ASEAN Tourism Destination: A Strategic Plan

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Abstract:

This is a preliminary research to explore the construction of ASEAN tourism promotion via @goaseantv images for the period January until December 2016.

This research shows the promotion activities from the regional destination management organization to develop the image of ASEAN tourism destination. These activities were observed from the marketing communication conducted via Twitter. Thr research conducted on a content analysis for each image posted on @goaseantv. These images were analyzed and categorized in reference to the image linked to the website or other social media.

Images were categorized into the following types: whether the image was natural or edited, the number of the objects displayed, the type of view, the type of objects displayed, the number of humans displayed, the animal species displayed, the type of lodging and accommodation, the dominant color, the art and culture, the food, the souvenir, the country of origin, as well as the type of the activities displayed.

A total of 255 photos were analyzed and the results show that the majority of the images uploaded to Facebook, displayed natural imagery rather than edited imagery, consisted of a single picture, the focus was on panoramic views, and most views displayed the sea.

Keywords: *Destination images, Regional Tourism Promotion, Twitter, Content Analysis, ASEAN.*

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1. Introduction

The image of the destination is a complex construct, in that, it provides an evaluation which develops the overall impression of the destination. The evaluation is obtained from a variety of information, coming from warious sources (Baloglu and McClearly, 1999; Choi *et al.,* 2007; Gartner, 1994; Stephenkova, 2007), and one of these sources is the internet. In the contemporary image destination research, the internet becomes an important tool because all marketing communications are closely related to it. In the initial phase, the internet becomes a medium for tourists to find information regarding tourism destinations, and websites play an important source of information for planning a trip and booking the itinerary. For the tourism business entities, the website became a marketing communication tool to convey and provoke the development of the image and the destination (Beerli and Martin, 2004).

The Internet also provides an important implications for tourism marketers, since the destinations visualized on the screen are of a flattened nature (nature displayed in the media such as flat-screen, magazines, paper). The flattened nature of the information is easy to convey, nevertheless the tourism destination management organization should be mindful regarding the variety of image perspectives that develop the destination image positioning.

After the introduction of the website, in early 2008, the internet enabled social media applications that now have an important role in the development of the tourism destinations. Since then, Twitter become the platform for Destination Management Organization. This is because, compared to the other platforms, Twitter allows the distribution a lot of information desired by the target audience and this information is communicated openly, and therefore the message is accessible for anyone who follows or explores Twitter (Hay, 2010). Yayli *et al.* (2011) conveys the importance of Twitter for the Destination Management Organization since it gives them an insight about the consumers by extracting the information, comments and opinions delivered by the same consumers. Moreover, this information is considered more reliable and important for marketers.

The current development of ASEAN regional tourism promotion was conducted using social media. This is a reasonable strategy since all the Southeast Asian countries currently promote their destinations toward people all over the world by posting photos of the destinations through social network applications like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Websites. This research explores the ASEAN image shown in @goaseantv in Twitter.

Finally, this article is organized as follows: section 2 includes a literature review to support the research background; section 3 develops the conceptual model; section 4 covers the research methodology, section 5 elaborates on the findings, and section 6 concludes the research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Destination Image

The history of the destination image started by Gunn (1972) who argued that the image is constructed through a process that employs two types of images which are the induced and the organic image. The organic image is the tourist's impression of the destination without visiting the destination. It is the impression obtained from indirect sources which are not related to marketing activities. This is difficult to be contextualized in the current era, as we are exposed to a wide spectrum of diverse activities and information, we are exposed from soft selling to hard selling activities which occur in our everyday life. These activities occur via social media and other marketing communication channels in our mobile phones. Gunn (1972) thought this relevant for the year 1972 since in this era, we could distinguish between advertising from television and advertising in magazines, which are not related to the marketing of the tourism destinations. That was the era of traditional marketing that still conserves conservative marketing communication channels such as television, radio, magazines, newspapers.

Furthermore, there are also induced images, an image obtained from the results of various sources of promotion conducted by the destination marketer. These days, the development of the destination images is not only the task of the marketer, travel and tourism business entities, but also the marketing conducted by a country or a region. One example of this is the ASEAN, whereby 10 ASEAN countries have a common goal to develop the tourism in the region of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nation). Furthermore, the ASEAN marketing communications do not relate to the private companies, but these activities will increase the number of tourists visiting ASEAN.

2.2 Regional Tourism Promotion

Sevin (2013) stated that the marketing of the destination cannot be separated from the branding of the destination, and it also cannot be separated from destination marketing activities of the country to promote the tourism destinations. It also cannot be separated in terms of who produces the varieties of the image destination (whether the destinations marketer, the Government or the consumers). Therefore, the branding of the destinations is a process of negotiation between the stakeholders and audiences that produce varieties of diverse images about the destinations (Munar, 2011). This claim is also supported by Ghazali and Chai (2014) who develop an argumentation model that connects social media with suppliers, consumers and the third party interaction between them. Tourism organizations and marketers play an important role in developing the tourism destination brand. They are using social media combined with the traditional marketing communication channels.

3. Conceptual Model

The research on cognitive image destinations is scarce, therefore an inductive approach wasused to obtain the pattern of cognitive image of the destinations. The identification of the cognitive attributes in the image posted on Twitter was conducted by direct analysis approach. The content and the themes were categorized and coded for further analysis.

In this research, the concept will be expanded further, therefore we are making the categories open and not limited. Categorization was obtained by testing the context of photos (including caption text, textual description and photos). The research conducted by Michaelidou *et al*. (2013), proposes the 11 cognitive elements which are: the natural environment, the attraction of tourists, the people, the culture and the art, the flora and fauna, the transportation, the food and beverage, the specific activities, the accommodation, the information and the infrastructure.

4. Methodology

Photographic analysis process recommended by Collier (2001) consists of 2 phases of coding that is directly and indirectly. Direct coding is related to research regarding the manifest content (documents) image data, while the analysis is not directly related to exploration, not directly to the image. The image of the exploration can be put as a mean of information that is not in the image itself (Collier, 2001). Each image is treated as a unit of analysis, taking into account the various themes that are in the image, then the coding of each unit of analysis is explored and not restricted. This is in accordance with the norms in visual research where photos can be coded into 4 categories (Bell, 2001; Pan *et al.,* 2007).

Assessment on the processes are subject to other social media links from the images posted, whether natural or edited, the number of objects displayed in the image, the type of views, the type of vehicles, how many humans, the types of animals, the accommodation, the dominant color, art and culture, food, souvenirs, the State information in the image, as well as activities that are displayed. Retrieval of such data was processed by selecting an existing photo data and analyzing the image in order to be able to code information. The information is then processed to obtain useful research findings to answer the question of how the exploration of Twitter @goaseantv in the promotion of the image of ASEAN destinations. The data consisted of 255 photos during the period 2016 showing tourist destinations in Southeast Asian countries. The following data are processed as shown below:

Table 1. Tweet Processed

@goaseantv 2016	
Posting period 2016	384 post
Tweet excluded	129 post
Tweet Analyzed	255 st

5.   Results and Discussion

The results of the categorization for 255 photos from @goaseantv from January until December 2016, are as follows:

a. Instrument. There are 255 pictures and it's all just photos, videos are not included in this analysis.

b. Links. 8.6% (22 photos) linked to the Website, 90.6% (231 photos) linked to Facebook, and 0.8% (2 photos) from Instagram.

c. Picture Categories. 56.1% (143 photos) of photo of the landscape are Natural, and 43.9% (112 photos) were edited imagery.

d. Number of Picture 92.9% (237 photos) consisted of 1 picture, and 7.1% (18 photos) consisted of more than 1 picture.

e. Man. There are 6.5% (13 photos) showing children, there's a 29.9% (60 photos) showing parents, there are 22.9% (46 photos) showing teenagers, there was 14.4% (29 photos) showing a female, and 26.4% (53 photos) showing a male.

f. Dominant color. The dominant color-coding results varied according to color.

g. Art and culture. Of all the photos in the period 2016 there were none who displayed art and culture in pictures.

h. Food. The results of the categorization of food i.e. 3.8% (2 photos) identified as snack, 69.8% (37 Photos) identified as Main (main Menu), 15.1% (8 photos) identified as Dessert, 3.8% (2 photos) identified as coffee, 3.8% (2 photos) identified as light snack, 1.9% (2 photos) as identified as fruit, 0.4% (1 photo) identified as vegetables, 1.9% (1 photo) identified as drinks.

i. State. The result of the categorization is 61.5% of Malaysia, 7.7% of the country of Laos.

j. Activity. 2.4% (6 photos) showing the activities of the Festival, 4.4% (11 photos) What?, 2% (4 photos) Religious, 0.4% (1 photo) road, 0.4% (2 photos) What?, 0.8% (2 photos) diving, 0.4% (1 photo) shopping, 4.4% (11 photos) holidays, 0.8% (2 photos) Watch, 0.4% (1 photo) handicrafts, 1.2% (3 photos) cooking, 1.6% (4 photos) Rowboat.

6.   Conclusion

The results of the analysis concluded that a lot of content shared or distributed @goaseantv represented the view of the sea in Southeast Asia, but the majority of the content shared is Malaysian tourism destinations. These findings show the projection of the ASEAN destination, therefore we should consider Gartner's (1989) thought that stated the projection of the image obtained from the identity of the destinations and the marketing strategy of the local actors. This means, the projection of the ASEAN destination image is an important agent to develop the perceived image of the ASEAN destinations. The projection believed to have the potential factors to shape the perception of tourists toward the local culture and form their excitement when travel (Urry, 1972).

Finally, to be able to develop the holistic ASEAN tourism destinations, the projected image in the @goaseantv should share varieties of ASEAN countries tourism destination. @goaseantv should share t other panoramic views such as mountain, art, food, historical stories that will develop the real ASEAN.

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