ABSTRACT

Word of mouth (WOM) plays an important role in one’s daily life, especially in the tourism industry, even though WOM is intangible and untouchable. With the development of information communication technologies, WOM has developed into electronic word of mouth, also referred to as eWOM. Potential tourists obtain travel information when choosing a tourism destination via new channels, especially via eWOM. This study examines the influence of eWOM on tourists’ behavioral intentions to choose a particular tourism destination. Through a case study of Chinese tourists, the theory of planned behavior (TPB) is utilized to investigate how eWOM influences Chinese tourists’ intention to visit Thailand.

This study is based on non-probability convenience sampling where primary data were collected from 400 respondents who relied on tourists’ online comments about their travel experiences to plan their trip to Thailand in the last six months. To gather primary data, a structured and self-administered questionnaire was designed and given to Chinese tourists in Bangkok. The researcher used both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the data.

The results show that there is a medium positive relationship between eWOM and attitude, and between attitude and behavioral intention toward visiting Thailand. Moreover, there is a strong positive relationships between eWOM and subjective norms, subjective norms and behavioral intention, eWOM and perceived behavioral control, perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention, and between eWOM and behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand, which means eWOM significantly affect tourists’ behavioral intention toward visiting Thailand by affecting their attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control of the theory of planned behavior (TPB).
The findings of this study will help tourism organizations and marketers based in China and Thailand to realize that using eWOM to obtain information for traveling is becoming a major trend for Chinese tourists when planning a so-called Do-It-Yourself (DIY) trip. It would be effective for them to attract more Chinese tourists through e-marketing, such as through the creation of an appropriate online communication forum with rich content in order to stimulate positive eWOM that would positively influence tourist behavioral intention.

KEY WORDS: Attitude, Behavioral Intention, eWOM, Perceived Behavioral Control, Subjective Norms, Tourism Destination, WOM, Chinese Tourist.