

## บทความวิชาการ

### บททวนปัจจัยและบทบาทของภาวะวิกฤติทางการเมืองที่มีอิทธิผลต่อ ภาพลักษณ์ของแหล่งท่องเที่ยวสำหรับอุตสาหกรรมไมซ์

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#### บทคัดย่อ

ภาพลักษณ์ของแหล่งท่องเที่ยว นับว่าเป็นปัจจัยที่สำคัญต่อความสำเร็จ ของสถานที่ท่องเที่ยว เนื่องจากนักท่องเที่ยวมักตัดสินใจเลือกเดินทางไปยังสถานที่ ท่องเที่ยวใดจากความรู้สึก ความคิดเห็นที่มีสถานที่นั้นๆ ดังนั้น งานวิจัยการ ท่องเที่ยวที่เกี่ยวข้องกับภาพลักษณ์จะได้รับความสนใจอย่างต่อเนื่อง แต่อย่างไร ก็ตาม งานวิจัยที่ผ่านมามักเน้นศึกษาการท่องเที่ยวเพื่อความเพลิดเพลินและการ พักผ่อน และมีเพียงจำนวนน้อยที่ให้ความสำคัญต่อการศึกษาภาพลักษณ์และปัจจัย ที่มีผลต่อการสร้างภาพลักษณ์ของสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวที่เน้นการท่องเที่ยวเชิงธุรกิจ โดยเฉพาะการท่องเที่ยวสำหรับการจัดประชุม การท่องเที่ยวเชิงร้างวัล ประชุมสัมมนาและการจัดนิทรรศการ (ไมซ์) ดังนั้น วัตถุประสงค์หลักของบทความ วิชาการ เน้นศึกษาปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิผลต่อภาพลักษณ์ของแหล่งการท่องเที่ยวสำหรับ อุตสาหกรรมไมซ์และบทบาทของภาวะวิกฤติทางการเมืองต่อการสร้างภาพลักษณ์ ของแหล่งท่องเที่ยวสำหรับอุตสาหกรรมไมซ์ จากการทบทวนงานวรรณกรรมที่ เกี่ยวข้อง ปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลต่อภาพลักษณ์ของแหล่งท่องเที่ยวนั้น ประกอบด้วย ปัจจัยหลายประการ อาทิ ลักษณะของปัจเจกบุคคล (เพศ อายุ ระดับการศึกษาและ สถานภาพทางสังคม) ข้อมูลข่าวสาร และประสบการณ์ในการท่องเที่ยว แต่อย่างไรก็

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ตาม สืบเนื่องจากลักษณะเฉพาะของอุตสาหกรรมไม้รากที่ให้ความสำคัญต่อความ  
ปลอดภัยของสถานที่จัดงาน ในลำดับต้นๆ ผนวกกับงานวิจัยที่ผ่านมาได้สะท้อนถึง  
ความสำคัญของสถานการณ์ทางการเมืองที่มีต่อภาพลักษณ์ด้านความปลอดภัย  
ของประเทศ ดังนั้น ผู้เขียนได้นำเสนอกรอบความคิดทางวิจัยที่ระบุถึงปัจจัยที่สำคัญ  
ต่อภาพลักษณ์ของแหล่งท่องเที่ยวสำหรับอุตสาหกรรมไม้รากที่มีประโยชน์ต่องานวิจัย  
ที่เกี่ยวข้อง

**คำสำคัญ:** ภาพลักษณ์ของแหล่งท่องเที่ยว, ปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพล ภาวะวิกฤติทาง  
การเมือง, อุตสาหกรรมไม้ราก

## REVIEW ARTICLE

### A review of antecedents and the roles of political crisis influencing the formation of destination image of Meeting, Incentive, Convention and Exhibition Industry (MICE)

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#### Abstract

Destination image, or the impressions a person holds about a place is widely recognized as the most important factor in ensuring long term viability of any tourist destination. Image can exercise great influence on the consumer decision-making process in many ways. According to the literature of leisure tourism perspective, destination image has been an area of strong interest based on numerous studies that have been carried out proving to be a well-established area of studies. However, very few studies have shed light on other areas of tourism, particularly meeting, incentive, convention, and exhibition market (MICE). Hence, the current paper aims to review past literature pertaining to destination image and the antecedents to its formation with its focus on business tourism perspective, namely MICE market. Based on the reviews, personal factors (gender, age, level of education and social class), external information sources (organic and induced sources of information), and previous experience visiting the destination were identified as influential factors in forming an image of a destination. The unique features

of MICE market have been highly sensitive to safety and security concern; specifically the role of political crisis on the destination image formation should be further elaborated. The paper concludes by proposing a generic framework of antecedents of destination image for MICE destination.

**Keywords:** Destination Image, Antecedent, Political Crisis, MICE Industry

## Introduction

Thailand is now known as one of the top tourist destinations for both leisure tourism and business tourism (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau or TCEB, 2010). Thailand has become the emerging destination for business tourism, namely meeting, incentive, convention and exhibition (MICE) market with great potential to be one of the leaders in the Asia Pacific region. Although Thailand may have many positive attributes that help rank the country as the world's leading MICE destination, there are obstacles that have impeded its success, particularly negative images of the country as a consequence of the continuing political crisis within the country (Vimolsiri, 2010; Custom Asia, 2008; Tansuwannarat, 2009).

The effect of crisis on destination image and level of confidence tourists have about a particular destination are likely to be greater among MICE visitors due to the market's sensitivity and vulnerability to crisis than other sectors of tourism industry (Campiranon, 2006). Hence, to guarantee the success of Thailand as a MICE destination, relevant destination organizations such as TCEB need to effectively deal with destination image problems, and also realise that there are factors affecting the formation of destination images (Avraham, 2004). Thus, it is the objective of this paper to identify factors that could have adverse effects on the formation of destination image of Thailand as a MICE destination, and to explore the roles of political-related crisis on destination image formation.

## Destination Image: Definitions

Destination image has also been the subject of much attention in tourism literature (Pike 2002). Despite the continual interest in the issue, there is yet to be a single universally accepted definition of destination image. One of the first definitions was proposed by Hunt (1971 cited in Gallarza, Saura and Garcia, 2002), the image is conceptualised as the impressions that a person holds about a place. Later, a more widely cited definition was by Gartner (1996, p. 457) who defined the destination image as “three distinctively different but hierarchical interrelated components: cognitive, affective and conative. Cognitive component is conceptualized as the sum of beliefs and attitudes of the destination attributes, while the affective component is related to the feelings and values an individual places on destination based on travel benefits or motives for which they seek (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). In relation to the conative component, it refers to the action and decision of an individual of whether or not to travel to a particular destination (Gartner, 1996). In sum, destination images are commonly defined as individual tourists’ feelings, expressions, beliefs and attitude towards the particular destination. Hence, majority of the past studies have focused on these dimensions when measuring destination images and these are further elaborated in the following section.

### Measures of destination image

Based on the review of past studies on the destination image by Pike (2002) one of the common methodologies used in the examining destination image is a structured methodology. Examples of common destination attributes often used in the destination image studies are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1 Dimensions/Attributes determining the perceived destination image**

Natural resources	General infrastructure	Tourist infrastructure
Weather	Development and	Hotel and self-catering
Beaches	quality of roads,	accommodation
Flora and fauna	airports, ports and private	Restaurant Bars and discotheques
	Development of health services, commercial and telecommunication,	Ease of access Excursions
	infrastructures	
Tourist leisure	Culture, history and art	Political and economic
Theme parks	Museums and historical	Political stability
Entertainment and	buildings	Political tendencies
leisure activities	Folklore, Festivals,	Economic
Adventure activities	concerts	development
Night life	Handicraft	Safety and security
Shopping	Gastronomy Customs and ways of	Prices
	life	

Natural environment	Social environment	Atmosphere of the place
Beauty of the scenery	Hospitality and friendliness of the local residents	Luxurious
Attractiveness of the cities and towns	Underprivileged and poverty	Good reputation
Cleanliness	Quality of life	Family-oriented
Overcrowding	Language barriers	Exotic
Air and noise pollution		Stressful or relaxing
Traffic congestion		Fun, enjoyable or boring
		Attractive or interesting

Source: Beerli and Martin (2004, p.625)

Clearly, destination images do cover both tangible and intangible elements of the destination. Indeed, these elements play parts in tourist decision-making and positive image can lead to greater profitability and the sustainability of businesses (Klunklin, 2003). Also, many studies have emphasized on assessing the nature of the destination image which is to be explained in the below section.

### Importance and the dynamic nature of destination image

Destination image is one of the important factors in ensuring the long term viability since it can exercise great influence on consumer decision-making process in many ways (Beerli and Martin, 2004). For instance, prior to visiting the destination tourists are more likely to choose a destination with strong, positive and recognisable images. In addition, perceived post-visit image can have great influence on the future intention to visit the destination both in positive and negative ways (Avraham, 2004). However, it is extremely difficult for tourists, particularly those with limited experiences and knowledge about a particular destination to make a decision as they may find it difficult to acquire objective measures on the important destination attributes as tourism products cannot be tried before one actually visits the destination (Ryan and Gu, 2008). For this reason, the image of a destination will take holistic position in the evaluation process of a tourism product, irrespective of whether or not those images are “true representations of what tourist destination has to offer” (Um and Crompton, 1990, p. 433).

Destination images are subject to change and influenced by many sources, both external information sources and internal/personal factors (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Um and Crompton, 1990; Gartner, 1993; Selby and Morgan, 1996). Information sources are one of the most mentioned in tourism literature as the influential factor in forming an image of a destination. For example, Gunn (1988, p. 4) suggested that two stages of images – organic and induced images are evolved and influenced by two different information sources. An organic image is the result of exposure to

materials such as newspapers, periodicals and books. This then evolves into induced image that is influenced by promotional materials such as advertising, magazines, guidebooks, travel brochures and etc. (Gunn, 1988). In addition, Gartner (1993) also identified information received from friends and relatives as another and highly credible source of information that people obtain before forming their own perception, beliefs and feelings towards a destination.

In addition, previous travel experience at a destination, amount of time in a destination and number of visits also have roles in shaping their perceptions and beliefs towards a destination image (Gartner, 1996; Um and Crompton, 1990). For example, when assessing the image of Korea, Chon (1991) found images to differ between pre-visitors and post-visitors as post-visitors tended to have a more positive view of the image of the country than pre-visitors.

Personal/internal factors also play an important role in facilitating the formation of a destination image. These include such factors as motives, values and personality. Particularly, motivation is highly related to the image of a destination and can determine the image of a destination prior and after the actual visitation (Mill and Morrison, 1992). According to Beerli and Martin (2004), destination image is also related to such socio-demographic profiles as gender, age, level of education and social class.

Based on the preceding discussion, one proposition can be derived which is

*Proposition 1: Perceived destination image is affected by personal factors (gender, age, level of education and social class), external information sources, and previous experiences visiting the destination.*

### **Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition (MICE) and its development in Thailand**

Based on the distinction of tourists as defined by World Tourism Organisation (2000 cited in Rogers, 2003), they are those who travel for leisure purpose and those who travel for professional reasons. The former are known as leisure tourist and the latter refers to business travellers. The Convention Industry Council (2011) produced the International Meetings Industry Glossary for terms commonly used in the meeting and convention market as well as various types of meetings. Thus, MICE market is clearly a sub-segment of business tourism of the tourism industry. However, the market is not purely for business purposes as it incorporates both business and leisure elements (Rogers, 2003). This is because although its main chief activity is business such as attending meetings, seminars, conferences, and conventions, delegates/participants to the meetings may engage in many leisure activities prior to and post business activity such as sightseeing and visiting local tourist attractions. This is also coupled with the fact that meeting delegates often travel with accompanying persons during their business trips

to attend meetings. They may prolong their trips so as to allow them more time to visit the destination.

The acronym 'MICE' is used to refer to business tourism with the first element, meetings. McCabe et al (2000) proposed four categories of meetings: corporate meetings, association meetings, government and intergovernmental meetings, and common interest meetings. An incentive is a reward from company to employee. Incentive programs begin with the structuring of a contest, by which entrants may win rewards, and culminate with the awarding of the prizes (Gilsdorf, 2009).

The next element is convention, or *an assembly of persons met for a common purpose* (Webster Dictionary 1980 cited in Weirich 1992). Convention Industry Council (2011) defines it as gathering of delegates, representatives, and members of a membership or industry organization convened for a common purpose. Conventions are usually larger than meetings and they are more like dual meetings which contain both business agenda and social interchange between attendees. Exhibitions refer to an event at which products, services or promotional materials are displayed to attendees visiting exhibits on the show floor (Convention Industry Council, 2011).

Over the past two decades, the MICE industry in Thailand has received much government support, and witnessed rapid growth in the supply side as well. Particularly, there has been a steadily increasing investment in the infrastructure for meeting and convention market (TCEB 2010). In addition, the country has already become one of the top thirty

countries for MICE business (International Congress and Convention Association or ICCA, 2009). Also, during 1999-2008, ICCA (2009) reported that Bangkok was one of the top five Asian cities in terms of the number of international meetings hosted. Thailand's meeting and incentive industry has gained popularity due to its strategic location at the heart of Asia (TCEB, 2009).

In Thailand, meeting and incentive have strong support from government sectors. Recognising the industry's potential economic benefits and responding to the increasing demand of the industry, TCEB was established and fully operational since 2004. TCEB acts like a marketing agency in charge of promotion and development of Thailand's MICE industry to compete with strong competition of the global MICE market (TICA, 2011).

### **Crisis and its effects on destination image**

Destination images are very dynamic and may be subject to change, particularly destination images measured at one point tend to differ after the occurrence of major incidents in the destinations (Avraham, 2004; Beirman, 2002; Kim and Morrison, 2005). On the positive side, mega events like Olympic Games and the World Cup can positively shape how people perceive the host destinations as a consequence of the extensive media coverage about the destination (Allen, O'Toole, Harris and McDonnell, 2008). Kim and Morrison (2005) also found empirical evidence that hosting a mega event like the 2002 World Cup led to a favorable tourists' perceptions towards South Korea. The study later concluded that an internationally significant event can change the image of a destination in a short period of time.

Nevertheless, the occurrence of unfavorable incidents or crisis in the destinations could lead to the formation of negative destination images (Kim and Morrison, 2005, Avraham, 2004; Beirman, 2002). Crisis has been defined differently by several authors. The word “crisis” is derived from the Greek word of ‘Krisis’ and defined as a decision or turning point (Laws et al., 2005). Regardless of how it is defined, crisis is believed to bring several negative impacts on those affected, for example disruption of operations, threatening customers and employees physically and mentally, and compromising an organization’s financial status and future viability (Kash & Darling, 1988; Okumus et al., 2005).

In general, crises can be classified as those internally and externally induced (Mogendorf, 2009; Lerbinger 1997). From tourism-related perspective, a crisis may include deteriorating destination’s physical conditions, on-going crime rate, and a high unemployment rate (Beirman, 2002). However, greater impact images of the destination tend to be negatively affected following such major crises like terrorist attacks, epidemics, assaults on tourists and natural disasters (Beirman, 2002; Avraham, 2004). Similarly, Ichinosawa (2006) argued that although direct impacts of any crisis may be more noticeable than non-direct (secondary), some secondary impacts like negative image can have more prolonged effects on the affected destination than direct impacts. An example of secondary impact is reputational disaster or the negative image portrayed and negative feeling associated with the area.

Among these crises, political crisis can cause longer and more far-reaching negative impacts on the marketing of any destination and the image of the destinations (Beirman, 2002). Unlike natural crisis, continued political problems in the destination tend to receive much more media attention than the cities would normally receive before the crisis, and the extensive media coverage of the situations could last for a long period. Consequently, these crises often result in considerable impacts on how people perceive the image of the destination. For example, the growth of tourism industry in Thailand has recently been impeded by numerous recent crises, particularly the political crises (Tansuwannarat, 2009).

In addition, the effects of crisis can extend beyond the locality where the crisis does actually occur (Steiner, 2007). In other words, previous research has found that when a crisis occurs in one country, tourist arrivals to the whole region may decline as tourists often form their risk perceptions of one area to the whole region. This effect is called 'neighboring effect' (Hollier, 1991). Media can also play an important role in intensifying the impact of neighboring effects as tourists rely heavily on information received. The information can shape the way people perceive the level of risks associated with the political unrest. For example, for the past 2 years, Phuket has been affected by the country's political instability even though many of these crises took place in Bangkok (Swangpunt and Jarumaneerat, 2010).

However, research has found that the effects of crisis on the destination may be short-lived when there are effective marketing and communication strategies (Hughes, 2008). The impacts of negative incidents

at a destination may be lessened among those tourists who visited the destination post-crisis (Hughes, 2008).

### Crisis and current development of MICE Industry in Thailand

For MICE market, safety and security of a destination is one of the most important factors in the site selection process, thus a destination that is perceived to be unstable and unsafe is clearly not considered as a viable destination choice. In other words, organizations may be reluctant to choose a location in a crisis-prone area where safety and security of delegates may be jeopardized (Campiranon, 2006; Roger, 2003).

Past research in MICE also confirmed the importance of safety and security in the destination selection process. Chiappa (2012) identified safety and security being one of the imperative factors when selecting a destination for MICE events. Similarly, business tourism destinations need to provide a suitable venue for the meeting, sufficient accommodation, attractions, good accessibility to the generating markets, efficient transport system within the destination, and most importantly a certain level of safety and security (Oppermann, 1996; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Crouch & Ritchie, 1998).

In fact, however Thailand's political conflicts which have caused considerable impact that almost wiped out the country's MICE industry. According to TCEB (2008), the number of MICE visitors was on a decline from 857,224 in 2007 to 727,723 in 2008 as a result of continued political conflicts in the country.

After the riots in Bangkok, the tourism industry in Bangkok was transformed from one of confidence to crisis. During the period of March-May 2010, there was extensive media exposure about the situations in Bangkok; some tended to magnify the situations and even falsely report that everywhere in Thailand was under siege. The image of the country was exacerbated by the action of governments in many tourist generating regions as their citizens were warned not to travel to Thailand after the riots in Bangkok (Reuters, 2010).

The effects of major political crisis on destination image formation are further supported by the study by Jarumaneerat and Promsivapallop (2012). At the post political crisis period, the study was conducted and the major findings pointed out that major recent crisis in Thailand play critical role in shaping the image of Thailand. It provided the empirical evidence that the crisis has led to the formation of the country from confidence to crisis since many organisers from overseas feel that there is no stability, rather uncertainty within the country. In response to the crisis, image revival is considered a crucial part in stimulating the country's tourism industry as TCEB and Thai government are extensively focusing on bringing back the confidence that Thailand and Bangkok are safe destinations (TCEB, 2010).

Following these lines of discussion, second proposition can be derived as:

*Proposition 2: Political crisis have impact on the image of Thailand as a MICE destination.*

## Proposed Framework of the Antecedents of Destination Image of a MICE Destination

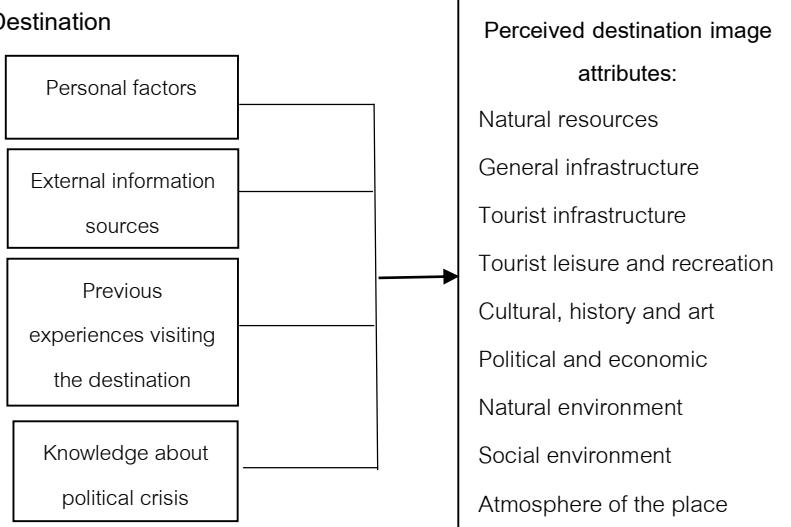
In order to successfully deal with destination image problems the process should commence with an understanding of the relevant factors that may be influential in formation of the image. Following the integration of the relevant destination image literature (Beerli and Martin, 2004; Gartner, 1996; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999), effects of crisis on destination image (Beirman, 2002; Avraham, 2004), and the literature pertaining to MICE (Roger, 2003; Campiranon, 2006; Jarumaneerat and Promsivapallop 2012) the framework depicting the influential factors of formation of a MICE destination is proposed in Figure 1. Two propositions are also derived which are:

*Proposition 1: Perceived destination image is affected by personal factors (gender, age, level of education and social class), external information sources, and previous experiences visiting the destination.*

*Proposition 2: Political crisis have impact on the image of Thailand as a MICE destination.*

Figure 1 Generic framework of antecedents of destination image of MICE

Destination



However, from the outset it may seem that the proposed framework is alike many other previous studies (Beerli and Martin, 2004; Gartner, 1996), notwithstanding that past research has focused merely on the perspective of leisure tourism, whereas few have attempted to investigate from the perspective of the lucrative MICE market. Also, future studies may further investigate whether the effects of political crisis have a short-lived impact of the destination image of MICE destination as past research found the effects of crisis on the image to be short-lived when effective marketing and communication strategies are carried out (Hughes, 2008). Quantitative studies may be carried out to empirically test the proposed framework. However, the sole use of quantitative studies in assessing destination images

could lead to many shortfalls, such as failure in capturing the holistic and unique features of destinations (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991). Hence, future studies may incorporate the use of qualitative method together with quantitative method in examining the proposed framework.

### Conclusion

This paper attempts to identify factors that could have effects on the formation of destination image of Thailand as a MICE destination, and to explore the roles of political-related crisis on destination image formation. The paper attempts to argue that the image is affected by many interrelated antecedents which are depicted in the conceptual framework. Two propositions were derived and could be empirically tested in future studies.

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