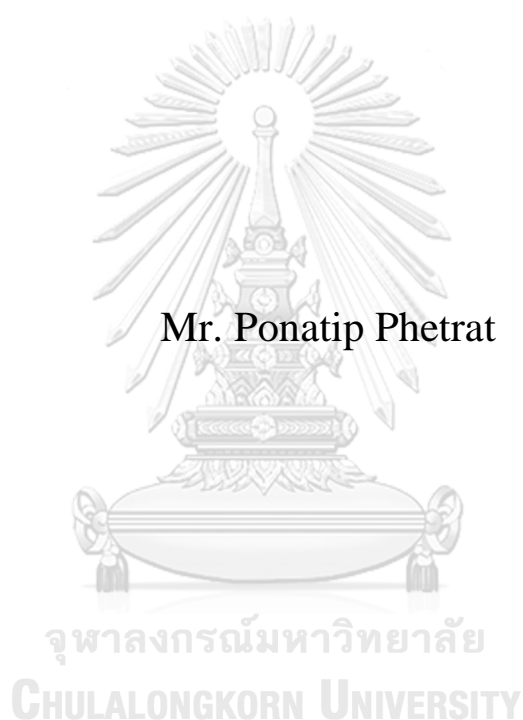


PERCEIVED IMAGE OF SAMUI ISLAND FROM LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS



An Independent Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Communication Arts) in Strategic
Communication Management
FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION ARTS
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The objective of this research was to explore the perceived image of Samui island from local stakeholders. An in-depth interview was selected as the research instrument for this study. The data is collected from 15 respondents who were local stakeholders of Samui island, they are those who live and work in Samui for more than 10 years, aged between 24-45 years old. The findings indicated that according to brand associations in terms of attributes the respondents perceived Samui island as “beach” “nature” and “cultural tourist destination” also, respondents perceived Samui as having “friendly” “lively” “complicated” and “easy-going” personalities. In terms of benefits, personal circumstances have a greater impact on the emotional component of an image as respondents perceived Samui island as gives various senses from relaxation, calm to happiness. The respondents were all have self-confident and proud of being one part of the island. In terms of attitudes, respondents who perceived a good image of Samui island may result in providing good attitudes towards the destination, on the other hand, those respondents who perceived a bad image of the island may lead to bad attitude towards the destination as respondents mentioned that the beach destination is clear and beautiful but those who perceived bad image think the beach are full of trash.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|--|-------------|
| ABSTRACT (THAI) | iii |
| ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)..... | iv |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | v |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | vi |
| CHAPTER 1 Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Background..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Objective of the study..... | 6 |
| 1.3 Research questions | 7 |
| 1.4 Scope of the study | 7 |
| 1.5 Operational definitions of the variables | 7 |
| 1.6 Expected benefits from the study | 8 |
| CHAPTER 2 Literature Review | 10 |
| 2.1 Related theories and concept..... | 10 |
| 2.2 Previous study..... | 15 |
| 2.3 Conceptual Framework | 18 |
| CHAPTER 3 Methodology..... | 20 |
| 3.1 Research Sample and Sampling Method | 20 |
| 3.2 Research Instrument | 22 |
| 3.3 Research Procedure..... | 23 |
| 3.4 Validity and Reliability | 24 |
| CHAPTER 4 Findings | 25 |
| 4.1 Demographic Profile | 26 |
| 4.2 Perceived Image | 27 |
| 4.3 Additional questions on perceived sustainable tourism image of Samui island as a tourist destination..... | 40 |
| CHAPTER 5 Summary and Discussion | 44 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 5.1 Summary | 44 |
| 5.2 Discussions | 51 |
| 5.3 Limitations | 56 |
| 5.4 Direction for Future Research..... | 57 |
| 5.5 Practical Implications | 59 |
| Appendix A..... | 63 |
| Appendix B | 65 |
| REFERENCES | 67 |
| VITA..... | 74 |



CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Tourism is one of the world's most important economic sectors. In 2019, tourism directly contributed USD 3.5 trillion to the global economy, or 4% of the global GDP (UNTWO, 2019). The tourism industry is also the most critical sector of Thailand's important economic driver due to the presence of tourists, facilities, accommodation and income have increased considerably. It is likely to increase its contribution to GDP from its pre-existing key role by more than 10%, as well as the career opportunities of the tourism industry and help spread prosperity throughout the kingdom. Despite its exceptional food, people, and culture, Thailand's beaches are regarded as one of the most popular tourist destinations of Thailand. Samui Island, the second largest island in Thailand after Phuket, also be included. Samui Island is perceived to be one of the most important tourist destination since they welcomed almost 2.3 million tourists per year (Symons, 2020) and generate income from tourism at least 50 billion baht per year (BBC, 2020). They are also known for their wonderful beaches with over 80 small islands, including the Ang Thong National Marine Park (TAT, 2022).

However, the covid-19 pandemic has caused our generation's worst health, financial, and societal crises. A global lockdown and several restrictions put in place to stop the virus' transmission caused an unprecedented decline in travel, which had a

negative impact on tourism. 96% of all international destinations had put restrictions on travel as a result of the pandemic. In 2020 International arrivals declined by 73%, from 1.5 billion to 402 million, by far the largest annual fall in the sector's history (UNTWO, 2021). This huge impact has a direct effect to the tourism industry in Thailand including the island destination, which is considered as an important source of income for the country. The island destination would have to struggle with the crisis where the intense price war began at this point. In order to compete with other island destination across the nation for domestic tourism, the island's hotels were obliged to drop their rates even further (Symons, 2020).

Nevertheless, Samui Island still faced with too many obstacles such as higher expenses on transportation is needed, when compared to other tourist destination competitors. Constraint has been getting to the island. Samui island receives much less visitors than islands like Phuket island due to Bangkok Airways' monopoly on flights there, the island's small airport, and the costlier and more expensive flights (Symons, 2020). Since covid-19 shape a new norm for tourists as they become more aware when they want to travel, because of this, the tourist may consider other choices when they perceive the same destination identity as the statistical data shows a significant decrease of tourists in Samui Island from 2019 (Surachet, 2020). In addition, the selling point slogan reflecting the image of Samui Island “Beautiful corals, clear seawater, white beaches, numerous coconut, the gem of the Gulf of Thailand” provided by the TAT in 1994, seems to be out of date and may not attract new tourists.

Since the covid-19 impact on tourism worldwide, UNTWO has developed the global guidelines to restart tourism for post-covid management. They suggested that people, especially the stakeholders, need to priorities for tourism recovery, sustainability and innovation development is important for future tourism as tourists are more likely to perceive environmental and health concerns which both private and public sectors need to collaborate for an efficient reopening. For destination planning and management, the stakeholders should define their roles & responsibilities properly. These show the empirical evidence on how important Samui Island need to push themselves in order to develop their destination promotion.

Rapid development in its economy and tourism, as well as the expansion of its local community, have had an impact on the provision of public services, environmental management, and the way of life of its residents. As a result, a full investigation of the difficulties that have developed as a result of these consequences is required in order to identify timely solutions with the engagement of all stakeholders. The local authority, comprised of local people's representatives, should be the primary mechanism for addressing problems effectively and appropriately in accordance with the island's geography, customs, and the needs of its local people in order to facilitate balanced and sustainable economic growth and development.

Nonetheless, tourist growth has the capacity to favorably and badly affect every area of a society (Byrd, 2007). Recognizing this potential, tourist development organizations, governments, professionals, and researchers understand the need and

right for stakeholders to be engaged and participate in the tourism development process (Aas, Ladkin and Fletcher, 2005; Byrd, 2007; Mitchell and Reid, 2001; Tosun, 2000). Since the tourist industry is a service industry (Brown, Spillman, Lee & Lu, 2014), it is vital to consider the views of its stakeholders (Waligo, Clarke, & Hawkins, 2013), who may have both direct and indirect effects on the success of the sector. Stakeholders may have both good and bad effects on businesses at different periods (Kuvan & Akan, 2012; Landorf, 2009). Consequently, a sustainable tourism management model is a tourist firm that considers the views of all relevant parties while making decisions (Yodsuwan & Butcher, 2012).

In order to establish a business strategy that satisfies the requirements of all of the relevant parties involved in the tourist industry, it is essential for a company in this industry to be aware of and comprehend the various points of view held by these parties (Byrd, Bosley, & Dronberger, 2009). The collaboration between the tourist industry and its many stakeholders is characterized by a decision-making process that plans and addresses a variety of concerns pertaining to business growth and company strategies (Jamel & Getz, 1995). In addition, the leaders of the company should put a high priority on the stakeholders by using tactics that might result in efficient business procedures (Sautter & Leisen, 1999). Cooperation is essential to the accomplishment of corporate goals. In addition, the manner in which the commercial sector interacts with the various players in the tourist industry is critically important to the establishment of a solid connection between the commercial sector and the various players in the tourism industry (Yilmaz & Gunel, 2009).

All stakeholders having an interest in the planning, process, and delivery of tourist services, as well as the results, should be considered in destination management (Sautter and Leisen, 1999), and attention should be given to each stakeholder, regardless of their degree of interest or power. Identification of stakeholders and their subjectively perceived contributions is required. Processes for managing stakeholders must be devised, as well as transactions or agreements between the organization and its stakeholders (Freeman, 1984). However, the many stakeholders are not uniform entities, with significant overlaps (e.g. local community residents own local businesses or are involved in the management of the destination).

"Destination Image" plays an important part in the decision-making process about destinations. It has been suggested that since tourist services are intangible, pictures have become even more essential than actuality (Sonnleitner, 2011). As a result, in order for the Island to stand out in the market, a destination marketing that is both distinctive and powerful will need to be developed. There have been a number of research done in the past that explored how tourists and visitors interpret a picture. However, the opinion that stakeholders have of a destination's image is very essential since it may directly impact the growth of the tourist industry in a specific tourism destination (Kuvan & Akan, 2012; Landorf, 2009).

According to Bregoli (2012), the identity of a destination is dependent on the general viewpoint of local communities and entrepreneurs, and a well-designed identity for a destination seems to produce the sensation that it is a part of the people

who live and work there. The correct method for developing a location as a tourist attraction. Having a distinct identity is critical in order to successfully attract visitors from near and far.

Businesses and other key players participating in the local tourist sector need to make a deliberate effort to establish, maintain, and manage a sustainable industry in order to make sustainable tourism a possibility. Only then will sustainable tourism be conceivable. This method is referred to as sustainable tourism development, and it is a collective duty with the goal of reducing the amount of damage or bad effects that are caused by tourists (Revfine, 2022).

To summarize, this research aims to explore the perceived image of Samui island from local stakeholders. The concept of brand image will be applied to this study in order to obtain a deeper perspective and real insight. The research findings may provide some valuable recommendations that will assist the communication specialists uncover the underlying points necessary to develop a marketing communications strategy for any prospective changes to the destination development of Samui Island.

1.2 Objective of the study

1. To explore the perceived image of Samui island from local stakeholders.

1.3 Research questions

1. How do local stakeholders perceived image of Samui island?

1.4 Scope of the study

This research is based on the qualitative approach, using an in-depth interview research instrument in order to obtain a deeper understanding as well as perspectives from local stakeholders towards the image of Samui island. Fifteen participants were carefully selected by using judgmental sampling technique. The participants, or in this case are local stakeholders, they are those people who live and work in Samui Island for more than 10 years.

The questions guideline about perceived image of Samui island are based on Keller's (1993) concept of image which involves the concept of brand associations including the three dimensions (attitudes, benefits, and attributes) and eight sub dimensions which are cognitive attitudes, affective attitudes, functional benefit, symbolic benefit, experiential benefit, product related attributes, and non-product related attributes.

1.5 Operational definitions of the variables

Local stakeholders are called internal stakeholders in a travel destination. Internal stakeholders are those who live and work in Samui Island. These people are in both the public and private sectors for example. Samui Island staff tour operator,

marketing organizations, entrepreneurs, citizens, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) responsible for TAT activities for Samui Island and officials from the local government.

Perceived Image: Based on Keller's (1993) concept of image. Brand image involves in the creation of brand associations which include three dimensions; Attributes, Benefits, and Attitudes.

Attributes, consist of two sub dimensions which are; product related and non-product related. *Benefits,* consist of three sub dimensions which are; functional, symbolic, experiential. *Attitudes,* consist of three sub dimensions which are; cognitive, affective, and conative.

1.6 Expected benefits from the study

1. Academically, the findings from this study should increase knowledge for deeper comprehension on perceived image of Samui Island from local stakeholders in order to implement the development plan for the island. Those with an interest in this subject may find it useful. The study also provides with the information about the concept of brand which retrieved from Keller (1993).

2. Practically, the findings can also be significant to tourism industry especially, Samui Island as the research findings may provide some useful information to identify important issues and revision points that will make it easier to establish an appropriate guideline to produce a powerful, credible destination image.

Also, this research finding may applicable as a fundamental study and can be adapted on different part in Thailand especially people who want to apply to other islands in the kingdom.



CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

In order to explore the perceived image of Samui Island from local stakeholders' perspective, the second chapter aims to provide a better understanding of what constitutes the concept of brand image. The literature review is attained from previous research, journals and related articles.

2.1 Related theories and concept

2.1.1 Perceived Image

People are increasingly appreciating tourism. Many people take regular holiday travels to shake up their routines and choose their vacation destinations based on their memories or perception of destination identities. As a result, tourists' perceived destination identity is becoming more essential for stakeholders (Preechawong & Sawagvudcharee, 2016). Hardy and Beeton (2001) classified stakeholders in the aspects of tourism into 4 categories: tourist operators, regulators, local residents, and visitors. Tourist operators are those who conduct tourism-related businesses in the destination. Regulators include governmental tourist organizations and their workers, consultants, marketing businesses, etc. They oversee assisting destination management. Local residents are permanent inhabitants of the area in which they reside and work. Visitors are those who travel to a destination solely for their tourism attractions.

A destination can communicate its unique identity through its branding strategies and advertising messages. Tourists, on the other hand, may perceive the destination's communicated messages via the lens of their own perceptions and so react differently to a brand message than it was intended (Kim & Lehto, 2013).

Previous studies indicated that to establish and sustain a brand-consumer connection, brand image projection and consumer brand perception must be synchronized (Davies & Chun 2002; Hatch and Schultz, 2003). Nandan (2005) mentioned that destination value can be built in the consumers' mind only when they understand and appreciate the conveyed brand images.

A thorough and unbiased understanding of both local inhabitants' and tourists' perceived destinations is a critical first step toward effective tourism development. Ku et al. (2017) investigated the variations in the perceived implicit relevance and effectiveness of destination image features among residents and visitors in the Liyu Lake Scenic Area in Hualien, Taiwan. The findings showed that inhabitants and visitors had different views on environmental concerns and the purpose of their trip. The most important finding was that both residents and tourists perceived the majority of the destination attributes as “possibly overkill”, reflecting that destination management organizations should reconsider the future direction of development and attempt to meet the "actual needs" of residents and tourists relying on their motivations.

According to Keller (1993), the notion of brand image is where the term "perceive image" originates. One of the most important aspects of marketing research is brand image, which may be defined as "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations stored in consumers' memory" (Keller, 1998). There is widespread consensus that the term "brand image" refers to a consumer's overall perception of a particular brand under the influence of their reasoned or emotional impressions. Despite the fact that the phrase "brand image" has a broad definition and is used in a variety of contexts, there is also widespread consensus that the term refers to a particular brand (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Aaker, 1996). As a result of the significant role that brand associations play in the formation of brand image (Biel, 1991; Dohni & Zinkham, 1990; Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000; Keller, 1998, 2003), many studies that investigate brand image take into account brand associations as an important factor.

Gallarza (2002) states that image is a summation of the beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions that a person has towards a person. Image is believed to be very important for a tourist attraction that is an important factor in tourists' travel decisions.

StuartandSundeen (1983) said that appearance is the sum of the attitudes underlying a person's perception of their body. including past and present perceptions which is a sense of perception about the size of the body and the potential and abilities of the body.

According to Kotler (2012), the term "image" refers to the accumulation of a person's thoughts, ideas, and general impressions towards a subject. which person's attitudes and actions towards an item is closely connected with its image. which person's actions and attitudes towards an object.

The associative network model (Farquhar & Herr, 1992) states that a person's memory is made up of links and nodes: links represent relationships (weak or strong, positive or negative), and nodes represent concepts (such as brand associations) and objects (such as brands). This model is the foundation for many brand associations. According to Aaker (1991), brand associations are a category of a brand's assets and liabilities that includes anything that people associate with the brand in their minds.

Brand associations, according to Keller (1988), can be divided into three groups: (1) Attributes (product-related attributes such as ingredients and features and non-product-related attributes such as price, user imagery, usage imagery, feelings, experiences and personality) (2) Benefits (functional benefits like being wholesome or nutritious, symbolic benefits like being fashionable and prestigious, and experiential benefits related to what it feel like to use the product or services), and (3) Attitude (overall evaluations). He believes that marketing initiatives that connect powerful, positive, and distinctive connections to the brand in memory help to generate a good brand image. The strongest, most positive, and most distinctive associations are most likely to be triggered and contribute to the brand's image (Keller, 2003).

2.1.1.1 Brand associations attributes

According to Keller (1993), brand associations may be divided into attributes, benefits, and attitudes. Similar to this, O'Cass and Lim (2001) classified three categories of brand associations based on how much information was condensed or included in each category. Benefits are individual values to which customers ascribe and from which they draw the functional, experiential, and symbolic qualities of the product or service that the brand offers. Brand attitudes, on the other hand, indicate how customers see a brand in general. In addition to what a customer perceives a product or service to be, brand attributes also include what is thought to be associated with its purchases and consumption. Both concrete and abstract qualities can be attributes. Size, color, and weight are particular attributes, but "youthful," "rugged," and other brand personality traits are abstract in nature. Additionally, attributes might be categorized as linked to products and unrelated to products (Keller, 1993). Packaging, user imagery, and use imagery are examples of non-product related qualities. Product related attributes would be specific to the sort of product and service.

The second dimension of brand associations is benefits. It is used to describe how customers feel their requirements have been met. Functional, symbolic, and experiential demands were divided by Park et al. (1991) into three categories. For example, items for hotels interested in environmental issues, such as water conservation tools, recycling bins, and cards requesting that guests reuse towels and

sheets—all things that have a significant symbolic meaning for green hotels—cater to the demands of customers who are concerned about conserving water, energy, and solid waste.

The third dimension of brand associations is attitudes. An attitude is a trained propensity to act consistently favorably or unfavorably toward a certain thing (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000, p. 200). Lutz (1991) identified cognitive, affective, and conative as the three elements that make up brand attitudes. The consumer's knowledge or beliefs about the brand are referred to as the cognitive component, while their emotions and feelings are referred to as the affective component and their propensity to buy something particular is referred to as the conative component.

In conclusion, this research will apply the concept of brand image. The question guideline will be based on Keller (1993) three dimensions of brand association, which are attitudes, benefits, and attributes.

2.2 Previous study

This section will provide an explanation of the research findings from the prior study, which will reveal the significant aspects that we used to apply to this study.

2.2.1 Perceived Image

Paek, Lee, Lin, Jou (2012) have studied the brand image for Starbucks. The study analyzes and defines how Asian customers, notably Taiwanese and Korean consumers, view Starbucks by providing qualitative data to support their thoughts on brand association (i.e., Starbucks' attributes, benefits, and attitudes). To investigate how Asian customers evaluate the brand image, focus groups and in-depth interviews were undertaken. A case study was carried out in Southern Taiwan. Utilizing a content analysis method, data were also examined. The findings showed that although most participants thought Starbucks was pricey, they thought they provided decent coffee and service. In the brand attributes dimension, the individuals from the two countries had higher overlap. Social, political, cultural, and environmental ties were discovered in addition to the general characteristics of items.

Preechawong and Sawagvudcharee (2016) explored Chang Island stakeholders' perceived destination identity. The study was conducted using a semi-structured question approach. Individuals who resided and worked on Chang Island were defined as internal stakeholders. They worked in both the public and private sectors including Chang Island authorities, tour operators, marketing organizations, entrepreneurs, residents, and officers from local government sectors. The findings supported the prior argument that Chang Island's cuisine culture was seafood, its traditional tradition was Loykratong, and its historical event was the Thai Navy Battle. Chang Island's main characteristic was dependability. It had a sophisticated personality. The original name of This Island was also Chang Island and it did not have a slogan. Such a study also mentioned that a destination could be described as a

blend of services and locally offered experiences. Furthermore, the core identity was the product's

2.2.2 Tourists' Perception of Samui Island, Thailand As a Tourist Destination

Boonsirichai (2002) have explored the overall image of Samui Island from Thai and non-Thai tourists' point of view also investigated problems with the infrastructural services, and the environment of Samui Island. The research is conducted in July 2001 This research was quantitative in nature. A total of 225 questionnaires were collected. The findings of this research indicated that Foreign and first-time visitors generally had a better opinion of the island's quality than Thai and returning visitors did. Samui Island should also develop, enhance, and protect its environment and infrastructure, particularly in four areas: accessibility, road quality and safety, cleanliness, and pricing for goods and services.

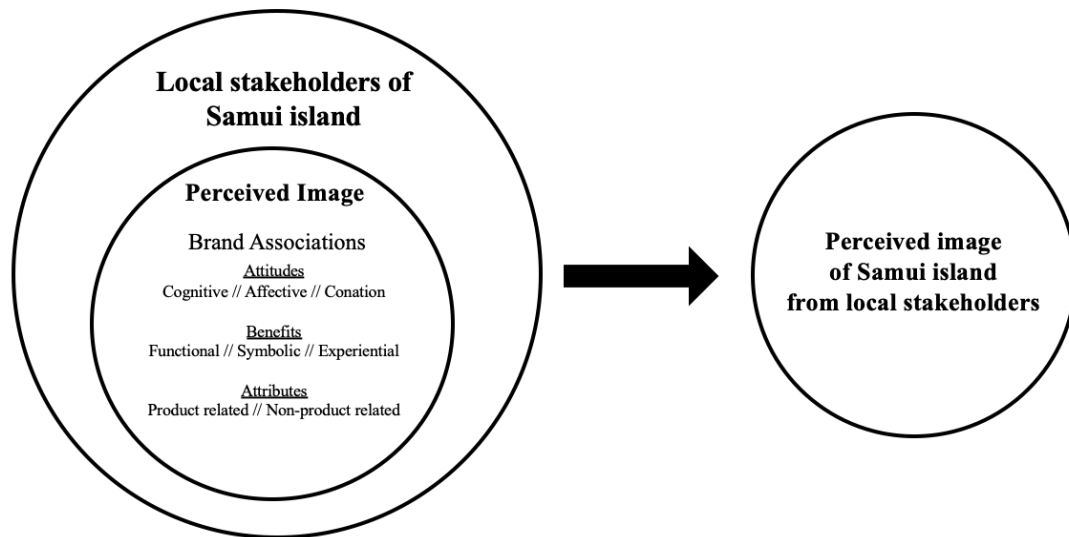
2.2.3 The Image Perception of a green Samui Island

Chotchuang S., Pianrot N., Racharak Na., and Kongrit W. (2017) investigated the image awareness of a Green Samui Island among government sectors, business operators, communities, and tourists in order to propose an integrated marketing communication plan for image creation of a Green Samui Island based on data collected through questionnaires. This was done in order to create a Green Samui Island image that would appeal to tourists. the findings indicated that government sectors, business operators, and communities all have a high level of awareness of the green island image. This is because their initial impressions indicate that touring

around the island gives them feelings of relaxation, which is followed by the idea that Samui Island is one of their first choices for natural tourist attractions. In a same vein, high-end tourists have a high degree of awareness of the image of green Samui, since wandering about the island makes them feel happy and positive emotions. The allure of this island's natural environment to tourists is their primary objective. The other emotion that they portray is one of satisfaction, which is then followed by a pleasant demeanor. This paper also includes some proposals and an integrated marketing communication plan for developing a green Samui Island, which all interested parties are tasked with putting into action.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research is described in Figure 2.1. The overview of the concept that will be applied to this study is also showed below. In the context of this research, the respondent or 'local stakeholder' will be explored on how they perceived image of Samui island through the concept of the image which retrieved from Keller's (1993).

Figure 2.1 A Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The third chapter is described with the methodology used for this study including the details of the research sample, sampling method, research instrument, data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability. This research is primarily aims to explore the perceived image of Samui island from local stakeholders. The methodology for the study will be based on the qualitative approach in nature. In order to deeply understand the real insight as well as perspectives of the participants, an in-depth interview research method was selected to this study. The questions guideline is consisted of two main sections which are questions about participants' general information and the concept of image including three dimensions of brand associations.

3.1 Research Sample and Sampling Method

This research will be based on the qualitative approach by using an in-depth interview research instrument with an attempt to explore on how local stakeholders perceived image of Samui Island. The data will include the in-depth point of views, thoughts as well as perspectives towards Samui Island from the sender side. A total of fifteen participants will be purposively selected by using judgmental sampling technique. The main targeted sample for this study will be those local stakeholders of Samui Island. The local stakeholders are referred to people who live and work in Samui Island. They will be in both the private and public sectors who take an

important role in driving and developing the tourism image of the island for instance; Tourism Authority of Thailand - Samui Island (TAT), the officers from local government sectors, entrepreneur, citizens, local travel bloggers (Ousanee, 2016). However, in this study, the researcher will rather exclude authorities to get a clear image of Samui Island from local stakeholders' perspective. The main participants from this study will come from only the private sectors which include the business owner, local citizens, local travel bloggers. The significance of choosing different respondents from various professions was conducted in order to provide the validity and reliability to the research study also the unique viewpoints from the respondents would also be included (Johnson and Christensen, 2010). In addition to this, those local stakeholders who were picked as participants are also people who have been living and working in Samui for more than ten years. Those who do not meet the requirements will not be chosen, and they will be taken out of consideration for the interview.

The in-depth interview will take place in October to November, 2022. All interviews would be conducted face-to-face which would allow the researcher to notify the respondent's reaction including their tone of voice, facial expression, and body language when the researcher is trying to dig deeper into the detail and in order to minimize the possible error impacting the misunderstanding of important information. The interview would also be recorded while the researcher taking notes of the main highlighted points.

3.2 Research Instrument

In this study, the question guideline is carefully formed based on the previous literature which are perceived image from the concept of brand image. The questions about perceived image of Samui Island are based on (Keller, 1993). There are three dimensions (attributes, benefits, and attitudes) and eight sub dimensions which are cognitive attitudes, affective attitudes, functional benefit, symbolic benefit, experiential benefit, product related attributes, and non-product related attributes.

The interview will establish in the form of open-ended questions and each question had a sub-question depending on the answers (see Appendix A). The question guideline consists of two sectors which are (1) participant's personal information and (2) perceived image.

The detail about the question guideline will be as follow:

1) *Participant's personal information* The questions will set off with basic information about the respondents. Four questions are aimed to capture their name, age, profession / occupation, and classification.

2) *Perceived Image* This part of the question will explore the respondent's perceived image of Samui Island which will consists of three main dimensions which are attitudes, benefits, and attributes also eight-sub dimensions

The questions will be written in English by the researcher, but they will also be provided in Thai (see Appendix B). This is because the researcher is concerned about the possibility of problems occurring during the data collecting process, particularly language hurdles. However, the context is transcribed the same way in both the English and Thai versions, so each participant will be able to choose the form that best suits their needs.

3.3 Research Procedure

Prior to the in-depth interview, the respondents will be approached by their personal contact. The researcher would provide the information about the interview including the researcher's information, the objective of this research, how long would it take for the interview, and the request letter regarding the interview from the faculty (if needed). When the participants have noticed and consent for the interview then the researcher would set up the interview date and time also the location which would depend on the participants' preferences. All the questions are reviewed by the researcher and the essential equipment for the interview including the voice recorder would be ready prior to start the interview.

During the in-depth interview, the researcher will start by explaining the research objective as well as and requesting consent to record the whole interview.

The participants will be allowed to choose if they want to do it in Thai or English. The researcher then follows the question guideline patterns as prepared. Starting with the main question follow by sub-questions. When additional information is required, the researcher will go deeper (laddering). The researcher will take note along with the interview while perceiving the respondent's nonverbal cues, for instance tone of voice, facial expression. Each respondent's interview will last no more than an hour, and the researcher will thank all of the participants at the end of the interview.

After collecting the data, the researcher will transcribe the data right away. The voice recording will subsequently be used to collect any notes that were not taken. The researcher will then analyze the transcribed data. The research results on perceived image of Samui Island from local stakeholder's perspectives will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

In terms of content validity, the research questions guideline was based on previous studies. The questions on perceived image were based on Keller's (1993) three dimensions. Therefore, this can somehow ensure the validity of this study in certain extent.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

This chapter provide with the results of this study gathered by using an in-depth interview research method with fifteen local stakeholders of Samui Island. This chapter will be divided into two main sections. The first section described the demographic profile of the respondents, followed by the second section with questions based on the conceptual framework including perceived image.

The following table provide with the respondent's demographic profile. However, the researcher decided to leave the respondent's names and surnames anonymous since the respondents asked not to disclose the particular information.

Figure 4.1: demographic profile of the total respondents

| Demographic Profile | | | | |
|---------------------|------|--------|-----|----------------------|
| Respondent | Name | Sex | Age | Occupation |
| 1 | n/a | Female | 29 | Restaurant owner |
| 2 | n/a | Female | 42 | Business owner |
| 3 | n/a | Female | 30 | Office worker |
| 4 | n/a | Female | 45 | Seller |
| 5 | n/a | Male | 36 | Seller |
| 6 | n/a | Male | 27 | Office worker |
| 7 | n/a | Female | 24 | Unemployed |
| 8 | n/a | Male | 36 | Taxi Driver |
| 9 | n/a | Male | 34 | Taxi Driver |
| 10 | n/a | Female | 43 | Business owner |
| 11 | n/a | Male | 34 | Local travel blogger |
| 12 | n/a | Male | 25 | Business owner |
| 13 | n/a | Female | 35 | Restaurant owner |
| 14 | n/a | Female | 33 | Seller |
| 15 | n/a | Male | 24 | Unemployed |

4.1 Demographic Profile

The first section describes the demographic profile of the participants which represented the basic information of the respondents including their age, gender, and occupation. Fifteen respondents who were selected are local stakeholders of Samui island which considered to be the target group of this study. They are those who work and live in Samui island. Respondent's career fields included sellers, business owners, taxi drivers, restaurant owners, officer works, unemployed and local travel blogger. The age ranging from 24 to 45 years old. In terms of gender, a total of eight respondents are female while another seven respondents are male.

The interviewees, local stakeholders of Samui island that exclude the private sector consisting of people from 7 different groups which are sellers, business owners, local travel blogger, restaurant owners, taxi drivers, office workers, and the unemployed. The sellers are selected from Samui island 's local market area, which is one of the island's most important commercial areas. Regarding business owners, Respondents are respected members of the business community. In connection with the travel and tourism sector, including the retail company, the elephant sanctuary, and the hotel business. For local travel blogger, the selected participant is having one of the highest number of followers/subscribers and they provide lots of local content of the islands continuously on their own online media channels. The participants from restaurants related are selected from one of the most well-known restaurants in Samui island and placed in the tourist spot area. For taxi drivers, they are those who work near famous tourism area and have more than ten years' worth of experience and knowledge in running a taxi business. Office workers are those whose work related to

tourism industry of Samui island.

4.2 Perceived Image

In this section, the respondents were asked to describe their perception towards image of Samui Island. This will allow the researcher to understand on how the respondents, or known as local stakeholders perceived the image of Samui island from their own perspectives without any bias. This section is divided into two main section based on Keller's 1993 concept of image which involves brand association. The two main section are types of associations (attributes, benefits, attitudes) and features of the associations (favorability, strength, uniqueness)

4.2.1 Type of associations

4.2.1.1 Attributes:

Product relate: In this part, respondents were asked questions related to image of Samui island in terms of tourist destination as a product.

Fifteen respondents stated that when they think of Samui island as a tourist destination, they first think of "beach". They mentioned that beach is the best representative when it comes to island tourist destination of Samui. One respondents mentioned "*Beaches of Samui are vary and each of them has different name and signature for example the chaweng beach represented the area of chaweng and it known for the longest white sand beach of the island*"

(male, seller, 36 years old)

Secondly, five respondents said they perceived “nature” when they think of Samui Island as a tourist destination. One respondents mentioned *“Samui’s natural attractions is as beautiful as northern part of Thailand. The geography of Samui island contains mountains and hills. This really makes we have a nature living destination”*

(male, business owner, 25 years old)

Lastly, few respondents shared similar opinion that when talking about Samui island as a tourist destination, they could think of “big bhudda” or known for cultural tourist destination as mentioned by one respondents *“The Samui’s Big Buddha is not an ordinary Buddha but it is located on the middle of small island that separated from Samui island. This is what a must visit for everyone who comes to Samui.”*

(female, restaurant owner, 35 years old)

Also, the respondents were asked about signature of Samui island, when it comes to tourist destination as a product. Most of the respondents shared “Hinta-Hinyai” as captured their mind. One respondent stated *“Hinta-Hinyai is one of the places in Samui that I could think of, it is a prominent attraction because it is located on the beach and has a long history.”*

(male, officer worker, 27 years old)

Also, some of the respondents think that the when think of signature of Samui island in terms of tourist destination as a product they stated that it is “island of the coconut” as a respondent stated that *“Lots of people who come to Samui keep asking why Samui island has so many coconut trees. That's what I think of when talking about Samui's attraction.”*

(male, taxi driver, 34 years old)

Non product related: which is the components that are connected to the product but are not the product itself such as price, user imagery, usage imagery, feelings, experiences and personality.

Samui island's Personality

Respondents were asked to describe the personality of Samui island, the results are varied, however, the majority of the respondents, with six respondents shared the same idea that Samui island has a “friendly” personality.

“Samui seems to be approachable. With various tourist attractions, kind people, delicious foods, I think the diversity within Samui makes us a friendly island.”

(male, officer worker, 27 years old)

Another group of three respondents, also believe that Samui island has a “lively” personality as one respondent mentioned *“Samui island always seems to be active because there are lots of activities to do and always have new attractions and tourist spots that make life never seems boring.”*

(male, Local travel blogger, 34 years old)

Some respondents also mentioned that Samui Island have mixed personality as one respondent said *“Samui is a calm person as when I see things gradually changes within the island, but sometime I think Samui is overactive person since things rapidly changes throughout the island”*

(female, restaurant owner, 29 years old)

Two respondents share the same believe that Samui Island has a complicated personality as a respondent shared *“Throughout my life on the island, Samui changed a lot and it always unpredictable. Sometime I think Samui is a peaceful island, but it’s not and sometime I think Samui island is hectic, but it’s not for some reason ”*

(female, seller, 45 years old)

Another two respondents also talked about Samui Island’s personality that he is easy going type of person. A respondent shared *“Samui is a suitable island for everyone. Whether coming with friends, family or as a couple, Samui has a wide range of activities to suit individual needs.”*

(male, business owner, 25 years old)

Price

This section investigates how the respondents saw the island of Samui beyond its role as a tourist destination. The respondents who were split into two groups each had a distinct opinion on the price.

As the first group from six out of fifteen respondents mentioned that price is considered middle to high for Samui island. As mentioned by one respondent

“For me, I understand that the cost of living on the island is a bit more than the mainland, it is considered middle to high range, however it depends on what and how much you would likely to spend.”

(female, officer worker, 30 years old)

The second group from nine out of fifteen respondents shared the same believe that the price of Samui island is very high. A respondent shared *“I think the price is too high, everything is expensive on the Island. My grocery shopping need to carefully plan each month in order to live pleasantly.”*

(male, unemployed, 24 years old)

Also, one respondent said *“Because we are not on the mainland. So everything is expensive. Higher gas prices than the mainland cause me problems with the cost of work and I earn less than before from driving.”*

(male, taxi driver, 36 years old)

4.2.1.2 Benefits

In this section, the respondents were asked to describe the perception of the needs being satisfied.

Functional

The respondents were asked to describe the functional benefits which retrieved from product related which is Samui island as a tourist destination.

Samui island's tourist destination provided "calm" "relaxation" as said by twelve out of fifteen respondents. One respondent said *"When I go to tourist sites on Samui Island, I always come away with a sense of calm and an increased ability to focus my attention, which makes going there a stress-reliever for me."*

(female, officer worker, 30 years old)

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Also some of the respondents mentioned "happiness". One respondent stated *"There will be horrible things happening someday. However, whenever I visit Samui's tourism attractions, I always feel joyful, happy and inspired to work again"*

(female, business owner, 42 years old)

Symbolic

All of the respondents believed that they feel proud and distinguished from other people. One respondent said *“My friends always jealous of me when they know that I’m living in the tourism destination of Samui island.”*

(male, unemployed, 24 years old)

The respondents were further asked to describe how Samui island provide them in terms of value. Most of the respondents mentioned that they have more self-confident. As mentioned by one respondent *“during the self-introduction in the meeting, I feel proud and confident when I’m able to say that I live in Samui island.”*

(female, officer worker, 30 years old)

Experiential

The respondents were asked question about their overall experience perceived from Samui island as a tourist destination. Two main group of respondents share different idea as one group from a majority of ten respondents stated that the overall experience with Samui was good which perceived to be in a positive way. One respondent said *“My home (Samui) is perfectly rich with sightseeing and activities to do, clear white beach, and a relaxing environment.”*

(female, restaurant owner, 29 years old)

Another group of respondent shared a distinct opinion stated that Samui island doesn’t provide a good experience with them which perceived to be in negative way

One respondents mentioned *“When talking about Samui’s beach, I prefer the previous version of beach as these days it changed a lot. Trashes are everywhere and the water is not that clear just like before.”*

(male, seller, 36 years old)

The respondents further asked about what aspect they perceived better than other tourist destination. A group of respondent mentioned that Samui island still have traditional culture, a feeling of countryside and give a feeling of calm. One respondents mentioned *“The ambiance of Samui's ancient town and a taste of the island's more traditional way of life can still be found here. This is often regarded as Samui's signature allure.”*

(male, local travel blogger, 34 years old)

4.2.1.3 Attitudes

In this section, the respondents were asked questions about their attitudes towards the image of Samui island. This part includes cognitive, knowledge and believe about the brand, Affective involves emotions and feelings, and Conation related to tendency for an action.

Cognitive

Two group of respondents shared different idea, one group believed that their overall experience with the destination was good One respondent said *“The sea is still*

beautiful and clear. The people around there are friendly. I have seen a lot of improvement including sign and symbols.”

(female, unemployed, 24 years old)

Another group of respondents explained that their overall experience with the destination was not good for several reason. From pollution and waste to maintenance of destination. One respondents mentioned *“Samui’s beach is not as beautiful as before. I feel that the marine ecosystem is changing. Previously, when I walk to the beach small fish and sea creatures can be seen but now nothing can be found.”*

(female, business owner, 43 years old)

Also, another respondent shared *“Some places were left unattended. There are many news stories nowadays that see tourists suffer in an accident in the destination of Samui. We should not just focus on promote but rather improve the destination as well.”*

(male, business owner, 25 years old)

Affective

The responders were asked to explain their emotions and feelings. This allows the researcher to discover how local stakeholders convey their emotions while discussing Samui Island as a tourism destination. Most of the respondents shared a common feeling as they think that they feel relaxing, warm, chilling, alive. One

respondent stated *“Tourist attractions on Samui Island are like home. Going to each attraction gives a warm, comfort and relaxation.”*

(male, officer worker, 27 years old)

Conative

Most of the respondents agreed that even Samui island is changing they still want to live here. As mentioned by one respondents *“This is my home, and there is no reason to leave, even if things change, I still want to live here all of my life.”*

(female, restaurant owner, 35 years old)

However, one respondent shared different perspective as she mentioned that Samui island rather be the same. She shared *“Maintaining the traditional image of Samui is better than changing as we have this aspect as our strength that makes us different from other destinations.”*

(male, seller, 36 years old)

The researcher further asked about the respondent’s opinion on how Samui island as tourist destination can be more appealing. They have mentioned there will need to be more connection between different stakeholders. One respondent said *“We should encourage people in the community to work together. Maybe because during COVID-19, people are discouraged. We should create more encouragement for them to stand up and work together since we have cultural destination as one of the driving*

force of tourism.”

(male, business owner, 25 years old)

Also a respondent mentioned that *“We should promote Samui's image from other perspectives that other people wouldn't expect. There are lots of time where my friends were asking that does Samui really have café on the big mountain? Since normally people always perceived Samui as a destination for beach.*

(female, unemployed, 24 years old)

Another respondent also discussed about the promotion of Samui island mentioned that *“I mostly perceived the promotion of Samui via travel platform, not from official or authority/organization related to tourism promotion, If we could promote both channel, people can widely see the promotion and wanted to visit the island more”*

(male, officer worker, 27 years old)

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4.2.2 Features of the associations

4.2.2.1 Favorability

The respondents shared the variety aspects of the destination as what they like when it comes to Samui Island tourist destination from people to atmosphere. One respondent said *“I get to talk with stranger every time when I visit the destination, the surrounding atmosphere of tourist attractions, see the dog walking. These really make me feel happy.”*

(male, officer worker, 27 years old)

another respondent also mentioned *“Visiting the destination from different periods of time gave me different feelings and emotion, even I live here for so long, I never feel bored”*

(female, Seller, 45 years old)

4.2.2.2 Strength

The respondents were asked on what they perceived to be the strength of Samui Island when it comes to tourist destination. Six out of fifteen respondents mentioned that calm and peace of the destination is considered to be the strength of Samui island. One respondent mentioned that *“The fact that Samui is an expensive tourist destination causing not many people to travel here might be the reason why this island looks peaceful, calm and perfect for the real vacation.”*

(female, office worker, 30 years old)

Also, four out of fifteen respondents mentioned that variety and diversity of Samui island considered to be the strength of the island. One respondent mentioned that *“Even we are smaller than Phuket, but we have everything. Living in Samui I can enjoy so much activity in a day from natural sightseeing to water sport activity”*

(male, officer worker, 27 years old)

4.2.2.3 Uniqueness

The respondents were asked on what they perceived to be the uniqueness of Samui Island when it comes to tourist destination. ten out of fifteen respondents mentioned that Samui island has a lots of wonderful beaches and each has its own personality. As mentioned by one respondents *“The beaches of Samui are vary, even me, myself haven’t been to all of the beaches yet”*

(female, restaurant owner, 29 years old)

Also, when asking about nature of Samui island. The respondents mentioned *“On Samui island, the original nature may still be found. Because the island's terrain is dominated by mountains and hills. Previously, it is famous among foreign visitors but nowadays, but Thai visitor as well nowadays”*

(male, taxi driver, 36 years old)

For cultural tourist destination. The respondent also mentioned *“The cultural landmark of Samui is Big Buddha. It doesn't just show that Samui is outstanding in culture. But it shows how nature and culture coexist seamlessly.”*

(male, local travel blogger, 34 years old)

Figure 4.2: the summary of the findings based on Keller (1993) concept of image.

| Dimensions | Sub-dimensions | Respondent's Answers |
|------------|---------------------|---|
| Attributes | Product related | "Beach"; "Nature"; "Cultural tourist destination"; "Hinta-Hinyai"; "island of the coconut"; "Beaches of Samui are vary and each of them has different name and signature"; "Samui's natural attractions is as beautiful as northern part of Thailand"; "People who come to Samui keep asking why Samui island has so many coconut trees" |
| | Non-Product related | "friendly"; "lively"; "mixed"; "complicated"; "easy going"; "Samui seems to be approachable. With various tourist attractions, kind people, delicious foods"; "Samui changed a lot and it always unpredictable"; "Samui is a suitable island for everyone"; "price are middle to high"; "price are too high"; "the cost of living on the island is a bit more than the mainland"; "everything is expensive on the Island" |
| Benefits | Functional | "calm"; "relaxation"; "happiness"; "I always come away with a sense of calm and an increased ability to focus my attention"; "I always feel joyful, happy and inspired to work again" |
| | Symbolic | "proud and distinguished from other people"; "more self-confident"; "I feel proud and confident when I'm able to say that I live in Samui island"; "My friends always jealous of me when they know that I'm living in the tourism destination of Samui island." |
| | Experiential | "positive overall experience"; "negative overall experience"; "I prefer the previous version of beach as these days it changed a lot"; "Trashes are everywhere and the water is not that clear just like before"; "My home (Samui) is perfectly rich with sightseeing and activities to do" |
| Attitudes | Cognitive | "The sea is still beautiful and clear"; "The people around there are friendly"; "I have seen a lot of improvement including sign and symbols"; "Samui's beach is not as beautiful as before"; "I feel that the marine ecosystem is changing"; "Some places were left unattended"; "There are many news stories nowadays that see tourists suffer in an accident in the destination of Samui" |
| | Affective | "relaxing"; "warm"; "chilling"; "alive"; "This is my home"; "Tourist attractions on Samui Island are like home. Going to each attraction gives a warm, comfort and relaxation." |
| | Conative | "This is my home"; "there is no reason to leave"; "even if things change, I still want to live here all of my life"; "Maintaining the traditional image of Samui is better than changing" |

4.3 Additional questions on perceived sustainable tourism image of Samui island as a tourist destination.

In this section, the respondents also described their additional thoughts/perceptions towards the sustainable tourism image of Samui island as a tourist destination. The finding may be useful for those authorities/marketers who can adapt/develop their communication plan in order to promote Samui island's image in a more sustainable way.

Samui island as a sustainable tourism destination

All of the respondents were described that they understand the meaning of sustainable tourism. Three group of respondents share different idea.

The first group, includes the respondents who work as business owners, restaurant owners, local travel blogger, and officer worker, mentioned that they perceived Samui island as a sustainable tourism destination. One respondent mentioned that *“I have seen a lot of campaign and activity promoting the sustainable tourism these day for instance “Gin Yu Doo Mui” as they aim to promote the tradition and culture of Samui through the different activity”*

(female, restaurant owner, 35 years old)

Also, one respondent mentioned that *“a lot of businesses and hotels are becoming more concern about environmental issues as they provide the eco optional for their customers”*

(male, business owner, 25 years old)

However, the majority of respondents from nine out of fifteen respondents believed that Samui island still need a lot more modification as they don't see the island as sustainable tourism One respondent stated that *“I feel like there were too much promotion over certain places. Many areas of Samui island have been abandoned. Tourists congregate in one spot only for outstanding attractions.”*

(male, office worker, 27 years old)

Last group of the respondents mentioned that they see no change to sustainable tourism destination of Samui island. One respondent mentioned that “*I feel that tourist attractions are still the same didn't change anything.*”

(female, unemployed, 24 years old)

Recommendations to develop a more sustainable tourism destination

Most of the respondents mentioned that people on the island need more collaboration in order to drive the sustainable tourism promotion. One respondent stated “The business owner, especially nowadays are foreign investors, they shouldn’t consider themselves as stand-alone business that care only about their own business but they should contribute to the community to develop sustainable tourism on a large scale.”

(female, officer worker, 30 years old)

Another group of respondents mentioned the focus on maintaining and developing some destinations to be more sustainable. “Many tourism organizations started to pay attention to environmental and animal protection. To build sustainable tourism and have a beneficial impact on long-term tourism, we need alter our business model to meet the expectations of contemporary visitors.”

(male, local travel blogger, 34 years old)

Also, one respondents said that Samui island need to develop the OTOP of Samui in a more sustainable way. “OTOP items in Samui seem to be out of vogue at the moment. We must devise a strategy for product development and processing. Not only to assist revive community activities, but also to improve Samui's reputation as a sustainable island for instance, we reformatting local products in a new way”

(male, business owner, 25 years old)



CHAPTER 5

Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, we will go through the summary, as well as the discussion, to further emphasize the actual significance of this research. To begin, a summary will be presented in accordance with the findings. Secondly, a discussion of the perceived image of Samui island from local stakeholders will be provided followed by the concepts of the perceived image. Then the limitations, directions for future study, and practical implications will be discussed accordingly.

5.1 Summary

The in-depth interviews were conducted with fifteen respondents. The respondents are from local stakeholders of Samui Island who live and work in Samui including sellers, business owners, taxi drivers, restaurant owners, officer works, unemployed and local travel blogger. Those who were selected are ensure that they live and work in Samui island for more than 10 years. In terms of gender, a total of eight respondents are female while another seven respondents are male. The age ranging from 24 to 45 years old. The summary will incorporate two parts which are perceived image of Samui island and perceived sustainable tourism of Samui island.

5.1.1 Perceived Image

This sector comprises Keller's (1993) image concept which are type of brand associations (Attributes, Benefits, Attitudes) and Features of associations (Favorability, Strength, Uniqueness)

Attributes

Product related

All of the respondents perceived beach as captioned their first impression when asking about Samui island as a tourist destination. They also mentioned that beaches of Samui each have their own distinct uniqueness. Another five respondents also shared that they perceived nature as Samui island provide mountains and hills.

Another group of respondents mentioned “big Buddha” or known for cultural tourist destination as stated that it is the must visit when going to Samui.

“Hinta-Hinyai” is perceived to be the signature of Samui island by most of the respondents also they mentioned “island of the coconut” which lots of their friends keep asking about it.

Non-product related

The respondents perceived Samui’s personality in various aspects. Most of the respondents mentioned that they perceived Samui as having “friendly” personality.

With various reasons gather together from people, food to lots of tourist attractions make Samui more approachable for everyone. Also some respondents mentioned “lively” “mixed” “complicated” and “easy going” personality.

Two groups of respondents share different idea when it comes to price of Samui Island. The majority of respondents from nine out of fifteen believe that price of Samui island is considered “very high” due to its geographical location that is not adjacent to the mainland. Another group of the respondent mentioned “middle to high” price of Samui island.

Benefits

Functional

Most of the respondents from twelve out of fifteen perceived tourist destination of Samui as giving the sense of “relaxation” and “Calm” when they visit the destination also some of the respondents also shared “happiness” since they have more inspired to work again.

Symbolic

Everyone who participated in an in-depth interview shared the opinion that they think they are unique and deserving of respect. One respondent shared that she has more self-confident when introducing herself in public.

Experiential

Two groups of the respondents were separately discussed as they both perceived differently. The first group with majority of ten respondents perceived overall Samui experience was good as one mentioned that Samui island is like his home.

Another group of respondents seems to get a negative image as they stated that they perceived a bad experience with Samui's tourist destination. The concerns are more likely to focus on the environment including trash that affects their own perceived image. However, when the researchers asked about what aspect that Samui has better than other tourist destination, a group of the respondents mentioned "traditional culture" as Samui still maintain its own tradition way of life.

Attitudes

Cognitive

Two group of respondents shared different opinion from what they perceived in terms of their belief and knowledge about the brand. One group mentioned that they perceived a good experience with the destination from seeing the development of destination including the symbol and sign also the people's expression around. However, another group of respondents showed a bad perception as mentioned that the marine ecosystem has been changed, a number of locations were overlooked, which contributed to the ensuing tourist disaster.

Affective

The respondents shared different attitudes related to their feeling and emotion towards tourist destination of Samui island. They mentioned “Relaxing” “Warm” “Chilling” “Alive” as mentioned by one respondents that they feel comfortable going to different tourist attraction in Samui island.

Conative

The researcher asked about the respondent’s tendency for an action. Most every respondent mentioned that Samui island represented as their home and whatever happen, they are not going to leave here. However, one respondent mentioned that they prefer the same version of Samui with full of traditional as perceived to be the strength of the island.

To make Samui become more appealing, the researcher captured three important issues mentioned by respondents. Firstly, Samui island needs more connections between different stakeholders. Not only from one side but also to encourage the local community as well. Secondly, we need to promote Samui's image from a variety of viewpoints that other people wouldn't anticipate. Thirdly, the promotion of Samui's image needs to be improved. The focus should put more on promoting via various channels especially from authorities and organizations related to the tourism promotion of Samui island.

Features of associations

Favorability

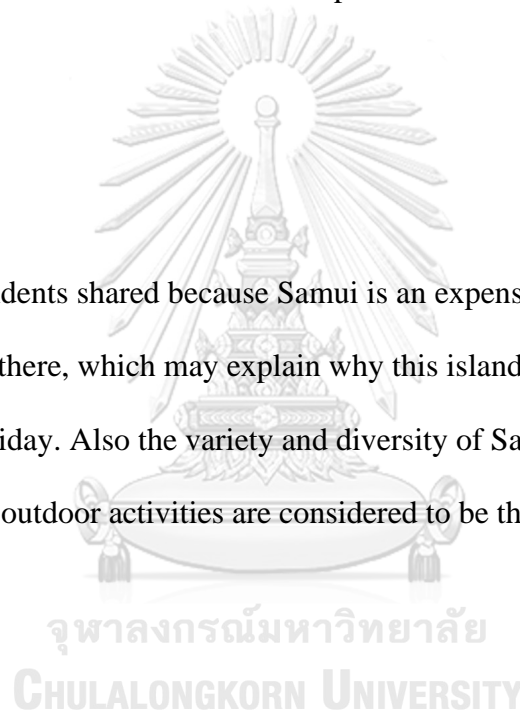
The researcher was able to gather from the responses of the respondents that not only did they describe things that were directly linked to the tourist destination, but also the surrounding factors that made the place become more appealing and intriguing as they mentioned about different period of time when visiting destination.

Strength

The respondents shared because Samui is an expensive tourist destination, not many people visit there, which may explain why this island seems peaceful, calm, and ideal for a true holiday. Also the variety and diversity of Samui island from natural sightseeing and to outdoor activities are considered to be the strength of the island.

Uniqueness

Most of the respondents perceived beaches of Samui as the uniqueness of the destination with various beautiful beaches within the island. Followed by nature of Samui since the island has many mountains and hills and it's now becoming more famous for both foreigner and Thais. Last but not least, the traditional tourist destination of Big Buddha is perceived to be the uniqueness of Samui island.



5.1.2 Perceived Sustainable tourism image of Samui island as a tourist destination

Samui island as a sustainable tourism destination

All of the respondents were described that they understand the meaning of sustainable tourism. The researcher has captured three different groups of respondents. The first set of respondents, who work as company owners, restaurant owners, local travel bloggers, and officers, said that they saw Samui as a sustainable tourist destination. They perceived lots of promotional campaigns of sustainable tourism on the island and also the drive from the business and hotel industry.

The majority of respondents (9 out of 15) stated that Samui island still needed a lot more change since they don't consider the island as sustainable tourism due to too much commercialization over particular spots. Many parts of the island of Samui have been abandoned. Tourists concentrate in one location only for exceptional attractions." However, there is a group of respondents that mentioned that they didn't see any changes to sustainable tourism destination of Samui island.

Recommendation to develop a more sustainable tourism destination

The researcher gleaned three major themes from the responses of the respondents. To begin, they highlighted cooperation between various stakeholders as well as encouraging prospective drivers from various enterprises on the island to join

in the activity of promoting and strengthening the sustainable tourism image of Samui island. The conservation of the nature of the island and its inhabitants, including animals, and wildlife was the subject of the second topic. The last theme is to come up with a plan for the production and development of the product for OTOP. Not just to aid in the revitalization of community activities, but also to enhance Samui's reputation as an island that practices sustainable island destination.

5.2 Discussions

To answer the first objective of 'to explore the perceived image of Samui island from local stakeholders.' The researcher identifies three dimensions based on Keller's (1993) concept of image involves in brand associations including types of associations (Attributes, Benefits, Attitudes).

The attributes for product related, All of the respondents perceived beach followed by nature, and big Buddha or known for cultural tourist destination. While Hinta-Hinyai and island of the coconut are perceived to be the signature of Samui. This is due to the fact that they understood the location from what was conveyed from their mind and memory which connected to Keller (1998) which explains that perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations stored in consumers' memory".

The attributes for non-product related, from the research findings, the respondents developed various personality of Samui island from "Friendly" "Lively"

“Mixed” “Complicated” “Easy going”. This indicated that different people perceived different image of destination as per their own experience and attitudes. This also consistent with the study from Snyder et al. (2015) which explains that perception is framed as an inferential process whereby previous experience is combined with current sensory information. In terms of price, two main group of the respondents share different opinion as one group perceived that the price is “middle to high” and another group perceived “very high” The result are consistent with the previous study by Also, Keller (1993) claims that price is one of the factors that show what a client feels the product or service is or has, as well as the costs associated in purchasing or consuming it.

The Benefits

Various senses of the emotion of respondents from visiting the destination underlying specific motivation as the desire for problem removal just like as respondents said they have more inspiration to work again. People who mostly perceived positive image may affect and build their positive motivation.

All of the respondents agreed that living on the island makes them feel different from others and increases their confidence these shown that they have a need of social approval and self-esteem.

Attitudes

When asking the respondents about their attitudes about the overall image of the destination. The two groups of respondents perceived separately. However, those who perceived good image of a particular action or product lead to good attitude about the brand as they mentioned that the beach destination is clear and beautiful, but those who perceived bad image of a particular action or product may lead to a good attitude about the brand. As one mentioned that she think the beach are full of trash. This linked with the study from Schiffman and Kanuk (2000) mentioned that an attitude is a learned predisposition to behave in a consistently favorable or unfavorable way with respect to a given object.

The research finding also indicates that respondents share various emotion and feeling and each one express differently. Similar to the research by Berlin and Martin, 2004 which indicates that people from various backgrounds perceive place in quite different ways. As a result, personal circumstances have a greater impact on the emotional component of an image. Motivations, for example, are intimately related to feelings evoked in a certain location. And, since the emotional component of an image may impact the total picture, motivation can as well.

The researcher captured three important suggestions by the respondents on how samui island can be more appealing. Firstly, the connection between stakeholders Secondly, various image perception promotion should be highlighted. Thirdly, they suggest that the promotion of Samui's image should come from various channels.

Additional information gathered from the respondents when asking about their perceived sustainable tourism image of Samui island as a tourist destination. The findings, all stakeholders were being aware of what's the meaning of sustainable tourism. However, not all stakeholders are aware of sustainable tourism promotion. to achieve the goal, all stakeholders from both private sectors and public sectors need a common understanding, they must be able to acknowledge the goals and objectives of promoting sustainability. Both private and public sectors need to push themselves. For public sectors, it is necessary to increase public relations to ensure that the private sector, including people from all area, can access important resources for sustainable tourism development through a variety of media channel.

Suggestions have been made from the respondents which include three main ideas. Firstly, connectivity and cooperation from all local stakeholders because this is an activity that does not affect any individual, but all. All benefits can be achieved by working together. This is connected to the previous study that a tourism business that is aware of the stakeholders' perspectives towards the improving tourism management is the model of sustainable tourism management (Yodsuwan & Butcher, 2012). To jointly improve and develop sustainable tourism to be accessible and create a new image for tourists to perceive. This also linked with the suggestion by UNTWO that sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all important stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process that needs ongoing monitoring of effects and the implementation of required preventative and/or corrective actions as needed (UNTWO, 2005).

Secondly, Conservation of nature and protection of wildlife. The tourism business has a negative impact on the environment due to its resource consumption, pollution, waste production, the construction of tourist-related buildings and infrastructure, and travel-related activities. The respondents mentioned that we all need to alter our business model to meet the expectations of contemporary visitors. The results are consistent with the previous article by UNTWO that suggested the opportunities for tourism to encourage further economic expansion while protecting and enhancing island communities and their natural ecosystems by promoting and protection of natural resources (UNWTO, 2014).

Thirdly, Production and Development for OTOP product of Samui in a more sustainable way. A plan for product development and processing must be created. For example, we reformatted local goods in a fresh manner to help reinvigorate community activities and enhance Samui's image as a sustainable island. As this also suggested by UNTWO which involve in sustainable tourism development guideline that we should conserve our built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance also make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity (UNWTO, 2005)

5.3 Limitations

It is impossible to get beyond these constraints, no matter how hard the researcher tries to mitigate their impact on the study. The people who participated in this research is one of the limitations that need to be considered in this research. Firstly, the researcher engaged in an in-depth and thoughtful conversation with each of the fifteen people who joined the interview. The information that was acquired from fifteen respondents cannot guarantee to reflect the whole population's overall perception of how Samui Island is perceived.

Secondly, the researcher discovered some error after all of the data are collected. There are two missing points which future research need to be noted. These dimension are feeling and experience.

Thirdly, all of the interviews were conducted only just a group of local not even the total group of local. We made a conscious decision to conduct our interviews only with people who were engaged in the private sector to avoid any bias regarding the image of Samui island, this included sellers, restaurant owners, taxi drivers, office workers, and local travel bloggers. As a result, the viewpoint of local stakeholders of public sectors who work in the area of governmental related and tourist associations related will not be included into this.

Fourthly, this research only considers the image as it is seen from the point of view of the local stakeholders. It does not take into account the viewpoint of the

recipient, or travelers who may have a distinct impression of Samui island based on their own experience.

5.4 Direction for Future Research

Future researchers are strongly urged to obtain more information to better understand the perceptions of stakeholders with regard to a variety of issues in order to further extend and improve upon this study.

Firstly, according to the results of the study, people of all ages and professions had diverse perspectives on how sustainable tourism industry on Samui island is perceived. The researcher advised that future study may narrow its down by concentrating on a particular age range or set of vocations in order to gather further information from a wider variety of respondents for instance it is encouraged to do further research on various age groups in order to investigate baby boomers in greater detail to find out what they think about Samui since they may give more insight into the destination. Moreover, the future researchers could expand this research by conduct the research using quantitative approach or mixed method, such as survey in order to explore the relationship between different variables that might be overlooked by the research technique.

Secondly, in order to make sure the public and private sectors are pulling in the same direction, it is possible that future research may collect data from local

stakeholders to determine whether or not they share the same perspective of Samui island image. There is a lot to think about in order to incorporate sustainable tourism in the right way, from the rules and regulations to the people who live there and the demand from tourists. As a consequence of this, it is of the utmost importance to take into consideration the concept of sustainable tourism from the point of view of both the tourist operator and the individual tourist. Every cog in the machine plays an important role in determining whether or not sustainable tourism will be successful.

Thirdly, the researcher may further study the perceived image from other topics related to Samui island, such as technology island and safety island. Also, in the future, researchers may learn how to set themselves apart from the competition and create a lasting impression on the visitors by comparing the findings of their studies to the public's assessment of images from other tourism destinations.

Fourthly, it is advised that more research be conducted on the image of Samui island as a sustainable tourist destination. As was mentioned, the researchers proceeded to ask more questions on the perceived sustainable tourism image of Samui island. However, we were only able to detect a preliminary answer from the respondents to these questions. This study has the potential to serve as a foundation for additional investigation into problems concerning the audience opinion of what constitutes sustainable tourism. to have a better grasp on the concept, including the opinions held by various stakeholders towards the intended goal.

5.5 Practical Implications

The findings of this study have potential applications in the fields of marketing and communication for tourism authorities and related fields. In order to improve or cultivate Samui Island's reputation so as to entice a greater number of travelers, this change is being made. Particularly the present set of visitors who are thinking in engaging in ecotourism more often. When deciding on a vacation, people are becoming more caution (Surachet, 2020). People may find this research useful are including the administration and developer of the tourist industry in Samui Island. Governmental organizations participating in the tourist industry, people who operate businesses in Samui island, also people those who work in marketing field.

Local stakeholders from the private sector including the TAT or tourism authorities of Thailand - Samui Island are able to learn how the local community, or local stakeholders of Samui island perceived the image of the destination in order to execute their communication strategy to promote tourism destination toward new visitors and meet their expectations (Byrd, Bosley, & Dronberger, 2009).

The suggestion plan developed by UNWTO showed empirical evidence of how this research finding linked with how respondents' suggestions. Sustainable tourism development requires the informed involvement of all key stakeholders in order to encourage wide engagement and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continual process that requires regular monitoring of impacts as well as the execution of necessary preventive and/or corrective measures. Therefore, the

researcher suggested that the marketer/authorities should organize the communication platform within different stakeholders in order to share and spread the message for more collaboration support and as the information update platform.

The images seen by local stakeholders also demonstrate that they have diverse image perceptions from non-product related, such as the personality of Samui island, which respondents perceived as "Friendly," "Lively," "Mixed," "Complicated," and "Easy Going." As the way different kinds of stimuli's emotional properties are perceived seems to change amongst persons of different ages (Carstensen et al., 2011; Riediger & Raters, 2014). The marketer may implement their plan including different way of message to attract different group of the audiences. Preliminary survey is recommended as to ensure the message would convey right to the target audiences.

Price is also being discussed. Respondents are divided into two categories. The group that believes the price is moderate to high, and the group that believes the price is too high. Authorities should consider that the cost of attractions that may generate new perceptions among visitors as well as to develop the sustainable living for both local and visitor who come to visit the island also help support the life of local people as well. However, the preliminary review is recommended as people may perceived price differently and each have their own measurement.

In terms of professions condition, the results from this study also indicated that among respondents whose occupations concerned; business owners, restaurant

owners, local travel blogger, and officer worker, are well-aware of environmental concerns as one respondent mentioned "I actually found trashes everywhere, but mostly near famous tourist destination". Authorities may adjust plans to communicate more about the importance of preserving the environment to other local stakeholders. For instance, a new destination slogan boost aims to promote a more sustainable living of Samui Island. However, to ensure that the messages are accurately delivered to the targeted audience. Marketers should carry out a preliminary survey since customers from various regions can want to process information in different ways.

However, in terms of the image of a tourist attraction, it was discovered that local stakeholders, notably product related which is tourist destination, were seen in the same manner. "Beach" was the local stakeholders' first impression of Samui, followed by "nature of Samui island", and finally the "cultural tourist destination". These findings indicate that respondents perceived the same destination identity, The suggestion to the authorities that they should also promote multiple destination identities of the island in order to differentiate themselves from other tourist destinations.

There are a number of important benefits that may be gained by making a commitment to sustainable tourism, the most important of which are the following: helping the environment, providing economic benefits for the site, and providing support for the people that are located there as mentioned by one of the respondents. In addition to this, building sustainable tourism has the additional advantage of

providing sustainable mobility, which indicates that the activities may continue and are more future-proofed than they would be otherwise.

This study may also serve as a foundation for additional research into other tourist sites from the perspective of their respective communities. or for additional research into other concerns related to image perception in various situations of tourist destinations.



Appendix A

Question Guideline Perceived image of Samui Island from local stakeholders

Part I: Basic Information

1. Name and Surname
2. Sex
3. Age
4. Occupations /Profession

Part II: Perceived Image

1.Attributes

Product related

1. When you think of Samui Island as tourist destination, what come into your mind?
2. In your opinion, what is the signature of Samui Island in terms of tourist destination?

Non-product related

3. If Samui Island is a person, what kind of personality he/she is?
4. What do you think about the price of Samui island as tourist destination?

2.Benefits

Functional

5. What Samui island as tourist destination provide to you?

Symbolic

6. Do you proud of yourself living here in Samui island?
7. Do you see any value of yourself living here in Samui island?

Experiential

8. What is your overall experience with Samui island as tourist destination?
9. What aspect that Samui Island is better than other tourist destination in Thailand?

3. Attitudes

Cognitive

10. What do you think about the overall Samui island's tourist destination?

Affective

11. How do you feel when you are living in Samui island?

Conative

12. If Samui Island is changing, do you still want to live here?

13. How could Samui island be more appealing as tourist destination?

Features of the associations

Favorability

14. What do you like about Samui Island when it comes to tourist destination?

Strength

15. What do you think is considered to be the strength of Samui Island in terms of tourism destination?

Uniqueness

16. What do you think is considered to be the uniqueness of Samui Island in term of tourist destination?

Part III: Additional questions on perceived sustainable tourism image of Samui island as a tourist destination

17. Do you know the meaning of sustainable tourism?

18. Do you see Samui Island as a sustainable tourism destination?

19. Do you have any recommendation that we can promote about sustainable tourism of Samui Island?

Appendix B

แนวคำถาม

เรื่อง การรับรู้ภาพลักษณ์เกะสมุยของกลุ่มผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียในท้องถิ่น

ส่วนที่ I: ข้อมูลเบื้องต้น

1. ชื่อ และนามสกุล
2. เพศ
3. อายุ
4. อาชีพ

ส่วนที่ II: การรับรู้ภาพลักษณ์แหล่งท่องเที่ยว

1. ถ้าสมุยเป็นคน คุณคิดว่าเขาเป็นคนแบบไหน/มีบุคลิกอย่างไร?
2. เกะสมุยในเชิงแหล่งท่องเที่ยว ด้านราคาเป็นอย่างไร?
3. เมื่อนึกถึงสมุยในเชิงแหล่งท่องเที่ยว ทำให้คุณนึกถึงอะไร?
4. ในความคิดเห็นของคุณ อะไรคือจุดเด่นของเกะสมุยในเชิงแหล่งท่องเที่ยว?
5. เกะสมุยในเชิงแหล่งท่องเที่ยวให้อะไรกับตัวคุณบ้าง?
6. คุณภาคภูมิใจที่อยู่บนเกะสมุยหรือไม่ อย่างไร?
7. จากการอยู่อาศัยในเกะสมุยหรือไม่ ทำให้คุณเห็นคุณค่าอะไรในตัวเองหรือไม่ อย่างไร?
8. ในมุมมองของคุณ ประสพการณ์โดยรวมกับเกะสมุยในเชิงแหล่งท่องเที่ยวของคุณเป็นอย่างไร?
9. มีอะไรที่เกะสมุยดีกว่าหรือเหนือกว่าแหล่งท่องเที่ยวอื่นๆในประเทศไทย?
10. คุณคิดว่าภาพรวมของเกะสมุยเกี่ยวกับแหล่งท่องเที่ยวเป็นอย่างไร?
11. การอาศัยอยู่บนเกะสมุยให้ความรู้สึกอย่างไรกับตัวคุณ?

12. ถ้าสมัยเปลี่ยนแปลงไป คุณยังอยากอยู่ที่นี้หรือไม่?
13. ทำอย่างไรเกาะสมุยที่เป็นแหล่งท่องเที่ยวจึงจะน่าสนใจมากขึ้น?
14. คุณชอบอะไรบ้างเกี่ยวกับแหล่งท่องเที่ยวของเกาะสมุย?
15. คุณคิดว่าอะไรคือจุดแข็งของเกาะสมุยในเชิงแหล่งท่องเที่ยว?
16. คุณคิดว่าอะไรเป็นเอกลักษณ์ของเกาะสมุยในเชิงแหล่งท่องเที่ยว?

ส่วนที่ III: คำถามเพิ่มเติมเกี่ยวกับการรับรู้ภาพลักษณ์การท่องเที่ยวอย่างยั่งยืนของเกาะสมุย

17. คุณรู้จักคำว่าการท่องเที่ยวอย่างยั่งยืนหรือไม่?
18. คุณมองว่าเกาะสมุยเป็นแหล่งท่องเที่ยวที่ยั่งยืนหรือไม่?
19. คุณมีคำแนะนำเพิ่มเติมที่จะช่วยประชาสัมพันธ์ภาพลักษณ์ของเกาะสมุยเกี่ยวกับการท่องเที่ยวที่ยั่งยืน ได้อย่างไร?

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