



## China's Image Repair: The Case of Chinese Tourists on Social Media in Thailand

Teerati Banterng\*

School of Journalism and Communication,  
Tsinghua University, Beijing 100084, PR  
China

### Abstract

The images of Chinese tourists are presented through social media which are expected to offer a wider range of content than broadcast and print media. How Chinese tourists negatively behave can be seen on social media which can influence other people's perceptions about China's national image in overseas. Thailand is one of the top destinations for Chinese tourists which can be seen from the Chinese outbound tourism statistics records. They have visited Thailand, generated and contributed the highest revenue to the domestic tourism industry. This research studied on Thai media contents associated with the Chinese tourists on social media which could affect the planning to improve the images of Chinese tourists and content presentation of Thai media. The research methodology used in this paper was Thai language content analysis on popular social media in Thailand during the past one-and-a-half years. The findings indicated that the social media in Thailand mainly rely on the social media from the US media platforms for the reason that Thailand does not particularly possess any social media platforms. The contents were mostly created by web content writers, who conveyed value, beliefs, and attitude, through Thai media outlets. Most of the images of Chinese tourists on social media in Thailand seemed to be stereotyped and contained negative images. Message strategies are using to dominate the image repair strategies. Both media outlets and government from China and Thailand have generated strategies to restore the images of Chinese tourists on social media in Thailand.

**Keywords:** China; Image repair; Social media; Chinese tourist; Thailand

\*Corresponding author: Teerati Banterng

✉ teerati.ban@gmail.com

Ph.D. Candidate in Journalism and  
Communication, School of Journalism and  
Communication, Tsinghua University, Beijing  
100084, PR China

Tel: +86 18518044004

**Citation:** Banterng T. China's Image Repair:  
The Case of Chinese Tourists on Social  
Media in Thailand. Global Media Journal  
2017, 15:29.

**Received:** October 03, 2017; **Accepted:** October 16, 2017; **Published:** October 21, 2017

### Introduction

China is considered as a representative of the eastern world with over 5,000 years of ancient civilization in Asia [1]. "China" has been internationally perceived as a country with an ancient civilization and advanced economic, culture, and technological development. The progress of China has occurred very rapidly; in less than a century [2]. Thus, China's global status in terms of economic and technological growth has been watched. Another important aspect of China is its national image, for which the government of China has developed and driven international policy to be accepted among the global community [9]. Besides, the national image (NI) or country image is an interesting topic for scholars in the field of strategic communication. Consequently, the study related to this issue is beneficial to add up the

reputation, benefits, and value on to the national image, both directly and indirectly [4].

Previously, the China's image was observed and pointed to the mass media such as foreign newspapers which represented facts to readers and had influence on personal attitude and thought towards the China's image [9,5]. China was perceived as one of the top powerful countries in the world based on features like economy, politics, vast land, and historical wealth. Also, it was an outstanding country in terms of academy, policy planning, and had a unique identity of mass media. Therefore, it was forecasted that China would become one of geopolitical powers due to its political system and development policy [6]. During recent years, China's image had been presented through international media; such as hosting the 2008 Summer Olympics Games, Shanghai Expo 2010, and APEC China 2014 [6,7,36]. The portrayal of

Chinese people was published on many television programs in other countries such as the US, which also presented the Chinese image negatively due to the bias of television production and film industry [8].

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, China's image is exhibited through various types of the social media in English. Several significant topics like the economy, culture, and technology are mostly found to be up for discussion on social media and are more frequently presented than the mainstream media like mass media. However, further development is needed to display certain images on the social media; for instance, society, politics, religion, and ethnic groups [9]. Similarly, the internet and social media have played an important role in the daily lives of Thai people. Social media is very popular among Thai people, and Thai is used as an official language among most Thai users [10]. Current social media also plays a key role in the tourism industry, as can be seen from well-known platforms such as virtual communities, microblogs, reviews, websites, and other forms of online communities. These platforms have a strong influence on the trip planning of foreign tourists, especially Chinese tourists, to travel to other countries which include Thailand. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are the most popular platforms worldwide and have the high level of influence on people's opinions affecting the overall social environment. Even though the mainstream media can widely publish news and information, the presentation in social media is fast and easy to access [11]. It can be said that the internet has a significant role in selecting destinations among Chinese tourists, because it affects their attitude and information perception toward tourism in a particular country [12].

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the images of Chinese tourists on social media in Thai. It also aims to acknowledge the images of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand through social media producers to examine differences of content presentation related to Chinese tourists on social media and mass media in Thai. Moreover, this research investigates the Thai contents associated with the Chinese tourists on social media, which in turn could affect any plans to improve the images of Chinese tourists and development of content presentation of Thai media.

## Literature Review

### National images and media portrayal

A national image is an output of accumulated perception about history, society, culture, politics, economy, and diplomatic relations of a country viewed from the aspects of another culture as it represents an identity of such country through mass media and popular culture. The representative image is proposed and utilized as an element of building "identity" [9]. The national image is an important power to the perception of other countries which can identify the identity of a country as it is one of significant strategies toward public relations [6]. Likewise, Simon Anholt [13] explains that national branding is an image perceived internationally. It is done in the same way how people perceive a product brand. The overall national image can be perceived both positively and negatively.

The national image is also a kind of soft power of a government to provide information in several aspects at an international level to "persuade" and "influence" the people's opinions and attitude towards its country. The perception of national image is also regarded as the representative image of the people in that country [14]. Walter Lippmann [15] notes that to create a national image, the news on various kinds of media has considerable influence on other nations because it builds an image of identity in the people's minds. It directs decision making to accept and believe through reporters' point of view. Besides, it generates the reporters' attitude and perception to select and present only certain aspects of information through the media which is called "Media Portrayal". Entman [16] describes that there are many important elements for the reporters' news presentation, including keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols, and visual images. They are implemented to persuade the audience to believe or highlight some points of the news.

Regarding the strategies to build the national image, the Chinese government has implemented China's foreign policy through "public diplomacy", which is a type of international communication. This policy aims to create its national image among people in different countries, develop its region, and build peace by distributing its good image through the mass media [17]. Nevertheless, as one of the world's powerful countries, China still has negative image when considering American perception through the mass media. After World War II, compared to the United States, China is significantly regarded as a communist nightmare as a result of representation through the mass media. A study of Pew Research Center [42] shows that the national image of the US seems to be more positive than that of China [18]. It can be concluded that the media has influence on national image building through images, symbols, events, and ceremonies. It leads to perception and belief accumulation until it becomes the national image [19]. Hence, the study on national image and media portrayal will be a considerable base from which to explore the images of Chinese tourists through the media's narration, particularly through social media in this research, which is highly popular in Thailand.

### Chinese outbound tourists and images of the nation

Tourism is an important activity for the overall economy of a country, especially in Thailand – one of Southeast Asia's countries which mainly profits from outbound tourism [37]. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Thailand ranks 11<sup>th</sup> on the World's top destinations by international tourism receipts, after Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. For this reason, the major revenue source of Thailand comes from the tourism industry [20]. Wu and Pearce [11] explains that there are several reasons for travelling abroad for tourists, such as recreation, experience in diverse culture, suitable and affordable cost of living, and highly flexible regulations. These factors have high level of influence on their decision making to visit other countries.

In 2012, Mainland China ranked as the world's biggest source of foreign tourists. Regarding statistics of the United Nations World

Tourism Organization, the Chinese tourists spent around \$102 billion during their trips to other countries [21,22]. The numbers of Chinese tourists travelling to other countries have been rapidly increasing due to higher purchase power and economic growth [23]. Chinese tourists usually travel with tour groups, friends, or relatives. They also need personal space, time, and privacy to be able to choose and buy products [11]. It can be said that the Chinese tourists are a significant part to the worldwide tourism industry due to their unique identities that stemmed from three important conceptual bases; confucianism, communism, and capitalism [24]. Additionally, Xiang [3] investigates considerable factors leading to the unique personalities of Chinese tourists. He reveals that there are five aspects affecting the travel of Chinese tourists, namely sociodemographic characteristics, motivations, the decision-making process (such as income, transportation, accommodation, duration of stay), spatial patterns of destinations (destination countries, regions and cities, resorts), and consumer patterns (budget travelers). Most of Chinese tourists are middle-class and their sightseeing is related to the time they have in the specific country. Dung and Reijnders [25] inspects the history of tourism of Chinese tourists and their behavior in Paris, the capital of France. The results show that the Chinese tourists have begun travelling abroad since 1980. They went to other neighboring countries in Asia, Southeast Asia, and then Europe when many Europe countries were open for tourism in 2004.

In 2012, most of outbound tourists in Thailand were among the total of 21 million tourists. There were 2.8 million Chinese tourists or 12.1% of the total outbound tourists, regarding to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). During the Chinese New Year Festival, TAT arranged a campaign to persuade the Chinese tourists which were the main targeted group to visit Thailand. This campaign could bring huge income to Thai people and the economy of Thailand. Moreover, it was supported by the Ministry of Culture (Thailand) to help promote many places during that festival such as Ratchaprasong and Chinatown – featuring the main shopping centers in Bangkok. Furthermore, a Chinese movie “Lost in Thailand”, filmed in Thailand, was very popular in China and it encouraged Chinese tourists to visit Thailand. Since the film, a dramatic increase of Chinese tourists to Thailand could be witnessed. The significance of Chinese tourists can be noticed in several places in Thailand, such as Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang Airports, where there are a lot of Chinese script and signs. Besides, there are Chinese interpreters and salespersons who are able to speak Chinese in several stores; for instance, King Power and Naraya. This is because the Chinese tourists praise and admire shopping assistants who can speak Chinese very well [37]. Another interesting behavior of the Chinese tourists is found in Hawaii’s tourism industry. Most of them have high purchase power and frequently go back. Thus, the public sector has defined some policies to stimulate its economic condition and specially promote the Chinese tourists to bring revenue to this region, which includes stores, hotels, and tourist destinations [26].

Han and Wang [4] demonstrate that the Chinese tourists have an effect on the perception of national branding of the country they visit. Their behavior has influence on the perception of other people with different culture because they represent China’s

national image. Therefore, good behavior can cause positive national image. China’s national image is conveyed through certain important mass media as well, particularly newspaper headings reflecting their identity and people’s opinions towards China [5].

### Mainstream to online, the rise of social media in Thailand

Since the development of Web 2.0 in 2005, the social media or social networking sites (SNS) have become one of the most important communication channels in society as the mass media [27]. In Thai society, in addition to the mass media like television, newspaper, and radio, most people follow the news and other information through social media. Social networking has become a popular channel among youth and adult groups. It is also the most favorite communication channel among teenagers as seen from annual growth statistics. Moreover, it is considered to be public service broadcasting for personal activities [28]. Social media is useful for public and private organizations, including mass media organizations, to publish their images and information to people around the globe. For these reasons, it can be said that the social media is an effective tool for reinforcing communication, both at national and international levels [28].

The Digital Advertising Association of include [38] revealed some survey results about the use of social media of Thai people. The findings indicated that Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter were utilized the most in Thailand. The most popular social media platform among Thai people is Facebook with over 30 million users, followed by YouTube with 26.2 million users, and Twitter with 4.5 million users. The features of Facebook were easy to use and access, while Twitter was a microblog which allowed the users to share short messages and photos. YouTube is another channel that encouraged the users to share and upload videos all the time without any restraints of location and time. Due to easy and convenient access, these three kinds of social media have become highly popular among worldwide users in a very short time. Additionally, YouTube can share data through its platform to Facebook and Twitter [28]. Zocialinc [29], a website providing various types of analysis on the internet, illustrated the behavior of Thai users on social media, including Facebook and Twitter in 2014. Thailand ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in countries with the highest number of Facebook users and 3<sup>rd</sup> place in Asia after Indonesia and the Philippines, which ranked 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place, respectively. Most Thai users uploaded their photos on Facebook or 57% of their post, 33% of them checked in, 21% of them posted along with links, 3% of them shared videos, and 2% of them only posted their messages. The activities (post, like, share) of Facebook users occurred at 2 pm, followed by 5 pm, and then again at 10 am. Over 97% Thai users belonged to Facebook whereas Thailand ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in countries with the highest number of Twitter users. There were around 250,000 tweets posted by Thai users per day and most of these Twitter users were students. This is because younger users liked to tweet while older users preferred reading. In 2012, an outstanding survey of the Social Engagement Benchmark (SEB) showed that both China and Thailand were ranked in the top 10 of the most socially engaged countries in the world [30].

This research examines the images of Chinese tourists on the top three social media platforms used in Thailand; namely Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. Data and content were collected with significant keywords relating to Chinese tourists and their representation on social media in Thailand.

### Image repair and crisis communication strategies

There are several concepts of image repair and crisis communication strategies in the field of public relations, in which most of the research is largely emphasized on the image repair of organization and individuals. Benoit [39,40] proposed five image repair strategies to solve the crisis which occurred inside the organizations:

- (1) Denial
- (2) Evasion of responsibility
- (3) Reducing offensiveness of events
- (4) Corrective action and
- (5) Mortification.

These five strategies have been applied to solve various problems in organizations such as airline, political parties, sports organization, as well as the entertainment industry. Avraham and Ketter [31] proposed a new model called “the multistep model to restore a positive image” which is used in image repair and crisis communication strategies of organizations and premises (places). In the beginning, the model was proposed to solve the issues through CAP characteristics strategies which comprises of crisis, audience, and place. Through these strategies, the marketing team will investigate the issue of the places through the opinions of the target tourists group, and then the image repair will be campaigned. The campaign utilizes the media strategies which focus on source, audience, and message (SAM strategies). This type of strategy uses multi-techniques such as promotion, public relations and advertising through multi-channels such as internet, television, radio, and newspapers.

In this study, we apply the key part of Avraham and Ketter’s model, “SAM strategies” to study the image repair strategy of Chinese tourists on social media in Thailand. Source strategies focus on affecting and influencing the source of the negative message. Audience strategies concentrate on values and perceptions of the audience. Message strategies are directly concerned about the negative image problem. Using the multistep model for altering personal image in this article aims to analyze what image repair strategies have been used to combat Chinese tourists' negative image characteristics and who is generating these strategies.

**Table 1** Research objects.

Social Media Type	Social Media	Sampling Amount	Web-ranking by Digital Advertising Association Thailand
1. Social Networking Site (SNS)	Facebook	300	1
2. Microblog	Twitter	200	3
3. Video Sharing Site	YouTube	100	2
Total Sampling Amount			600

## Methodology

### Research questions

The research presented explores the images of Chinese tourists on the social media in Thailand. The content and issues are mainly associated with the Chinese tourists. Although the national image consists of a wide range of aspects such as politics, economy, society, culture, and technology, this paper mainly investigates the tourism industry section by applying the images of Chinese tourists as the representative of China through social media in Thai language.

There are four main objectives of this paper. Firstly, What are the images of Chinese tourists as it is represented through social media in Thailand? Secondly, Does social media in Thailand presents the images of Chinese tourists that are different from that presented by the mainstream media in Thailand? Thirdly, what are the sources of the Chinese tourists’ content that is created through social media in Thailand? Who is generating these contents? Fourthly, what image repair strategies have been used to combat the negative images of Chinese tourists? And who enforces these strategies.

### Research approach and research objects

The research was conducted using content analysis to analyze the most popular social media platforms among Thai people. Regarding the survey of Digital Advertising Association of Thailand, the top three social media platforms consists of Facebook (social networking site), Twitter (microblog), and YouTube (video sharing site). The samples were randomized from all kinds of social media (**Table 1**).

The data had been collected for one and a half years, from 1 January 2015 to 31 June 2016. A keyword “Chinese Tourist” “นักท่องเที่ยวจีน” (in Thai) was used to select 100-300 samples from the most visited news report, including the highest number of comments and searching VDO clips. The search was compiled by a Google Search Engine and the scope of searching was specified in Thai only.

The methodology in this study was exploratory in nature without any use of sampling. Six hundred samples were gathered as the samples of this research. Every unit of news in the samples was coded by considering its source, theme, tone, issue, people, and place. Regarding the reliability of data, two research assistants were recruited to inspect similarities and accuracy of the unit of analysis. Some requirements of research assistants were defined such as master’s degree and skills related to social science



research. They were trained in coding and their work was closely controlled by the researcher. Moreover, Cohen’s Kappa [41] formula was applied to examine the inter-coder reliability and its value was higher than 0.8.

## Findings

### The images of Chinese tourists on social media in Thailand

Most of the foreign tourists visiting Thailand were from China. Thus, there were a large number of news and other publications on social media in Thailand. According to this study, a content analysis was conducted to analyze “tourism image” through over 600 Thai publications on social media, including Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter during one and a half years (Table 2).

The data were collected to analyze certain keywords in Thai news relating to the Chinese tourists. These keywords are shown below.

**Keywords related to negative image:** Poison of Chinese tours, break regulations, drop garbage, effects, steal, watch out, act violently, and uncivilized.

**Keywords related to positive image:** Stimulate economy, new opportunity, generate revenue, and help Thai people.

When considering the frequency of tone presentation of Chinese tourist on social media in Thailand, it found that more negative tone was mostly found at 287 times or 47.83 percent, followed by neutral tone at 129 times or 21.50 percent. The least tone was the most negative at 42 times or 7.00 percent as presented in Table 2.

### US social media dominate the information in Thailand

Regarding the data analysis, the social media in Thailand came from western countries such as the United States of America. Several social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter were developed in the US and all of them are American social media. When considering the presentation of repasted content relating to the Chinese tourists during one and a half years, it was mostly found on Facebook at 82 times, followed by YouTube at 71 times, and Twitter at 11 times as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 2 Reporting tone of Chinese tourists on social media in Thailand.

Tone Category	Frequency	Percent
Most Positive	67	11.17
More Positive	75	12.5
Neutral	129	21.5
More Negative	287	47.83
Most Negative	42	7
Total	600	100

Table 3 Social media outlet repasted.

No.	Social Media Outlets	Frequency Repasted	Country
1	Facebook	82	US
2	YouTube	71	US
3	Twitter	11	US

Table 4 Thailand’s mainstream media outlet repasted.

No.	Media Outlets	Frequency Repasted
1	www.manager.co.th	18
2	Channel 3 (Television Network)	13
3	www.tnews.co.th	13
4	www.thairath.tv	12
5	www.cm108.com	10
6	www.nationtv.tv	10
7	www.mcot.net	9
8	www.posttoday.com	6
8	NOW26 (Television Network)	5
10	www.mthai.com	5
11	www.brighttv.co.th	4
12	www.chilldjang.com	4
13	www.clipmass.com	4
14	www.kapook.com	4
15	Thai PBS (Television Network)	4
16	Bright TV 20 (Television Network)	3
17	NBT 11 (Television Network)	3
18	Spring News CH19 (Television Network)	3
19	www.pptvthailand.com	3
20	www.prachachat.net	3
21	www.tlcthai.com	3
22	www.vijaichina.com	3
23	www.voicetv.co.th	3
24	www.eduzones.com	2
25	www.logisticscorner.com	2
26	www.sanook.com	2
27	www.tnnthailand.com	2
28	Amarin TV (Television Network)	1
29	www.chiangmainews.co.th	1
30	www.easyintaobao.com	1
31	www.marketingoops.com	1
32	www.prachatham.com	1
33	www.rmutt.ac.th	1

### Thailand mainstream media are the main source of Chinese tourist news on social media in Thailand

According to the collection of mainstream media outlets related to the Chinese tourists, the findings revealed that there were 33 agencies of media outlets in Thailand producing the Thai contents related to Chinese tourists. These agencies used the American social media platforms namely Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter which were most popular among Thai people. The Thai media outlet that significantly presented the contents related to the Chinese tourists on American social media, was manager.co.th, one of the best-known newspaper websites in Thailand. The frequency of content presentation of manager.co.th was found at 18 times, followed by Channel 3, a top television channel in Thailand, and tnews.co.th, a website of news agency on cable television at 13 times. Besides, there were some media outlets proposing the contents related to the Chinese tourists more than 10 times in a year. These media outlets were thairath.tv, cm108.com, and nationtv.tv as specified in Table 4.

## Sources of Chinese tourists' content of social media in Thailand

**Most contents associated with the Chinese tourists were produced (DIY) by news agencies in Thai:** The results illustrated that most content in the news on social media in Thailand were newly produced or called DIY (Do it yourself). The frequency of these kind of items was found at 223 times or 37.17 percent, followed by the newly produced news combined with repeated news (DIY and Repasted) at 200 times or 33.33 percent, and the repasted news brought from other news agencies at 164 times or 27.33 percent as shown in **Table 5**.

**Staff workers in Thailand mainstream media lead the opinion of Chinese tourists on social media:** Regarding the total 600 samples, the occupation mostly producing the contents associated with the images of Chinese tourists was web content writers that cannot identify the work position. During one and a half years, the frequency of news presentation was at 518 times or 82.88 percent, followed by unidentified writers at 65 times or 10.4 percent. However, an obvious difference was found in the third occupation; teachers/academics. The frequency of news presentation of this group was at 9 times or 1.44 percent. The last group was citizen writers who were also member or volunteers reporting the news. The frequency of news presentation of this group was at 8 times or 1.28 percent as represented in **Table 6**.

## Using the multistep model for altering the negative images of Chinese Tourists

This study applies the multistep model of Avraham and Ketter [31] for altering negative image of Chinese tourists in which three kinds of strategies are used to restore the respective Chinese tourists' positive image: source, audience, and message (SAM Strategies).

**Using message strategies dominate the Chinese tourists' image repair strategies:** The study shows that within one and a half years period, message strategies were mostly adopted in Chinese tourists' image repair via online media in Thailand, which is closely followed up by source strategies and audience strategies respectively.

**Table 5** Source type of contents on social media in Thailand.

Source Type	Frequency	Percent
DIY	223	37.17
Repasted	164	27.33
DIY and Repasted	200	33.33
Unspecified	13	2.17
Total	600	100

**Table 6** Social media occupation.

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Web Content Writers	518	82.88
Citizen Writers	8	1.28
Teachers/Academics	9	1.44
Unidentified	65	10.4
Total	600	100

**01. Source-Focused Strategy:** A trustworthy source can persuade masses, i.e. the news which is broadcasted by the embassy or the government media to the target group. Therefore, one of a very important strategy is to give precedence to source.

**Cooperation and media relations:** The Embassy of The People's Republic of China in the kingdom of Thailand arranged a meeting with mass media from Thailand and China on the occasion of the 2014 New Year's celebration. Over 100 people participated in this meeting, which included the Chinese ambassador, Mr. Ning Fukui and the representative of the Thai Journalists Association, the Press Association of Thailand, the Thai Broadcast Journalists Association and 27 other mass media stations of Thailand (Thai Rath Newspaper, Matichon newspaper, Daily Mail newspaper, Daily News newspaper, Manager newspaper, Thansettakij newspaper, The Nation Group, Thai Television Channel 3, Royal Thai Army Radio and Television Channel 5, TV Broadcasting Station Channel 9), as well as the Chinese media in Thailand. The main objective of the meeting was to create a good relationship between the mass media and the government of the two countries, as well as to promote the understanding of Thai culture to Chinese people (and also to create an understanding of Chinese culture to Thai people). Meanwhile, Spring News TV has collaborated with Chinese media "Xinhua press" in Thailand to exchange information in order to promote the communication and understandings between the two nations.

**02. Audience-focused strategy:** The principle of audience-focused strategy is to directly improve the image to the receiver, i.e. the communicators raises the subject relevant to the good image of Chinese tourist and ignore all the negative content which can raise to dispute.

**Emphasis on similarities and relevance:** Thai Post newspaper dated on March 29, 2015 adopted the strategy which creates the awareness on the similarities between Thai people and Chinese people in which people from different places in China tend to have different personalities and character. This is quite similar case to Thailand. Chinese people regard Thai people as their brothers and relatives. In their opinion, Thailand is also regarded as a developed nation, like European nations. Similar to Thai people, Chinese people will be very offended if to be racially discriminated.

**03. Message strategies:** In the last group, image repair strategies focused on the messages that described the images of Chinese tourists. Message Strategies are extremely important because they are used to describe the target audience directly.

**Hosting opinion leaders:** The articles of China Radio International dated on April 7, 2016 and Manager Online News dated on September 21, 2014 have used messages of the key leader such as Xi Jinping, the president of China, by mentioning that "Chinese tourists must behave well when visiting other countries. We need to protect the good image of the country and we ought to educate our citizens and behave ourselves as people who have civilization when traveling abroad." In addition, the article dated on January 12, 2016 of the Embassy of The People's Republic of China in the kingdom of Thailand has also announced regulations to Chinese

tourists who are coming to Thailand during the Chinese New Year by claiming that Chinese tourists must respect the traditions of different countries and must comply with regulations and local laws, and respect for other people's rights as civilized tourists. Moreover, Thai Rath Online News dated on February 18, 2015 has presented content about a tourism campaign aimed at changing Chinese tourists' behaviors by using interview reports of the president of the Thai-Chinese Tourist Guide Club by mentioning that Chinese people are very different by age and status, and that the Chinese government gives priority to promoting tourism abroad. Likewise, the government of Thailand promotes by giving priority of different cultures.

**Hosting spotlight and cultural event:** Voice TV News has presented the news dated on April 20, 2016 about the China National Tourism Administration that launched a campaign to develop well behaved Chinese tourists when traveling abroad. The campaign was held at the front of Summer Palace, including nine popular tourist attractions in Beijing. In this project, the Chinese government has invited Chinese artists to perform for more than 10,000 people. In addition, the Chinese government also planned activities every three months to promote a campaign to protect the environment, for example, putting garbage in a trash can. China Radio International Online dated on December 14, 2015 presented the news about Songkran Festival in Chiang Mai City, Thailand on the occasion of the 720 years anniversary for the founding of Chiang Mai City. In the festival, there was the China-Thailand cultural exchange exhibition named "Caravan Tour 2015: China-Thailand friendship", this exhibition aims to welcome Chinese tourists who wished to drive a car when travelling around in Thailand while on tour. Moreover, the Royal Thai Embassy in Beijing's website dated on April 10, 2015 that they have presented the news of the "The Two Lands One Heart" photography exhibition with the objective to strengthen the relationship between the two nations' citizen on the occasion of celebrating 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between Thailand and China. The exhibition has cooperated both sides in political, economic, cultural, educational, and tourism missions.

**Acknowledging the negative image technique:** Kapook Website dated on October 16, 2014 stated that China Central Television (CCTV) released spot advertising set in Sydney aimed at reminding Chinese people to encourage better behavior on overseas trips so as to make people behave more civilized while traveling. The ad has portrayed Chinese tourists as pandas who publicly urinate, litter, intrude on photos, sleeping on park benches and spraying graffiti on trees, the ad closes with the tagline, "Be a good panda, be a good tourist".

**Media outlet and the government have generated strategies to restore the Chinese tourists' positive image:** From the analysis, it is found that Chinese tourist image repair strategy is generated from media outlet and the government of both countries (Thailand and China).

**01. Chinese Tourist Image Repair Strategy of Media Outlets:** Media outlets in Thailand are normally implemented through translating the news from both English and Chinese websites, i.e. [www.manager.co.th](http://www.manager.co.th) which daily translates all the news

which is relevant to politic, economy, education, and culture in China, and uses both its official website and social media such as Facebook, under its "Astvchina" fan page to publish the translated news. Furthermore, China's media outlets such as China Radio International (Thai Section) also display the news and activities of Chinese tourist, such as the cultural promotion, tourist attractions, arts, and common-welfare activities of Chinese tourist.

**02. Chinese tourist image repair strategy of government:** The Tourism Authority of Thailand and Royal Thai Consulate-General in Chengdu city is carried out through the photography exhibition to show a strong bond between Thailand and China. The 40 years of diplomatic ties between Thailand and China is celebrated by means of "The Two Lands One Heart" photography exhibition with the objective to strengthen the relationship of the two nation's citizens. Furthermore, Thai PBS's official website has reported that the Chinese government by China National Tourism Administration (CNTA), has taken further steps to regulate Chinese tourist during their oversea trips by enacting nine tourism laws, namely:

- (1) Hindrance and interruption towards the staff operation whether in an aircraft or in public vehicles are strictly forbidden.
- (2) Vandalism of public property is forbidden.
- (3) Disrespect for local culture and tradition is prohibited.
- (4) Vandalism of archaeological site and antiquities is prohibited.
- (5) Narcotics, prostitution and gambling are prohibited.
- (6) Threatening behavior is forbidden.
- (7) Destruction of ecosystem is prohibited.
- (8) Any behavior which shows credulity, superstitions and fanaticism is prohibited.
- (9) Any defamatory actions or behavior which can defame the nation are prohibited.

Any person who violates these nine regulations will be blacklisted and will be banned from leaving the country for a period ranging from two to ten years.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The data analysis on the image presentation of Chinese tourists on popular social media platforms in Thailand through Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter indicates that the news and information perception through these channels in Thailand "relied on" the social media from western world. Most contents shown on Thai media outlets were produced by the media staff. It could be said that Facebook was the most popular social media platform among Thai users and YouTube was a channel to rerun television programs. Nevertheless, Thai media were not particularly interested in Twitter to propose the tourist news. Most of the news were directly reported by reporters or repasted from Facebook and YouTube. In addition, a large number of photos and statements about the Chinese tourists were shared among

Thai social media users without going through the news agencies. Regarding the content analysis methodology, the photos and statements relating to Thailand's tourism and Chinese tourists were mostly posted and shared on Facebook fan pages.

The findings of this research also demonstrated a variety of found data on the images of Chinese tourists including both their negative and positive image. It was regarded as a normal matter when studying the national image in various countries. On the other hand, this paper found that the images of Chinese tourists reported by Thai media was negative and considered as stereotypes. Regarding the selected presentation of Thai media, certain keywords frequently found in the news were: poison of Chinese tours, break regulations, drop garbage, effects, steal, watch out, act violently, and uncivilized. It seemed to be a large frame of social and cultural images. In contrast, some positive images were identified by many keywords such as: stimulate economy, new opportunity, generate revenue, and help Thai people, which was a big frame of economic image.

Even though the images of Chinese tourists were presented in an undesirable aspect, it was continually improved by the government [32]. This was concordant with a study of Li, Pan, Zhang and Smith [7] which noted that social media had an effect on the development of national image. Therefore, any persons concerned with this part should define effective strategies through social media to improve the national media by building multidimensional constructs, including perception and attitudes. Additionally, this article was concordant with, and a part of, the national image development of Chinese tourists. Chow and Bai [33] claimed that the government of China had several implemented policies to create a positive image of their citizens, for instance in education, urban development, technological development, health development, and economic development. Although the economic growth of China could contribute to the positive national image, many countries still focused on China's political future and the need to reform it due to benefits from trade, foreign investment, and a peaceful international environment [34]. Notwithstanding, some studies found that developing countries seemed to have a better national image of China than others with fast-growing economies. The government of China officially determined its policies towards the national image, public diplomacy, and soft power. It believed that the policy communication at an international level could influence the world population and successfully distribute the Chinese value and culture [35].

It could be concluded that the social media in Thailand were just a past way to present news and information of Thai media outlet

which conveyed the images of Chinese tourists to audiences using foreign social media platforms. The web content writers as media staff was responsible for transferring the value, belief, attitude, and images of Chinese tourists and most of them were stereotypes as well. The national image of China required the construction of China's national image through the Chinese tourists as shown on various contents in this study (**Appendix A**). Besides, the repasted news was found between the social media. We found that the body of knowledge in this research depends on three elements; firstly, on social media, "web content writers" is an important group in persuading and influential thoughts towards attitudes and behaviors of the audience; secondly, government is an important agency in shaping and reviving the reputation of the country, in this research, both the Thai government and Chinese government work together to solve the problem and be aware of the good relationship between the two countries first; and finally, this research may be playing the important role for the future research about country image repairs by giving some idea to public relations, and country branding practitioners to create the place marketing, public diplomacy, and media management strategies to revive the positive images of the country. Additionally, this research aims to be a light for people concerned with media organizations in Thailand and to make them realize the neutral presentation of news and information regarding ethical framework, human rights, and national benefits. This is because the Chinese tourists are an important source of national revenue and could stimulate domestic economy and generate the revenue to local communities. Moreover, both Thailand and China would operate the New Silk Road, and logistics project, the initiative called "One Belt, One Road" together and to invite a huge number of Chinese tourists to visit Thailand.

## Limitations and Future Study

This study examined managing the images of Chinese tourists on social media in Thailand within a limited time frame of one and a half years only. The samples were gathered from Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, while there were additional interesting social media platforms. This paper furthered the researcher's study on China's Nation Branding in Thailand which covered other dimensions apart from the tourism. In addition to the content analysis, other methodologies would be applied; for example, survey research, focus groups, or in-depth interviews. These methodologies are interesting and important to plan and develop the images of Chinese tourists. More importantly, a comparative study on the images of Chinese tourists in Thailand and other Asian countries would be a challenge for the researchers.



## References

- 1 Yu B, Sun Y (2012) Images of China: An Empirical Study of Western Tourist Material [Bachelor's thesis]. University West: Sweden.
- 2 Charhar Institute and Millward Brown (2013) China National Image Global Survey.
- 3 Xiang Y (2013) The Characteristics of Independent Chinese Outbound Tourists. *Tourism Planning & Development* 10: 134-148.
- 4 Han G, Wang X (2015) From Product-Country Image to National Image: "Made In China" and Integrated Valence Framing Effects. *International Journal of Strategic Communication* 9(1): 62-77.
- 5 Xiao H, Mair HL (2006) A Paradox of Images. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing* 20(2): 1-14.
- 6 Ding S (2011) Branding a Rising China: An Analysis of Beijing's National Image Management in the Age of China's Rise. *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 46(3): 293-306.
- 7 Li X, Pan B, Zhang L, Smith WW (2009) The Effect of Online Information Search on Image Development: Insights from a Mixed-Methods Study. *Journal of Travel Research* 48: 45-57.
- 8 Wu HD (1996) An enduring schema: the image of the Chinese in American prime time television dramas. *Gazette* 58: 69-86.
- 9 Xiang D (2013) China's image on international English language social media. *The Journal of International Communication* 19(2): 252-271.
- 10 Anurit PJ, Pornpatcharapong W, Chongpakdeepong S, Sataman K, Phuong QHD, et al. (2011) Influences of Social Media on the Use of Thai Language. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 1(2): 109-122.
- 11 Wu MY, Pearce P (2014) Understanding Chinese Overseas Recreational Vehicle Tourists: A Netnographic and Comparative Approach. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* 20(10): 1-23.
- 12 Sparks B, Pan GW (2009) Chinese Outbound tourists: Understanding their attitudes, constraints and use of information sources. *Tourism Management* 30: 483-494.
- 13 Anholt S (2007) *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*. New York, USA: Palgrave Macmillan.
- 14 Li X, Chitty N (2009) Reframing National Image: A Methodological Framework. *Conflict & Communication Online* 8(2): 1-11.
- 15 Lippmann W (1922) *Public opinion*. New York, USA: Macmillan.
- 16 Entman R (1993) Framing: Toward a clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication* 43(4): 51-8.
- 17 Wang H (2011) China's Image Projection and Its Impact. In: Wang J (ed.) *Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy Soft Power in China: Public Diplomacy through Communication* (1stedn), New York, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, pp: 37-56.
- 18 Astarita C (2009) The Evolution of the Image of China in the United States during the Cold War. *China Report* 45(1): 23-34.
- 19 Scannell P, Cardiff D (1991) *A social history of British broadcasting 1922-1939*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- 20 Zhang X (2012) The Factors Effecting Chinese Tourist Revisit Thailand Destination [Master Thesis], University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Bangkok.
- 21 Skift Trends Report (2013) Rise of the Chinese Independent Traveler. Retrieved August 11, 2015, from [www.skift.com](http://www.skift.com).
- 22 Lahouati J (2012) Attracting Chinese Tourists to Denmark: A Focused Study on Chinese Tourists' Perceptions [Master Thesis]. Copenhagen Business School, Denmark.
- 23 Li X, Stepchenkova S (2012) Chinese Outbound Tourists' Destination Image of America: Part I. *Journal of Travel Research* 51(3): 250-266.
- 24 Pearce PL, Wu MY, Osmond A (2013) Puzzles in Understanding Chinese Tourist Behavior: Towards a Triple-C Gaze. *Tourism Recreation Research* 38(2): 145-157.
- 25 Dung YO, Reijnders S (2013) Paris offscreen: Chinese tourists in cinematic Paris. *Tourist Studies* 13(3): 287-303.
- 26 Agrusa J, Kim SS, Wang KC (2011) Mainland Chinese Tourists to Hawaii: Their Characteristics and Preferences. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing* 28(3): 261-278.
- 27 Trottier D, Fuchs C (2014) Theorising social media, politics and the state: an introduction. In: *Social media, politics and the state: protests, revolutions, riots, crime and policing in the age of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube*. Routledge Research in Information Technology and Society (1stedn), New York, USA: Routledge, pp: 3-38.
- 28 Nupairoj N (2013) Social Media and Media Literacy in Thailand. Paper presented at the Asian Conference on Media and Mass Communication, Osaka, Japan.
- 29 Zocialinc (2014) Thailand Zocial Awards 2014: Statistics of Social Media Usage Behavior in Thailand.
- 30 INFORMA (2012) *Destination Thailand: Current and future trends towards AEC 2015*.
- 31 Avraham E, Ketter K (2008) Media strategies for marketing places in crises: Improving the image of cities, countries, and tourist destinations.
- 32 Gartner WC, Shen J (1992) The Impact of Tiananmen Square on China's Tourism Image. *Journal of Travel Research*, Spring, pp: 47-52.
- 33 Chow N, Bai X (2011) Modernization and its impact on Chinese older people's perception of their own image and status. *International Social Work* 54(6): 800-815.
- 34 Lubman S (2004) The dragon as demon: images of China on Capitol Hill. *Journal of Contemporary China* 13(40): 541-565.
- 35 Xie T, Page B (2013) What Affects China's National Image? A cross-national study of public opinion. *Journal of Contemporary China* 22(83): 850-867.
- 36 Jianping N (2008) The Beijing Olympics and China's National Image Building [Draft Paper for the Workshop on "China, the Olympics and the World"]. Shanghai Institute of American Studies, Shanghai.
- 37 Tungkeunkunt K (2013) China's Soft Power in Thailand. *ISEAS Perspective* 33: 1-9.
- 38 Digital Advertising Association of Thailand (2014) *Thailand Social Media Landscape: Social Media Subscribers in Thailand*.
- 39 Benoit WL (1995) *Accounts, excuses, and apologies: A theory of image restoration strategies*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- 40 Benoit WL (2015) *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies: Image Repair Theory and Research* (2nd ed.). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- 41 Cohen J (1960) A coefficient of agreement for nominal scales. *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 20: 37-46.
- 42 Pew Research Center (2013) *America's Global Image Remains More Positive than China's*.

## **Appendix A**

### **China's Image Repair:**

#### **The Case of Chinese Tourists on Social Media in Thailand**

Following were examples of the types of Chinese tourists' image on social media in Thailand statements found in the collected items:

#### **Positive Images;**

- Chinese Tourists Interested in Natural Attraction in Ban Pong Community near Chiang Mai City.
- Effects of 'Lost in Thailand' Film on Chinese Tourist Boom.
- Chinese Tourist Crowd Driving to Thailand during Chinese New Year.
- 900 Charter Flights of Chinese Tourists Landing in Thailand to Celebrate Chinese New Year.
- Chinese Tourists Generating Huge Revenue for Tourism and Cooperation towards International Transport.
- Chinese Tourists Mostly Visiting Thailand.
- Chinese Tourists Considering Thailand and Thais as Relatives or Close Friends with No Harms.
- Chinese Tourists Considering Thais as Friendly People and Thailand as Developed Country in Europe.
- Chinese Tours Urging Thailand's Economy.
- Chinese were disciplined due to high level of competition in the country.
- Thailand was the most popular destination among Chinese tourists during Chinese New Year.
- Thai's attitude towards "Chinese tourists" was adjusted to support increasing revenue from tourism.
- Thousands of Chinese Tourists Joining Seminar in Thailand.
- Chinese Tourist Stimulating Tourism.
- Chinese Tourist and New Opportunity of Samui.
- Chinese Tourists Helping Restaurant's Employees Wash Dishes.

#### **Negative Images;**

- Chinese Tourists Banned at Wat Rong Khun after Inappropriate Use of Toilet.
- Chinese Tourists Dropped Used Toilet Paper into Flush Tank.
- Half Million Chinese Tourists Visiting Shenzhen Beach and Left 362 Tonnes of Garbage on Holidays.
- Shocked! Chinese Woman Draping Her Underwear at Chiang Mai Airport.
- Chinese Tourists Blamed after Urinating in front of Church in Wat Rong Khun.
- Chinese Passengers Fight on Thai Airways Flight from Bangkok to Beijing.
- Thai Sharing VDO Clip of Disrespectful Chinese Tourist Kicking Sacred Bells at Wat Phra That Doi Suthep.
- Chinese Tourists Creating Mayhem at Chiang Mai University.

- Chinese Tourists Dressed Up in Uniform Similar to Chiang Mai University and Causing Outrage on Campus.
- Revenge to Death! Angry Chinese Passenger Fighting against Pilot and Opening Emergency Exit while Taking-Off.
- Chinese Tourist Stealing Local's Tricycle.
- Chinese Teenage Tourists Not Paying for Food in Chiang Mai.
- Chinese Sun-Seekers Enjoying Sunbathing on Dirty Beaches.