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The Influence of Online Marketing Communication on Perceived Value
of Cultural Tourism at Wat Pa Lelai Worawihan,
Suphan Buri Province, Thailand

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Abstract

This study aimed to (1) analyze tourists' awareness of marketing communication strategies, (2) assess tourists' perceived value of cultural tourism, and (3) examine how each marketing communication factor influenced perceived cultural tourism value at Wat Pa Lelai Worawihan, Suphan Buri Province. Quantitative data from 447 tourists were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression.

Results showed high awareness of marketing communication, especially online marketing, advertising, and public relations. Perceived value was also high, with spiritual value rated highest. Regression results indicated that online marketing had the strongest influence on perceived value, followed by sales promotion, direct marketing, and advertising, while public relations had no significant effect. The model explained 83.7% of the variance in perceived value, emphasizing that interactive online communication enhances tourists' perceived cultural tourism value. It is recommended that temple administrators and local tourism agencies prioritize digital content creation, active social media engagement, and continuous online storytelling to deepen visitors' emotional connections and promote sustainable cultural tourism development.

Keywords: online marketing communication; perceived value; cultural tourism

Introduction

Suphan Buri Province is one of Thailand's culturally rich regions. The province is renowned for an enduring cultural heritage, traditional communities, ancient temples, and safeguarded indigenous wisdom. Wat Pa Lelai Worawihan constitutes a royal temple of historical and religious significance, associated with the Khun Chang Khun Phaen legend featuring distinctive architecture and a spiritual atmosphere, the site constitutes a pivotal center for cultural heritage and tourism.

It was located on Malaiman Road along the Tha Chin River. The temple houses Luang Pho To, a 23.46-meter-tall U Thong-period Buddha image in the Pa Lelai posture. The Tourism Authority of Thailand has certified the temple among the "sacred sites recommended to visit for blessings" in 2025. Furthermore, the location houses "Khun Chang House," a cultural learning center drawing inspiration from Thai heritage. These attributes make Wat Pa Lelai Worawihan a highly suitable case study for analyzing online marketing strategies that enhance cultural tourism value.

Domestic tourism has experienced a resurgence following the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly among travelers who prioritize spiritual and cultural experiences (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2023). The Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2024) reported an 81.11% increase in Thai tourists to Suphan Buri in 2023, with temples like Wat Pa Lelai driving local economic recovery, pride, and cultural preservation. Creative communication strategies are paramount for sustaining the observed momentum. Tactics that encompass social media marketing, digital storytelling, influencer engagement, and interactive content have a significant influence on traveler perceptions and decision-making (Kotler, Keller, Ancarani & Costabile 2017). Relative to traditional media, digital platforms facilitate personalized, engaging, and emotionally significant connections with tourists (Li

& Wang, 2021). The concept of integrated marketing communication (IMC) provides a framework for planning communication strategies systematically. Kotler & Armstrong (2012) describe IMC as the coordination of marketing communication tools advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing, and online marketing, to deliver a unified message and strengthen long-term relationships with consumers. In the context of cultural tourism, which emphasizes shared experiences, learning, and the creation of psychological value effective marketing communication should enable tourists to perceive value at a deep level, not only in the informational dimension but also in feelings and experiences. Within this framework, perceived value explains how tourists assess a destination's "value" based on the benefits they receive and the experiences they have, particularly through cultural participation, each shaped by high-quality communication strategies. Meanwhile, Wertime & Fenwick (2008) argue that online marketing in the digital age can create interactive experiences through content, video, and social media that not only stimulate awareness but also strengthen emotions, bonding, and shared psychological value.

Studies indicate that effective online marketing communication strongly influences perceived value-tourists' overall assessment of benefits gained from cultural experiences relative to costs (Zeithaml, 1988; Prebensen, Vitterso & Dahl, 2013). In cultural tourism, this value extends beyond physical attributes to include emotional, social, and experiential dimensions (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Several scholars have explored the multidimensional nature of perceived cultural tourism value. Prebensen (2007) noted that tangible value stems from the quality of facilities, accessibility, and service performance that underpin tourist satisfaction. Aesthetic value arises from sensory and visual appreciation of architecture, design, and landscape, evoking emotional responses to heritage sites (Wang, 2019). Spiritual value reflects inner fulfillment, inspiration, and moral enrichment gained from religious or cultural experiences (Chen, 2020; Lee & Oh, 2014). These tangible, aesthetic, and spiritual dimensions are particularly significant in temple-based cultural tourism, where visitors encounter both physical and transcendental experiences. Thammasitthirak (2019) and Chakrachum (2021) highlighted that culturally themed, interactive, and story-driven digital content enhances visitor engagement and stimulates travel intentions. Their studies also revealed that online marketing emphasizing experiential, interactive, and emotional content strongly influences tourists' decisions and perceived value of cultural sites. Furthermore, digital platforms provide a richer experience than traditional one-way public relations by enabling two-way communication and creating greater perceived value (Meyer & Wilkins, 2015).

In addition, while the concept of integrated marketing communication (IMC) offers advantages in message coherence and strategic coordination, its application in highly religious or culturally significant destinations - such as temples and local communities - requires careful attention to ethical and cultural appropriateness so as to avoid communication that could affect tourists' beliefs and feelings. An effective marketing communication strategy should integrate marketing effectiveness, cultural appropriateness, and the creation of long-term psychological and social value.



However, empirical studies on how online marketing communication influences the perceived value of specific local cultural sites in Thailand remain scarce. In particular, research is limited on optimizing communication practices at temple-based destinations to attract domestic tourists and promote sustainable cultural tourism. Accordingly, this study investigates the influence of online marketing communication on the perceived value of cultural tourism at Wat Pa Lelai Worawihan. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by expanding knowledge in cultural tourism marketing and practically by providing strategic guidelines for local tourism promotion in the digital era.

Objectives

1. To analyze the level of tourists' awareness of the use of marketing communication strategies in each aspect.
2. To analyze the level of tourists' perceived value of cultural tourism.
3. To examine the influence of each marketing communication factor on tourists' perceived cultural tourism value.

Conceptual Framework

This study specifies five marketing communication factors - Advertising (ADV), Public Relations (PR), Sales Promotion (SP), Direct Marketing (DM), and Online Marketing (OM) - as the independent variables. The dependent variable is tourists' perceived cultural tourism value (PCTV) associated with visits to Wat Pa Lelai Worawihan, Suphan Buri Province.

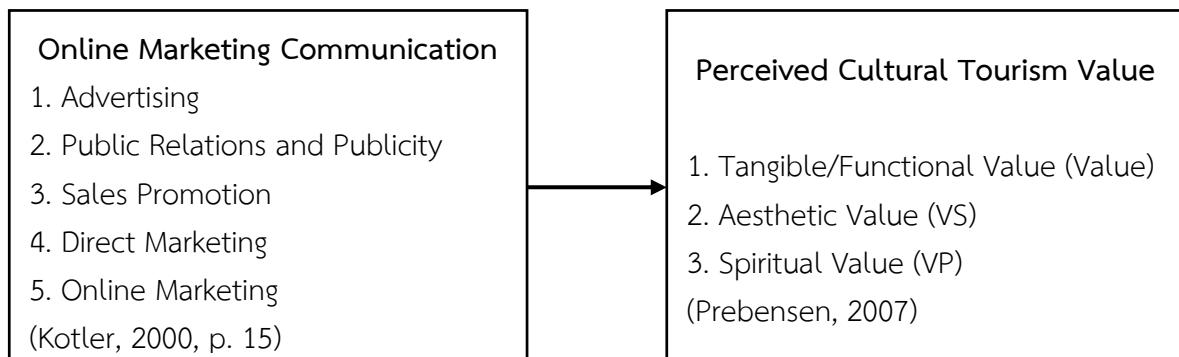


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Advertising has a significant positive influence on tourists' perceived value of cultural tourism.

H2: Public relations has a significant positive influence on tourists' perceived value of cultural tourism.

H3: Sales promotion has a significant positive influence on tourists' perceived value of cultural tourism.

H4: Direct marketing has a significant positive influence on tourists' perceived value of cultural tourism.

H5: Online marketing has a significant positive influence on tourists' perceived value of cultural tourism.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study was a quantitative research project aimed at investigating the marketing communication factors affecting perceived cultural tourism value at Wat Pa Lelai Worawihan, Suphan Buri.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of tourists visiting Wat Pa Lelai Worawihan. The sample size was determined using an a priori power analysis for multiple regression with G*Power (version 3.1), following Cohen's (1988) guidelines for a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), a significance level (α) of .05, and statistical power ($1-\beta$) of .80, with five predictors (advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing, and online marketing). The analysis indicated a minimum of 92 participants. In this study, 447 valid responses were collected, exceeding the minimum requirement and aligning with Green's (1991) rule of $N \geq 50 + 8m$ for overall model testing and $N \geq 104 + m$ for individual predictors, confirming sufficient statistical power. Data were gathered using a time–location systematic intercept sampling method from tourists aged 18 and above visiting Wat Pa Lelai Worawihan. Surveys were conducted on weekdays and weekends across morning, midday, and afternoon sessions to reflect variations in visitor flow. Every k -th visitor at designated points (e.g., main courtyard or exit) was invited to participate, with one respondent per group to prevent duplication. A total of 447 valid responses ensured adequate representativeness of tourists to the site.

Research Instrument

The instrument was a questionnaire composed of three parts: (1) general information of respondents, (2) items measuring perceptions of the use of marketing communication strategies in five aspects – advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing, and online marketing, and (3) items measuring perceived cultural tourism value. Perceived value was assessed across three dimensions (tangible value, aesthetic value, and spiritual value) adapted from Prebensen (2007). All items used a five-point Likert scale. The content validity of the questionnaire was verified by three experts, and the reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha. The alpha coefficients for the various sections ranged from 0.78 to 0.89, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Data Collection

Questionnaires were distributed to the target sample of tourists who visited Wat Pa Lelai Worawihan during June–July 2023. The researcher and trained research assistants administered the survey on site and assisted in the data collection process.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using statistical software. The analysis comprised: (1) descriptive statistics (percentage, mean, and standard deviation) to summarize respondent characteristics and key variables; (2) Pearson's correlation to examine the interrelationships among

variables; and (3) multiple regression analysis to test the research hypotheses. The regression analysis considered Adjusted R², standardized regression coefficients (Beta), statistical significance (p-values), and multicollinearity diagnostics (Variance Inflation Factor – VIF, and tolerance values).

Conclusion

Sample Characteristics

The respondents in this study were 447 tourists visiting Wat Pa Lelai Worawihan. Regarding gender, the majority were female (54.14%), followed by male (33.56%), with the remainder not specifying gender (12.30%). In terms of age, the largest group of respondents was 31–40 years old (42.51%), followed by those aged 21–30 (30.87%), and those under 20 years old (16.11%).

For occupation, most respondents were private company employees (35.57%), followed by government officials or state enterprise employees (27.96%), and students (18.79%). In education level, the majority held a bachelor's degree (79.87%), with 11.86% holding a master's degree. The most common monthly income range was 10,001–20,000 THB (37.58%), followed closely by 20,001–30,000 THB (37.14%). Geographically, most respondents resided in the Central region of Thailand (62.64%), with others from the Northeast (17.00%) and the South (14.54%).

Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

1. The table presents means and standard deviations regarding tourist perceptions of distinct marketing communication strategies. Descriptive data analysis indicates a relatively high level of perception regarding marketing communication strategies, most notably advertising. In particular, advertising (Mean = 3.99, SD = 0.49), public relations (Mean = 3.99, SD = 0.50), online marketing (Mean = 3.99, SD = 0.51) and promotion (Mean = 3.97, SD = 0.50), while the direct marketing variable was slightly lower than the other aspects (Mean = 3.89), while the overall perception of value (Com) was at the average level of 3.97, reflecting a relatively high level of positive sample positivity towards the marketing communication activities of cultural tourism (Table 1).

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of the level of awareness of tourists towards the use of marketing communication strategies (n = 447).

Marketing Communication Variable	Mean	SD
Advertising (Adv)	3.99	0.49
Public Relations (PR)	3.99	0.50
Sales Promotion (SP)	3.97	0.50
Direct Marketing (DM)	3.89	0.50
Online Marketing (OM)	3.99	0.51
Overall (combined)	3.97	0.47

Note: “Overall (combined)” represents the aggregate perception across all five marketing communication factors.

2. The means and standard deviations regarding the perceived value of cultural tourism among tourists are presented across three dimensions and overall. The results of the descriptive analysis showed that the sample had a relatively high level of value perception. In particular,

spiritual value (VP) had the highest average value (Mean = 4.01, SD = 0.52), followed by objective value and overall value perception (VT) with the same average value of 3.98 (Table 2).

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of tourists' perception of cultural tourism value (n = 447).

Perceived Value Dimension	Mean	SD
Tangible/Functional Value (Value)	3.98	0.51
Aesthetic Value (VS)	3.96	0.53
Spiritual Value (VP)	4.01	0.52
Overall Perceived Value (VT)	3.98	0.50

Hypothesis Testing

Before performing the regression analysis, Pearson's correlation was used to check the relationships between the three sub-dimensions of perceived value (tangible, aesthetic, spiritual) and the overall perceived value (VT). The results showed that all three sub-dimensions had very high correlations with the overall value ($r \geq 0.85$, $p < .01$). Such high inter-correlations among the dependent variables suggest a potential multicollinearity issue if they were entered separately in a regression model (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). To avoid this problem and improve the accuracy of the analysis, the three dimensions were combined into a single composite overall perceived value (VT) to serve as the sole dependent variable in the multiple regression. This approach is consistent with the recommendation of Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson. (2010) that when sub-variables are highly correlated ($r > .80$) and conceptually related, using a combined index can reduce multicollinearity and yield a more stable model.

3. Marketing Communication Factors Influencing the Perceived Value of Cultural Tourism. Multiple regression analysis findings indicate that marketing communication variables specifically advertising (Adv), public relations (PR), promotion (SP), direct marketing (DM), and online marketing (OM) could jointly predict statistically significant perceived value (VT) overall ($R^2 = .837$, adjusted $R^2 = .835$, $F = 452.499$, $p < .001$) without any autocorrelation problems in the model (Durbin-Watson = 1.813, within acceptable limits) together, these five factors explained approximately 83.7% of the variance in tourists' perceived cultural tourism value.

Subsequently, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with the five marketing communication factors (Adv, PR, SP, DM, OM) as independent variables and the overall perceived value (VT) as the dependent variable. The key results of the regression analysis are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Multiple regression results for the influence of marketing communication factors on overall perceived value (VT).

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	T	p	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.154	0.083	–	1.860	.064	–	–
Advertising (Adv)	0.159	0.039	0.157	4.042	.000**	0.244	4.093
Public Relations (PR)	0.053	0.044	0.053	1.210	.227	0.191	5.227
Sales Promotion (SP)	0.183	0.045	0.186	4.038	.000**	0.174	5.755
Direct Marketing (DM)	0.166	0.041	0.168	4.055	.000**	0.217	4.617
Online Marketing (OM)	0.402	0.044	0.413	9.193	.000**	0.183	5.450

Note: $R = 0.915$, $R^2 = 0.837$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.835$, $F = 452.499$ ($p < .001$). $p < .001$ (statistically significant). Durbin-Watson = 1.813.

An analysis of individual variables reveals that online marketing (OM) exerts the most significant influence upon perceived value, yielding a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.413 ($p < .001$). This suggests that online marketing efforts (e.g. social media content, digital campaigns) substantially boost the value that tourists perceive. The next most influential factors were Sales Promotion (SP) (Beta = 0.186, $p < .001$), Direct Marketing (DM) (Beta = 0.168, $p < .001$), and Advertising (Adv) (Beta = 0.157, $p < .001$), all of which had positive and significant effects. In contrast, Public Relations (PR) showed a positive but non-significant effect (Beta = 0.053, $p = .227$), indicating that traditional publicity activities did not significantly affect the perceived value in this model.

Regarding multicollinearity diagnostics, the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values for some predictors (PR, SP, OM) were in the range of 5.2–5.7, which is near the commonly cautioned threshold but still below the critical value of 10. No tolerance value was below 0.10. These statistics suggest that multicollinearity was within acceptable limits for the regression (Field, 2013; Pallant, 2020).

Based on the study “The Influence of Online Marketing Communication on the Perceived Value of Cultural Tourism at Wat Pa Lelai Worawihan, Suphan Buri Province, Thailand,” the findings are summarized as follows:

1. Tourists showed a high level of awareness of marketing communication strategies, indicating effective cultural tourism communication that enhanced their understanding and interest. Advertising, public relations, and online marketing were rated highest for their broad reach and alignment with digital tourist behavior, followed by sales promotion and direct marketing, which scored slightly lower due to tourists’ limited familiarity. Overall, tourists responded positively to marketing communication, particularly online and advertising media, which effectively built awareness and stimulated interest in cultural tourism.

2. Tourists perceived cultural tourism value at a high level, reflecting recognition of its multifaceted benefits. Spiritual value ranked highest, showing that cultural tourism fosters emotional and spiritual fulfillment and pride in heritage, followed by functional and overall value, which demonstrated appreciation for experiential and tangible benefits. Aesthetic value was also rated high, indicating acknowledgment of artistic beauty and uniqueness. These results suggest that tourists perceive value comprehensively across spiritual, functional, and aesthetic dimensions, creating both physical and emotional significance.

3. Multiple regression analysis revealed that marketing communication factors significantly influenced perceived value, confirming their crucial role in shaping overall perceptions. Online marketing had the strongest effect, followed by sales promotion, direct marketing, and advertising, while public relations showed no significant influence, suggesting the limited effectiveness of current PR activities. Overall, the findings highlight that online marketing and sales promotion are

key drivers of perceived cultural tourism value and provide practical guidance for developing effective communication strategies to promote cultural tourism.

Discussion

Based on the research results, the researcher discussed the results according to the objective to study the marketing communication factors that affect the perception of cultural tourism value in the context of Wat Pa Lelai Worawihan Temple, Suphan Buri Province, as follows:

1. Tourists showed high awareness of marketing communication strategies, with Advertising (Adv), Public Relations (PR), and Online Marketing (OM) averaging 3.99, followed by Sales Promotion (SP) at 3.97 and Direct Marketing (DM) at 3.89. This aligns with the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) framework of Kotler & Armstrong (2012), emphasizing message consistency and audience orientation. The results suggest that Wat Pa Lelai Worawihan effectively employs IMC-especially digital tools-to engage visitors. This supports Wertime & Fenwick (2008) and Chakrachum (2021), who found that interactive and digital content enhances awareness and engagement. The slightly lower score for direct marketing may reflect tourists' reliance on multiple information sources rather than direct contact.

2. Tourists perceived high cultural tourism value, with spiritual value (VP) highest at 4.01, followed by material (VM) at 3.98 and aesthetic (VS) at 3.96. This supports Zeithaml's (1988) and Sweeney & Soutar's (2001) multidimensional value model, highlighting functional, emotional, and social aspects. The strong spiritual and emotional experiences align with Prebensen (2007) and Thammasitthirak (2019), who emphasized that cultural participation fosters satisfaction and perceived value. Similar ratings for material and aesthetic value indicate appreciation for the temple's architecture, art, and facilities. Overall, perceived value in cultural tourism integrates tangible, aesthetic, and spiritual dimensions through effective communication.

3. Based on the hypothesis test of the influence of each marketing communication factor on the perception of cultural tourism value. It was found that online marketing (OM) had the highest influence, followed by Sales Promotion (SP), Direct Marketing (DM), and Advertising (Adv), all of which were statistically significant. Meanwhile, Public Relations (PR) did not have a significant influence.

These findings are consistent with previous studies. Chakrachum (2021) confirmed that digital marketing-particularly advertising, direct marketing, and online channels-plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of cultural value. Similarly, Thammasitthirak (2019) demonstrated that various promotional strategies influence domestic travel decisions, with online marketing showing the strongest effect. Upamai & Saranrom (2020) also found that online marketing enhances the marketing mix's effectiveness by improving value propositions, branding, and consumer engagement. On the contrary, Public relations (PR) did not show a significant effect. Consistent with Meyer & Wilkins (2015), traditional public relations can be viewed as a one-way communication approach that focuses mainly on information dissemination. Such methods are less effective in generating experiential engagement and emotional connection compared with interactive digital marketing, which emphasizes two-way communication and value co-creation.

Conclusion: this study suggests that marketing communication strategies play an important role in the perception of cultural tourism value in the context of Wat Pa Lelai Worawihan Temple. It was found that online marketing promotions direct marketing, and advertising all have a significant influence on value perception, especially online marketing, which is the most influential. Meanwhile, the publicity did not have a significant effect. The research model was able to account for the variability of value perception up to 83.5% (Adjusted $R^2 = .835$), which is considered a very high level. As well as producing content that responds to the faith, cultural values, and expectations of tourists in the digital age. Therefore, the results of this study can be applied as a guideline for the management and development of other cultural tourism sites with similar characteristics to strengthen the perception of value, impression, and sustainability in the economic, social, and cultural dimensions, as well as to support the organization of public relations and tourism promotion activities that are in line with the cultural context and behavior of tourists in the modern era.

Recommendations

Policy or application recommendations

1. Local authorities or temples should prepare an annual digital marketing communication plan to strategize the use of various online media and continuously link them to existing cultural activities.
2. There should be training for personnel in charge of the temple's tourism to have digital marketing skills. In order to create a positive online experience, along with on-site hospitality.
3. The government should support the creation of a central platform that gathers temples and cultural heritage sites nationwide, employing digital technologies to serve the primary function of driving promotion and cultivating a collective national identity.

Suggestions for the utilization of research results

1. Prioritize a systematic online marketing (OM) strategy with value-driven content and active engagement for example, consistent social media, temple-intro videos that tell cultural stories, and campaigns tied to local festivals to strengthen visitors' emotional/spiritual connection.
2. Design sales promotions (SP) aligned with target behaviors (e.g., online activities during religious festivals; exclusive discounts for those who have shown interest or checked in via online platforms) to encourage repeat visits.
3. Use direct marketing (DM) tools, LINE Official, email campaigns, and digital membership programs to build long-term relationships and keep value salient.
4. Since public relations (PR) showed no significant effect in the model, pivot to more interactive tactics: participatory online events, community KOLs/micro-influencers, and credible social media channels to boost vitality and interest. Moreover, since public relations showed no significant effect in the statistical model, future communication strategies should integrate PR more closely with online marketing. Researchers and practitioners should explore how PR can complement digital engagement-for example, by transforming traditional publicity into online storytelling, press releases

into social media features, and community events into live-streamed content. By aligning PR activities with digital communication channels, organizations can enhance message consistency and strengthen tourists' emotional and spiritual connections to cultural destinations.

Suggestions for future research

1. A comparison between Thai and foreign tourists should be studied to see if communication channels have different influences on the perception of value. To be able to adjust niche strategies more precisely.
2. The research framework should be extended to Structural Model-Based Analysis (SEM) to test the relationship between elements of marketing communication and in-depth value dimensions such as spiritual loyalty or community relationships.
3. Qualitative studies should also be conducted, such as in-depth interviews with tourists or temple administrators, to understand the true feelings of the content and experiences from online marketing communications.

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