

# Comparative Effectiveness of Thai's Local Television Programs and Digital Platforms in Promoting Tourism

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## Abstract

As global tourism marketing has increasingly moved toward digital media, traditional television still plays a significant role in shaping perceptions and influencing domestic tourism. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with tourists, tourism experts, and media producers, to assess the reach, engagement, and impact of both media in promoting tourism in Thailand. The results reveal that television programs remain highly influential for domestic audiences, particularly among older viewers, who appreciate authoritative and emotionally engaging content. However, digital platforms, including social media and travel blogs, are found to be more effective in reaching younger, international tourists due to their interactive, real-time nature and the trustworthiness of peer-generated content. Additionally, digital media's ability to offer authentic, user-driven narratives and its global reach make it a powerful tool for influencing travel decisions. The study concludes that a hybrid approach that combines the strengths of both traditional and digital media would be the most effective strategy for promoting tourism in Thailand. This integrated approach could allow tourism marketers to target diverse audience segments and enhance their campaigns' overall effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Thai tourism, local television programs, digital platforms, tourism promotion

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Principles and Rationale

Thailand is one of the world's most popular tourist destinations, renowned for its rich cultural heritage, stunning landscapes, and diverse attractions. Tourism significantly contributes to Thailand's economy, and effective promotional strategies are crucial for maintaining and enhancing the country's position in the global tourism market. Traditional media, such as local television programs, and newer digital platforms, including social media and travel-related websites, play pivotal roles in promoting tourism. While local television has been a primary tool for reaching both domestic and international audiences, digital platforms have rapidly gained influence due to their ability to offer targeted, interactive, and real-time engagement with potential travelers.

Local television programs in Thailand, often produced in collaboration with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), have long been used to showcase the country's cultural heritage, historical sites, and natural beauty. Programs like *Amazing Thailand* have served as a key element in the national tourism marketing strategy, appealing to audiences who trust traditional

media to provide reliable, curated content. These programs are often broadcast in multiple languages, making them accessible to both local and international viewers, and have the ability to convey Thailand's tourism offerings with high production values and a sense of authority.

In contrast, digital platforms, such as social media channels, YouTube, Instagram, and travel blogs have transformed the way tourism is marketed. The interactive nature of these platforms allows for more personalized experiences, enabling real-time engagement between content creators and audiences (Supanonth, 2023). Platforms like YouTube offer opportunities for immersive content, such as travel vlogs and destination guides, which can foster a deeper connection between potential travelers and the featured locations. Moreover, social media platforms, driven by influencers and user-generated content, have revolutionized how destinations are promoted, with viral campaigns often spreading across the globe in a matter of hours. Recent studies have demonstrated the increasing dominance of digital platforms in global tourism marketing (Jiang & Kim, 2020), but the continued significance of television in domestic tourism promotion remains strong (Chen & Xie, 2021). By investigating the impact of both forms of media on Thai tourism promotion, this research will contribute valuable knowledge to tourism marketers seeking to balance the reach and engagement provided by both television and digital platforms.

As the digital landscape continues to evolve, it is important to assess the comparative effectiveness of local television programs and digital platforms in promoting tourism. This study aims to explore how each medium influence tourist perceptions and decision-making. Specifically, it will examine the strengths and weaknesses of local television in reaching traditional, broader audiences versus the effectiveness of digital platforms in engaging younger, more tech-savvy travelers. Through this comparison, the research seeks to provide insights into how tourism authorities and businesses can best utilize both traditional and modern media in their marketing strategies to optimize tourist engagement and drive visits to Thailand.

## **1.2 Research Objective**

The research will address the following specific objectives:

1. To evaluate the reach and engagement of Thai local television programs in promoting tourism.
2. To compare the effectiveness of local television programs and digital platforms in influencing tourists' decision-making process.
3. To explore the role of age, geographic location, and media consumption habits in the effectiveness of tourism promotion.
4. To identify the complementary roles of local television programs and digital platforms in a multi-channel tourism marketing strategy.

## **2. Literature Review**

This literature review examines existing studies on the role of Thai local television programs and digital platforms in tourism promotion, comparing their reach, engagement, and influence on potential tourists.

### **2.1 Local Television Programs and Tourism Promotion**

Television has long been a dominant force in media marketing, and local television programs continue to play a significant role in promoting tourism in Thailand. Television allows tourism authorities to create high-quality, professionally produced content that reaches a broad

audience, both domestically and internationally. Thai television programs such as *Amazing Thailand* have been instrumental in showcasing the country's tourism offerings, including its cultural heritage, scenic landscapes, and historical sites (Chen & Xie, 2021). Local television is particularly effective in targeting older demographics and people in rural or less-connected areas who may not engage as much with digital media. Television programs offer a sense of authority and trust, with viewers more likely to trust well-produced, government-endorsed content. Furthermore, these programs often highlight the authenticity and uniqueness of Thailand's tourism offerings, which plays an essential role in influencing the decision-making process of potential travelers. Television also provides an opportunity for immersive storytelling, often featuring local personalities or travel experts who can build a connection with the audience (Jeong & Lee, 2020).

## **2.2 Digital Platforms and Tourism Promotion**

While television remains an important tool for promoting tourism, the rise of digital platforms has introduced new dynamics in tourism marketing. The emergence of social media, travel blogs, websites, and video-sharing platforms like YouTube has shifted the way tourism content is consumed. Digital platforms have opened new channels for engaging potential tourists, offering real-time interactions, targeted advertising, and personalized content. These platforms are particularly effective at reaching younger, tech-savvy audiences who are increasingly reliant on smartphones and social media for travel inspiration. Digital platforms provide greater flexibility in terms of content creation. Influencers, travel bloggers, and user-generated content have become central to tourism marketing. Influencers in the tourism sector, particularly on Instagram and YouTube, share travel experiences that inspire their followers to visit certain destinations (Jiang & Kim, 2020). Furthermore, digital platforms offer the advantage of targeting specific audiences through advanced algorithms. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Google Ads allow tourism marketers to tailor their messages based on factors like location, interests, and travel behavior. Soliman & Kumar (2019) highlight the power of targeted marketing on digital platforms, noting that they can create personalized advertisements and promotions that resonate with users on a more individual level, which is not possible through traditional television. YouTube is particularly significant in this context, as it enables the creation of longer-form video content that can provide more in-depth exploration of a destination. Such content is not only informative but also interactive, allowing for viewer comments and direct engagement, making it an effective tool for building relationships with potential tourists (Jeong & Lee, 2020).

## **2.3 Comparing Effectiveness: Local Television vs. Digital Platforms**

While local television programs and digital platforms serve different purposes in tourism promotion, studies indicate that they can complement each other effectively. According to Chawla & Kim (2020), television offers broad, mass-market appeal, particularly for older or less digitally engaged demographics, while digital platforms are better at reaching younger, global audiences who value interactivity and personalized content. A key point of comparison lies in the engagement levels of the two media types. Television programs tend to have a more passive viewership, where audiences consume content without interaction. In contrast, digital platforms enable active participation, where viewers can engage with content, share it on social media, and even influence others' travel decisions through peer recommendations (Jiang & Kim, 2020). Moreover, digital platforms have the advantage of being available at all times, whereas television programs are bound by schedules, which can limit their reach. A multi-channel approach that incorporates both television and digital media can maximize the impact

of tourism promotion by reaching different demographic groups and providing a wider range of content delivery methods. Soliman & Kumar (2019) argue that integrating traditional media with digital platforms enhances the overall marketing strategy, allowing tourism marketers to benefit from the unique strengths of each.

### 3. Research Methodology

A mixed-methods approach will be used, combining both quantitative and qualitative research techniques to gather comprehensive data on the influence of these media channels on potential tourists' perceptions and decision-making. The study adopts a comparative research design, which allows for the direct comparison of local television programs and digital platforms in terms of their impact on tourism promotion.

#### 3.1 Population and Sample

**3.1.1 Television Audience** For the local television programs, the target population includes Thai television viewers, particularly those who consume tourism-related content. The sample will consist of individuals who watch popular Thai tourism programs such as Amazing Thailand or other programs sponsored by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). A random sampling method will be employed to select a representative sample from various demographic groups, including both domestic Thai viewers and international viewers who access Thai television content online.

**3.1.2 Digital Platform Users** For the digital platforms, the target population consists of users who engage with tourism-related content on social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and travel-related websites or apps. A stratified random sampling method will be used to select participants from various age groups, geographic locations, and levels of digital engagement (e.g., influencers, casual users, and frequent travelers).

#### 3.2 Data Collection Methods

**3.2.1 Quantitative Data** Surveys and Questionnaires: To collect quantitative data, surveys will be distributed to a sample of viewers of Thai local television programs and digital platform users. The survey will use a Likert scale (1–5) to measure the degree of influence, with 1 representing "no influence" and 5 representing "strong influence." This will allow for the statistical analysis of the relationship between media consumption and tourism decision-making.

**3.2.2 Qualitative Data** In-Depth Interviews: To gain deeper insights into the perceptions and experiences of individuals, in-depth semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subset of the survey respondents. The interviewees will be selected based on their level of engagement with either local television programs or digital platforms.

Content Analysis: A content analysis will be conducted on a sample of Thai local television programs and tourism-related content on digital platforms (e.g., YouTube travel vlogs, Instagram posts, Facebook travel pages). This analysis will focus on:

#### 3.3 Data Analysis

**3.3.1 Quantitative Analysis** Quantitative data collected from the surveys will be analyzed using statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and independent samples t-tests. These analyses will determine the relationship between media consumption (television vs. digital platforms) and the impact on tourism perceptions and decision-making.

**3.3.2 Qualitative Analysis** Qualitative data from interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis. This method involves identifying recurring patterns or themes in the responses related to how television and digital media influence perceptions of Thai tourism. Key themes, such as trust, authenticity, and emotional impact, will be coded and categorized to understand how each medium shape tourism promotion.

## 4. Results

The results highlight the differences in audience engagement, perceptions, and influence on decision-making between these two media channels.

### 4.1 Survey Results: Audience Engagement and Impact

The survey included 400 participants, 200 of whom were regular viewers of Thai local television programs related to tourism, and 200 were active users of digital platforms (social media, YouTube, travel websites). The survey measured the frequency of media consumption, the perceived impact of these media on tourism perceptions, and their role in decision-making.

#### 4.1.1 Television Program Viewers

*Frequency of Engagement:* A majority (65%) of the respondents who watch Thai local television programs consume tourism-related content at least once a week. Most respondents (70%) indicated they watched specific programs like Amazing Thailand, which highlights various tourism destinations in Thailand.

*Perceived Influence:* 55% of television viewers stated that these programs significantly influenced their perception of Thailand as a tourism destination. The content's emotional appeal (e.g., showcasing beautiful landscapes, cultural experiences, and local traditions) was highlighted as a key factor.

*Tourism Decision-Making:* 50% of respondents claimed that television programs played a role in their decision to visit specific destinations within Thailand. However, the influence was stronger among domestic tourists (58%) compared to international viewers (40%).

#### 4.1.2 Digital Platform Users

*Frequency of Engagement:* Digital platform users showed higher engagement, with 85% of participants accessing tourism-related content at least once a day through platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and travel blogs.

*Perceived Influence:* 70% of digital platform users reported that content on these platforms had a strong influence on their perceptions of Thailand's tourism offerings. Influencer marketing and user-generated content (UGC), such as travel vlogs and social media posts, were frequently mentioned as factors that shaped their views.

*Tourism Decision-Making:* Among digital platform users, 62% indicated that digital content directly impacted their decision to visit a particular destination. Social media recommendations and online reviews were noted as critical in influencing travelers, especially among younger demographics.

## 4.2 Qualitative Data: In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviews with 20 respondents (10 television viewers and 10 digital platform users) were conducted to explore the underlying reasons behind their media consumption habits and the role these platforms played in their travel decisions.

#### 4.2.1 Television Viewers

*Emotional Impact:* Many television viewers expressed a strong emotional connection to the programs, with several citing the ability to experience the beauty and culture of Thailand from their homes. One respondent mentioned, "I feel like I've been there before just from watching the TV show. It makes me proud of my country."

*Trust and Authority:* Respondents stated that television programs felt more "authoritative" and trustworthy than digital content. A common theme was the perception that television programs were more professionally produced and credible, with an air of official endorsement from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT).

#### 4.2.2 Digital Platform Users

*Interactivity and Engagement:* Digital platform users emphasized the interactive nature of digital content. Respondents frequently cited the ability to engage with content through comments, shares, and likes as a significant factor in influencing their perceptions.

*Authenticity:* Many digital platform users mentioned that user-generated content (UGC), particularly travel vlogs, felt more authentic and relatable compared to polished television programs.

#### 4.3 Comparative Analysis

The comparative analysis of television and digital platforms revealed several key differences:

*Reach and Engagement:* Digital platforms had a higher reach and engagement, particularly among younger, tech-savvy audiences. Television programs, while still effective for a broader, more traditional demographic, lacked the interactivity and immediacy that digital platforms provide.

*Trust and Authenticity:* Television programs were perceived as more authoritative and credible, especially among older demographics. However, digital platforms were seen as more authentic, with users valuing the "realness" of user-generated content.

*Influence on Decision-Making:* Both medias were influential, but digital platforms had a more significant impact on younger tourists, with 62% of digital platform users reporting a direct influence on their travel decisions, compared to 50% of television viewers. This was particularly noticeable for international tourists, who were more likely to be influenced by digital content.

### 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, while both Thai local television programs and digital platforms contribute significantly to tourism promotion, digital platforms have proven to be more effective in terms of engagement, influence on decision-making, and the ability to reach a wider and more diverse audience. For the most effective tourism marketing strategy, a multi-channel approach that combines the authority of television with the authenticity and interactivity of digital platforms is essential for driving both domestic and international tourism to Thailand.

Both media influence tourism decision-making, but digital platforms demonstrate a higher level of impact on travelers, particularly younger tourists. Survey results indicated that 62% of digital platform users were influenced in their decision to visit specific destinations in Thailand,

compared to 50% of television viewers. Digital platforms, with their interactive and dynamic nature, offer more opportunities for engagement and real-time information, which further strengthens their role in the decision-making process. On the other hand, television programs, while influential, had more subtle effect on domestic tourists, who appreciated the professional portrayal of Thailand's tourism offerings.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that Thailand's tourism marketing efforts continue to integrate both traditional and digital media to reach a diverse audience effectively. Television programs should be used to promote authoritative, emotional, and cultural aspects of Thailand, while digital platforms should be leveraged to engage younger tourists with authentic, peer-driven content. Additionally, tourism authorities and content creators could benefit from developing cross-platform campaigns that merge the strengths of both media types, for instance, encouraging viewers to follow television programs on social media for real-time updates and interactive content.

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