

Constructing ASEAN tourism brand identity by applying event and leisure marketing^{*}

การสร้างอัตลักษณ์แบรนด์การท่องเที่ยวอาเซียนด้วยการใช้การตลาดการจัดงาน และสันนาการ

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Abstract

ASEAN countries committed to strategically alliance at the end of year 2015 as Asian Economic Community (AEC). With members of ten countries where have nearly identical economic activities in tourism industry contributing to the countries' GDPs, the core competency and definite identity of ASEAN are still ambiguous. The conglomerate policy covers only on the surface of cooperation hardly identify the outstanding benefit to the integration, however, hospitality and tourism industry is the key spot that can be extensively complied with concept of AEC. The qualitative research conducted in 2015, using an in-depth interview with eight key informants from multiple roles in ASEAN tourism, aims to examine an overall strategic planning process focusing on formal and informal communication of how ASEAN tourism branding being constructed based on destination tourism and marketing communication through event and leisure activities. The benefits of this study for students, researchers, marketing managers, and other tourism related entities are two parts; an elaboration of how ASEAN tourism branding built under a consensus agreement and suggestion on the potential decision on ASEAN tourism brand identity in long term.

Keywords: 1. ASEAN 2. Brand Identity 3. Event 4. Leisure 5. Marketing

^{*} This article aims to study the formal and informal roles of ASEAN Secretariat in strategic marketing of ASEAN tourism branding creation

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บทคัดย่อ

ประเทศไทยอาเซียนมุ่งมั่นที่จะเป็นพันธมิตรทางยุทธศาสตร์ในปลายปี พ.ศ. 2558 ในฐานะประชาคมเศรษฐกิจอาเซียน อันประกอบด้วยสมาชิกสิบประเทศที่มีกิจกรรมทางเศรษฐกิจที่ส่งผลต่อด้านนิสิตภัณฑ์มวลรวมภายในประเทศ ที่เกือบจะเหมือนกันทั้งหมดในอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยว ทำให้ความสามารถทักษะและเอกลักษณ์ที่ชัดเจนของอาเซียนยังคงไม่ชัดเจน นโยบายการรวมกลุ่มครอบคลุมเฉพาะบนพื้นผิวของความร่วมมือไม่ค่อยระบุถึงผลประโยชน์ที่โดดเด่นต่อการรวมกลุ่ม อย่างไรก็ตามอุตสาหกรรมการบริการและการท่องเที่ยว เป็นจุดสำคัญที่สามารถปฏิบัติตามแนวคิดของ ประชาคมเศรษฐกิจอาเซียนได้อย่างกว้างขวาง การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพที่จัดทำในปี 2558 โดยใช้การสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกกับผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญแปดคนจากหลายบทบาทในการท่องเที่ยวอาเซียนครั้งนี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษากระบวนการวางแผนเชิงกลยุทธ์โดยเน้นศึกษาการสื่อสารอย่างเป็นทางการและไม่เป็นทางการเกี่ยวกับการสร้างแบรนด์การท่องเที่ยวอาเซียนขึ้น โดยอาศัยแนวคิดของการท่องเที่ยวปลายทางและการสื่อสารทางการตลาดผ่านการจัดงานและสัมนาการ ประโยชน์ของการศึกษาครั้งนี้ สำหรับนักเรียน นักวิจัย ผู้จัดการฝ่ายการตลาด และผู้ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการท่องเที่ยวภาคส่วนอื่น ๆ มีสองส่วนคือ การอธิบายรายละเอียดของการสร้างแบรนด์การท่องเที่ยวของอาเซียนภายใต้ข้อตกลงที่เป็นเอกฉันท์ และ ข้อเสนอแนะในการตัดสินใจเกี่ยวกับเอกลักษณ์ของแบรนด์การท่องเที่ยวอาเซียนในระยะยาว

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Introduction

Ten Southeast Asian countries officially merged as a single community called Association of Southeast Asian Nations Community of ASEAN Community. The three pillars of ASEAN; socio-cultural, economic, and political security, aim to strengthen the unity of variety of ASEAN member countries. ASEAN identity is one of the key challenges of all ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) countries to achieve another level of integration in terms of socio-cultural pillar (Asian Development Bank Institute, 2014). The idea of building an ASEAN identity was defined as the creation of ‘sense of belonging, consolidate unity in diversity and enhance deeper mutual understanding among ASEAN Member States about their culture, history, religion, and civilisation’ (World Tourism Organization, 2010, p. 26). When ASEAN community produced an ASEAN identity, the formation can be achieved by various influences including, regional cultures, natural diversities, religious, common value systems (Anand, 1981). In fact, it was not an easy task to develop and strengthen ASEAN regional identity because of the differences in religions, traditions, customs and historical backgrounds (Lim, 1981). Any ASEAN study needs to understand the dynamics of both external and internal aspects (Yue, 1980), which later became key challenges of ASEAN community after identifying its brand identity. Since it should be able to support economic activities of member states, ASEAN brand identity

concept will be deemed as a regional value that can enhance AEC in various industries. Hospitality and tourism industry is one of the major industries of ASEAN countries affected by AEC. Although tourism industry contributed to ASEAN's GDP for around 12.30% in 2013 (The ASEAN Secretariat, 2015, p.1), it is still one of ASEAN priority sectors, apart from ICT or e-ASEAN, healthcare, and air travel (Kotler, Kartajaya, and Huan, 2007). ASEAN Tourism needs to have the regional identity that could be used to communicate to target audience worldwide, which can be a tool to achieve socio-economic goals (Wong et al., 2011; *Chinsettawong, 2014*). However, as a regional approach, it is a challenging task to create ASEAN tourism brand towards target travellers. Each individual country in ASEAN already has its own tourism identity to promote the industry, such as 'Wonderful Indonesia,' 'Malaysia, Truly Asia,' 'Cambodia – Kingdom of Wonder,' 'The greenheart of Borneo, Brunei – A Kingdom of Unexpected Treasures,' 'Amazing Thailand, Always Amazes You,' 'Mystical Myanmar or Myanmar – let the journey begin,' 'It's more fun in the Philippines,' 'Vietnam, Timeless Charm,' 'Laos, Simply Beautiful,' and 'Your Singapore.com.' Hence, ASEAN tourism brand identity is a challenge of how ASEAN member states can overcome the differences and unite on the common ground that can be used communicate to all travellers and tourists throughout the world. The current brand identity of 'ASEAN, Southeast Asia - Feel the Warmth' of ASEAN Tourism has undergone multiple process and communication before accepted to be the regional brand identity of a single market for ASEAN destination tourism. An explanation of those process and communication among ten member states to achieve consensus decision of the tourism brand identity for ASEAN is yet studied in depth.

This study is an exploratory research regarding to the ASEAN tourism branding and a part of four main stages of an anticipated research project involving with four entities, such as policy maker, policy executor, private sector, and customer. Its scope points out on the policy maker especially the role of ASEAN Secretariat who helps and coordinates all ten member states in release ASEAN tourism strategic policy and thrive key projects to pursue the vision of one region, one identity, one market. The rest of three parties are left for further studies in the future to complete the perspective. This research intends to unfold the policy consideration process and reveal the significance of formal and informal communication in building the brand identity for ASEAN tourism administered by ASEAN Secretariat. Therefore, the research looks for the solutions of the questions, how ASEAN secretariat participates in *formal* process and communication in constructing ASEAN brand identity, how ASEAN secretariat participates in *informal* social organizing of member states in developing pre-decision context and how

ASEAN Secretariat engages all member states in both formal and informal communication. Moreover, it also seeks for how event and leisure marketing can be applied to support the ASEAN tourism brand identity. It can be beneficial to students, researchers, marketing managers, and other tourism related institutions to understand the complexity of brand identity construction for ASEAN tourism and a potential application of event and leisure marketing in constructing its brand identity.

Review of literatures

ASEAN tourism brand identity

ASEAN tourism brand identity is a regional destination brand identity in tourism industry combining ten countries mutual characters into single appeal. One of results of study on ASEAN tourism by Yates (2009) shows the cluster of brand attributes of cultural richness, natural beauty, and warmth of welcome, which later interpreted, symbolized as the Sun with ten radiances, and chosen as the latest tourism brand identity of ASEAN. If a brand identity is ‘tangible and appeals to the senses; you can see it, hold it, hear it, watch it move; fuels recognition, amplifies differentiation and make big ideas and meaning accessible; takes disparate elements and unifies them into whole system’ (Wheeler, 2013, p. 4), an ASEAN tourism brand identity should also be able to express the same for the whole ten regional countries in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the working group should be ‘purpose-oriented’ in responding to the synergic needs of national tourism organizations, NTOs, of each country without fixed forms of coordination (Dinnie et al., 2010).

The word brand and identity have a coherent and supportive meaning in marketing. Brand has been defined by multiple academic and professional gurus in different ways. It can be defined simply as a symbol, or logo or trademark or colour and so on, representing products, services, and experiences that create impression to customers in various altitudes. David Ogilvy (1955), founder of Ogilvy & Mather, defined brand in terms of advertising that it is the intangible sum of attributes, name, packaging and all elements sought and bought by consumers who use it (Finskud, 2004). Brand can be defined as a legal instrument, risk reducer, identity system, adding value, logo, company, shorthand, image, value system, or personality (Chernatony et al., 1998, p.426). Brand concept can be perused in multiple levels, from products, services, places, countries, to regions. The word ‘identity’ has various senses of history, culture, social-class as well as belief in consumption, especially for luxury (Wattanasuwan, 2003). ‘Brand identity should help establish a relationship between the brand and the customer by generating a value proposition involving functional, emotional, or self-

expressive benefits (Aaker, 1996, p. 68).’ National, regional, or place destination tourism apply it in the destination brand identity to create bonding recognition and differentiation into the target audience (Dinnie, 2008; Morgan et al., 2010; Pike, 2008; Wheeler, 2013). It needs to be powerful and distinctive enough to let people aware and ultimately choose to visit as the prime destination for tourism. A conceptual framework made by Madhavaram et al. (2005) proposed that integrated marketing communication or IMC strategy and brand identity were considered as crucial elements of brand equity. They believed that under the synergy of market communication for brand identity complying with the customer needs and preferences the anticipated brand equity can be accomplished. Although most destination brandings have short lifespan in order to create exhilaration (Kolb, 2006), it is critical to aware that constructing a brand in people’s minds requires certain time consuming. The best scenario on how long the brand should remain is as long as possible (World Tourism Organization, 2009). Rebranding or repositioning, refreshing, or even radical change on destination brand requires multiple studies on financial status, consumers’ attitudes, brand equity, and potential impacts.

Marketing of ASEAN tourism brand identity

Throughout the evolvement of AEC, there were only little efforts to create the cooperative brand for ASEAN (Auttarat & Visuthismajarn, 2017). The label of *Made - in - ASEAN* products and services, including the establishment of a regional agency for the certification and standardization is yet to fortify. In the recent publication of Asian Development Bank (ADB) - it is suggested that ASEAN needs to come up with, among other related contributing factors, ASEAN brand to fully achieve the full potential of the AEC. Tourism market offers great potential for contributing to the overall ASEAN economy. There is a driving factor from intra-ASEAN and global economic tend. The single market of AEC is putting together a more than 600 million intra-ASEAN consumer with some 67 million households is already in consuming class (HV et al., 2014). The number of tourist arrival to ASEAN during 2002 to 2008 was doubled from 33 million to 65.5 million tourists. According to World Economic Forum report 2012, travel and tourism is estimated to account for 10.9 percent of ASEAN GDP. It directly employs 9.3 million people and indirectly supports 25 million jobs. In 2013 the ASEAN tourism generated a rise for all travel and tourism activities accounting for 12.30% of regional GDP based on the WTTC-based Oxford econometric model forecasts (The ASEAN Secretariat, 2015). This is the market size which greater than Europe or North America. The higher income and increased in number of consuming class creates a greater demand on leisure activities and increasing brand awareness (Budiman et al., 2014). Given rich natural resources and historical –

cultural attraction, ASEAN attracts a tourist from the higher-income Asian economies such as Japan, the Republic of Korea and Taipei – and outside Asia region such as Australia and Europe. Another contributing factor to this is the region is positioned at the heart of Asia with geographical proximity to large and growing market such as the People's Republic of China and India. Therefore, a regional branding offers another means of product differentiation by providing a place of connection for the consumer, thus creating brand recognition and ultimately an added value (Van Ittersum, 2001). In order to build a strong brand, a homogeneous brand identity and reputation are more important than image (de Chernatony, 2010). ASEAN member countries have many similarities yet distinctions. In general, ASEAN community prefers to a 'conflict avoidance' scheme among its member states to a 'conflict resolution' approach (Denoon and Colbert, 1998-1999). Although many potential benefits for the ASEAN governments in the regional integration are close at hand, two major inhibitions are a resistance to neoliberal reforms supported by U.S. government and international financial institutions, and boundary of their ability to implement them (Beeson, 2003). After AEC launch in 2015, hospitality and tourism industry will be certainly affected. There are concerns from travel and tourism association and agencies about how ASEAN tourism integrating ten single countries into one regional destination by using ASEAN instead of Southeast Asia. The previous tagline of 'Visit ASEAN' was misled because 'ASEAN is an association not a region' (Lowe, 2015, p. 21). According to ASEAN motto - One Vision, One Identity, One Community, ASEAN countries aim to employ geographical region as strategic orientation in hospitality and tourism industry, including destination marketing and geographical imagination. The marketing strategy of ASEAN in tourism is to attract international visitors to the region (The Asian Secretariat, 2012). Destination marketing is defined as 'all the activities and processes to bring buyers and sellers together; focuses on responding to consumer demands and competitive positioning; is a continuous coordinated set of activities associated with efficient distribution of products to high potential markets; and involves making decisions about the product, branding, price, market segmentation, promotion and distribution' (Terzibasoglu, 2004, p. 10). Nevertheless, the challenges exist due to the complication of 'the tourism product and the number of stakeholders involved in destination marketing' (Baker and Cameron, 2008, p. 81). In other words, the policy has to satisfy all needs of stakeholders involving in that region. Another concept of geographical imagination is explained as a form of 'spatial consciousness that enables an individual to understand the role of space and place in his or her life, and how events and experiences are shaped by geography' (Chang and Lim, 2004, p. 166). This is where

marketing comes across in event and leisure for hospitality and tourism industry in AEC countries. Each ASEAN country primarily has had been experienced through individual implementing event and leisure marketing for its national gain. An ASEAN brand is regarded as a new co-creation of regional brand identity involving with its target customers and their needs (Ind et al., 2013).

Event and Leisure Marketing: the potential approach for ASEAN tourism brand

A good brand identity can illustrate a sense of place when translating it from the physical environment, inspiration, and impression (Budelmann et al., 2010). 'It is significant to note that bringing event management and understanding its origin from leisure theory into tourism and hospitality industry can create a distinct interpretation and implementation. Marketers mainly emphasize on impact generation on prospective customers and stakeholders by a variety of events based on people's psychographs (Siriwichai, 2015, p. 419).' Leisure activities and recreational tourism have been alternatives for customers who are looking for lifestyle purchasing in destination marketing (Scott and Parfitt, 2005). Event marketing is applied in the recent decades heavily focus on building strong brand (Kanjanapokin, 2012). Different types of events anticipate and engage various customers to attend and obtain multi levels of benefits as well as experiences. 'Destination can use events to reinforce their brand (World Tourism Organisation, 2009, p. 20).' With the trend of new approach on marketing communication via event and leisure activities to build strong brand equity in many sectors, including tourism industry, consumers are presently seeking for experiential values beyond tangible products and anticipated services (Siriwichai, 2015). In general, customers of products of destination tourism or place branding can freely choose any travel experience with little control by marketers (Hankinson, 2004). Therefore, presenting ASEAN as a destination tourism brand in accordance with event and leisure can achieve a higher level of marketing communication towards customers' perception naturally. Since event and leisure activities are customized according to individual preference and lifestyle, travellers and tourists may absorb and comprehend the marketing message with lesser offensive recognition. Nowadays, countries or regions try to engage themselves into the world events in order to reach out for global audience and prospected outcomes. Events and leisure have been used as podiums for human and social interaction because no matter how advance any technology could go; people always search for familiarity, intimacy, trust, and sense of belonging through personal experiences.

Research Methodology

The qualitative method is chosen to collect data and draw out conceptual framework (Saunders et al., 2007; Creswell and Clark, 2011). According to the research plan, core data and major findings are discovered through semi-structured one-on-one in-depth interview sessions. A set of interview guideline questions is prepared prior to each interview and used in all interviews with key informants. However, the questions are repeated, added, and adjusted during the interview sometimes in order to discover deeper information. Primary data set divides into main two parts of interview sections, comprising with one session of ASEAN Tourism Marketing coordinator, based in Bangkok, Thailand and the other session of participated policy makers and major supporters in Jakarta, Indonesia, such as Senior Officer of Infrastructure Division of ASEAN Secretariat office, in total eight officers engaging in the interview sessions listed in Table 1. However, this study emphasizes on the two informants represented for ASEAN Secretariat and supported with other informants.

Table 1. List of key informants and its role in ASEAN tourism branding

Key Informants	Roles in ASEAN branding construction
1. ASEAN Tourism Marketing Coordinator	Strategic marketing plan and implementation
2. Senior Officer of Infrastructure Division of the ASEAN	Secretariat Strategic and executive decision supporter
3. Technical Assistant of Infrastructure Division of the ASEAN Secretariat Strategic digital	Strategic digital market coordinator
4. Director General of Tourism Destination Development, Republic of Indonesia	Policy influencer
5. Director of Tourism Resources development agency and the creative economy, Republic of Indonesia	Policy influencer
6. Director of International Relations of Ministry of Tourism, Republic of Indonesia	Policy influencer and strategic supporter
7. Deputy Director for Regional ASEAN of Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Republic of Indonesia	Policy Maker
8. Researchers of Research and Development Centre of Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Republic of Indonesia	Brand identity research

The study applies snowball sampling in recruiting key informants by starting with officers of ASEAN Secretariat, who gathers all information, function, agreement, and implementation scheme because of its essential role in developing the marketing strategy for ASEAN tourism, then requesting for references of evidential participants in ASEAN tourism working group. In fact, ASEAN tourism is under the scope of ASEAN Economic Community Department, which has a senior officer and team of infrastructure division supporting to various

coordination including marketing planning and communication initiatives. Narrative analysis method (Schutt, 2011; Berg and Lune, 2012) is applied to display original notions, processes, and communications of brand identity formation among the working group. There is no certain formula to transform texts into findings (Patton, 2002); hence, an overall perspectives and individually additional comments are accumulated to inductively explain the construction of ASEAN tourism brand identity.

Findings

1) How ASEAN secretariat participates in formal process and communication in constructing ASEAN brand identity.

According to the interview with ASEAN Tourism Marketing Coordinator, ASEAN tourism has ten ministers from ten member states engaging in ASEAN Tourism Strategic Planning or ATSP. The five working groups; product development, marketing, quality tourism, ASEAN tourism professional monitoring or ATPMC (dealing with MRA), and Tourism Integration Budget Committee or TIBC, are created to cover major projects of the ATSP. Regarding to tourism marketing, ASEAN Secretariat support this critical part by having a tourism marketing coordinator to support marketing working group as she mentioned:

Marketing working group, when started, Thailand was a chairman of marketing working group. Each chairman chaired two years. Now is the Vietnamese. Next two months will be Brunei. The role of ASEAN Secretariat is only facilitating or helping as well as working for ATSP. ATSP is a mother of ATMS (ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy), which is a blue print of ASEAN tourism marketing. Plan and vision are in ATSP. The new ATSP will last for 10 years, rather than 5 years as the present.

Based on ATSP and ATMS, ASEAN Secretariat participates in a formal structure of ASEAN tourism working group through the marketing coordinator. The general decision processes and policies implementations including ASEAN brand identity decision can be illustrated as in Figure 1.

Figure 1. A formal communication structure of ASEAN Tourism Marketing Initiatives



Source: Author

The formal structure comprises with four key parties; ASEAN Secretariat via ASEAN Tourism Marketing (ATM) Coordinator, ten National Tourism Organisations or '10 NTOs' of ASEAN member states, external supports from academic consultancy and private tourism associations. ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) and ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy are the two foremost sets of tourism policies, which are applied over the period of five years of implementation. ASEAN Tourism Marketing Coordinator explained about how this part of protocol works that;

Senior officer of ASEAN Secretariat also supported on the issue proposed to ASEAN Tourism Working group that;

We cover both. Formal communication means they come for the meeting and they are asked to make presentation on what are the activities, what are they plan, what has been achieved in the previous plan. Although we are not the NTOs and do not really scrutinise their plan because they have their own board of director, the Ministry of Tourism, we suggest them on certain activities.

In other cases, ASEAN Tourism Marketing coordinator has to proactively prepare private sector involvement in marketing communication by contacting the target travel or tourism agencies and presenting to the working group of ten NTOs. The implementation in this part has a perplexity because of hierarchical procedures in communicating back and forth. It has to affirm that every member state agrees upon the proposed information before taking actual action. ASEAN Secretariat has to assimilate data from various sources in order to appropriate

coordinate to the next step of evaluation on the result of marketing communication and policy implementation from the whole region. Indonesia takes the lead role in conducting the passenger exit research, which brand identity of ASEAN tourism is also included in this survey. The result of that market research will be presented to the meeting of ASEAN Tourism marketing working group raised and prepared by ASEAN Secretariat staff. The formal loop can continue in the same way for any issue discussed and considered in the working group before announce as policy for execution throughout the region. Therefore, the closing loop of feedback arrangement can be conducted by both ASEAN Secretariat and Indonesian NTO. The results of both surveys can let the marketing working group to find proper solution for the next strategic planning.

2) *How ASEAN secretariat participates in informal social organizing of member states in developing pre-decision context.*

Facilitating and helping ten countries NTOs to generate different project initiations, ASEAN Secretariat and team members have not only formal administration, but also informal communication prior or post of official meetings. The internal and informal forms of communication can strengthen the collaboration among working group members and ASEAN Secretariat staff. Senior officer of ASEAN Secretariat enhances channels to communicate with all members through social media for further discussion or other social gatherings. Through this unofficial communication via individual Facebook or LinkedIn, working group team member can have more opportunity to access to information sharing from key actors. In consequence, the motivation to initiate other projects for ASEAN can put forward to expected plan in the formal meeting. The summary of this informal communication can be illustrated as Figure 2.

Figure 2. An Informal communication structure of ASEAN Tourism Marketing working group



Source: Author

3) How ASEAN Secretariat engages all member states in both formal and informal communication

This kind of interactive communication for both formal and informal forms indicate an implication how ASEAN Secretariat encourage social interaction amongst member states in constructing ASEAN marketing project as well as ASEAN tourism brand identity. They discussed outside the meeting rooms, casual talks, over any social gatherings. Topics were started with personal to work or work to personal issues. By this way, members in the working group can exchange ideas, comments, and feedback vigorously. The results of informal discussions became the solution of formal communication in most decision or policy. For ASEAN tourism branding, every interviewee agrees that ASEAN tourism already have ‘Feel the Warmth’ theme as the ASEAN brand identity, which derived from official process in construction under ASEAN marketing working group. This current brand identity is used for five years since 2011. ASEAN Secretariat attempts to encourage social interaction amongst member states in constructing ASEAN brand identity over the time. All publications both online and traditional, internally or externally, conspicuously display its current brand identity theme of ‘Feel the Warmth.’ ASEAN Marketing coordinator expressed her experiences here;

For feel the warmth, it's only 5 years old. So it might be too early whether it's good or not. What we try to do, currently, we put the logo in our name card. And do not allow others to use. And puts it on every promotional material we have. We have puts the logo of our brand, ‘Feel the warmth’, for example in business card, also promote the NTOs to display the logo on their promotional collateral, at the booth, at ASEAN booth. Many people may not notice it because they're looking for another ASEAN corporate logo.

The logo ‘Feel the Warmth’ may be seen as major part of ASEAN brand identity in action. It can communicate two key messages of hospitality and tourism industry in ASEAN countries; warm welcome from the people and warm weather under the sun. This tagline of ASEAN tourism brand identity showing ASEAN people’s attitude of warm welcome to the region can be sustainable over the time is still questionable. Many countries in ASEAN confront with political economy challenges and multi levels impact of the U.S and European countries’ socio-economic situations. Nonetheless, its tourism brand identity cannot be settled for a long term since this is one of the challenges of destination marketing (Baker & Cameron, 2008).

4) *How event and leisure marketing can be applied to support the ASEAN tourism brand identity*

In order to incessantly accentuate ASEAN brand identity; event marketing has to be enhanced with integrated communication of various media for leisure activities. ASEAN Secretariat produced short documentaries along with booklet for the new three tourism campaigns; Soft Adventure, Festival and ASEAN Travel Primer. The process of these campaigns followed the formal structure as ASEAN Tourism Marketing. ASEAN Secretariat emphasizes these three themes to construct ASEAN tourism brand identity to public. These travel guide booklets were published mainly for NTOs and agencies to communicate to consumers. ASEAN Travel Primer provides a general information of all ten countries, when ASEAN festival and soft adventure directly suggests to major and popular places, countries, and activities that tourists and visitors can explore and experience on their own preferences liberally. When referring to event and leisure marketing, certainly, *MICE* or Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions also attributes into the framework of ASEAN brand identity. MICE industry is growing sharply in Singapore and Malaysia (TTGMICE, 2013). ASEAN Secretariat also considers this industry as a part of hospitality and tourism industry, which penetrating in the business market. ASEAN Secretariat applies event and leisure marketing in various approaches both via online marketing and offline or traditional marketing. For event marketing, with the limited resource, ASEAN Secretariat attempts to take part in travel and tourism tradeshow in key target markets and facilitates a major event for ASEAN Tourism in January annually when there are ASEAN summit and tourism trade fair. This event delivers marketing communication to public on the ASEAN tourism brand identity. Meanwhile, they also expanded to potential market like China, by participating in China International Travel Mart. The Senior officer of ASEAN Secretariat also added more background of this event that it is not for consumers but informants (NTOs) and travel and tourism agencies as he revealed here;

We usually did more on Business-to-Business approach rather than Business-to-Customer. Of course, we have engagement with TTG Asia¹ for example. They have some kind of AEC Activities Innovation to Tourism. There are the one who organise it then we just support by providing additional information they might need. We work also with PATA. The difference may be Business-to-Business. We have not experienced in really on consumer basis.

¹ An Asia-Pacific's leading travel trade business resource since 1974, referred to <http://www.ttgasia.com/>

Current lifestyles of people usually engage with information technology. Online marketing or digital marketing can augment brand identity for a wide variety of leisure activities in daily life. In particular, social media where simulating social gathering in one place is for sharing images, information, comments, preferences, attitudes, and most importantly identities of all human, business, and branding entity. ASEAN Tourism Marketing coordinator expressed that online marketing will generally relate to ATF and strategic actions plan and presented via ASEAN Secretariat official website and its Facebook page. It can also come from unexpected event, which can be considered on the case by case basis. In addition, ASEAN centres in key targeted countries such as China, Japan, and Korea presently employs online marketing through social network, Facebook, for public announcement on trade fairs, important visits, and bilateral collaboration activities.

Discussion

Despite the current formal structure in ASEAN Tourism Marketing working group, ASEAN Secretariat and NTO committees also have an informal approach in sharing various information and activities, which can inspire and lead to a new project initiation and coordination. This way ASEAN tourism brand identity is constructed through both types of communication that can create a convincing collaboration against challenges ahead. The major concern of choosing the word ASEAN instead of Southeast Asian in representing integrated brand identity in a single destination is systematically justified by market surveys before releasing a new theme. The first one brand identity ‘Visit ASEAN’ was used from 1991- 2001 and changed to ‘10 perfect paradise’ in 2001, which added the word ‘ASEAN’ in 2008 to confirm as an ASEAN tourism brand identity. The latest ‘Feel the warmth’ initially used ‘Southeast Asia: Feel the warmth’ in 2010, then changed to use ‘ASEAN – Feel the warmth’ since 2011 because people from intra and outside Southeast Asia start looking for the same identity over the region. This increasing influence of ASEAN brand identity can confirm the consequence of ASEAN tourism marketing working group in taking various marketing communication through both event and leisure marketing activities that permeate into public awareness including all stakeholders. They have been implemented event and leisure marketing communication through three themes of Soft Adventure, Festival and ASEAN Travel Primer and organized annual event, participated in other potential ones for target audience to capture marketing message in ASEAN tourism branding. Moreover, they also apply online marketing, such as official website, Facebook, and twitter, in order to perform a dynamic communication in updating news and enhance efficient impact to a wider range of customers

globally. For continuous strengthening of its tourism brand, ASEAN may require more fund and manpower to fulfill many potential projects which only public can judge whether they can represent brand identity that can be interpreted to brand image in the consumer's mind. An advance step of ASEAN tourism branding can be a development of an internet website or mobile to provide integrated information of all member states of ASEAN Tourism for worldwide tourists to find their desirable information about attractions, accommodations, leisure activities, and other event promotions. This platform can be used extensively from planning for a trip to guiding for tourism information in order to be more convenient in travelling around ASEAN countries. Nevertheless, ASEAN Secretariat intends to generate a gradual development by inaugurating strategic actions into the long term implementation over the region rather the leapfrog of advancement due to short of resources. Apart from major workshops, which are operating across ASEAN countries, marketing communication of ASEAN brand identity in tourism can be achieved through those three themes relating to event and leisure undertakings. The strategic plan may not state in terms of marketing but the actions reflect this new way of marketing communication.

Conclusion and recommendation

ASEAN Secretariat has been a significant medium to facilitate, organise, and maintain the harmony and unity of ASEAN tourism marketing working group. This leads to the time consuming in executing any policy to implementation. ASEAN tourism brand identity has been slowly initiated and evolved through decades with the challenging issue of uniqueness over resemblances of ten countries' tourism identities to compete with other global competitors. The present ASEAN tourism brand identity, feel the warmth, has been utilised since 2011 undergone numerous formal and informal communications prior to the consensus decision. Although most tourism brand identities have short lifespans because it needs to create stimulation and excitement to attract tourists, 'Feel the Warmth' can be an exceptional case of regional tourism branding. Since it represents not only the geographic characteristics but also psychograph of people around Southeast Asian nations, the current brand identity can be employed longer than common period of time such as five years. It is a possible reason that ASEAN Tourism Marketing working group decided to extend the time of using this theme further until 2020. The three themes are signals of new approach in applying marketing communication through a more experiential and mass-customised to the world travellers. It may not impact abruptly to ASEAN tourism but it is a good example of how event and leisure are used as marketing tools to communicate as well as generate impression and resonance in

the target consumers' minds. The survey of this brand identity should be conducted to examine the brand equity of ASEAN destinations and search for traces of new tourism brand identity to be developed in the near future.

This research reveals the roles of event and leisure marketing in constructing ASEAN brand identity that can be scrutinised further for possible improvement and innovation in marketing communication for regional destination tourism. However, it has a limitation of key informants who should include all ten NTOs. Though it refers and applies the concept of the relationship of brand identity and image in the receiver's mind, starting from the sender transmitted various signals of messages, including event or leisure activities, to create brand image of the receiver (Kapferer, 2008, p.174), it is yet fully undertaken. Hence, the future research can complete the later phases of building strategic brand identity towards preferable brand image in the customers' minds through the study with informants, marketing elements, and outcome of the brand identity transmission to brand image. Furthermore, it can also measure ASEAN tourism brand equity based on the influences of event and leisure marketing approach.

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