

## Advanced Destination Marketing Strategy for Chanthaburi Province, Thailand

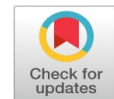
KULRISA SRISANGKAEW \*

Hospitality and Tourism Department Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand

**Abstract:** This academic journal discusses the destination marketing strategies for Chanthaburi, a province in Thailand. The province will be accredited as the hub of diverse resources with sufficiency economy tourism plans to produce benefits for the national economy, and to promote the cultural, social and economic development of the local communities by increasing the standard of living and enhancing the quality of life. The marketing strategies focus on building the right image and perception in the visitor's mind, by improving the awareness of the destination and the quality of the natural resources and services by employing a range of strategies. The research process involved collecting secondary data from various theories in tourism marketing as well as primary data from observation. The sources of information are tourism journals and textbooks, including relevant information to develop marketing strategies for Chanthaburi. The theoretical and practical implications include the destination area life cycle, (Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities, Threats) SWOT analysis and the tourism marketing mix, which can be applied in advanced strategies. The tourism product offer should be developed to target allo-centric to mid-centric types of tourist, as well as new international travelers who wish to be socially and environmentally responsible, by setting competitive prices in the market and by using e-marketing as an information distribution channel. The promotion strategies focus on building customer awareness and creating interest in the target market. There is the need for training of service provider staff to possess the spirit of hospitality, service recovery skill, communication skill, and to perform the services beyond guests' expectations. The packaging and programming can be inclusive and offer added value to potential customers. However, it needs to deal with some challenges in marketing development in Chanthaburi with regard to the economic conditions, the lack of superstructure and infrastructure, the competitive situation, and environmental issues which should be addressed when developing marketing strategies in the future.

**Keywords:** Tourism marketing, Destination marketing, Tourism marketing mix, Destination branding

Received: 06 October 2016 / Accepted: 07 December 2016 / Published: 28 February 2017



### INTRODUCTION

Destination marketing is progressively becoming more competitive worldwide especially in developing countries which rely on revenue from the travel business. In the case of Chanthaburi, there is potential to plan several marketing strategies and tactics to cope with changing customer trends and demand, which have become more sophisticated. The image of Chanthaburi has long been perceived as a multi-natural resource. The original provincial slogan was "Magnificent Waterfalls, Fruit City, Good Breeding Peppercorns, Loads of Gems, Chanthabun Mat, Fertile Nature, and Gathering Place of King Taksin the Great's Liberation Armythe" (Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), 2010).

The tourism legislative head of Chanthaburi, Mr. Theerathew Sriyapan, has expressed the vision of Chanthaburi as a center of premium foods for partners, vacationers, and the tourism business. The focus on sustainable development is fundamental tool to create maximum financial, social, and environmental benefit. Hence, marketing should be carefully arranged and overseen to achieve these goals. This article is based on secondary information (academic journals, TAT news, articles, handouts, and site sources) and primary data (interviews and observations). During the exploration, the researcher visited various attractions in Chanthaburi to observe tourism-related improvements. In addition, fundamental information with a visitor's focus was collected and there were opportunities to meet staff and to collect written tourism data about Chanthaburi. This led to the creation of hypotheses, and the opportunity to make proposals.

---

\*Corresponding author: Kulrisa Srisangkaew

†Email: [dr.kristie1980@gmail.com](mailto:dr.kristie1980@gmail.com)

**Brief History**

Chanthaburi is situated in the east of Thailand around 245 kilometers from Bangkok. Its neighboring areas are Trat, Rayong, Chonburi, Chachoengsao and Sa Kaeo. Chanthaburi is the focal point of gemstone mining, particularly rubies and sapphires, which are one of the region’s present sources of income, including gemstones cut by experienced specialists. The pearl market could also be developed as an attraction for vacationers. In addition, natural tropical products are also major attractions in the area (Wikipedia-Chanthaburi, 2011).

As indicated by history, Chanthaburi used to be a French province in the early part of the twentieth century and this affected its design. It is also home to the biggest Catholic church in Thailand and a sizeable Christian population (Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), 2011). With the most noteworthy mountain pinnacle of the East, these normal resources add to magnificent tourism attractions, for example, adventure tourism, eco-tourism and marine-tourism, which attract allo-centric voyagers who love to visit pristine nature. This place is one of the destinations in Thailand that never fails to amaze sightseers who are able to experience a different way of life. The motivation behind the selection of Chanthaburi as a contextual investigation as far as goal advertising is concerned on account of living there in the past. The rapid development of tourist arrivals produces both positive and negative effects on the region so that there is a need for a powerful destination marketing strategy with specific end goals to create advantages in sustainable ways.



Figure 1. Map of Thailand highlighting Chanthaburi province  
Source: Wikipedia-Chanthaburi, (2011)

**SITUATION ANALYSIS**

It can be said that Chanthaburi’s competitiveness is a result of the unspoiled nature, such as the beaches which are not crowded, and the mountains and forests, which are suitable for activity-based tourism. Taking into consideration the destination life cycle, Chanthaburi is in a growth stage, in which more people are interested in investing in the accommodation and facilities. During this stage, destination awareness increases among tourists. Infrastructure development improves access to the province while tourists tend to compare trip options. Thus Chanthaburi needs to differentiate its offerings to attract tourists. It is a good tactic to create a competitive travel niche, such as gastronomic tourism, cultural heritage tourism or active sport tourism, since the growth stage represents the destination’s greatest economic growth opportunity.

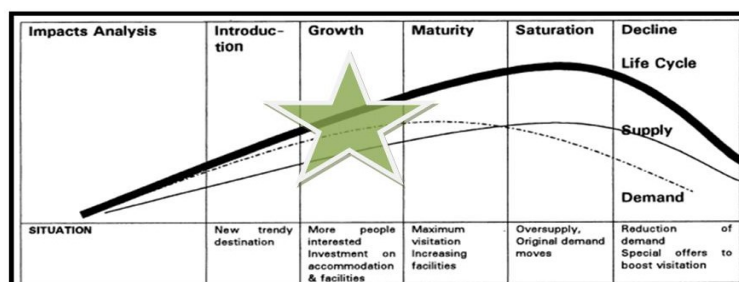


Figure 2. Destination life cycle pattern in Chanthaburi  
Source: Adapted from Buhalis, (2000)

From my review and perceptions of the area in March, 2011, Chanthaburi is a city with great resources, waterfalls, mountains, streams, and fascinating products to buy. Consequently, efforts should

be made to present Chanthaburi with clear marketing strategies to encourage more arrivals so that it can gain a greater market share. There is some local activity, and the number of tourists increases each year. Regarding nature, preservation and legacy have to be enhanced, with the low level of tourist interference and damage. Consequently, keeping in mind the end goal of building of long-term, sustainable tourism for Chanthaburi, it is important to employ reasonable practices that contribute benefits to the district as well as economic, sociocultural, and environmental development.

### **Vision, mission and major goals**

According to Thailand's five-year tourism marketing and promotion plan (2007-2011), TAT's objective mirrors the national motivation in attempting to maintain a harmony between economic development and the accomplishment of reasonable improvement. In the quest for Thailand's new idea of a "sufficiency economy", tourism has given Thailand a great opportunity to develop tourism policies and marketing strategies in accordance with the standards of His Majesty the King of Thailand to encourage harmony between marketing and development (Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), 2010). Thus, the vision, mission and real objectives will be achieved, which relate to the idea of sustainable economy tourism including the following:

#### **Vision**

Over the following five years, the development and improvement of tourism in the Chanthaburi region will be driven by the development of the tourist destinations as an exotic and pleasurable recreational area, which focuses on both domestic and international tourists by an offering ecotourism, adventure and exercise-based tourism, seaside attractions and social encounters. In addition, the province will become a hub of diverse resources with sufficiency economy tourism plans to produce benefit for the local economy by promoting the social, cultural, and the economic development of local communities, enhancing the overall standard of living and contributing to a superior quality of life.

#### **Mission**

To gain more quality tourists' arrival from domestic and international regions in order to obtain higher market share, the marketing strategies will focus on building the right image and perception in visitor's mind. The use of advertising media can increase the awareness of the destination while promoting the quality of the natural resources. Also, there will be the development of the destination supply, both infrastructure and superstructure to cope with increasing demand by aiming at visitors' experiences and satisfaction as well as improving the destination's relaxation contribution and widening its year-round demand.

#### **Major goals**

Apart from maximizing its market share, there will be a focus on the living standards of local people through tourism development by generating employment opportunities, together with environmental protection and improvement. Additionally, to advance the region's image and to present new tourism activities, existing tourist attractions need to be upgraded and improved. The improvement may incorporate long term enhancement of all administration and infrastructure to meet tourism goals, for example, water supply, transportation, streets, policing, social insurance, tourist accommodation and destinations, and other attractions.

### **Challenges in marketing development in Chanthaburi**

#### **Economic conditions**

The fluctuating global economy and variable trade conditions will continue to influence the development of Chanthaburi. In addition, the tourist price sensitivity is a huge challenge to marketing development, as the demand falls when prices rise; thus value-pricing will influence customer demand. In addition, the typical cost of basic items, inflation, trade rates, local efficiency, and competition ought to be added into the pricing equation.

### The lack of superstructure and infrastructure

Even though there are increasing numbers of small resorts and bungalows, especially along the coastline in Chanthaburi, there are no five-star hotels or standard franchise accommodations. The poor transportation development, especially the lack of an airport in the province affects accessibility. Tourism and transportation are inseparably connected. As world tourism builds, extra demands will be put on transportation (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2008). One of the reasons why Chanthaburi cannot gain a larger market share among provinces in the east zone of Thailand is the uncomfortable journey, especially for international tourists. There are only buses and vans for tourist transportation from Bangkok, and most travelers take a personal car to get to Chanthaburi. It is the task of public and private organizations to cooperate and support with investment in transportation in Chanthaburi.

### Competitive situation

With many emerging travel destinations in the east zone of Thailand, Chanthaburi cannot gain the largest market share among nearby provinces, Chonburi, Rayong and Trat get more arrivals. This reflects the need for more marketing communication development and marketing strategies. Furthermore, the number of international tourists is still at a low rate, so it is necessary to create a new marketing mix to attract more arrivals. From Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) (2007), the top 5 international visitors to Chanthaburi apart from domestic tourists are from Malaysia, Singapore, China, Hong Kong and Japan. To increase the number of international tourists, Chanthaburi's tourism industry requires huge investments in tourism-related organizations. There should be more investment in airports, air carriers, hotels, and retailers. Differentiation from competitors is still a key strategy to gain a greater market share (Luekveerawattana, 2016).

Table 1: Tourist arrivals, 2007

Country of air	Chonburi	Bangkok	Rayoq	Chantaburi	Dot	Sakaew
Thailand	1,798,728	3,468,287	1,519,472	527,271	676,917	310,745
Malaysia	87,220	300,194	10,812	1,910	375	540
Singapore	37,876	424,475	12,259	2,223	965	135
China	470,184	963,103	12,901	2,012	1,795	393
Hong Kong, China	191,340	299,769	11,017	2,020	1,528	110
Japan	97,460	1,448,006	21,410	2,341	3,178	2,129

Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) (2007).

### Environmental issues

Natural disasters and climate change greatly affect the tourism industry, which is vulnerable to non-controllable events. It can be devastating for the local economy which is heavily dependent on tourist arrivals. The loss of infrastructure, superstructure and resultant negative media can affect the destination in the long term. Less concern for proactive approaches including predictions and warnings for disaster occurrence can be obstacles in destination management as tourists are concerned about safety and security issues.

### CHANTHABURI'S MARKETING STRATEGIES

To set the direction of Chanthaburi's tourism development, marketing analysis should be conducted by benchmarking in order to build competitive advantage in order to find a way to reach the major goals. By benchmarking with Trat province, Chanthaburi needs to create a unique selling proposition to target specific groups and build a stronger image for visitors. Trat province focuses on Chang Island to sell to foreign tourists who love water sports activities like scuba diving, and the policy has been successful. In terms of tourism marketing mix, there is a need to develop tactics and strategies as well as conducting research and feasibility studies to determine whether the plan is potentially profitable with sustainable, long term viability in the market place as follows:

### Target market

Includes both domestic (Thailand) and international visitors (especially Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, China, and Japan) who are allo-centric to mid-centric in type, including backpackers, elderly people, and ecotourists, who are potential quality travelers. Platinum and gold tourists are the main target customers, since they are quite loyal and revisit the place as well as have environmental awareness while travelling (Kozak & Martin, 2012). With the carrying capacity issue, it should shadow the Tourism Authority of Thailand's marketing vision that highlights the "high quality" target market with niche tourists (Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), 2007). . The idea is to guarantee that individuals, communities, or any associations are able to organize the activities that tourists want to take part in.

### Destination branding

To create the positive image and increase brand awareness in customers' minds, a new slogan "Chanthaburi...An Exotic Experience in the City of Miracles" is proposed, which conveys idea of authentic experiences that will be enjoyed by customers during a visit. Since ecotourism, agro-tourism and historical tourism can attract tourists to have good memories, Chanthaburi can be a place of miracles. The logo is made with a yellow theme with the moon in the logo in the form of the word, "Chantra", the original Thai meaning. Flowers and butterflies convey the message of the charming natural resources which is the main feature of the area.



Figure 3. Proposed Chanthaburi logo  
Source: Own design

### Marketing mix Product, price, place, promotion, people, packaging, programming, and partnership

#### Product

The best feature of Chanthaburi is its abundance of natural resources such as its beaches, mountains, national parks, waterfalls, forests, tropical fruits and gems. Ecotourism can thus be the feature of Chanthaburi, which should be promoted in terms of adventure tour packages to allo-centric type tourists and backpackers, who love exotic places (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2008). A unique travel experience can be created by adding adventure sports and activities such as hiking, biking, bird watching, water sports, kayaking and scuba diving in the beach areas. There should be information about the code of conduct in the destination areas as to what tourists should and should not do to prevent damage to the environment. Local food and different types of accommodation should be offered to suit different types of customer to create happy travel experiences, which can raise positive word-of-mouth and customer loyalty (Alegre & Garau, 2010; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Um, Chon & Ro, 2006).

To differentiate the product, Chanthaburi can create a pilgrimage tour package for elderly people and the young who prefer to learn more about historical story for their appreciation and education. At present, Yot Khao Phrabat is a fascinating spot on top of Khao Phrabat, which is framed by natural geographical wonders which are identified with Buddhist legends, for example, Sila Chedi, the Buddha's impression, which is a stone in the form of an upset donation bowl, Tham Ruesi (Wikipedia, 2011). Also at Wat Khao Suki is the important temple which is used as a meditation venue.

The table below presents an assessment of the available resources. Chanthaburi has many varied resources which can be combined to create packages for specific groups of target customer. The spa, bou-

tique hotel, and health resort industry could be a potential tourism attraction. Moreover, Chanthaburi can become the hub of famous local products such as fruits, gems and jewelry, Mat Weaving and pepper, which are famous authentic local products made and sold by the local people as well as the historical and cultural places to visit.

Table 2: Major tourist attractions in Eastern Thailand

Area	Ecotourism	Historical	Cultural
Bangkok	-	Grand Palace, Arun Temple, the Chakri Maha Prasat Throne Hall	Rattanakosin Island
Chanthaburi	Namtok New National Park, Khao Kichakut National Park, Khao Soi Dao Wildlife Sanctuary, Kung Wiman Beach, Chao Lao Beach	Chanthaburi National Museum, Maritime Museum Tuk Daeng, Kook Khi Kai	Khung Kraben Research Development Center, Oasis Seaworld
Chonburi	Pataya Beach, Sichang Island, Sam Muk Island	-	Buffalo running festival
Rayong	Samet: Island, Khao Laem Ya	-	-
Sakaew	Pangsida National Park	Prasat Khaonoi, Prasat Sadok Kok Thom	-
Trat	ko Chang National Park, Ko Mak, Ko Kut, Mai Rood Beach, Ban Chuen Beach	Wat Bupharam, Residence Kampot, Khao Lam Memorial	-

Source: (Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), 2010).

### Price

As purchasers seek ecological products, they are prepared to pay premium prices (Pigram, 1996; Thomas, 1992; Laarman & Gregersen, 1996). In the high season, high price-setting can be used to meet the inelastic demand, but in the low season, the low price-setting could be used to attract tourists. Furthermore, with the mission to create the image of an economical destination, Chanthaburi needs to keep prices in line with customers' expectation. Package bundle pricing is also another possible pricing strategy when setting up inclusive tours to Chanthaburi. The price includes accommodation, transportation, restaurants, guided tours and activities which target group tour travelers. In addition, pricing also needs to take into account the total cost of product innovation, distribution and promotion cost as well (Bunchutrakun, Lieungnapar, Wangsomchok & Aeka, 2016).

### Place

At present, internet marketing plays a significant role in customers' lifestyle, so the tourism suppliers should create attractive websites to provide information as well as online reservation options for potential tourists as it allows tourists to find information and purchase personal itineraries on-line, and therefore it transforms destination marketing. Furthermore, travel agents, tour operators, specialty channels and internet selling can be other channels for tourism package sales. Increasing long-term partnerships with tour operators and travel agencies is extremely important for the development of holiday destinations.

### Promotion

Chanthaburi should extend online resources and improve access through sites, and long range inter-personal communication promotion procedures; additionally promotion to its target customer can be achieved through planning FAM (familiarization) to media and group tour customer contacts. In addition, it should advertise special event promotions through various advertising strategies, as well as offering coupons and discounts to generate sales. Moreover, it can be used to promote and support special interest tourism, such as pilgrimage tourism, ecotourism activity, agro-tourism products and sport and adventure tourism. In addition, it should continue to enhance email promotion efforts and create a database of potential customers by employing innovations to enhance the tourism site experience, for example, video blogging. Similarly, Destination marketing organizations can be used to target annual tourism and travel fairs in Bangkok. Finally, pamphlets should be prepared which provide information

about attractions and activities, including various local providers, for example, bars, and other entertainment and catering services (Wicks & Schuett, 1993).

#### *People*

Human resource management has to be managed effectively, since the interaction between guests and service providers can create satisfaction and positive customer experiences. Local people should be employed in tourism businesses to generate income. In the growth stage, the host-tourist interaction is an informal relationship. Service industries need to focus on tourism marketing because customer satisfaction leads to good word-of-mouth and enhances customer loyalty. The key is training service provider staff to possess the spirit of hospitality, training for service recovery, communication skills, and performing services beyond guests' expectations (Luekveerawattana, 2016).

#### *Packaging & programming*

Special activities and events can be used to increase customers' expenditure and to conduct attractive tour packages or other interesting tourism services. Tourism policy views programs as a strategy to ensure a clear focus for marketing efforts. With the image as an ecotourism destination, Chanthaburi should create tour packages, which provide transportation, lodging, amenities, and recreation activities, and can be packaged and sold together with bundle pricing.

In terms of programming, a mileage travel collection program can attract more tourists. Several local festivals in Chanthaburi can be employed to promote the image and create a good travel experience for visitors. The itinerary can combine local fair and festivals, where visitors can participate and interact with local people such as, Phra Phutthabat Phluang (highlights a service to watch heavenly attendants overlaying the Ruler Buddha's impression and moving up), the World Durian Celebration and Chanthaburi Gemstone and local product fairs (Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), 2010).

#### *Partnership*

Chanthaburi needs to rival different areas in the locale with cooperation between all tourism-related partners especially from the business division, together with the support from other segments. Information sharing is necessary in joint-marketing activities which can be a powerful draw for visitors to the province. In terms of destination promotion, global or provincial magazine coverage is another necessity. Interdependency between all goal partners and collaboration between organizations are also necessary.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

Having studied the destination, there is a need to have effective integration between different stakeholders, such as local government, tourism suppliers, tourists, and the local community itself. Destination marketing organizations play a vital role in promoting a destination in a sustainable direction. When Chanthaburi has achieved a higher level of development, it needs to enhance the advertising of ecological activities and its natural setting to accomplish sustainable competitive advantage. A de-marketing strategy should be employed for controlling the carrying capacity of tourist arrivals to preserve the quality of natural resources. On the other hand, consumer trends keep changing so research should be conducted continuously, together with good implementation and control by using total quality management. All stakeholders, public and private organizations need to cooperate in enhancing service quality and sustainable resources with long term perseverance of the local culture and ecology (Pathumporn & Nakapaksin, 2015).

### **REFERENCES**

- Alegre, J., & Garau, J. (2010). Tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 37(1), 52-73.
- Buhalis, D. (2000). Marketing the competitive destination of the future. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 97-116.

- Bunchutrakun, C., Lieungnapar, A., Wangsomchok, C., & Aeka, A. (2016). A corpus-based approach to learning a tour guide talk. *International Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 2(2), 58-63.
- Goeldner, C. R., & Ritchie, J. R. (2008). *Tourism: Principles, practices, philosophies* (11th ed.). New Jersey, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Kozak, M., & Martin, D. (2012). Tourism life cycle and sustainability analysis: Profit-focused strategies for mature destinations. *Tourism Management*, 33(1), 188-194.
- Kozak, M., & Rimmington, M. (2000). Tourist satisfaction with Mallorca, Spain, as an off-season holiday destination. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(3), 259-268.
- Luekveerawattana, R. (2016). Relationship between personal factors and marketing mix satisfaction of the tourists at Don Hoi Lot in Samut Songkhram province, Thailand. *Journal of Administrative and Business Studies*, 2(3), 113-120.
- Laarman, J. G., & Gregersen, H. M. (1996). Pricing policy in nature-based tourism. *Tourism Management*, 17(4), 247-254.
- Pathumporn, J., & Nakapaksin, S. (2015). Participatory action research model for sustainable community based tourism development. *International Journal of Business and Administrative Studies*, 1(3), 89-93.
- Pigram, J. J. (1996). Best practice environmental management and the tourism industry. *Progress in Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 2(34), 261-271.
- Thomas, J. (1992). Tourism and the environment: An exploration of the willingness to pay of the average visitor. Paper presented at the *Tourism in Europe Conference*, Centre for Travel and Tourism, Durham, UK.
- Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). (2007). *Domestic and international marketing strategies and plans*.
- Tourism Authority of Thailand coporate (TAT). (2010). *Marketing 'amazing thailand' to the world: Thailand branding tourism authority of Thailand-Tourist information, Chanthaburi*. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/vMc0xf>
- Um, S., Chon, K., & Ro, Y. H. (2006). Antecedents of revisit intention. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33(4), 1141-1158.
- Wicks, B. E., & Schuett, M. A. (1993). Using travel brochures to target frequent travellers and big-spenders. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 2(2-3), 77-90.
- Wikipedia (2011). *Destination marketing organization*. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/QOc4ZF>
- Wikipedia-Chanthaburi. (2011). *Chanthaburi province*. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/Q4uM0K>

— This article does not have any appendix. —