Research Agreement No. 006/2019

References

- Afshardoost, M., & Eshaghi, M. S. (2020). Destination image and tourist behavioural intentions: A meta-analysis. *Tourism Management*, 81, 104154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104154>
- Bernstein, P. L. (2000). *The power of gold: The history of an obsession*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Boley, B. B., McGehee, N. G., & Hammett, A. T. (2017). Importance-performance analysis (IPA) of sustainable tourism initiatives: The resident perspective. *Tourism Management*, 58, 66–77. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.10.002>
- Buhalis, D., & Law, R. (2008). Progress in information technology and tourism management: 20 years on and 10 years after the internet—the state of eTourism research. *Tourism Management*, 29(4), 609–623. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2008.01.005>
- Chen, C. F., & Tsai, D. (2007). How destination image and evaluative factors affect behavioral intentions? *Tourism Management*, 28(4), 1115–1122. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2006.07.007>
- Chon, K. S., Pizam, A., & Mansfeld, Y. (1999). *Consumer behavior in travel and tourism* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203047613>
- Clayton, A. (2002). Strategies for sustainable tourism development: the role of the concept of carrying capacity. *Social and Economic Studies*, 51(1), 61–98. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27865262>
- Crompton, J. L. (1979). An assessment of the image of Mexico as a vacation destination and the influence of geographical location upon image. *Journal of Travel Research*, 17(4), 18–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728757901700>
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1993). The measurement of destination image: An empirical assessment. *Journal of Travel Research*, 31(4), 3–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728759303100402>
- Engel, J., Blackwell, R., & Miniard, P. (1990). *Consumer behavior* (6th ed.). Dryden Press.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (2009). *Predicting and changing behavior: The reasoned action approach*. Psychology Press.
- Garbelli, M., & Gabriele, M. (2021). Reshaping the role of destination management organizations: Heritage promotion through virtual enterprises—case study: Bresciatourism. *Sustainability*, 13(8), 4471. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13084471>
- Gee, C. Y., Makens, J. C., & Choy, D. J. (1989). *The travel industry* (2nd ed.). Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Goeldner, C. R., & Ritchie, B. J. (2009). *Tourism: Principles, practices, philosophies* (11th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Govers, R., & Go, F. (2009). *Place branding*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. (2007). *Globalisation, democracy and terrorism*. Little, Brown.
- Horne, S., & Swarbrooke, J. (2020). *Consumer behaviour in tourism* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Jugmohan, S., Spencer, J., & Steyn, J. (2016). Local natural and cultural

- heritage assets and community based tourism: Challenges and Opportunities. *African Journal for Physical and Health Sciences*, 22(1–2), 306–317. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC187476>
- Kotler, P., Haider, D. H., & Rein, I. (1993). *Marketing places: Attracting investment, industry, and tourism to cities, states, and nations*. Free Press.
- Kozak, M., & Decrop, A. (2008). *Handbook of tourist behavior: Theory & practice* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203881804>
- Lepetit, P. (2023). *Ratchaburi tourist map*. <https://patricklepetit.jalbum.net/RATCHABURI/MAPROOM/Map-Ratchaburi.jpg>
- Liu, C. H., Horng, J. S., Chou, S. F., Yu, T. Y., Huang, Y. C., & Lin, J. Y. (2022). Integrating big data and marketing concepts into tourism, hospitality operations and strategy development. *Quality & Quantity*, 57, 1905–1922. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-022-01426-5>
- Martilla, J. A., & James, J. C. (1977). Importance-performance analysis. *Journal of Marketing*, 41(1), 77–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224297704100112>
- Matos, N., Mendes, J., & Pinto, P. (2015). The role of imagery and experiences in the construction of a tourism destination image. *Journal of Spatial and Organizational Dynamics*, 3(2), 135–154. <https://journals.cinturs.pt/jtsw/article/view/48>
- Mill, R. C. (1990). *Tourism: The international business*. Prentice Hall.
- Mooij, M. (2010). *Consumer behavior and culture: Consequences for global marketing and advertising* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Oliver, R. L. (1999). Whence consumer loyalty? *Journal of Marketing*, 63(4), 33–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429990634s105>
- Palmer, A. (2012). *Introduction to marketing: Theory and practice*. OUP Oxford.
- Pearce, P. L. (1982). *The social psychology of tourist behavior* (Vol. 3). Pergamon Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/C2013-0-03367-1>
- Pike, S. (2002). Destination image analysis: A review of 142 papers from 1973 to 2000. *Tourism Management*, 23(5), 541–549. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(02\)00005-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(02)00005-5)
- Pike, S. (2008). *Destination marketing: An integrated marketing communication approach*. Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Pike, S. (2009). Destination brand positions of a competitive set of near-home destinations. *Tourism Management*, 30(6), 857–866. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2008.12.007>
- Ritchie, J. B., & Crouch, G. I. (2003). *The competitive destination: A sustainable tourism perspective*. CABI Publishing.
- Saisud, R., Bunjongmanee, P., & Louang-on, A. (2023). The managing strategies for integrated communication channels from the stakeholders' perspective towards the secondary destination image of Ratchaburi. *Suan Dusit Graduate School Academic Journal*, 19(2), 10–25.
- Tourism Authority of Thailand. (n.d.). *Ratchaburi*. <https://www.tourismthailand.org/Destinations/Provinces/Ratchaburi/232>
- UN Tourism. (2023). *Tourism's importance for growth highlighted in world economic outlook report*. <https://www.unwto.org>
- Uysal, M., & Fesenmaier, D. (1994). *Communication and channel systems in tourism marketing* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Weaver, D., & Lawton, L. (2014). *Tourism management* (5th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Wondirad, A., & Ewnetu, B. (2019). Community participation in tourism development as a tool to foster sustainable land and resource use practices in a national park milieu. *Land Use Policy*, 88, 104155. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2019.104155>