

ONLINE MARKETING MIX FACTORS AFFECTING ONLINE ACCOMMODATION DECISIONS OF THAI TOURISTS

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ABSTRACT

The research objective was to study demographic factors and online marketing mix factors affecting online accommodation decisions of Thai tourists. The research used a quantitative method. A sample of 220 tourists was randomly selected using the snowball sampling from target group who are ordinary Thai tourists on social media platforms and interested in booking online accommodation. Data collection tools used a closed-ended questionnaire. The statistics used in data analysis were descriptive statistics and inferential statistics which used Independent-Sample T-Test, One-Way ANOVA, and Multiple Regression Analysis. The research results revealed that the sample group gave high importance to the online marketing mix (5A), namely Aware, Appeal, Ask, Act, and Advocate. The results of the hypothesis test revealed that differences in genders had different effects on Thai tourists' decision to online accommodations, while differences in age, education level, occupation and income had no different effects on their decision making. In addition, all aspects of online marketing mix factors significantly influenced Thai tourists' decision to online accommodations at the significance level of .05, which the online marketing factor in term of Act having the most influence, followed by Advocate, Appeal, Ask, and Aware, respectively.

Keywords: Decision making, Online accommodation, Online marketing mix, Touris

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is one of the top generating industries in Thailand and is directly important to the economic development of the country, resulting the well-being of the people in the country improved. The growth of the tourism industry brings economic benefits in increasing employment, investment and generating income into the country. The tourism industry has expanded the scope of economic activities closer to the way of life of the community. Some tourists are increasingly interested in traveling to experience the traditional way of life of various areas in Thailand. In addition, tourism has spread to communities not only in big cities, resulting in many localities using tourism to help in economic development and quality of life [1].

Due to the problems of the Covid-19 virus, Thai tourism continues to be affected by new outbreaks continuously since April 2021. The government has taken steps to relax travel control measures by shortening the time of home bans for the most heavily controlled areas, which has resulted in a steady recovery in domestic tourism. In October 2021, there were 3.70 million Thai tourists traveling in the country with a decrease of 66.64%, and generating income of 10.4 billion baht with a decrease of 78.03% compared to the same period last year [2].

The Internet is a powerful computer technology for communication that is highly popular and a potential marketing channel in the tourism industry providing services related to tourism directly. Nowadays, customers are looking for better and faster service, more quality and reliable information, and tend to spend less time on each trip. Most of which may be traveling on their own more than before. This is why the tourism industry and the tourism business on the Internet has grown rapidly.

The tourism business has been changed by technology because Internet media has become a part of everyday life and is important to people in the present day, such as in business, education, or even buying products or services from the internet. Tourists often use the Internet to plan their trips and compare the information they receive from the Internet. Travelers often book plane tickets, book accommodation, or decide to use travel agencies via the Internet to facilitate their transactions faster and able to estimate travel expenses in advance [3]. This resulted in a large number of online accommodation booking companies. Applications that tourists like to use such as TravailGo, Booking.com, Traveloka, Agoda and Hotels Combined, etc., as well as the website of the accommodation itself. It contains details of the use of services, accommodation prices and hotel promotions depending on the terms of the application used [4].

However, booking accommodation online is nothing new. There has been an accommodation booking website for more than 10 years, but in Thailand it has begun to be used seriously in the past 7-8 years. It is considered to increase the customer base to expand the target group. It can help promote the services of businesses quickly, shorten the time to reach customers far and near. The accommodation business is a service business related to tourism and is directly important to tourists, therefore, there is a high level of competition. The accommodation business itself must develop and create strengths in order to survive in the long term. It should determine the factors that will lead the accommodation business to success. It consists of image and reputation, marketing mix that meets the needs of customers, quality of service, attracting customers to use the service, and the word of mouth of those who have used the service [5].

From the aforementioned problems, the researchers are interested in studying the online marketing mix factors that affect the decision to book accommodation through online channels of Thai tourists. Its purpose is to guide the development and improvement of domestic tourism. The results of this study can be used as information for the accommodation business of those who are interested in starting a new business or as information for business owners for use in adjusting tactics or marketing strategies that suit the behavior of tourists. As well as, it is also a guideline for improving the efficiency of the accommodation provider's services.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

From the literature reviews, it was found that many researchers continue to focus on research on demographic concepts that are important to decision-making in purchasing and services in order to reach and meet the needs of the consumer group as much as possible [3]. Shiffman and Kanuk [6] defined demographics as information about an individual, such as age, gender, education, occupation, income, that influences consumer behavior. It is generally used as a basis for marketers to consider when segmenting a market and relates it to consumer needs, preferences and usage rates. Sereerat, Laksitanon, and Sereerat [7] describes the demographic factor are important to marketing services that is one of the factors affecting ideas, ideologies, values, tastes and needs. Due to different demographic factors affect the behavior of consumers differently, the researcher therefore brought this concept together to be used as a guideline for the study. It can be considered as the basis for defining the behavior of different consumers in booking accommodation decisions depending on demographic factors.

In addition, if the business can determine the appropriate marketing strategy. It will make it easier for consumers to make an online booking decision and be satisfied with the service, resulting in recommending them to others [8]. Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan [8] states in his book that the Marketing 4.0 is a marketing that uses various technologies to help reach more consumers. It won't stop at the storefront anymore. But both sales and marketing will step into the online world. In fact, technology is not the only important aspect of Marketing 4.0. But it's marketing that has "humans" at the center as the current market has changed as a result of the changing purchasing behavior of consumers. In today's era, 5A is the concept of the process from consumers wanting to buy a particular product to the purchaser until consumers are satisfied and have word of mouth. The 5A marketing mix is similar to AIDA marketing consisting of (A)wareness, (I)nterest, (D)esire, (A)ction. But the 5A marketing mix has added a referral process which is believed to be a recommendation from real users always influencing customers or consumers. The principle of 5A marketing plan, consumers will go through the following 5 steps as followings [3],[8],[9].

Aware - Building awareness first is to make consumers aware of a brand. Consumers know the brand from experience, marketing communications or from referrals from other people. At this stage, most of them use various forms of advertising both television commercials or on social media and word-of-mouth marketing remain an important tool in building awareness once a brand is established. It will create interesting content which must match the personal factors of the consumer but really important is how to make the consumer see the brand as much as possible.

Appeal - Appeal is to make consumers interested in the product or service after consumers know that there are products or services of the brand. Marketer's duty is to attract the attention of customers by means of consumer interest such as likes, shares, comments and mentions. At this stage, consumers will want to know more about the product. The dependence on the website to provide good content is therefore very important to provide information about where and how to order whether it's Facebook, Line, Instagram, Website, etc. There should inform a brand location that can be contacted directly, how to order, service details and current service status.

Ask - The inquiry occurs when consumers have observed the product for a while. Consumers will start wanting information to make decisions from various channels which happens after appeal by asking from someone close to or who has experience with this kind of product before. Therefore, brands need to have communications that will provide appropriate details from the perspective of real users or information beyond the product description whether it's via Inbox, Comment or Live Chat. Most consumers tend to consider additional reviews from real users and influencers to help answer questions and stimulate consumer demand. If the brand can't answer the question, it will have a very high chance that customer will turn to other brands that are more convenient.

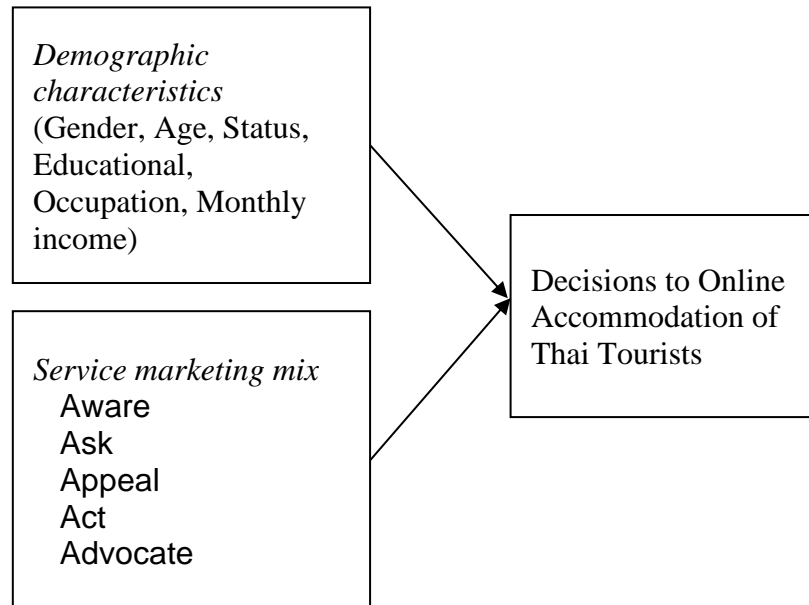
Act - If the consumer believes in the information received, then it will go into the purchase decision process. After making a purchase decision, consumers will interact with brands more deeply. Brands need to attract consumers by building good relationships with them. If there is a problem or complaint, it is necessary to pay attention and urgently resolve the problem. This may later lead to greater brand loyalty, which is reflected in the brand's persistence as a consumer, and then leads to a repeat purchase process and encourages others to pay attention to the brand.

Advocate - Product recommendation or word of mouth from real users which will occur when a product or service is purchased. Consumers will have expectations for usage and after-sales service as a result of the satisfaction of the consumer after purchasing the product. Nowadays, word of mouth is very important in today's marketing because word of mouth comes from close people who have a much higher level of credibility than sales. Including a review section in social media or websites for consumers to write, play an important role in a long-term relationship with customers and can create more new consumers as well.

Moreover, the concept of purchasing decisions, consumers have a process of choosing alternatives in order to get what they want which consumer behavior in purchasing can be influenced by a variety of motives, such as economic, cultural, social, and personal sentiments [10]. Solomon [11] describes the consumer purchasing decision process which consists of 5 steps. 1) Problem Recognition refers to the first stage of the consumer purchasing process based on internal impulses such as immediate demand for goods or services, and external impulses such as reading reviews, viewing advertisements, which inspire purchasing decisions. 2) Information searching means consumers search for information or details of products or services that the consumer needs in order to make a purchase decision. 3) Evaluation of alternatives means the consumer compares similar or interchangeable goods or services to look for advantages and disadvantages for the best value. 4) Purchase decision means consumers actually make purchasing decisions with purchase intent and have a reason to buy. 5) Post-purchase behavior means the consumer check their satisfaction after the consumer has used the product or service. It can measure their tendency towards the next purchase decision, if in this purchase decision meet the needs of consumers completely.

The above theories and related works are used as a reference and as a guideline for determining the variables in the research conceptual framework as shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1
Conceptual framework of Online Marketing Mix Factors Affecting Online Accommodation Decisions of Thai Tourists



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The target population used in the study was general Thai tourists who are on social media platforms and are interested in booking accommodation through online channels which cannot know the exact target population. The researchers therefore used Taro Yamane's sample size determination formula for unknown population size at a 95% confidence level and error of 5%, which the calculation result was a sample of 385 tourists.

The sampling was done using a probability sampling method with Cluster Random Sampling because online hotel booking users are on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Line and Instagram, etc., Therefore, a simple random sampling method was used by randomly drawing 10 groups on social media. Then non-probabilistic random sampling method was used to randomize the sampling units by convenience sampling method.

Tools used in this research as a questionnaire which consisted of questions based on characteristics to be measured, divided into 3 parts: Part 1 Demographic characteristics, Part 2 Opinion on online marketing mix (5A), and Part 3 Opinion on decisions to online accommodation. The questionnaire is a 5-level rating scale of Likert which were tested for the validity and reliability of the questionnaire to obtain accurate research results and achieve the stated objectives. In this regard, the researcher conduct a pilot test of 40 sets. The results of checking the confidence of each question had Cronbach's alpha coefficient were between 0.741-0.893, and the total coefficient was 0.875, which passed the reliability criteria [12]. The researcher chose to do an online questionnaire and distributed through online social networking channels such as Facebook (Facebook), Line (LINE), etc., because it is a method with low

operating costs. and can quickly access target audience information. A questionnaire with 220 responses was obtained.

Statistics used in data analysis was descriptive statistics to describe the demographic characteristics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. As well as the inferential statistical analysis was used to test research hypotheses by using t-Test, ANOVA, and multiple regression analysis.

RESULTS

Personal data of 220 respondents can be summarized as follows. Most of the respondents were female accounted for 71.4 percent, aged between 18-30 years accounted for 83.2 percent, being single accounted for 93.2 percent, having the highest level of education at the bachelor's degree accounted for 78.6 percent. Including most of the respondents work in private business employees accounted for 70.5 percent, and has an average monthly income less than or equal to 10,000 baht accounted for 45.9 percent.

The opinions on online marketing factor affecting online accommodation decisions of Thai tourists as a whole was at a high level. If considering with each aspect, the most was the online marketing factor in the aspect of Advocate, followed by Appeal, Act, Ask, and Aware, respectively, were at a high level in all aspects. When consider in each aspect of the online marketing mix factor found that in terms of awareness with the highest average is knowing about online booking through social media sharing. In terms of Appeal, it was found that the highest average was online reservations allow customers to complete the booking process by themselves with step by step process. In terms of Ask, it was found that the highest average was they can find details of online booking information by themselves. In terms of Act, it was found that the highest average was they can choose to pay according to their convenience, whether on the date of booking or on the day of arrival. Moreover, in terms of Advocate, it was found that the highest average was they will definitely come back to use the online booking service again.

Findings on the hypothesis test were as follows.

Hypothesis 1: Differences in demographic factors consisting of gender, age, education level, occupation, and monthly income differently affect online accommodation decisions of Thai tourists.

The results of the hypothesis test using t-Test and ANOVA revealed that differences in genders affect online accommodation decisions of Thai tourists differently, while differences in age, education level, occupation and monthly income did not affect online accommodation decisions of Thai tourists differently at the statistically significant level of .05.

Hypothesis 2: Online marketing mix consisting of Aware, Appeal, Ask, Act, and Advocate affect online accommodation decisions of Thai tourists.

The results of analysis by using multiple regression analysis to test the hypothesis was shown in Table I.

TABLE I
Multiple Regression Results of Online Marketing Mix Factors Affecting Online Accommodation Decisions of Thai Tourists

Variables	B	Beta	T	p-value (Sig.)
(Constant)	.627		7.139	.000**
Aware	.132	.141	2.117	.020*
Ask	.112	.127	2.006	.043*
Appeal	.177	.230	3.811	.000**
Act	.246	.269	4.441	.000**
Advocate	.288	.307	5.880	.000**

R = 0.807, Adjusted R Square = 0.651, S.E. = 0.17075, F = 72.105

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$, **Significant at $\alpha = 0.01$

From Table I, the multiple regression analysis using the Enter method found that online marketing mix factors affect the online booking decision of Thai tourists at a significant level of 0.05. Online marketing mix factors affecting online accommodation decisions consisted of the factors in term of Aware (Sig. = .020*), Ask (Sig. = .043*), Ask (Sig. = 000**), Act (Sig. = .000**), and Advocate (Sig. = 000**), where each factor has a positive effect on the decision to book accommodation through online channels of Thai tourists. When considering the weight of the effect of the independent variable based on the multiple regression coefficient with standardized coefficients values. It was found that the factor with the highest multiple regression coefficient was Advocate ($\beta = 0.307$), followed by Act ($\beta = 0.269$), Appeal ($\beta = 0.230$), Aware ($\beta = 0.141$) and Appeal ($\beta = 0.127$), respectively. All online marketing mix factors can together predict the online booking decision of Thai tourists was statistically significant at F = 72.105, and all variables could explain the variance of online booking decisions of Thai tourists (R^2) at 65.1%.

From the results of the multiple regression analysis, a forecasting equation can be created for the decision making of online hotel bookings of Thai tourists as follows:

$$\text{Online booking decision of Thai tourists} = 0.627 + 0.132 (\text{Aware}) + 0.112 (\text{Ask}) + 0.177 (\text{Appeal}) + 0.246 (\text{Act}) + 0.288 (\text{Advocate})$$

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The results of the research revealed that online marketing mix factors affecting the decision to book accommodation through online channels. It was found that Thai tourists focused on creating awareness and asking questions at a high level, and focus on attractiveness booking, decision, and word of mouth at the highest level. This shows that it is in line with the concept and online marketing mix of Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan [8], which states that today's marketing has changed as a result of the consumer's purchasing behavior. The 5A concept is

the concept of the process from the consumer's desire to purchase a particular product to the satisfaction of the consumer and then word of mouth. The group of respondents has focused on the matter of attraction, booking decision, and the word of mouth mainly. In this case, it meant the factor in making a booking decision, such as being able to choose to pay according to your convenience, promotions and special privileges such as discounts on accommodation, and cancel the reservation, etc., are easy to do at any time. Including booking accommodation online is cheaper than booking through other channels, and having complete accommodation information as you want is what Thai tourists want to have services in this section. The results of the study revealed that the following factor was the word of mouth factor, for example, tourists will definitely use the online booking service again, followed by they will tell others about the service quality of online hotel reservations, and they will tell about the advantages that you have received to close to you. Tourists are constantly encouraged to book accommodation online and they will recommend online accommodation reservations to family, friends and relatives, which is in line with the research of Wetchapitak [9], a study of 5A marketing strategies and consumer decision making for organic products. It was found that in term of Appeal and Advocate were the factor that the respondents paid the most attention to. Moreover, the study of Phuangnak [13] about marketing mix factors affecting the decision to use hotel services in Phra Nakhon District, Bangkok, was found that all factors had a high level of significance.

When considering the relationship between online marketing mix factors and the decision to book accommodation through online channels of Thai tourists. It was found that they were related in all aspects and in the same direction that means when Thai tourists pay attention to any aspect of online marketing mix factors, it will result in the decision to book accommodation through online channels as well. Any aspect of the online marketing mix will be crucial in every online booking decision. This is in line with the study of Phuangnak [13] who studied marketing mix factors affecting the decision to use hotel services in Phra Nakhon District in Bangkok. It was found that all aspects of marketing mix factors affected the decision to use hotel services in Phra Nakhon District in Bangkok at a high level. Including in accordance with the research of Tantipitok [14] who studied factors affecting the behavior of choosing accommodation of generation Y tourists in Phuket. The results of the analysis revealed that the marketing mix factors affect the choice of accommodation of Generation Y tourists in Phuket. It is also in line with the research of Wechapitak [9] who studied 5A marketing strategies and consumers' decision to buy organic products. It was found that the 5A marketing mix factors that most respondents gave the most importance were inquiry and answer aspects. Followed by the aspect of appeal, support decision-making and product awareness aspect, respectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from the results of statistical analysis are presented as guidelines for tourism entrepreneurs to apply and plan strategies to build their business competitiveness in the future as following.

1. According to the research findings, it was found that the sample group focused on being able to search for online accommodation information conveniently and completely for decision-making, as well as from advice of people who have used the service before. Therefore,

tourism entrepreneur should be able to show details of accommodation information completely and clear to use in making decisions, such as room rates, and attractions closest to the source of accommodation. In addition, nowadays, the decision to buy a product or service, consumers will study from reviews of people who have used the service before. If the reviews of consumers who have used the service are in a good direction, it will affect consumers who are about to use the service.

2. According to the research findings on post-purchase behavior, it was found that the subjects expressed their satisfaction with the results after using online booking services and will continue to use online accommodation even as new channels are added. Therefore, tourism entrepreneur should maintain the confidentiality of customer data by using a security system high standard safety both in technology and processes to prevent the theft of confidential information, including should inform consumers to be confident in keeping their data safe.

3. According to the results of research on online marketing mix, it was found that the sample group focused on making purchasing decisions at online accommodation booking providers with complete information. Therefore, tourism entrepreneur should present information for use in making decisions such as pictures, locations, conditions and contact methods in detail. The information may be presented as pictures, annotation or make a presentation video clip. It will make it more interesting and will make it easier for consumers to visualize which they can search and compare the accommodation by themselves. In addition, they can choose to see other information related to additional travel and booking accommodation online has more details than other channels.

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