RESEARCH

Guidelines for Crisis Communication Management to Promote Tourism in Thailand amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

Nutcha Patananukit
*Ph.D (Communication Art), Master of Communication Arts Programs, Faculty of Communication Arts, Bangkokthonburi University

Abstract

The research study on "Guidelines for Crisis Communication Management to Promote Tourism in Thailand amid the COVID-19 Pandemic," had the following objectives: 1) to investigate crisis communication management to promote tourism in Thailand in times of the COVID-19 pandemic; 2) to study problems and obstacles of crisis communication management to promote tourism in Thailand amid the COVID-19 pandemic; and 3) to find suitable guidelines for crisis communication management amid the so called crises. This was qualitative research using in-depth interview and purposive sampling techniques. The population consisted of groups of administrative and operational personnel from the Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Tourism Authority of Thailand, and the Tourism Industry Council of Thailand. Key informants were eight officials from those organizations, whose mission and vision were to promote tourism in Thailand.

The following results were found:

1.   Crisis communication management should cover the followings: 1) a planned campaign to assist

tourism business entrepreneurs to improve the quality of their services until they are accord with the Hygiene Safety Standard(SHA) to ensure the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 at tourist attraction spots; 2) SHA measures and policy should be specified by people and local administrative organizations; 3) a plan to publicize vaccination campaign against Coronavirus to increase the number of people with the so called virus immunity in order to set a plan to re-open the country; and 3) the government sector should reveal information, patterns, methods and practical guidelines leading to problem solving amid COVID-19 crisis by government and private sectors together with people in general.

2. Management of tourism business in Thailand amid COVID-19 crises involved the followings:1) sectors concerned both government and private ones alike work together with an integration manner; 2) in an aspect of the policy, the work was divided up clearly among them; and 3) in an aspect of communications, war room meetings were set up for the gatherings of

representatives from agencies related to tourism business, strategic communications concerning the spread of coronavirus came through both digital media and personal ones via channels or networks provided by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Tourism Offices and village health volunteers/ VHV.

3. Problems and obstacles in crisis communication management to promote travel in Thailand amid the COVID-19 pandemic: 1) tourism campaigns in the past did not give priority to groups of Thai tourists, resulted in an imbalance number of domestic tourists and their overseas counterparts until it had negative effect on Thai economy as a whole; 2) the rate of unemployment was considerably high; 3) tourism business operators lacked financial liquidation; 4) inadequate facilities to prevent the spread of the epidemic at tourist attraction spots; 5) the lack of readiness for cooperation among various organizations; 6) the lack of confidence in the standardized control to prevent the spread of the disease at tourist attraction spots; 7) local people did not cooperate adequately to control the spread of COVID-19 at those places.

4. Recommendations for crisis communication management to promote travel in Thailand should cover the followings: 1) the government sector should fix policies and measures in accord with the Hygiene Safety Standard (SHA); 2) personnel' s potential should be improved so that they become knowledgeable in terms of the Hygiene Safety Standard (SHA); 3) communication channels should be expanded more by making use of the online media.

Keywords: crisis communication management, COVID-19, Tourism Business Management, Thailand

Introduction

From the pandemic outbreak of Corona Virus 2019(COVID-19) and for the past four or five months so far since January until May 2020, it was found that this has had a harsh impact on tourism industry in every region of the world. The workforce in tourism sector was at risk of losing their jobs of more than 100-120 million positions. The number of tourists worldwide has also decreased by 60%-80%. This had an impact on the decrease of turnover gained from foreign tourists around the world with the total amount of between 850-1,100 million U.S. dollars.

For the situation of international tourism in Thailand during January 2020, it has been reduced with the percentage of 3.60 when compared to that of the same period of time last year. However, effects from the spread of COVID-19 caused international tourists to postpone or cancel their travel plans permanently. Meanwhile, the Chinese government ordered travel agencies to stop their services abruptly since 24 January 2020. This has had a significant impact on Thai tourism economy. Thus, domestic tourism in Thailand had a decrease rate of 3.48%. Also, there were the decreases in the number of tourists and the amount of turnover gained from tourism because of this crisis (tourism situation of 20 January 2020, reported by the Division of Tourism Economy and Sports on 28 February 2020). Furthermore, a great number of airlines cancelled or decreased the arrival of international flights serving areas which were likely to be contaminated by the coronavirus pandemic.

From the results of a survey on tourism situation conducted by the Division of Tourism Economy and Sports in January 2020, it was found that significant factors to be manipulated urgently in order to support tourism business were: 1)the measure supporting the confidence of the tourism sector by promoting the healthcare of both Thai people and overseas tourists; 2) the measure to restore tourism economy after the disentanglement of the pandemic of coronavirus;3) the measure to restore tourism business and workforce affected by the pandemic. However, these required the process of suitable crisis communication management together with guidelines for tourism business management.

Accordingly, the research study on "Guidelines for Crisis Communication Management to Promote Tourism in Thailand amid the COVID-19 Pandemic" needed to find out about suitable guidelines to fulfill the mission since government agencies and their networks in charge of tourism promotion will be able to develop proper guidelines for crisis communication. Consequently, they will be relevantly able to support tourism business operators. Moreover, the researcher would like to study crisis communication management, its problems and obstacles. It will lead to guidelines for crisis communication management to promote tourism in Thailand, so that the government sector will be able to operate crisis communication management amid the coronavirus pandemic. In so doing, tourism business in Thailand will be supported as a consequence, and this will build up competitive advantages for entrepreneurs who welcome domestic tourists and international ones alike in the future.

Objectives

1) To investigate crisis communication management to promote tourism in Thailand amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

2) To study about problems and obstacles of crisis communication management to promote tourism in Thailand amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

3) To seek for guidelines needed for crisis communication management to promote tourism in Thailand amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Definitions

1) Crisis communication management to promote tourism in Thailand amid the COVID-19 pandemic involved aspects of public relations during the crises, steps of effective communications, and strategic communications as well.

2) Tourism business management to promote tourism in Thailand in times of the COVID-19 pandemic involved the process of tourism business management (planning, organizing, leading, and controlling), co-operating, evaluating, promoting the potential of entrepreneurs and quality of services.

3) Problems and obstacles of crisis communication management to promote tourism in Thailand amid the pandemic outbreak of COVID-19 involved aspects of crisis communication management, and problems as well as obstacles in tourism business management.

Reviews of Related Literature

This research study had related literature including ecotourism and potential of tourist attraction spots.   The researcher had reviewed theories and related work as can be seen from the followings:

1) Concepts of crisis communication management: Crisis communication management as mentioned in the handout on how to conduct public relations amid critical situations by the Public Relations Department (2002,   pp. 9-13) was that the crisis communication management covered information management and conducting public relations amid a critical situation, an ability to manage the so-called situation effectively with an attempt to preserve reputations, images and trustworthiness of organizations or institutions. Thus, it is necessary to understand the nature of a critical situation.

According to Ulmer,Sellnow and Seeger (2007, pp.33-46) stages involved in effective crisis communication can be explained as in the followings: 1. Setting up goals for communications: this will help organizations and institutions to be able to make decision when conducting communications; 2. Co-operation among related agencies; 3. Making an attempt to understand the diversity of the receivers/decoders; 4. Listening to opinions of people affected by critical situations in each time, a good communication should encompass the two-way one, listening to them is significant for crisis communications; 5. Characteristic of information needed after the

outbreak of a critical situation is an abrupt and frequent one since an initial communication amid the critical situation consisted of: 5.1) informing affected people about the incidence immediately and this should be maintained continually and uninterruptedly; 5.2)identifying the primary cause of the incidence which is significant in problem solving; 5.3) specifying causes of the crisis which is a significant factor in solving problems amid a critical situation, an analysis of causes in order to eliminate   uncertainties or untrustworthiness; 5.4) connecting with every sector affected by the crisis; however, one should not communicate abruptly nor exactly since it will cause wide criticism which at the same time can bring about impacts to organizations or institutions because amid uncertain situation, everything is changeable; 5.5) watching out for claims made by people concerned and when communicating with them one should not exaggerate risky situations or impacts of an incidence, this will cause the public to become panic-stricken; 5.6) communicating with people concerned of how to make themselves safe and about self-protection, these should be done with a step by step manner and these can be conducted by themselves; 5.7) this type of communication reflects our concerns towards the affected people.

2) The Concept of Tourism Business Management Boonlert Jittungwatana (2005) defines "tourism business management" as planning a trip and fulfilling the plan by means of personnel management, directing and controlling with suitable manners and in accord with the set plan together with an evaluation of the plan. Whereas, Aree Naipinit and Thirachaya Maneenate (2008) define this term as executing a trip plan consisted of management, people in charge, controlling, budget allocation, evaluating, and reporting results of tourism business management. Tourism Authority of Thailand (2002) mentions tourism management conducted by agencies in charge of tourist attractions that it should include five main missions including:

1. Advertisements and public relations: agencies responsible for tourism should have their role in publicizing   tourist attractions to the public at large and this should be done as much as they can.

2. Surveying of information related to natural tourism resources: it is a survey to get information about tourist attractions located in the area. The information will be used when publicizing tourist attractions there.

3. Improving tourist attractions: this involves the project planning to improve tourist attractions, so that they will become attractive to tourists.

4. Managing tourist attractions: this involves the fixing of guidelines for suitable management of tourist attractions in the area for their maximum benefits.

5. Security guarding at tourist attractions: this involves the setting up of a security system to serve visitors entering tourist sites. In conclusion, tourism management is conducting a purposive task in accord with suitable principles, theories, and concepts by putting a consideration on a real condition together with social restrictions and environments. When fixing guidelines, measures and good action plans, one has to think about the framework set beforehand.

Moreover, Rampaipan Keawsuriya (2004) mentions principles of a sustainable tourism management as specified by the World Tourism Improvement Principles as in the followings: 1. preserve and use resources sufficiently; 2. reduce the unnecessary consumption and use of resources together with the reduction of waste; 3. preserve and maintain the diversity of nature, society and culture; 4. integrate tourism improvement plans; 5. use tourism to expand local economic foundation by co-operating with local administrative organizations and related government agencies in order to promote tourism activities in a local area; 6. participate in and construct a tourism improvement network with local agencies; 7. set up meetings and consult with stakeholders; 8. fix human resource development plan; 9. provide information needed for tourism news services; 10. evaluate, investigate, and conduct research which help to solve problems and add value including quality of tourism attraction sites, an investment in tourism business and people in charge of tourism.

3) The Concept of Crisis Communication Management

Strategies used in conversations amid the COVID–19 pandemic this time, government and private sectors have had different guidelines to conduct strategy for crisis communication management. This depends on the appropriateness of each situation. Coombs (n.d. cited in Picharm Geeyapeerapat (2015) and Vilach Laphirattanakul. (2006) concludes popular strategic communications used in conversations amid the crises as in the followings : 3.1 Attack the Accuser Strategy: when an organization verified the truth and found that it was such a fake accusation without an evidence or a distortion so as to cause damages. In some cases, a legal action was needed or the case would be brought to the court of justice in order to attack an accuser; 3.2 Denial Strategy: it is the method used by an organization or an agency which denies the occurrence of a critical situation, but it should abstain from informing news which is not incongruent with reality. Since it will bring about violence to the crises, or if it is fake news to deceive the mass media, the organization is likely to confront with the other side of the crises from the mass media: 3.3 Excuse Strategy: when an organization makes an error until the crisis occurs and it is unable to deny its responsibility, this strategy should be used when there is an occurrence of a real natural disaster or an inevitable event; 3.4 Justification Strategy: it is an explanation for an occurrence of the critical situation which leads to very few damages, in some cases people affected by the crises themselves are to be blamed , and this strategy will be fruitful when there is an occurrence of technical accident in an industrial setting; 3.5 Ingratiation Strategy: this strategy is used when an organization tries to please customers or consumers in an applause like a reimbursement, donating money to the organization, giving free vouchers for free goods to customers during an aftermath of the crises because of an organization's errors; 3.6 Corrective Action Strategy: the method used by an organization to correct their errors in order to relieve critical situations, meanwhile, trying to find corrective measures to prevent a repetition of those errors, this strategy should absolutely be used by an organization since it is pertinent and reflects its responsibilities; 3.7 Full Apology Strategy: this is used when an organization takes responsibility

towards the society and makes apologies to the public, this method is popular in solving problems of an organization in times of a crisis; it is similar to begging for forgiveness from affected people; frequently, a compensation or an assistance in various ways are given to those people.

Pipawan Laowakul (2010) proposes more principles of public relations in times of crises as in the followings: 1. The principle of communication in times of a critical situation is telling everything to the public and this should be done abruptly so as to prevent and terminate rumors immediately; 2. An organization should inform people and stakeholders in those crises that it will not refrain from an incident, but still working to solves those problems rapidly by launching the press conferences periodically; 3. Public relations and giving information to people in times of crises, this should be done at all time; 4. The number of spokespersons should be restricted (normally, there is only one person) for unity and confusion free, rather than one with contradictory news; 5. Do not provide people with an opportunity to relate one critical situation to the other worse one. 6. Announcements made by an organization should be truthful and straight, there should be no deception, lies or blind guessing; 7. A press conference for the mass media and general people who should receive news which is complete, correct and advertised as frequently as it should;8. There should be a practical plan for crisis management or planning communications in times of crises in an organization in which some critical situations are predictable; 9. There should be preparation for the readiness of an organization's officials so that they are well prepared to cope with critical situations which can occur at all times, and to improve their potential and fluency in emergency situations; 10. An organization should predict critical situations beforehand since various crises are predictable and preventive; 11. The compensation or damages should be hastily given to affected people, and willingly done without avoidances, negotiations or delay; 12. If it is an organization's fault, it should willingly take responsibilities together with expressing admittance and making an apology to people concerned or stakeholders, or expressing sympathy for an occurrence without denials nor claiming that it was not its faults.

Research Methodologies

1.Research Design

This was the qualitative research and data were collected by means of in–depth interview as well as purposive sampling with the number of eight participants.

2.Population and Sample

The population under this study consisted of government agencies with their vision and mission in the promotion of tourism in Thailand. The samples consisted of administrative officials and their operational counterparts, who were in charge of communications both inside and outside of the organizations. These people have had five years of working experiences, and they are from government sector including the Department of Tourism, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the Tourism Authority of Thailand, and Tourism Industry Council of Thailand.

3. Research Instrument

Research instrument used in this qualitative study was the semi-structured interview including questionnaires on guidelines for crisis communication management amid the COVID-19 pandemic to promote tourism in Thailand, verified by the experts with the IOC value of 0.939. They can be divided into four parts, namely: Part 1: Personal information of the interviewee; Part 2: Opinions about crisis communication management amid the COVID-19 pandemic to promote tourism in Thailand; Part 3: Opinions about guidelines for crisis communication management under the pandemic threat to promote tourism in Thailand; and Part 4: Opinions about problems and obstacles of crisis communication management amid the COVID-19 pandemic to promote tourism in Thailand.

4. Data Analysis

The researcher put an emphasis on qualitative methodologies, starting from the thorough investigation of patterns, methods as well as data collection, data manipulation, data analysis, and research conclusion under the choices of suitable instrument for data collection. In so doing, the researcher applied phenomenological methodology, especially making use of that of hermeneutics via the process of data collection and the data were strictly analyzed with the interpretation and systematics screening which could be treated as an essential instrument. Thus, the researcher put a strong emphasis on the data analysis plan encompassing the following factors:

1) Organizing Data: it is the stage which makes data collected from the interviews systematic, easily to be approached and used . The recorded data during the interviews were transcribed word for word or verbatim. After that, the researcher organized the meaningful data which were relevant to the points needed by the researcher by   means of coding in order to categorize the whole data; meanwhile, putting data with the same meanings into the same group with the same code.

2) Data Linking: it was the stage of linking data with the same codes and putting them into the same group if their codes were relevant to one another under the principle of compatibility and indicating the same theme. This resulted in the concept implying approach used to interpret the phenomena at one level.

3) Integrating Data : this involved a stage of finding the conclusions under relevant concepts

according to the appearance of empirical data during this study until they reached the point of theoretical saturation and resulted in the conclusions of the phenomena under this research study.

Findings

Results of in-depth Interviews

Results of conducting in-depth interviews with eight key informants were officials who have had five years of working experiences, and they work for government agencies with the vision and mission to support tourism in Thailand; the following conclusions were made:

1. Opinions about crisis communication management amid the COVID-19 pandemic to promote tourism in Thailand:

1) There should be the campaign plan to encourage tourism business operators to upgrade the quality of their services to be in accord with the Hygiene Safety Standard or SHA in order to create the confidence in preventing the spread of COVID-19 at tourist attraction sites. At the same time, it is an upheaval of acceptable standardized tourism; 2) Measures and policies should be set for working in accord with SHA by people, and local administrative organizations, especially the area where tourist attraction sited are located; 3) the government sector should fix the agenda of campaigns so as to create the confidence in preventing the spread of COVID-19 by publicizing the Hygiene Safety Standard/ SHA; 4) there should be the public relations plans to launch the vaccination campaign in order to increase the number of people with coronavirus immunity, this may lead to a plan to re-open the country in the future; 5) the government sector should have guidelines for crisis communications amid the COVID-19 pandemic; there should be campaign plans, public relations plans together with psychological preparation so that the people will be secure with problem solving by the state through the digital media 6) government sector should make clear to reveal information , patterns , methods and practical guidelines to both government and private sectors since these will lead to solutions for problems related to the critical situations under threat of the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand.

2. Opinions about tourism business management amid the COVID-19 pandemic to promote tourism in Thailand:

1) In an aspect of management sectors involved working together in an integration manner, especially on aspects of security, safety in the prevention of the pandemic disease and tourism improvement plans. The government sector co-operated with the Ministry of Public Health by sharing information and working together in order to make tourist attraction sites pass the Hygiene Safety Standard/ SHA as well as criteria indicated by the Department of Health under the project called "Clean together." Moreover, the government sector worked collaboratively with the National Broadcasting and Telecommunication Commission on communication channels. And for the private sector, the biggest mobile phone company launched the multi-lingual campaigns on the prevention of the pandemic which was in accord with the Department of Health's criteria by sending SMS text to groups of overseas tourists in Thailand. 2) In an aspect of the policy of agencies in charge of tourism, they clearly divided the tasks equally in each level. For example, the Ministry of Tourism is in charge of all the national policies whereas the Department of Tourism

is in charge of promotion, development, enforcing working in accord with law, and tourism business management. Tourism Authority of Thailand, the state enterprise, is in charge of marketing promotion, and sales whereas Tourism Industry Council of Thailand is a coalition of many private agencies to work cooperatively with the state sector and the Ministry of the Interior for the livelihood of Thai people: 3)In an aspect of communication: war room meetings were launched for the gatherings of related tourism agencies from both state and private sectors so that they are able to meet and consult with one another once every week. They collaboratively planned communications for the prevention of the pandemic, and strategies of crisis communications to stop the spread of COVID–19 via digital media as well as personal ones through channels or networks provided by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Tourism Offices and village health volunteers/ VHV nationwide.

3. Problems and obstacles of crisis communication management amid the COVID–19 pandemic to promote tourism in Thailand.

1) Tourism campaigns in the past did not give a priority to groups of Thai tourists, resulted in an imbalance number of domestic tourists and their overseas counterparts until it had negative effect on Thai economy as a whole; 2) the rate of unemployment was considerably high; 3) tourism business operators lacked financial liquidation; 4) inadequate facilities to prevent the spread of the epidemic at tourist attraction spots; 5) the lack of readiness for co–operation among various organizations to prevent the spread of COVID–19; 6) the lack of confidence in the standardized control to prevent the spread of the disease at tourist attraction spots; 7) local people did not co–operate adequately to control the spread of COVID–19 at those places.

4. Suggestions for guidelines for crisis communication management amid the COVID–19
pandemic to promote tourism in Thailand.

1) There should be the allocation of policies, and measures on management to support tourism operators to work incongruently with the Hygiene Safety Standard/ SHA; 2. The policy of vaccination should be quickly forced until Thai people are immune to coronavirus so as to re–open the country for overseas tourists without the fourteen days of quarantine; 3. The potential of personnel in an organization should be improved until they are knowledgeable about the Hygiene Safety Standard/ SHA in an area where tourism business is conducted; 4. there should be an improvement of facilities at the tourist attraction sites; 5. tourism operators should include more measures for safety management; 6. channels for co–operation and tourism improvement plans with other agencies should be expanded for the accessibility of information related to suitable the infrastructure; 7. participation of people, groups and other organizations should be created in order to build up attractions for tourists; 8. channels for public relations should be expanded via the online media; 9. there should be the marketing plan to balance the number of both national and

international tourists; 10. tourism business operators should upgrade their services until they are incongruent with the Hygiene Safety Standard (SHA).

Discussions

1) Crisis Communication Management amid the COVID-19 pandemic to promote tourism in Thailand.

From the performance of crisis communication management in Thailand amid the COVID-19 pandemic from 2562 to 2563, it was found that Thailand should have a campaign plan to help tourism business operators to improve the qualities of their services until they pass the Hygiene Safety Standard (SHA). People in charge work co-operatively to determine the policy in setting up measures, policies and speed up communications with the content to people and local administrative organizations, especially tourist sites nationwide in order to build up confidence towards preventing the spread of COVID-19 at the tourist attractions sites which will lead to the re-opening of a country in the future.

The above mentioned were incongruent with the research conducted by Panasit Onya and others (2019) on "Factors Affecting the Success of the Management of Tourist Destination that Comply with Thailand Tourism Standard" The findings revealed that every component was a significant leading to the successful management of tourist attractions at the high level, especially that of the planning by people in charge of the tourist attraction sites which was at the high level as well.

Moreover, for the so called crisis communication management amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the government sector should have the public relations plan to launch a vaccination campaign for a great number of people since this will increase the number of people with the coronavirus immunity. This will lead to the plan to re-open the country for tourism in the future together with the psychological preparation to make the Thai people confident with the government sector's ways of solving problems through the channel of the digital media. This research study was also incongruent with the one by Nalaumon Anusonphat (2020) on the topic of "Economic Adjustment in Tourism under the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Crisis in Thailand" and it was found that the tourism economic adaptation in Thailand amid the pandemic was in the aspect of withstanding and communicating amid the pandemic with an effect on tourism business by developing communication channel of risks, disease control and at the same time informing people about safety measures when taking their trips.

Also, this study was incongruent with one by Kritnat Saenthawee (2014) on the topic "The Factor of Crisis Communication and Integrated Marketing Communication in Tourism of Thailand." and the finding was that during an occurrence of a crisis tourists expected that the confidence in safety measures should be promoted. Since the most appropriate integrative marketing communication in tourism business of Thailand amid the COVID-19 pandemic was the internet,

and from the research results by Cason (2013), it was found that roles of the new media, such as the internet or the other kinds of media based on electronics like e–mails, blogs, webcasts, podcasts, text and social media resulted in a new plan in the management of critical situations of an organization. Moreover, the use of new media can help to divide clearly between the crisis–prepared organizations and the crisis–prone ones.

Furthermore, this finding was also incongruent with a study by Patra Prommarak (2017) on the topic, "The Use of Digital Media in Crisis Communication Strategies and Crisis Management Practices in The Restaurant Industry" and it was found that the most popular strategy is that of corrective one. In so doing, communication should be based on sincerity, and the sharing of correct information. Moreover, one has to control the agenda and conversation circles amid the crises until they are under his owned media, in order to control and observe trends of the crises. When the crises come to an end, the brands will launch restoration schemes with two guidelines, namely: (1) evaluating plans and results of communication performance and the correction of critical situations in the past, collecting them as the body of knowledge, and publicizing them in an organization to avoid or plan to cope with further critical situations in the future; (2) reviving officials' morale, so that they will securely serve an organization before conveying them to stakeholders from the outside of an organization. In using the digital media for communication and critical situation management, it was found that the digital media had significant roles from the initial stage of communication inside an organization through instant messaging programs and the Facebook groups.

2) Tourism Business Management amid the COVID–19 pandemic to promote tourism in Thailand.

Tourism management amid the critical situation of the COVID–19 pandemic to support tourism in Thailand this time can be treated as working co–operatively among agencies in charge of tourism business in aspects of security and safety measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, and a plan for tourism development in the area. The government co–operated with the Ministry of Public Health in terms of sharing information and working co–operatively with each other, so that tourist attraction sites will reach the Hygiene Safety Standard/ SHA as well as the criteria of the Division of Health in the project called "clean together." Furthermore, the government sector asked for the co–operation from the National Broadcasting and Telecommunication Commission/(NBTC) whereas Thailand top mobile phone companies co–operated to design bilingual messages both in Thai and Chinese for the campaigns to prevent the spread of the pandemic as specified by the public health, and sent SMS text to overseas tourists in Thailand.

From the performance of agencies related to tourism, it was clearly seen that there was the division of labor in each level as in the followings: the Ministry of Tourism oversaw and

controlled all policies of the country, the Department of Tourism executed work of promotion, improvement, executing missions in accord with law, tourism business management whereas the Tourism Authority of Thailand, a state enterprise organization, is responsible for marketing promotion, and sales. The Tourism Industry Council of Thailand is the conglomeration of private agencies to work collaboratively with the state sector while the Ministry of the Interior oversees and cooperates in community work nationwide.

In an aspect of communication management, war room meetings were initiated to gather representatives from state and private sectors in charge of tourism business. They called a weekly meeting so that they could meet and consult with one another. Meanwhile, they co-operatively planned communications in order to support a means to   prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease, communication strategy during the critical situation to prevent the spread of the disease through online media, and personal media via the networks of the Ministry of Tourism, Tourism Offices, and village health volunteers/ VHV nationwide.

This was incongruent with the research conducted by Nattavadee Poolamphai (2013) on the topic "A Crisis Communication Process of The Thai Red Cross Society for the Purpose of Relief and Response of flood crisis victims" It was found that communications during the critical situations of the Thai Red Cross Society was the process of exchanging information, news, disastrous situations, asking for help, and giving relief to disaster victims among the personnel of an organization which was divided into various sub-divisions, and the working groups in charge of diverse critical situation management both at the policy level and the management one with the uses of various communication channels, and each level had different stages of appropriateness.

3) Problems and obstacles of crisis communication management amid the COVID-19 pandemic to promote tourism in Thailand.

 For the problems found, it was because tourism business groups in Thailand did not give priority to groups of Thai tourists, accordingly the target groups of the advertisements were mainly overseas tourists. Since these people brought considerable turnovers for tourism industry. At the same time, it caused an imbalance between numbers of national tourists and international ones with considerable differences. Nowadays, when there were no overseas tourists to Thailand anymore, Thai economy was harshly affected since tourism operators lacked liquidations; some of them even terminated their tourism activities permanently; employees who had worked in the tourism business circle were unemployed. This also affected groups of occupations, namely tourist guides, travel agencies, and hotels. Accordingly, there was a high rate of unemployment for this group of people.

The tourism operators were not confident with the state sector's measures to control the spread of COVID-19 at the tourist attraction sites. Moreover, the state's measures to assist operators in tourism industry in the past were unsuccessful, but there were the problems of

corruptions in the structure of the operation. Also, there was a problem of local people's co-operation to control the spread of COVID-19 at the tourist attraction sites.

This finding was conformed to a study conducted by Tarinee Wisamitanan, Autchara Yodsri, Winai Luekhachon and Sermsak Khunpol. (2019) on the topic, "Communication and Management of Crises in Case study the Capsize of Phoenix PC Driving Boat at Phuket Province." The finding revealed that there were problems of the delay by the state agency in giving rescue to the victims because there was an uncontrollable obstacle which was basically nature. This was similar to the crises right now when there was the pandemic of COVID-19, which was natural, globally affected, and uncontrollable.

4) Suggestions for guidelines for crisis communication management amid the COVID-19 pandemic to promote tourism in Thailand.

Findings gained from the interviews, the sample suggested policy guidelines that the state sector should set policy and management measures and force tourism operators to work in accord with the Hygiene Safety Standard (SHA) in order to boost up confidence in the tourist attraction sites. Meanwhile, there should be an enforcement of participation from community leaders, local people, and local administration organizations, so that they will join force in the construction of disease free tourist attraction sites. However, there should be the policy of abruptly nationwide vaccination in order to re-open the country to welcome international tourists without the fourteen-day quarantine. Furthermore, in an aspect of communication, channels for public relations should be expanded through the online media and there should be the marketing plan to balance the number of both national tourists and their international counterparts.

This suggestion was incongruent with the study by Nalaumon Anusonphat. (2020) on "Economic Adjustment in Tourism under the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Crisis in Thailand. It revealed that Thai tourism adaptation during the COVID-19 crises should cover five aspects, namely: 1) There was an adaptation for the increase in community tourism potentials by upgrading the standards of community-based tourism in order to seek more confidence from tourists, at the same time, there should be the development and an increase in the competitive capability of a community; 2) There was an adaptation in an aspect of tourism economy recovery, and an encouragement for an exchange of timely and reliable news together with seeking for co-operation from negotiating parties, strategic partnerships, and stakeholders with the measures to support and rescue the tourism sector in order that it will be able to cope well with challenges among these situations; 3) There was an adaptation in an aspect of tourism business with the adoption of 9P's to boost up competitive capacity of Thai tourism industry; 4) There was an adaptation in an aspect of modern tourism behaviors using the following principles, namely: globalization, tourism for specific groups, life in the digital era, safety during trip, low cost airlines, political policy and aged society; 5)There was an adaptation in an aspect of withstanding and crisis communications affecting tourism business which needs an adaptation, and there was an

improvement of communication system in terms of risks, disease control, and making people feel secure during their trips.

The above suggestions were incongruent with the study by Sutep Singkhalah.(2017) on the topic "Development of Sustainable Tourism at Kamala Sub-district and Kathu District, Phuket in Tourism Operators' and Local Government Officers' Perspective, Tumbon Kamala, Amphoe Kratoo, Phuket Province." It was found that holistically the levels of participation in tourism were from medium to high levels, and it was also in accord with the study by Supphawat Chuamuangphan and others (2013) on a topic, "The study of potential development of community tourism: a case study of Ban Rai Kong Khing, Nong Khwai Sub-district, Hang Dong District." It was found that after the community members had conceived more about the significance of community-based tourism, and got better understanding about it , they decided to set up the committee to firstly run community-based tourism, and the committee was known as "Community-based Tourism Committee."

Suggestions for further study

This study was the collection of data by means of in-depth interviews and documentary research, resulting in the limitation in the analysis of the research results. Consequently, the further study may be conducted using other methods so as to make the data correct, well-rounded, and can be used with its highest benefits.

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