Communication perspectives on tourist decision making in community-based tourism: Hua Takhe case

Natvara Kaewoui[1], Kanokkarn Kaewnuch[2]
[1,2]Graduate School of Tourism Management, National Institute of Development Administration, Bangkok, Thailand

ABSTRACT

Background: Community-based tourism (CBT) involves local communities in the tourism value chain to provide sustainable benefits. Tourist decision-making in CBT situations, specifically how communication elements like destination image, service quality, and local engagement affect behavior, is currently understudied. Recent work typically separates these elements without acknowledging their interconnections in tourist decision-making. **Purpose:** This study aims to develop a conceptual model that explains tourist decision-making in community-based tourism (CBT) by integrating key communication determinants. It focuses on how communication factors such as destination image, service quality, community storytelling, and local engagement interact to influence tourist behavior. Methods: A qualitative-descriptive approach was employed through an integrative literature review of empirical and conceptual studies from tourism and communication disciplines. Relevant sources were systematically selected based on thematic relevance to CBT, communication, and tourist behavior, allowing the synthesis of theoretical and contextual insights. **Results:** The findings show that symbolic, emotional, and communicative dimensions of tourism services significantly shape tourists' decision-making in CBT contexts. Authentic encounters and emotional connections between tourists and host communities enhance destination image and perceived service quality. Furthermore, cultural immersion, local narratives, and place-based identities strengthen perceived value, loyalty, and revisit intention. **Conclusion:** This study demonstrates that CBT tourist decisions extend beyond rational or economic considerations. Communication factors particularly interpersonal connection, narrative meaning-making, and perceived authenticity play a central role in shaping tourist choices and behavioral intentions within community-based destinations. **Implications:** Theoretically, this study enriches CBT literature by embedding communication variables into behavioral models. Practically, it offers strategic recommendations for enhancing community storytelling, destination branding, and service interaction especially in destinations like Hua Takhe.

Keywords: Tourist decision-making; community-based tourism; communicative determinants; destination image; Hua Takhe

---

Correspondence: Natvara Kaewoi, Graduate School of Tourism Management, National Institute of Developmnet Administration Ratchapruek Building, 2nd Floor, 148 Serithai Road, Khlong Chan Subdistrict, Bangkapi District, Bangkok 10240, Thailand, *Email:* fahsai.n43@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of World War II, the global tourism industry has never faced a crisis as complex as the COVID-19 pandemic. When the crisis reached its worst point, international cross-border mobility decreased dramatically by 74%, causing more than one billion trips between countries to fail. The financial impact of this condition was so great that there was a global foreign exchange leak of around US$ 1.3 trillion (UNWTO, 2021).Thailand as one of the leading tourist destinations in Southeast Asia was also significantly affected, with a shrinkage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from the tourism sector reaching more than 70% and the loss of approximately four million jobs, both directly and indirectly related to tourism (Slutskiy & Boonchutima, 2022). In the span of two years, thousands of SMEs that depend on the tourism sector have ceased operations, while state authorities have to allocate large amounts of fiscal stimulus budgets to maintain the viability of regional economies that rely on tourist flows.

As we approach the end of 2022, when the travel ban begins to be relaxed, indicators of a tourism revival are starting to show a positive direction. Statistics from Thailand's Ministry of Tourism show a sharp increase in the number of tourists from 11.15 million in 2022 to 35 million in 2024, close to the 39 million recorded before the pandemic. The growth is mainly driven by the return of Chinese tourists who in 2019 accounted for 28% of total foreign travelers (Prachachat Turakij, 2024). Travelers from countries such as Malaysia, India, South Korea, and Russia have also strengthened the recovery, as regional flight routes have increased and visa-on-arrival policies have been introduced. Factors such as national political stability, accelerated immunization programs, and improved macroeconomic indicators have also strengthened tourists' sense of security and confidence to visit again. Based on the analysis of regional development agencies, the tourism recovery in Thailand is predicted to reach its full point by 2025.

Tourism trends in 2026 are projected to reflect substantial shifts in response to the evolving needs and expectations of contemporary travelers. Rather than engaging in travel merely to visit destinations, tourists are anticipated to pursue deeper, personalised, and meaningful experiences. A prominent trend in this direction is the continued expansion of wellness tourism, driven by an increasing emphasis on physical, mental, and emotional health. Travelers in 2026 are expected to prioritise tourism products and facilities that support well-being, including wellness resorts, luxury spas, yoga and meditation retreats, and detoxification programs. This development is likely to influence tourism destinations to diversify and innovate their wellness services while creating immersive environments that promote relaxation, life balance, and holistic health.

This also aligns with increasing tourist Furthermore, experiential tourism is becoming increasingly important, with tourists seeking authentic immersion in local cultures. They are not satisfied with a simple, passive visit but want to participate in cultural activities such as cooking traditional cuisine, participating in traditional ceremonies, and participating in festivals and the daily lives of local communities. This trend adds a new dimension to tourism: an effort to preserve culture while empowering local communities, making travel more meaningful and enriching tourists' knowledge and appreciation of the destinations they visit.

Advances in information technology have also significantly influenced tourism trends through digital tourism. Travelers utilize various digital applications, virtual reality, cashless payment systems, and interactive platforms to plan and experience trips more practically, efficiently, and personally. This technology enables fast and easy access to information, flexible scheduling, and experiences that can be tailored to each individual's preferences, further pampering travelers in the digital age.

Other unique trends include noctourism, which is nighttime tourism that offers a unique experience with various nighttime activities, including exploring city life, viewing the night sky, or attending exotic night festivals. Similarly, sleep tourism is gaining popularity, offering tour packages that prioritize visitors' sleep quality, with special amenities such as comfortable mattresses, carefully adjusted lighting, and a tranquil atmosphere to address the sleep disorders common in modern society.

Furthermore, there is a growing emphasis on sustainability and responsible tourism practices, particularly in adopting smart technology for better destination management. Smart tourism, utilizing the Internet of Things (IoT), real-time crowd management systems, and intelligent transportation, offers solutions to provide a comfortable travel experience while preserving the environment and resources. awareness of the social and environmental impacts of their tourism activities, leading to the emergence of more eco-friendly and sustainable destinations and tourism products.

Meanwhile, new trends in tourist behavior are also evident in the emergence of concepts such as detour destinations, where tourists seek experiences around the main destination to explore more hidden and unique places, and goods getaways, which focus trips on acquiring viral or unique products from a region as part of the travel experience. These trends open up new opportunities in tourism marketing and the development of more creative and personalized tour packages.

While the number of returning tourists has increased, the pandemic crisis has changed the overall outlook and expectations of travelers. It is important for government public relations to translate health protocols into persuasive messages that travelers can easily understand (Kadarisman, 2021). In addition, a report from

PwC (2023) identified three new trends in travel behavior: first, increased attention to sanitation, health, and safety aspects; second, a tendency to choose tourist sites that provide open areas, activities that blend with nature, and limited interaction with crowds; third, a growing interest in travel experiences that have emotional value and have a positive impact on local communities. Sustainability is now considered a key consideration in choosing a travel destination. In Thailand, this shift in preference is evident in the high interest in community-based tourism (CBT), village tourism, and travel models that focus on attachment and slow-travel (Sangpikul & Thipbharos, 2024).

Communication studies is an academic discipline that studies the processes, mechanisms, and effects of communication in a variety of contexts, from interpersonal to mass interactions. Within the communication studies literature, the field has flourished since the mid-20th century, particularly in the United States, through the contributions of figures such as Wilbur Schramm, considered the founder of modern communication studies. Schramm and his successors established communication research institutions and formalized the field by integrating various traditions such as rhetoric, journalism, and oral communication.

The primary literature in communication studies includes basic communication theories such as the Transmission Model, which emphasizes the process of transmitting messages from sender to receiver through specific channels, and social learning theory, which states that communication is learned through observation and imitation. However, these early models are often considered overly simplistic because they fail to account for two-way communication, feedback, cultural context, and complex social interactions.

In addition to theories, communication studies also examine communication competence, defined as a person's ability and experience in communicating effectively to achieve shared goals. This competency is influenced by personal and social characteristics and is measured using various indicators from experts such as Spitzberg and Cupach, who explain how communication skills develop and play a role in work and government situations.

Methods in communication studies vary, from qualitative to quantitative analysis, allowing researchers to study communication phenomena in diverse social, political, and cultural contexts. Literature in this field often utilizes library research or literature reviews to summarize theoretical findings and previous research as a basis for developing new studies.

In line with demand transformation, the Thai government launched the IGNITE TOURISM THAILAND program in early 2024. The program carries three main pillars of Inclusivity, Green Growth, and Digital Empowerment as well as the "5 Must Do in Thailand" promotional strategy: Must Taste, Must Try, Must Buy, Must Seek, and Must See (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2024).

The approach aims to distribute the benefits of tourism to secondary regions, reduce overtourism in big cities, and spur grassroots economies through MSME empowerment, cultural preservation, and increased community digital literacy. The resonance of this policy can be seen in the surge of online searches related to local destinations on Google Trends keyword "ตลาดเก่าหัวตะเข้" (Talad Kao Hua Takhe) up 320% between January-December 2024 (Google Trends, 2025).

The Hua Takhe traditional market area, which has been established for more than a hundred years on the banks of the Sisa Chorakhe Yai Canal in Lat Krabang district, is one of the successful examples of community-based tourism (CBT) that combines the rich local culture and history of the community. Distinctive features such as rows of wooden houses on stilts in a mixed Chinese and Thai style, wall paintings depicting daily life along the canal, and traditional food cooking workshops create a nostalgic atmosphere away from the bustle of downtown Bangkok. Its strategic location and proximity to Lat Krabang Airport Rail Link Station and only about 15 minutes away from Suvarnabhumi Airport make Hua Takhe a favorite day trip destination for local travelers.

The concept of perceived value in community tourism highlights the importance of ecological value in shaping the perceived sustainability of a location. Hua Takhe, has cultural and environmental values that are communicated narratively by the community creating emotional resonance similar to how green finance shapes ecological value on farmland in China. These two contexts both emphasize that perceived value arising from interactions between visitors and local experience providers through both physical ecosystems and social communication can influence visiting decisions and visitor loyalty. Tourism components or 5A attractions, accessibility, amenities, accommodation, activities (Dickman, 1997) are often used as destination readiness parameters (Inkson, & Minnaert, 2022). In Hua Takhe, canal cultural attractions, easy access from the airport, vintage-themed café amenities, community homestays, and Thai dessert workshop activities create a comprehensive portfolio of experiences. This research proposes expanding the 5A's with the dimension of cultural communication, which is how effectively the community narrates its identity through touristy interactions.

In academic circles, community-based tourism is understood as a development model that makes local communities the owners, managers, and main beneficiaries of tourism activities. There are ten main principles that form the basis of the CBT concept: community ownership, active involvement of citizens, strengthening local identity, improving welfare, protecting the environment, preserving cultural values, intercultural learning, respect for diversity, fair distribution of profits, and reuse of income for the common good. Although Thailand has a variety of studies on CBT, most

of the research has focused on aspects such as destination management, tourism supply chain studies, or integrating the creative economy. Studies on how tourists choose to visit CBT destinations and how communication influences the process are still relatively limited. Recent research has shown that symbolic experiences and visual narratives from content created by internet users can shape judgments of destinations even before one actually arrives at the destination. This finding is in line with the constructionist approach in tourism communication studies that views destinations as cultural constructs that are continuously shaped through interactions between travelers, local communities and the media (Bui. 2022; Pike & Page, 2014).

In terms of theory development, this article expands the horizon of tourist behavior studies by incorporating cultural communication approaches and community-based services into the travel decision-making model. By combining decision theory, destination representation, and service interaction quality, this study provides a holistic framework for understanding tourist behavior patterns in community-based destinations, especially during the transitional period following the global health crisis. In terms of practical application, the findings of this study can serve as a reference for local governments, small and medium enterprises, and community organizations in developing authentic destination narratives, improving service quality, and optimizing the economic benefits for local residents. The integration of communication, cultural identity, and community participation is expected to strengthen both the emotional and experiential values perceived by tourists. As a follow-up, empirical research using quantitative and mixed-method approaches is recommended to validate the proposed conceptual model in other destination contexts. Further exploration may also focus on the digital communication dimension and the synergy between local communities and policy actors in shaping competitive and sustainable destination perceptions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative conceptual approach using a literature-based study design to develop a theoretical framework explaining how tourists make decisions in the context of community-based tourism (CBT). This approach was chosen to integrate various existing theories and concepts into a model that is contextually relevant to local realities. As a conceptual study, this paper does not involve empirical data collection such as interviews, surveys, or observations, but instead focuses on advancing theoretical understanding within Communication Studies and Community-Based Tourism through systematic literature synthesis (Snyder, 2019).

The data analyzed in this research were entirely derived from secondary sources,

including peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, government policy documents, and other contextually relevant materials. The selection of literature was conducted purposefully and guided by specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure methodological rigor and replicability. Only scholarly publications from 2010 to 2025 written in English or Thai that discussed community-based tourism, service quality, destination elements, and destination image were considered. The sources were required to be indexed in reputable academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, or Google Scholar, or published by recognized academic institutions. Non-scholarly materials, unverified online content, publications without methodological clarity, and duplicate studies were excluded to maintain the quality and relevance of the literature base. (Calderón-Fajardo et al., 2024). The contextual focus on Hua Takhe in Thailand serves merely as an illustrative example of a community-based tourism destination rather than an empirical research site. This clarification ensures that the study remains conceptual in nature, using the Hua Takhe case as a reference point for contextual relevance rather than as an object of data collection or field observation.

The process of literature analysis followed an integrative synthesis technique as proposed by (Webster & Watson, 2002). Emphasizing the development of a comprehensive theoretical framework that connects existing concepts, identifies knowledge gaps, and proposes

conceptual linkages. The analysis integrated several foundational theories, including the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF models of service quality (Magasi, Mashenene, & Ndengenesa, 2022), the 5A concept in tourist destination development (Inkson, & Minnaert, 2022), and theoretical approaches to destination image formation. In addition, theories of tourist decision-making (Kotler & Keller, 2006; Schmoll, 1977) were used to explain the cognitive and emotional processes influencing destination choices among tourists.

The conceptual framework resulting from this study positions service quality, perceived destination elements, and destination image as interrelated variables that shape tourists' intentions to visit community-based destinations. Rather than testing these variables empirically, this paper synthesizes them conceptually to contribute to the theoretical development of tourism communication.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first step in the development of this model was to explore the basic concepts of destination, including attractions, accessibility, facilities, lodging, and activities (Inkson, & Minnaert, 2022). In community-based development, these elements are enriched with local social and cultural values that become part of the experiential assessment. The literature analyzed confirms that the involvement of local residents plays an important role in forming lasting impressions for visitors. The

community's position is not limited to being a service provider, but also a custodian of meaning and a cultural link within the destination. The model draws strength from the destination image theory developed by Bui, et al (2022), which distinguishes between functional and psychological aspects and between natural and artificial information. The meaning of place is discussed as an active construction between travelers and the community, formed through direct contact as well as digital representations such as internet reviews and visual uploads. The mental image of a tourist area is closely related to the narrative formed by the community through tourism participation, thus reinforcing original impressions and creating an emotional connection between visitors and the locations they visit. The proposed model offers a new synthesis that has not been comprehensively discussed in previous studies, integrating communication perspectives with destination image theory to explain how meaning, emotion, and authenticity coalesce in community-based tourism decision-making.

The conceptual findings in this study show that the process of tourists choosing a community-based destination is formed through a complex relationship between understanding of destination elements, description of the place, and assessment of service quality. The decision to revisit or recommend a location such as Hua Takhe is the result of the interaction of these three key factors. A thorough synthesis of the literature resulted in the design of a theoretical

framework that combines the 5A's model of destination elements, place image theory, and service quality evaluation frameworks from SERVQUAL and SERVPERF as an integrated system.

One of the key outcomes in the formation of this model was the discovery of a close relationship between perceived quality of tourism elements, destination image and service quality. All three interact with each other in influencing the tourist decision-making process. In the formulated framework, perceptions of the quality of tourism components are the initial triggers that generate interest and form initial expectations from visitors. Destination representation then acts as a cognitive and emotional link that can reinforce or change these perceptions, while service quality becomes a direct experience that confirms or contradicts the expectations that have been formed. This entire process forms a cycle of assessment that allows tourists to make decisions based on the results of comparisons between expectations and actual experiences, whether in the form of a first visit, decision to extend stay, desire to return, or in the form of recommendations to others.

The structural model designed in this study reflects a holistic approach to the travel decision-making process, in line with the theoretical framework introduced by Schmoll in 1977 and Kotler in 1997. Schmoll suggested that travel behavior is influenced by psychological, social factors, as well as the character of the

destination itself. Kotler outlines a five-stage decision process that includes need recognition, information search, choice evaluation, purchase action, and post-experience assessment. In the case of Hua Takhe, the decision to visit was influenced by the richness of the local culture, reinforced by the visual content spread across digital platforms, and ultimately clarified by the personalized service interactions of the local community.

The image of a destination formed from direct experience and social stories has a great influence on the decision-making process. Based on Bui, et al (2022) framework, the image of a place includes tangible aspects such as facilities and location, psychological impressions such as a sense of security and hospitality (Szromek et al., 2022), as well as organic sources derived from media narratives or the experiences of others. Stylidis and colleagues (2017) state that the image of a destination is formed through various channels, not limited to visual elements. The way local people hold conversations, convey cultural symbols, and share stories about their region has a strong influence on how tourists perceive the place. This study also found that when local stories are told repeatedly and consistently, a solid perception is formed and rooted in the minds of visitors (Choe & Kim, 2018). Stories told personally to potential tourists have a greater influence than visual promotional materials. The stories shared by both locals and tourists through digital platforms become a kind of emotional testimony that

shapes the expectations and initial images of potential visitors to the destination.This finding is in line with the understanding of destination communication as a form of cultural text, where narratives born from the community become a space for interpretation that forms an authentic impression and distinguishes the destination in the midst of competition in the tourism industry.

In developing this model, researchers also expanded the 5A framework by adding a sixth dimension, namely cultural communication. The five classic elements, attraction, accessibility, amenities, accommodation, activities, remain relevant and interact with each other. However, this study found that cultural communication elements, such as local performances, folklore, and visual communication in the form of murals or traditional signage, strengthen tourists' connection with local identity (Bakti et al., 2018). In Hua Takhe, canal murals and community-constructed historical narratives show how communication is an important medium in building a sense of place.

Furthermore, the influence of digital communication was also found to be very significant. Communities that actively spread information about culture and services through social media show a significant increase in destination visibility and attractiveness (Novianti et al., 2020). Visualizations of community activities, traditional cuisine, and environmental conservation activities shared on social media create a perception of the destination as an authentic place worth visiting.

This reinforces the claim that social media is a key channel in conveying destination identity and shaping experiential expectations (Stylidis et al., 2017). Another finding underscores the importance of emotional bonding as an outcome of community-based tourism experiences. When tourists are involved in local activities such as cooking, crafting, or environmental conservation activities, their emotional attachment to the place increases (Blomstervik & Olsen, 2022). This engagement not only increases the value of the experience but also reinforces positive memories and forms long-term loyalty.

The study also found that collaborative governance models where communities are the main actors in designing and delivering the tourism narrative contribute to tourism sustainability (Calderón-Fajardo et al., 2024). When communities feel part of the decision-making process, they are more motivated to preserve the local culture and environment (Sun et al., 2024). Within Thailand, destinations such as Hua Takhe in secondary urban areas demonstrate strategic advantages in terms of accessibility, affordability and emotional closeness to local communities. This study concludes that in the context of similar destinations, the determinants of travelers' decisions are not only facilities or price, but also the extent to which the community is able to build authentic narratives, convey cultural values consistently, and provide services based on social relations. The results of this study

reveal that tourists' decisions to visit community-based tourism destinations are influenced by a number of interrelated determinants. Within the scope of the Hua Takhe Community, the main findings of this study highlight three main factors that are causally interrelated, namely the quality of tourism components, destination image, and service quality. All three contribute to shaping tourists' perceptions, which in turn drive their decision to visit the community-based destination. The conceptual model developed from this study is depicted in Figure 1, which shows the structural relationship of these dimensions.

The conceptual model in this study outlines the determinants in tourists' decision-making to visit community-based tourism (CBT) destinations. The model incorporates three main dimensions: components of tourism, service quality, and destination image with a strong emphasis on the role of communication in shaping tourists' perceptions, experiences, and loyalty. First, on the components of tourism dimension, the five main subdimensions analyzed include attractions, accessibility, amenity, accommodation, and activities. The field findings in attractions are that Hua Takhe's distinctive appeal comes from the rows of wooden houses in a mixed style of Chinese and Thai architecture that stand along the canal more than a hundred years old, traditional markets, and local cultural values that are still maintained. This uniqueness gives the community a strong identity and is a major draw for travelers
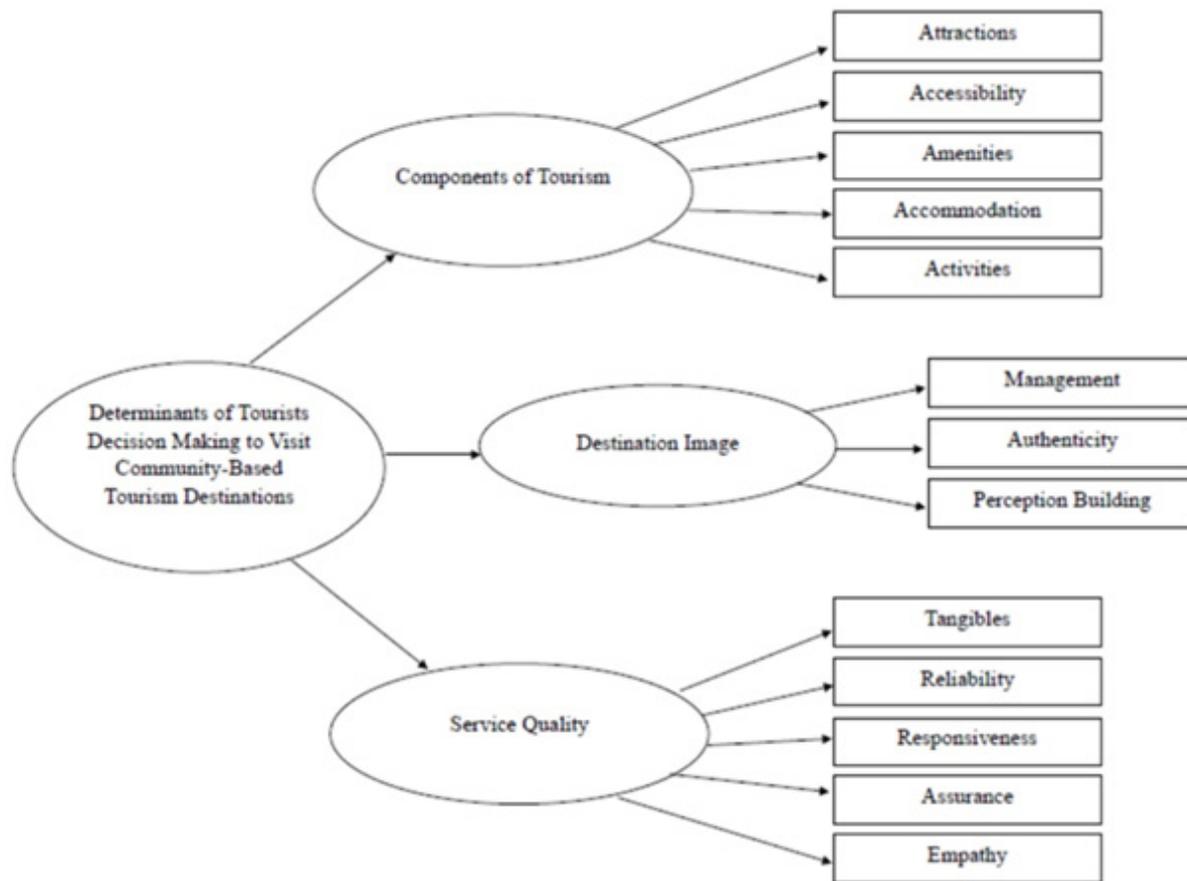
Source: Reseacrh Result, 2025
Figure 1 Determinant of Tourism Decision Making to Visit CBT Destinations

seeking an authentic experience. Accessibility refers to the extent to which tourists can reach the destination easily, both in terms of geographical location, choice of transportation modes, and supporting infrastructure such as directional signs or public transportation lines (Zientara et al., 2024). Although Hua Takhe is located in a suburban area, access to Hua Takhe is very easy because of its strategic location, only about fifteen minutes from Suvarnabhumi Airport, and can be reached by private vehicles or public transportation, helping to strengthen the decision of tourists who want to vacation. Good accessibility increases convenience and

lowers barriers to visitation, which in turn impacts visitation intentions and realizations. This convenience is an important factor in community-based destinations as it determines comfort and affordability. Amenities are additional facilities that support the comfort and basic needs of tourists while in the destination. These facilities include restaurants, cafes, public toilets, places of worship, parking, information centers, and other public facilities are also indicators of destination readiness to receive tourists. Although not the main attraction, adequate amenity will reinforce positive perceptions of destination readiness

and influence tourists' assessment of the overall experience.

Then, lodging is one of the important elements that support comfort during a tourist trip. In community-based tourism, accommodation comes in the form of homestays that are managed directly by local residents. Homestays in Hua Takhe provide more than just a temporary place to stay. Travelers who stay overnight will be involved in the daily life of the host, from cooking activities to casual conversations in the living room. Through these interactions, visitors can learn more about the community's way of life, local values and customs. The availability of accommodation in the form of homestays, which are managed directly by local residents who provide shelter and become a medium for cultural exchange and social experiences (Song et al., 2021). Comfortable facilities such as charcoal coffee shops, community galleries and well-maintained public toilets are an important part of building a positive impression. Homestays run by locals offer affordable prices and the experience of staying with a local family. The activities offered include all forms of activities that tourists can do while in the destination. In Hua Takhe, activities range from learning to make traditional cakes, taking a boat tour on the canal, to joining local craft training. These activities serve as a medium for direct interaction between tourists and residents, strengthen engagement, and encourage the creation of meaningful and authentic experiences. Within the scope of

CBT, activities are not only recreational, but also educative and transformative. This is in line with the principle of community-based tourism, which emphasizes direct involvement of tourists in local life and culture (Kitole & Sesabo, 2024).

Each element in the tourism structure acts not only as a physical aspect, but also as a means of conveying cultural and social values that can influence how tourists understand the authenticity and meaning of the travel experience. When tourists are directly involved in community activities such as cooking together, watching local performances, or taking part in environmental activities, they gain emotional experiences that strengthen their sense of connection to the place they are visiting (Sogaard & Larsen, 2022). These experiences are made more meaningful through communication by locals, both verbally and through body language, which reflects a warm welcome and traditional values (Lupiyoadi & Ridwan, 2018). Tourism component elements also play an important role in shaping a destination's identity. When tourism attractions and activities are packaged with local stories and communicated through community media such as legends or cultural agendas, visitors' perception of sustainability aspects will increase (AlKahtani et al., 2015). Cultural activities that represent local heritage also strengthen the emotional connection between tourists and the community (Novianti et al., 2020), while direct involvement in local activities contributes to a

strong and lasting image in the minds of tourists (Hartono et al., 2022).

The next section explores the forms of destination branding. Based on the approach developed by Bui, et al. (2022), the impression of a place consists of three main varieties: attribute-based images, functional and psychological images, and images formed through external information (Shneikat et al., 2025). The attributive element in Hua Takhe arises from the presence of the canal that extends between the wooden houses, the street artworks, and the feel of the traditional market that is still actively used. Functional and psychological images are supported by a clean environment, a safe atmosphere, and the friendliness of the people who manage tourist activities. These factors reinforce a sense of comfort and build emotional bonds. Meanwhile, organic-inductive imagery develops from various digital content such as reviews on social media, videos uploaded by content creators, and news articles that describe the canal travel experience as a form of escape from the busy metropolitan Bangkok. Short-form video reviews have a high influence on travel interest among the younger generation. These findings confirm that the Hua Takhe community needs to continue producing visual narratives that are authentic and aligned with the reality on the ground in order to maintain a consistent image of the destination in the eyes of the public.

Destination image is a perceptual construction formed from a combination of information received, personal experience, and social representations of a particular destination. Destination image determines tourist decisions because it reflects expectations and expectations of the experience to be obtained. In this model, destination image consists of three main dimensions, management which reflects the quality of destination governance, including cleanliness, security, orderliness of public spaces, and service management. Effective management provides a sense of security, comfort and professionalism for tourists, and enhances the reputation of the destination. In Hua Takhe, this element is reflected in the arrangement of the market environment, the community hygiene system, and the responsive attitude of the community in welcoming tourists.

Authenticity refers to the destination's ability to display a local identity that is not artificial but reflects the cultural and social reality of the community (Komariah et al., 2016). This aspect is crucial in CBT because today's tourists tend to look for experiences that are authentic and not artificial. The element of authenticity in Hua Takhe can be seen from the daily activities of residents, the architecture of old buildings, and the culinary and handicraft traditions that are still preserved. As well as perception building, perception building refers to the process of how the destination image is communicated to the public, either through traditional media, traveler reviews, or social media. Narratives built from direct experience greatly influence the perceptions of other

potential travelers. Communities that are able to build positive narratives and manage their digital reputation well will have a competitive advantage in attracting tourists.

The perception-building dimension is closely related to communication, whether through social media, traveler reviews or direct experiences. Travelers who share their experiences through digital platforms help strengthen the positive image of the destination, while organically creating a communication network between tourists. The role of community communication in shaping destination image is further emphasized, showing that visitors' cognitive and emotional perceptions are formed through direct interaction or through digital media and reviews of fellow tourists (Prastiani et al., 2020). When communication between the community and managers is open and adaptive, mutual trust emerges, which strengthens the direction of long-term destination management (Gómez et al., 2018).

Information delivery strategies that are collaborative, honest and involve direct participation have proven effective in building a destination's reputation as a welcoming and enjoyable location to visit (Szromek et al., 2022). The function of communication in this case is not limited to promotion but includes relationship building that encourages memorable emotional experiences. When information shared through digital media and direct interaction matches the real conditions on site, visitors' sense of trust is strengthened (Musa et al., 2022). Community

efforts in delivering messages through social media have also proven successful in shaping positive perceptions and attracting new travelers (Pung et al., 2024).

The final factor that is an important determinant of the travel experience is service quality. The five key indicators analyzed include physical form, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and care. In a CBT environment, quality is not measured solely by the facilities or physical premises, but rather by the way residents deliver services directly to tourists. A warm welcome, attention to needs, and the ability to respond quickly are measures that visitors value highly. Travelers' views on the friendliness and care of local residents have a major impact on the emotional attachment formed and encourage the willingness to come back (Aunchistha, 2025). When communication patterns are professional and consistent, tourists feel valued and encouraged to share their experiences with others through personal recommendations. This can reinforce the idea that experiences that are able to meet or even exceed expectations will contribute greatly to loyalty and willingness to provide recommendations to other potential tourists.

The quality of service from the community was shown to have a major influence on visitor satisfaction and experience. This finding is in line with the SERVQUAL approach that identifies five main indicators, namely tangible evidence, accuracy, responsiveness, security, and care. In community-based tourism, the aspects of

care and security have more weight because the majority of interactions come directly from local residents. Comfort and warm acceptance are largely determined by the quality of the communication relationship that occurs. These results reinforce the idea that an approach that prioritizes trust and empathy encourages the creation of emotional attachments that then shape the tendency to return or recommend the place.

Service aspects contribute to bridging initial expectations with actual experiences. In community-based tourism, assessment of service quality is not limited to physical aspects such as cleanliness or orderliness of facilities (Sigala et al., 2025). Another aspect that is taken into account is the ability of residents to show personal attention and sensitivity to the social needs of visitors. The friendliness, responsiveness, and care of local residents have a strong influence on tourists' satisfaction levels and propensity to return, especially when the destination is managed by a small-scale community (Gato et al., 2022). Impressions of service quality are developed through interpersonal interactions conveyed by the community. Communities that can share their stories in an honest and friendly manner tend to leave a lasting impression on visitors. Even gestures such as a smile or a friendly attitude contribute greatly to a pleasant experience, such aspects are analyzed as a form of symbolic communication and active engagement that strengthens the emotional value in the

relationship between visitors and hosts.

Service quality is a traveler's assessment of how good the service provided is during their interaction with service providers in the destination. In this model, service quality is described based on the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF frameworks, which include five dimensions, Tangibles: this aspect refers to the physical appearance of the destination and the facilities available, such as environmental cleanliness, building aesthetics, and staff appearance. In Hua Takhe, the well-organized traditional market, well-maintained wooden houses, and visualization of local handicraft products give a professional impression while reflecting local cultural values. Reliability: reliability refers to the ability of a service provider to deliver what it promises accurately and consistently. In CBT, this means the accuracy of the activity schedule, the availability of facilities, and the accuracy of information provided by the guide or activity organizer.

Responsiveness: shows the readiness and speed of services in responding to travelers' needs. In Hua Takhe, community members demonstrate high responsiveness through friendliness, willingness to help, and openness in interacting with guests. Assurance: relates to the professionalism, confidence and credibility of the service provider. In CBT, this dimension is demonstrated through the training of local residents, the ability to provide accurate information, and a courteous attitude that builds travelers' trust. Empathy: reflects personal

attention and understanding of travelers' specific needs. For example, homestay organizers provide special services for the elderly or children, and offer activities tailored to each visitor's interests.

In Hua Takhe, although the form of implementation is different from commercial tourist areas. For example, reliability can be seen in the on-time schedule of boat tours and the accurate delivery of history by guides. Preparedness can be seen from the readiness of residents to help tourists during transactions or when they need additional seats. A sense of security is provided by local inns through the cleanliness of the rooms and the availability of emergency services. Care is shown when hosts provide special menus for guests who observe certain dietary restrictions. While tangible proof is seen in the vintage-style café displays featuring teak wood and canal ornaments.

The synthesis shows the relationship between service and destination image. Responsive and empathetic service creates a positive affective image, which in turn strengthens the attributive and functional cognitive image. When a destination image is established, tourists' perceptions of the tourism component improve, resulting in a positive expectation-experience cycle. This scheme is in line with the destination branding loop model which illustrates that a positive experience will strengthen word of mouth and electronic word of mouth (Audouin, 2022), which then encourages other tourists' visit

intentions (Pike & Page, 2014). On a theoretical level, the integration of SERVQUAL, 5A, and destination image confirms the multifactorial concept in tourist behavior. This research adds a communication layer as a meta-construct that mediates the relationship between the three main factors. The community communication mechanism functions as a sense-making device that translates destination attributes into personal meaning for tourists, the destination as a cultural text that is constantly negotiated through residents' narratives and visitors' interpretations.

Central to the model is the decision-making process of tourists to visit community-based destinations. This process is not linear, but is the result of a complex interaction between expectations, actual experiences, and cognitive and affective evaluations of the destination. The traveler decision factor in this model is directly influenced by the tourism component, which forms the initial expectation of what to expect at the destination. Service quality experienced directly by tourists during the visit. Destination image that acts as a perceptual filter and shapes visit intentions, repeat visits, and recommendations to others. In the integration of these three dimensions, the model places communication as the binding factor that bridges between perception, experience and decision. When local identity is authentically communicated through tourism activities, destination image is positively formed, and service quality is transmitted through warm

social interactions, tourists' decision to visit becomes stronger and more targeted. The importance of empowering local communities as key actors in destination messaging and management is also emphasized in this study. When communities are actively involved in governance and have space to convey their cultural values, tourism sustainability increases. Communication that is rooted in local values and participatory creates an equitable and sustainable tourism ecosystem.

Through the mapping of the findings, three main focuses can be proposed in the communication strategy of destinations such as Hua Takhe. First, strengthening the story and visualization of an authentic image through both direct experience and digital channels. Second, improving the ability of residents to provide satisfactory services and be responsive to the needs of tourists. Third, managing all physical elements and cultural values in an integrated manner in order to leave a deep and pleasant impression on every visitor. The practical implications of this study include organizing communication training directed at destination promotion, developing a digital system that is able to accommodate and follow up on visitor feedback, and collaborative efforts between the public, private and community sectors to maintain the sustainability and competitiveness of the destination image in the future.

The findings show that Thai tourists' choice to visit the community-based tourism area in Hua Takhe is formed through a complex interrelationship between perceptions of service quality, views on destination elements, and the formation of destination images. These three factors act as the foundation of communication that structures the way tourists process information, starting from the initial stage of receiving information to ultimately forming a visit intention (Adeleye, 2023). A synthesis of the literature review systematically shows that these three components influence each other in a bidirectional manner. When the service is considered satisfactory, the impression of the place also becomes more positive. Conversely, when perceptions of place are well formed, tourists tend to rate tourism components more openly. This finding corroborates the tourist decision-making theory that sees the appraisal process as a multilevel sequence, where initial impressions determine expectations at the next stage.

This conceptual model places communication as a key axis in shaping travelers' perceptions, experiences and decisions towards community-based destinations. Empathetic interactions, authentic narratives and active community participation create the structure of memorable and sustainable tourism experiences. The success of this model depends on solid collaboration between communities, tourism managers, and the media in conveying local identity in a consistent and meaningful way to global travelers (Mastika et al., 2023). Communication that is rooted in local values and participatory creates an equitable and

sustainable tourism ecosystem. Finally, the integration of community storytelling in destination communication is an important key in creating memorable experiences (Yasir, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that tourist decision-making, especially in the context of community-based tourism in Hua Takhe, is formed through a systematic and complex evaluation process. This process is influenced by perceptions of the quality of destination components, destination image formed through affective experiences and symbolic communication, and the quality of services perceived during tourist interactions. The findings confirm that travel decisions cannot be separated from collective perceptions of attractions, accessibility, facilities, accommodation and activities, as described in Dickman's 5A model, as well as the emotional and representational aspects inherent in destination image. Service quality, which includes tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, contributes to strengthening meaningful travel experiences. The results of this study show that service quality, destination image, and cultural interactions play a central role in shaping visitors' decision to choose a community-based tourism (CBT) destination. Through the incorporation of various theories and field findings, the study elaborates that people-to-people relationships, emotional engagement,

and stories told by locals have a major influence on how tourists perceive a place, their level of satisfaction, and their propensity to make repeat visits. Experiences that feel real and are delivered through empathetic communication and active participation have been shown to increase destination value and strengthen tourists' long-term commitment. Visual and digital storytelling by the community contributes to the establishment of destination identity and strengthens the trust of travelers. The research highlights the need for service communication training for residents so that the dimensions of empathy and assurance can be met equally. In addition, the provision of digital infrastructure to support user-generated content-based marketing is key in managing an organic-inductive image. Local governments and tourism agencies are advised to provide digital literacy mentoring programs, such as short video production workshops and destination *hashtag* classification, to ensure online narratives are consistent with local cultural values. This study contributes a new conceptual framework that bridges communication and tourism behavior studies through the integration of destination image theory, service quality, and cultural interaction in community-based contexts. The proposed model offers a novel synthesis that has not been comprehensively discussed in previous studies, especially regarding the post-crisis adaptation of local communities.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, N.K.; methodology, N.K.; validation, N.K. and K.K.; formal analysis, N.K.; investigation, N.K.; resources, N.K.;

REFERENCES

Adeleye, B. N. (2023). Re-examining the tourism-led growth nexus and the role of information and communication technology in East Asia and the Pacific. *Heliyon*, *9*(2). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e13505

AlKahtani, S. J. H., Xia, J., Veenendaaland, B., Caulfield, C., & Hughes, M. (2015). Building a conceptual framework for determining individual differences of accessibility to tourist attractions. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, *16*, 28–42. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2015.05.002

Audouin, C. (2022). The role of multi-level governance in branding medium-sized cities: the case of Nantes, France. *Cities*, *123*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2022.103577

Aunchistha, P. U. D. B. A. (2025). Resilience and reinvention: knowledge management strategies for community-based tourism in Post-Pandemic Thailand. *Sustainable Futures*, *9*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sftr.2025.100772

Bakti, I., Sumartias, S., Damayanti, T., Aat, D., & Nugraha, R. (2018). Pengembangan model komunikasi pariwisata berbasis kearifan lokal di Kawasan Geopark Pangandaran. *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi, 6*(2), 217–230. https://doi.org/10.24198/jkk.v6i2.18459

Blomstervik, I. H., & Olsen, S. O. (2022). Progress on novelty in tourism: An integration of personality, attitudinal and emotional theoretical foundations. *Tourism Management, 93*, 104574. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2022.104574

Bui, V., Alaei, A. R., Vu, H. Q., Li, G., & Law, R. (2022). Revisiting tourism destination image: A holistic measurement framework using big data. *Journal of Travel Research, 61*(6), 1287–1307. https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875211024749

Calderón-Fajardo, V., Anaya-Sánchez, R., & Molinillo, S. (2024). Understanding destination brand experience through data mining and machine learning. *Journal of Destination Marketing and*

Management, *31*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2024.100862

Choe, J. Y., & Kim, S. (2018). Effects of tourists' local food consumption value on attitude, food destination image, and behavioral intention. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *71*, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2017.11.007

Dickman, S. (1997). *Tourism: an introductory text* (3rd ed.). Sydney: Hodder Headline.

Gato, M., Dias, Á., Pere and add citation ira, L., da Costa, R. L., & Gonçalves, R. (2022). Marketing communication and creative tourism: An analysis of the local destination management organization. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, *8*(1). https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc8010040

Gómez, M., Imhoff, B., Martín-Consuegra, D., Molina, A., & Santos-Vijande, M. L. (2018). Language tourism: The drivers that determine destination choice intention among U.S. students. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, *27*, 125–135. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2018.06.001

Google Trends. (2025). *Google Trends "□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□" (Talad Kao Hua Takhe)*. Trends.Google.Com. https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=now%20 q="□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□"%20 %20Talad%20Kao%20Hua%20 Takhe&hl=en

Hansen, L.S., & Larsen, T.S. (2022). Relational becomings and ethical practices. *Open Physio Journal* http://www.doi.org/10.14426/opj/202212hp0212

Hartono, T., Amelia Trisakti, F., & Fuadiah, I. (2022). Community-based ecotourism: peran "Pokdarwis" dalam branding Siak Hijau. *PRofesi Humas*, *6*(2), 154–177. https://doi.org/10.24198/prh.v6i2.26018

Inkson, C., & Minnaert, L. (2022). *Tourism management: an introduction*. Sage.

Kadarisman, A. (2021). Government public relations dalam pengembangan pariwisata masa pandemi COVID-19 di Geopark Ciletuh. *PRofesi Humas*, *5*(2), 270–290. https://doi.org/10.24198/prh.v5i2.29800

Kitole, F. A., & Sesabo, J. K. (2024). Tourism-driven livelihood dynamics: A comprehensive empirical study of Mount Kilimanjaro National Park communities in Tanzania. *International Journal of Geoheritage and Parks*, *12*(3), 416–433. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijgeop.2024.07.001

Komariah, K., Subekti, P., Sos, S., & Fakultas, M. S. (2016). Peran Humas Dalam Pengembangan Pantai Pangandaran sebagai Destinasi Ekowisata melalui Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Pangandaran. *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi*, *4*(2), 173–184. https://doi.org/10.24198/jkk.v4i2.7741

Kotler, P., & Keller, K. Lane. (2006). *Marketing*

management (12th ed.). Pearson Prentice Hall.

Lupiyoadi, R. (2028). *Manajemen pemasaran jasa: Berbasis kompetensi*. Salemba Empat

Magasi, C., Mashenene, R. G., & Ndengenesa, D. M. (2022). Service quality and students' satisfaction in Tanzania's higher education: A re-examination of SERVQUAL model. *International review of management and marketing*, 12(3), 18-25. https://doi. org/10.32479/irmm.13040

Mastika, I. K., Harsono, S. S., Khristianto, W., Oktawirani, P., & Hutama, P. S. (2023). Creative strategies of local resources in managing geotourism in the Ijen Geopark Bondowoso, East Java, Indonesia. *International Journal of Geoheritage and Parks*, *11*(1), 149–168. https://doi. org/10.1016/j.ijgeop.2023.01.002

Musa, H. G., Fatmawati, I., & Nuryakin, N. (2022). The strategies to promote Sudan's tourism destinations post COVID-19 pandemic. *PRofesi Humas Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Hubungan Masyarakat*, *7*(1), 38. https://doi.org/10.24198/prh.v7i1.37042

Novianti, E., Bakti, I., & Perbawasari, S. (2020). Jaringan komunikasi dan Implementasinya dalam mengembangkan Desa Berbudaya Lingkungan. *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi*, *8*(1), 85–98. https://doi.org/10.24198/jkk. v8i1.24004

Pike, S., & Page, S. J. (2014). Destination marketing organizations and destination marketing: Anarrative analysis of the literature. In *Tourism Management* (Vol. 41, pp. 202–227). Elsevier Ltd. https://doi. org/10.1016/j.tourman.2013.09.009

Prachachat Turakij. (2024). *Thai tourism exceeds target in 2024: Over 35 million foreign arrivals generate 1.8 trillion baht in revenue*. Prachachat Turakij. https:// www.prachachat.net/breaking-news/news- 1725336

Prastiani, N., Zuhriya, R., & Pratiwi, B. (2020). Promosi dan pemasaran pariwisata objek wisata Tirta Sinongko dalam upaya menarik wisatawan. *PRofesi Humas*, *5*(1), 38–57. https://doi.org/10.24198/prh.v5i1.21311

Pung, J. M., Houge Mackenzie, S., & Lovelock, B. (2024). Regenerative tourism: Perceptions and insights from tourism destination planners in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management*, *32*. https:// doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2024.100874

PwC. (2023). *Travel industry outlook 2023: Changing travel behaviors and emerging trends*. PricewaterhouseCoopers. https:// www.pwc.com

Sangpikul, A., & Thipbharos, P. (2024). Understanding Green Hotel Selection in The Real-World Situation Through A Decision-Making Theory: A Case of Thailand. *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, *30*(2), 283–291. https://doi.

org/10.20867/thm.30.2.11

Schmoll, G. A. (1977). *Tourism promotion.* Tourism International Press.

Shneikat, B., Elfekair, A., Laradi, S., & Wondirad, A. (2025). The impact of information quality on behavioral intention: New insights from North African tourism sector. *Acta Psychologica*, *256*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105024

Sigala, M., Goh, E., Leung, X., Rasoolimanesh, S. M., Su, C. H. (Joan), & Tham, A. (2025). 30 Years of contribution and future directions in tourism, hospitality, and events research: A Quo Vadis perspective from the Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, *62*, 258–265. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2025.02.001

Slutskiy, P., & Boonchutima, S. (2022). Credibility of the Official COVID Communication in Thailand: When People Stop Believing the Government. *American Behavioral Scientist*. https://doi.org/10.1177/00027642221118297

Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, *104*, 333–339. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039

Song, S., Suess, C., Mody, M. A., & Dogru, T. (2021). Comparing the influence of substantive and communicative servicescape on healthcare traveler emotions: the moderating effect of accommodation type and interior design style. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *33*(1), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-12-2019-1022

Spitzberg, B.H. and Cupach, W.R. (1984). Interpersonal Communication Competence. San Diego: Sage.

Stylidis, D., Shani, A., & Belhassen, Y. (2017). Testing an integrated destination image model across residents and tourists. *Tourism Management*, *58*, 184–195. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.10.014

Sun, R., Ye, X., Li, Q., & Scott, N. (2024). Assessing the eco-efficiency of cruise tourism at the national Level: Determinants, challenges, and opportunities for sustainable development. *Ecological Indicators*, *160*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolind.2024.111768

Szromek, A. R., Walas, B., & Kruczek, Z. (2022). The Willingness of Tourism-Friendly Cities' Representatives to Share Innovative Solutions in the Form of Open Innovations. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, *8*(3). https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc8030112

Tourism Authority of Thailand. (2024). *Ignite tourism Thailand 2025 vision and tourism strategies*.https://thailand.prd.go.th/en/content/category/detail/id/48/iid/275673

UNWTO. (2021). *2021: Tourism United, Resilient and Determined*. Untwo.Org. https://www.unwto.org/2021-a-year-in-review

Webster, J., & Watson, R.T. (2002). Analyzing the past to prepare for the future: Writing a literature review. *MIS Quarterly*, 26(2), iii–xiii.

Yasir. (2021). Komunikasi pariwisata dalam pengembangan destinasi wisata di Kecamatan Kuok Kabupaten Kampar. *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi*, *9*(1), 108–120. https://doi.org/10.24198/jkk.v9i1.26170

Zientara, P., Jażdżewska-Gutta, M., Bąk, M., & Zamojska, A. (2024). What drives tourists' sustainable mobility at city destinations? Insights from ten European capital cities. *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management*, *33*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2024.100931