

# The Role of Identity and Images Affecting Communication: Study of Cultural Tourism Business

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## Abstract:

Tourism is one of the essential industries within a developing state because it directly affects its economic rate and also promotes a positive relationship with the neighbor states. This paper is an informative approach to study the impact of place identity and image on enhancing cultural tourism within the state. To examine the statistical calculations of the given variable, the SPSS software's based statistical tests like Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and Structural equation modeling (SEM) is implemented on the online survey data. According to the results, there is a significant relationship between the place image and cultural tourism growth and between the place identity and cultural tourism growth. While the positive word of mouth act as a significant mediator between these both relationships. This paper is an informative approach for this tourism industry, its management, owners and decision-makers to understand how to promote their cultural tourism growth within a state. Also, the state's authority can utilize this information for the development of its tourism industry. In addition, there are some minor limitations within this paper i.e. lack of comparative analysis based mixed research method, which can be overcome by the upcoming researchers.

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## INTRODUCTION

In Thailand, its economy is majorly dependent on its tourism industry for the last some decades (Chatchawanchanchanakij, Arpornpisal, & Jermisittiparsert, 2019; Rana & Kumar, 2019). In 2017, its Ministry of Tourism and Sports had welcomed 35 million international tourists on its shores for business purposes that result in enhancing its tourism volume in a short term (Sevinç & Güzel, 2017). Its yearly-wise tourist arrivals are shown in the following graph.

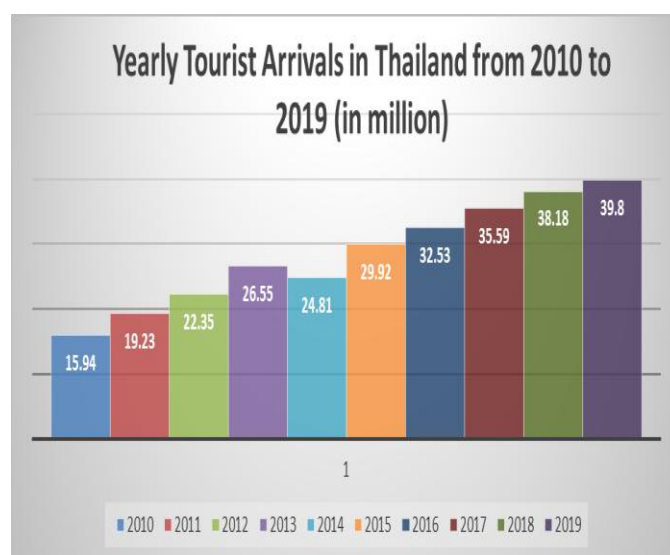


FIGURE I:  
Yearly Tourist Arrivals in Thailand from 2010 to 2019 (in million)

The above figure shows that continuously the percentage of international tourists is increasing in the Thailand market because of its locations and seashores (Untong, 2019). This increased number of international tourists result in enhancing their revenue and profit margin. It is 2015 to 2019 based revenue generation statistics are shown in the following table (Chaivichayachat, 2019);

TABLE I:

Thailand's Tourism Revenue from 2015 to 2019

Thailand's Tourism Revenue from 2015 to 2019	
2015	42557.72
2016	46307.49
2017	53985.83
2018	58076.46
2019	62288.54

The problem statement of this research is based on critically understand the role of place identity and place image on developing cultural tourism growth by specifically considering the mediating role of positive word of mouth in the tourism business.

This is a productive research which covers the gap of previous researches that only based on studying the importance of corporate social responsibility in brand valuation, a tour guide interpretation and the productive cultural image of historical places on the international tourists (Cheng, Kuo, Chang, & Chen, 2019; Ferrari & Guala, 2017; Gürlek, Düzgün, & Uygur, 2017). But no one majorly worked on communication-oriented place identity and its image building among the tourists which is significantly covered through this paper. The major objectives of this paper are;

- To critically identify the role of place identity in the cultural tourism growth in the tourism industry.
- To critically identify the role of place image in the cultural tourism growth in the tourism industry.

- To critically evaluate the mediating role of positive word of mouth between the place identity and cultural tourism growth.
- To critically evaluate the mediating role of positive word of mouth between the place image and cultural tourism growth.

This study is an informative approach for the tourism industry and its management to specifically consider the importance of cultural tourism growth for their sustainable development. This research will add value in the decision-making process of the marketing managers to understand how the place identity and its positive image provoking advertising campaigns directly impact on its growth rate. Also, this valid data can be utilized the related academic scholars in their hypothesis evaluation mechanism.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Identity Management Theory

The meaning of this identity management theory is based on individuals who perceive their identity differently at a diverse point across space and time (Chonody & Teater, 2016). This identity management way is majorly based on two ways like the first one is the ability to communicate based on ability to manage the cultural and relational identities, and the second one is to face work as a determinant factor to identify the management as a face of the individual to reflect the cultural and relational identities (Almqvist, 2019; Fritsch, 2017; Wafik et al., 2017; Nabi, 2017). This theory was come up in the early 1990s and developed by William R. Cupach and Tadasu Todd Imahori (Bratton & Gold, 2017; Coopamootoo & Groß, 2016). It is such a communication theory that helps the company to make a proper image in the mind of the consumer (Merrigan, 2017). The researchers stated that identity management and the relational culture in effective martial communication is developed such company's marketing campaign that helps them to gain customer satisfaction towards the brand services (Gaur, Sharma, Herjanto, & Kingshott, 2017; Pasquier & Villeneuve, 2017).

According to business researches, this communication theory is an effective source to develop a positive place identity and its position among the consumer market (Martinez, Ting-Toomey, & Dorjee, 2016; Table, Sandoval, & Weger, 2017).

## ***2.2. Place Identity and Cultural Tourism Growth***

To critically evaluate the relationship between the place identity and tourism growth, many researches have been made. Like in 2016, Mariangle Franch with others specifically considered the place identity and the war heritage by specifically considering the number of challenges based by managers in their tourism development. According to them, the tourism industry is such a historical heritage which is one of the fastest-growing segments of cultural tourism. The management and conversation of dissonant heritage have led to war tourism product development in various destinations. According to them, a more targeted promotion of war heritage significantly contributes to upgrade the awareness of Italian cultural heritage (Franch, Irimiás, & Buffa, 2017). In the International Journal of Tourism Space, Place and Environment, Andrea Corsale and Shaul Krakover (2019) specifically considered the impact of globalized transnational networks and its influence on the religious, cultural, and political identities and the affiliations over the long distances. According to them, the diverse approaches, views, representations, and perceptions result in conflict and disagreement. In the end, they concluded that in order to strengthen and diversify the international cultural destination status, different components of both Jewish and non-Jewish stakeholders practice the different approaches to heritage tourism. They concluded that the actor, reasons, and the discourses are effective promotion sources to enhance cultural tourism growth (Corsale & Krakover, 2019; Egbuniwe, 2019; Hassan, Hameed, Basheer, & Ali, 2020). Hence, the following hypothesis has been suggested from the previous work;

**H1: There is a significant relationship between Place Identity and Cultural Tourism Growth**

## ***2.3. Place Image and Cultural Tourism Growth***

In the Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Grey Richards (2018) traces the development of cultural tourism and identifies the major trends and research areas. According to these scholars, cultural tourism is an efficient place image provoking idea that motivates the company to generate their positive image in the mind of customers. They concluded that cultural tourism based place identity enhanced the cultural motivations, cultural consumption, heritage conservation, anthropology, cultural tourism economics, and its relationship with the creative economy (Richards, 2018; Hayriye, Saf, & Ergul, 2018). Other researchers also studied the framework of place branding, place reputation and place image in enhancing the profit margin of a company by stating that there is a key indicator of identifying a place brand comes into two headings named as infrastructure (economic condition, security, tourism development goals, promotional strategy, technological advancement and place marketing) and national culture (country's brand, name, attributes, social change, language and people). They concluded that political perception, place awareness, tourism experience, place association, social media, and news are major mediators for place branding (Foroudi, Gupta, Kitchen, Foroudi, & Nguyen, 2016). After critically evaluate the previous research articles on related topic, the following hypothesis has been proposed;

**H2: There is a significant relationship between Place Image and Cultural Tourism Growth**

## ***2.4. Mediating Role of Positive Words of Mouth between Place Identity and Cultural Tourism Growth***

To critically evaluate the impact of positive word of mouth on developing the place identity and cultural tourism growth, Ning Chen and others majorly studied the relationship between the place

attachment and word of mouth behavior. They stated that there are many factors to communicate with potential tourists based on environmental psychology and tourism. In their research study, they stated that positive word of mouth-based behavior of residents results in enhancing the positive reputation of a company in the consumer market. According to them, destination marketing managers are directly involved in the promotion of tourism destinations among the residents (Chen, Dwyer, & Firth, 2018). To critically consider the importance of positive word of mouth between the place identity and cultural tourism growth, many pieces of research have been made like Luh Miche Anggraini (2016) stated that local sense of place refers to the reciprocal and emotional relationship between the residents of the community and the environment in which they lived. In this case, the positive reputation of the company palsy a significance to enhance the market share of the company. According to these researchers, effective tourism development is majorly based on the positive word of mouth of its operating activities among customers (Anggraini, 2017). Therefore, the following hypothesis has been proposed;

**H3: There is a significant mediating role of Positive Words of Mouth between Place Identity and Cultural Tourism Growth**

### ***2.5. Mediating Role of Positive Words of Mouth between Place Image and Cultural Tourism Growth***

In 2019, Trung & Khalifa stated that positive word of mouth of the brand operating activity among the consumers cause a positive impact on enhancing brand loyalty in the consumer market. In their research, the scholars concluded that in the tourism industry the plaice image is an important source to enhance the profit margin of a company in the consumer and competitor market (Trung & Khalifa, 2019). According to scholars, the perception of residents of tourism impacts and their level of development support is considered as sustainable development of tourism. They stated that there is a

significant relationship between the place image dimensions, support for development, and perceived tourism impacts of residents. They concluded that social environment and physical appearances are major place image dimensions that significantly impact on residents' attribute towards tourism (Stylidis, 2016). After critically evaluate the previous researches, the following hypothesis has been proposed;

**H4: There is a significant mediating role of Positive Words of Mouth between Place Image and Cultural Tourism Growth**

Figure 2: Theoretical Framework

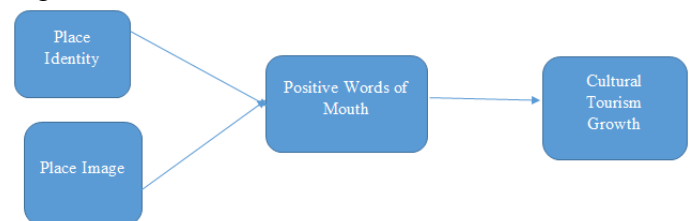


FIGURE II:  
Theoretical Framework

## **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### ***3.1. Data Collection and Sampling Measurements***

In the research methodology, quantitative research is used where an online survey-based questionnaire method is adopted for data collection (Kılınc & Fırat, 2017; Rahi, Alnaser, & Abd Ghani, 2019; Sattar, Wang, Muqadas, Ashraf, & Tahir, 2017). The relevant data is collected from the tourism field's employees, management, experts, and decision makers that help to develop reliable research on these variables concerning its hypothesis. For the quantitative research, we go through online to the 425 people from Thailand that are mostly managers of the tourist companies. From this, out of 425 people, 329 people are active respondents. In the gender demographic, males are 180 in quantity (54.7%) and females are in 149 (45.3%). In age demographic, there are 105 (31.9%) people that are less than 25 years, 131 (39.8%) people are between the 25 to 35 years, 78 (23.7%) people are between the 35 to 45 and 15 (4.6%)



people are more than 45 years. This result shows that it majorly derived from those people who are within the age group of 25 to 45 years old. Last but not the least, in the experienced demographic, these are 46 (14.0%) people that have experienced less than 2 years. 144 (43.8%) people have experiences from 2 to 5 years, 108 (32.8%) people have experiences from 5 to 8 years, and 31 (9.4%) people have experience more than 8 years in this tourism industry.

### 3.2. Measurements

We use the five-point Likert scale (1=strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree, 5=strongly disagree) to measure the respondent outcomes. After taking the demographic researches and survey, we used a relevant and informative model of SPSS software named as the SEM (structural equation modeling), KMO and Bartlett's test and the CFA (confirmatory factor analysis) in its analysis portion (Hadi, Abdullah, & Sentosa, 2016; Pattnaik & Dangayach, 2019; Phogat & Gupta, 2019). Because these are a helpful approach to justify the hypothesis by evaluating the relationship between the tested variables.

## IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this paper, the SEM model is used to take a structural analysis of the variables. The CFA is one of the informative approaches to understand the correlation among the variables with making a network of their relationship. While, KMO and Bartlett's test is used to examine the sampling suitability of every variable concerning its hypothesis in the model (Center, 2018; Priyadarshinee, Raut, Jha, & Gardas, 2017).

TABLE II:  
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error
Place Image	32	1.00	5.00	3.27	1.06461	-.172	.134
Place Image	9			36			
Place Image	32	1.00	5.00	3.34	1.01438	-.385	.134
Place Image	9			65			
Word of Mouth	32	1.00	5.00	3.25	1.14982	-.341	.134
Word of Mouth	9			94			
Cultural Tourism Growth	32	1.00	5.00	3.57	1.14657	-.480	.134
Cultural Tourism Growth	9			14			
Valid N (listwise)	32						
	9						

The above table of descriptive statistics shows that positive word of mouth and cultural tourism growth has a large standard deviation value that is 1.15, and place image has a small standard deviation value, 1.064. It means there is a strong influence of place image on both mediator and dependent variables. After this, the KMO and Bartlett's test-based statistics are mentioned below;

TABLE III:  
KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.876
Bartlett's Test of Approx. Chi-Square Sphericity	3505.710
df	78
Sig.	.000

In the above table, it shows that the sampling suitability value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin is 0.876 which means within the threshold range. While the difference value variable is 78 with the significance value of 0.000. These values show that this model is

a good fit to make the productive results. The table of the rotated component matrix is following there;

TABLE IV:

Rotated Component Matrixa

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
ID1		.832		
ID2		.902		
ID3		.853		
IM1			.863	
IM2			.839	
IM3			.842	
WM1				.854
WM2				.891
WM3				.864
TG1	.866			
TG2	.847			
TG3	.880			
TG4	.866			

In the above table, it becomes clear that all values of the rotated component matrix values of each item are more than 0.7 means within their threshold range, so all the variables are successfully uploaded in the model. After this, the table of convergent and discriminant validity is given below;

TABLE V:

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

	CR	AV	M	Max	W	ID	IM	TG
		E	SV	R(H)	M			
<b>W</b>	0.8	0.7	0.2	0.890	<b>0.8</b>			
<b>M</b>	89	28	03		<b>53</b>			
<b>ID</b>	0.9	0.7	0.3	0.947	0.3	<b>0.8</b>		
	07	64	14		80	<b>74</b>		
<b>I</b>	0.9	0.7	0.3	0.968	0.4	0.5	<b>0.8</b>	
<b>M</b>	21	95	26		51	60	<b>92</b>	
<b>T</b>	0.9	0.7	0.3	0.979	0.4	0.4	0.5	<b>0.8</b>
<b>G</b>	40	97	26		24	96	71	<b>93</b>

In the above table, every mentioned variable value of composite reliability is more than 0.7, while its average variance extracted value is higher than

0.5. It means that there is no issue of convergent validity within these variables. Also, the bold values in the descending order investigate the non-existence of any discriminant validity issue.

TABLE VI:

Model Fit Indices

CFA	CMI	GFI	IFI	CFI	RMSE
Indicato	N/DF				A
rs					
Thresho	≤ 3	≥ 0.80	≥ 0.9	≥ 0.9	≤ 0.08
ld			0	0	
Value					
Observe	2.315	0.942	0.97	0.97	0.063
d Value			8	8	

In the above model fit indices based informative table, it has been shown that the all CMIN/DF, GFI, IFI, CFI, and RMSEA values are within their threshold range. Like, the observed value of CMIN/ DF is 2.315 (lower than standard 3 value). GFI value is 0.942 that is greater than 0.80. Now, both values of IFI and CFI are more than 0.90 values and have the same outcomes as 0.978. Also, its RMSEA value is lower than 0.08 which is 0.056 (Hameed, Nadeem, Azeem, Aljumah, & Adeyemi, 2018; Ul-Hameed, Mohammad, & Shahar, 2018). The CFA figure displays the variables in the graphical representation that is following there;

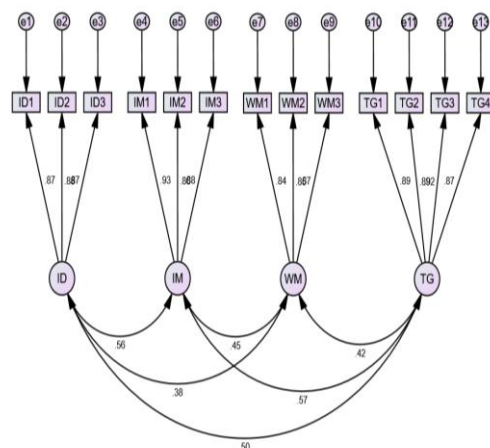


FIGURE III:  
CFA

TABLE VII:  
Structural Equation Modeling

Total Effect	PlacIma	PlacIden	PosWOM
PosWOM	.316**	.205**	.000
CulTourG	.399**	.259**	.153**
Direct Effect	PlacIma	PlacIden	PosWOM
PosWOM	.316**	.205**	.000
CulTourG	.351**	.228**	.153**
Indirect Effect	PlacIma	PlacIden	PosWOM
PosWOM	.000	.000	.000
CulTourG	.048**	.031**	.000

The above table shows that there is a direct association among the mentioned independent, dependent, and mediating variables of this study. Like the mediating role of the positive word of mouth causes the 15.3% influence on the dependent variable, cultural tourism growth. The place image has a 31.6% influence on the positive word of mouth and a 39.9% influence on cultural tourism growth. While, the place identity has a 20.5% influence on the positive word of mouth and a 25.9% influence on the cultural tourism growth, as also shown in the following figure;

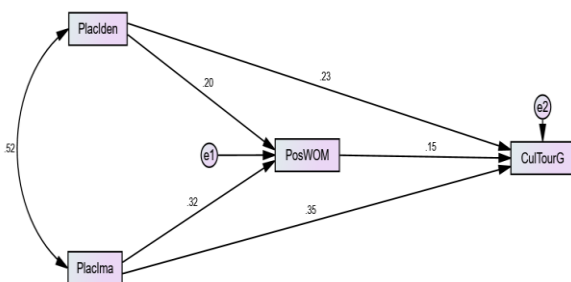


FIGURE IV:  
SEM

## V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 5.1. Discussion

After critically evaluating the above SEM-based statistical data, it becomes clear that both

independent variables like place image and place identity significantly impact on the dependent variable named as cultural tourism growth. And the positive word of mouth plays a positive mediating role between the relationship of both the major variables. This point was also justified by Franch and others in their research article by stated that place is a historical heritage of a state that significantly promotes the tourism industry within a state (Franch et al., 2017). According to them, the more targeted promotion of participate locations results in enhancing its cultural awareness. In the Journal of hospitality and tourism management Grey Richard also explored the development of tourism culture within a developing state where he stated that mobility's turns, creative turns, and performance turns into the development of advanced trans-modern culture (Richards, 2018). In the Leisure Studies based research article, Sonia Ferrari and Chito Guala (2017) majorly worked on studying the importance of destination branding as a way to generate the leverage process of the event itself and enhanced the image of the location. According to them, such type of identity and image creating branding are helpful ones to promote the positive perception of the visitors towards the place. They considered this approach as a long-lasting effect on creating urban regeneration and also enhanced the confidence of stakeholders (Ferrari & Guala, 2017).

### 5.2. Conclusion

After taking all analysis and discussion outcomes, it becomes concluded that there is a significant impact of place image and place identity on the cultural tourism growth based dependent variable with the productive mediating role of positive word of mouth that enhances the performance of the tourism companies in Thailand. This structural equation modeling (SEM), and confirmatory figure analysis (CFA) based descriptive and valid outcomes are the important approaches to justify the proposed hypothesis.

### 5.3. Future Implications

For the research implications, this paper is useful in the field of tourism and hospitality by helping their decision-makers to make new decisions and strategies to attract international tourists. Also, this paper can be used by the tourism business experts, state's policymakers, and foreign investors to make some active strategies for the advancements of the Thai cultural tourism industry. This paper will also be an informative approach for Thai natives to understand the importance of the cultural tourism industry for their welfare. The related field scholars can utilize this data in their discussion portion.

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### 5.4. Limitations and Future Researches

This paper only based on a quantitative research method rather than a qualitative or mixed method of research. Also, there is a lack of comparative analysis of this Thai cultural tourism data to the other country's data. So, in front of future researches, there is an opportunity to work on its deficiency and derived a versatile research.

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