

PROMOTING COUNTRY AS TOURIST DESTINATION TO CHINESE TOURISTS
VIA WEIBO:
A CASE STUDY OF THE SWITZERLAND TOURISM BOARD



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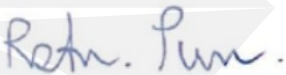
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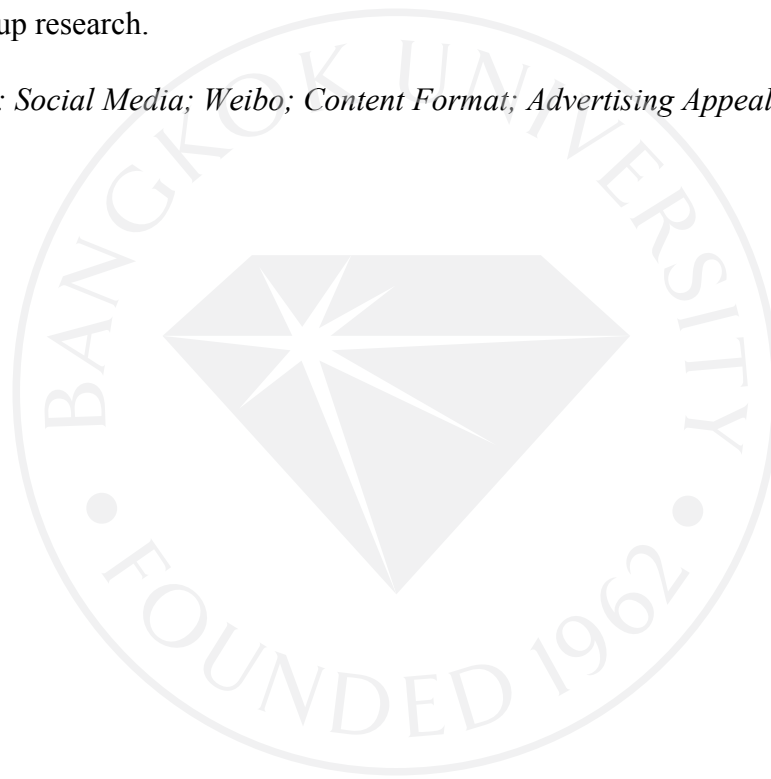
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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the content format, advertising strategy and execution style presented in the articles of Switzerland Tourism Weibo official account with quantitative content analysis. 238 articles were selected from Switzerland Tourism Weibo from May 2018 to April 2020 as samples of the study by random sampling method. Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) were used to analyze the data. The findings present that Switzerland Tourism Weibo plays an important role in communicating messages of destination to potential Chinese tourists and positively influence their decision-making. For content format, text with images are used the most to convey messages. In terms of the advertising appeals, tourist attractions, brand appeals, tourist attraction, brand appeal, musical appeal, nature, outdoor activity, promotion campaign, custom, trending topic, transportation, food and beverage, event, accommodation, social appeal, endorsement appeal, weather report, popularity appeal,

adventure appeal, animal, romantic appeal are commonly used in Switzerland Tourism Weibo articles. As for the execution style, demonstration and slice-of-life are the most popular strategy. Implications are provided for marketers who are using social media such as Weibo to promote their products and services to audiences in China and scholars in follow-up research.

Keywords: Social Media; Weibo; Content Format; Advertising Appeal; Execution style.



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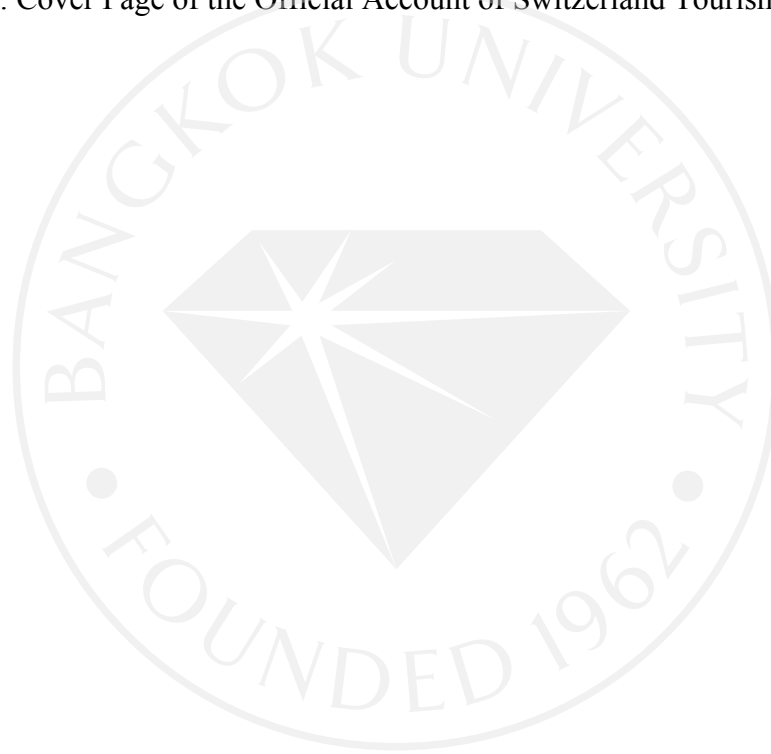
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

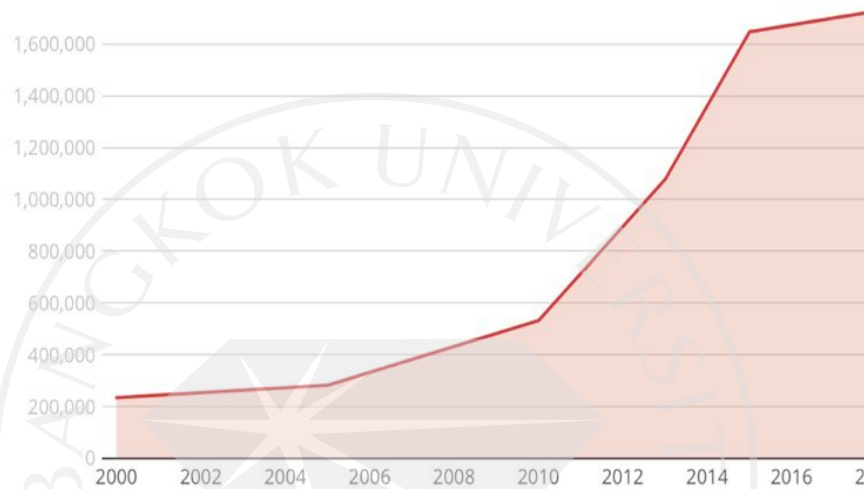
This chapter describes the background, rationale and problem statement, objectives and scope of the study, research questions, research hypotheses and significance of the study. The important terms are also conceptually defined.

1.1 Background of the Study

As China's population is getting richer and more and more Chinese are able to travel abroad, mainland China has been regarded as a potential market for outbound tourism with great potential. The global tourism industry has been affected by the surge in Chinese tourists.

Switzerland is one of the most attractive countries in the world. The Swiss tourism industry attracts many Chinese tourists with its good economic benefits, high standard of living and beautiful tourist attractions. According to the data from Allen & Zhang (2019), there were 35.5 million overnight stays in Switzerland and 19.3 million Chinese tourists in 2016. They spent an average of 350 francs per night. In fact, half of the Chinese tourist budget is indeed used for shopping.

Figure 1.1 Overnight Stays in Switzerland by Chinese Tourists 2000-2018



(Also includes guests from Hong Kong and Taiwan)

Source: Allen, M., & Zhang, Y. Record-breaking Chinese tourist party descends on Switzerland. Swissinfo.ch (2019, May 14).

The graph above depicts the growth of Chinese tourists visiting Switzerland. In 2013, the number of Chinese tourists staying overnight exceeded the 1 million mark for the first time. The market share of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan increased from 0.7% to 4.5% within the specified time.

The Swiss Tourism Board (ST) is Switzerland's national tourism board. For more than 90 years, it has been committed to promoting Switzerland as a destination for tourism, vacation and conferences in Switzerland and abroad. In 1998, the Swiss Tourism Board, as the first European national tourism organization, began operations in the People's Republic of China. At present, Switzerland tourism China has three offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong with twelve staff throughout the country. The Swiss Tourist Office (ST) mainly operates online, and its official website is called MySwitzerland.com. The website serves as the central hub of ST's online communication strategy, making marketing and sales activities possible (Luxury Properties Showcase, 2020).

Famous tourist destinations have certain advantages in customer recognition, market competition, introduction of new scenic spots, customer loyalty, value sharing and reputation, which can produce positive market effects and increase huge economic benefits. Chinese consumers are interested in choosing famous tourist destinations. At this point, tourism organizations are trying to impress people with advertisements.

Advertising is one of the most important factors that helps the tourism industry attract tourists from local and international markets. The tourism sector is responsible for promoting natural resources, culture, heritage, etc., and helping tourists experience the destination. Travel advertising helps tourists get familiar with the destination before visiting it in person.

Advertising plays a key role in attracting tourists. Technically speaking, tourism is not a product. It is invisible, so unlike products, the industry cannot sell directly to their customers. These industries sell specific destinations based on tourists' imagination. Gurtoo (2019) stated that the tourist plans a holiday on the basis of expectations developed via advertising.

Traditional media related to advertising include television, radio, movie, newspapers, magazine, as well as various forms of outdoor advertising, such as billboards. This marketing communication usually represents a one-way communication between the advertiser and the audience, and it is not interactive. Today, social media has a huge impact on the way we experience the world around us. Lang (2017) stated that Social media and tourism marketing are indeed a match made in digital heaven.

Hu, Marchiori, Kalbaska, & Cantoni (2014) found that whether in the search of travel-related information or the sharing of travel experiences after travel, Chinese tourists are very active online. A recent report released by China Travel Trends, the China Outbound Tourism Research Institute, and the Asia Pacific Travel Association pointed out that Chinese tourists are more likely to obtain information through social media rather than visiting official websites.

Sina Weibo, China's largest and leading social media platform, has gained more than 500 million registered users (Sienna Parulis-Cook, 2019). Weibo is driven by the desire for information sharing or information collection, and it is a media tool with certain

social functions. Weibo is considered to be a more powerful content production platform. The comprehensive V account spans 45 vertical and multimedia supports make Weibo an ideal original content platform. According to Zhao (2017), Weibo has 340,000 orange V accounts and 15,000 golden V accounts. The huge market penetration of Weibo indicates that tour operators and marketers need to understand how to establish effective and sustainable communication on Chinese social media platforms to reach Chinese tourists.

More and more Chinese customers obtain travel information through Weibo. Users can open their accounts, upload text or multimedia content such as pictures, videos, and share them with other users on the platform. Compared with personal accounts, corporate accounts provide more professional functions. With this account, the company can increase brand awareness and loyalty by posting the latest product release information and launching promotional campaigns, and can also improve engagement and customer by interacting with followers (Wan, 2019). Hence, the marketing effect of the official account must be fully utilized, which means that Swiss Tourism must learn to publish effective posts and find ways to effectively reach Chinese customers through this platform.

The official Weibo account is the best platform to promote Swiss tourism to Chinese customers, it has comparatively mature advertising products, and provides a variety of advertising and targeting options. The key to tourism promotion and destination awareness is the content of Weibo advertising, which help the official account holder to

reach the target audience through differentiated experiences and emotional connections. From a content strategy perspective, Weibo tour operators are focusing on destination awareness, presence of attractions, and promotional activities to access original production and user-generated content. From the customer's perspective, advertising appeal is changing, customers are looking for convincing and high-quality Weibo articles.

1.2 Rationale and Problem Statement

As far as this platform is concerned, the content and entire page of a travel article has an obvious purpose, which is to attract the audience with high quality and well-planned strategy. Articles on Weibo's official account should be persuasive in order to eventually lead Chinese tourists to decide to travel to Switzerland. This sparked a research interest in understanding how the Swiss Tourism Board can effectively promote its destination to Chinese viewers through its Weibo official account.

1.3 Objective of Study

The purposes of this study are to explore the content format and advertising strategy of the Swiss Tourism (ST) Weibo official account. The specific objectives are:

a) To investigate the type of Weibo content format being used in the ST Weibo official account article;

b) To examine the advertising strategy (rational and emotional appeals) being used in the article on the official account of ST Weibo;

c) To indicate the execution style being in the article on the official account of ST Weibo.

1.4 Research Questions

To explore how the Switzerland Tourism (ST) advertising was executed in the selected Weibo official account articles, the following three research questions are proposed:

RQ # 1: What types of Weibo content format are used in the ST official account articles?

RQ # 2: What advertising strategy (rational and emotional appeal) are used in the article on the official account of ST Weibo?

RQ # 3: What execution styles are used in the ST Weibo official account articles?

1.5 Scope of the Study

Based on the advertising innovative strategy, this research is limited to the type of media material, advertising appeals and execution style in the article of the official account of Swiss Tourism Weibo. The purpose is to study the current status of the official accounts of Switzerland Tourism Weibo for Chinese customers, and what messages can reflect the advertising appeals of Switzerland Tourism articles. Therefore, the selected articles are chosen from the official account of the Swiss Tourism Weibo from May 2019 to April 2020. Quantitative content analysis (Berelson, 1984) is used to objectively, systematically and quantitatively describe this communication phenomenon.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Weibo has become a very important channel for tourism agencies to establish contacts with potential customers in China. So as to reach the Chinese population, foreign tourism companies really need to fully understand how to manage Weibo's official account management platform and learn how to interact effectively with its users. The researcher tends to fill in the gap, sum up some suggestions, and provide some valuable references for marketers and scholars in follow-up research.

The two main meanings of this study are:

- 1) Academically, this research provides empirical evidence for the Weibo content format, advertising strategy and execution styles in the Swiss Tourism's Weibo official account article.
- 2) In practice, the research results and suggestions in this article provide useful management inspiration for foreign tourism operators and follow-up researchers who are interested in marketing communication via Weibo research.

1.7 Definition of Terms

This research involves the following terms.

1.7.1 Sina Weibo

“Weibo” means “micro-blog” in Chinese, it is China's biggest social media platform after Tencent's WeChat. Sina Weibo or simply Weibo is a microblogging website and application launched by Sina Corporation in 2009, with over 300 million monthly active users (Tenba Group, 2019).

1.7.2 Weibo content format

It refers to the audio language and visual language in the text, the text and rich media materials posted in Weibo official account articles.

1.7.3 Advertising appeal

There are two types of advertising appeals.

1.7.3.1 Rational Appeal

It relates to the audience's self-interest by showing product benefits such as product's quality, economy, value or performance (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

1.7.3.2 Emotional appeal

“Emotional appeal attempts to stir up either negative or positive emotions that can motivate purchase (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018)”. These appeals include fear, anger, passion, etc.

1.7.4 Execution Style

This term is defined as the way an advertisement conveys its message to a target audience. "How to say a message" can be done in many ways, such as lifestyle, demonstration, drama, animation, fantasy, endorsement, slice-of-life, etc (Zou & Volz, 2010).

1.7.4.1 Lifestyle

It shows "how" products or services will "perfectly" integrate into consumers' lifestyles, improve their convenience or quality of life.

1.7.4.2 Demonstration

It shows how the product works. It provides an effective way to convey the advantages of the product to the audience.

1.7.4.3 Drama

This style of theatre performance is considered part of entertainment advertising. The drama draws the audience to the actions it depicts.

1.7.4.4 Animation

Animated characters are used as brand spokespersons.

1.7.4.5 Fantasy

It is creating a fantasy around a product and what it can do for a consumer often aligns well with a *social appeal*-the need to identify with something bigger than oneself. It is about creating a fantasy around a product, what it can do for consumers, and it often

fits well with a social attraction, which is the need to identify something bigger than oneself.

1.7.4.6 Endorsement

Having celebrities or experts explain products is usually a way to gain brand trust from consumers.

1.7.4.7 Slice-of-life

It depicts people enjoying life because of a certain product or service in a normal setting. The purpose of this style is to establish an attachment to the product by demonstrating how "they" can enjoy a better life if they participate in the product.

1.7.5 User Generated Content (UGC)

UGC stands for user-generated content, which is any form of content posted by unpaid contributors. UCG can be content of any type, including images, website pages, social media posts, blogs and testimonials (Jose, 2020).

1.7.6 GIF

GIF stands for graphics interchange format, a type of computer file that contains a still or moving image (Elyssamcgregor, 2019).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature regarding content format, advertising appeal and execution style.

2.1 An Overview of Switzerland Tourism Development

The Switzerland Tourism (ST) is committed to promote Switzerland as a travel destination on a global scale, while emphasizing the country's attractiveness for multiple purposes: as a perfect holiday destination throughout the year, the slogan is: "Switzerland. get natural", but also as an ideal place for business travel and meetings. ST is headquartered in Zurich, with branches in 26 countries and a total of 240 employees (S-GE, 2020).

2.1.1 Switzerland Tourism Board

Cantoni, Brühlhart and Alessandro (2012) stated that Switzerland Tourism(ST) is a complex organization whose main goal is to market products and services for the Swiss tourism in a certain number of markets. There are six different units in Switzerland Tourism: marketing and conference; marketing and strategic partnership; corporate

communications, media and market research; Business development; portal management, e-marketing and IT; Finance, control and human resources. The online communication department belongs to the e-marketing and IT, and is also divided into six different working groups: Information technology; network production and data network; online marketing and e-commerce management; e-commerce Solutions; Partner websites and Postal companies. E-marketing is the one that is increasingly relevant in terms of planned investment and impact among these working groups mentioned.

ST recognizes and values the importance of technology and e-marketing, it can be seen from the budget provided in this channel for online activities, the number of end users and potential travelers who are constantly looking for online content at their destination. The key to success of online communication of Swiss Destination Management Organizations lies in The modernization and versatility of the technology used, as well as the practical use of online communication channels.

2.1.2 Switzerland Tourism in China

According to LPS (2020), Switzerland Tourism has three offices and a 10-employee team in China: Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong. The business of Chinese people traveling to Switzerland has been soaring. In the past decade, it has grown dramatically by about

30%, and broke through the 1 million overnight mark in 2014, became the fifth largest foreign market after Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom and France.

It is reported in the Switzerland Tourism (2018, Switzerland-China Year of Tourism 2017) that China and Switzerland hope to cooperate more closely in the field of tourism. Switzerland-China Tourism Year 2017 has initiated this cooperation, and on December 7, the tourism bureaus of the two countries signed an agreement at the Sino-Swiss Tourism Forum in Lausanne which laid the foundation for the continued cooperation between the two countries' tourism industry. In fact, the cooperation between the two countries' tourism industry started as early as 20 years ago when Switzerland Tourism(ST) was the first European tourism organization to open an office in China. According to The Local (2019), Switzerland Tourism is providing customized tours in the most beautiful regions of Switzerland based on Chinese tourists' preferences and pace.

2.1.3 Switzerland Tourism on Weibo

The Swiss Tourism official Weibo account started publishing articles on February 26, 2011. Up to now, there are in total 5424 articles, 466K followers. Marchiori, Kalbaska and Cantoni (2014) stated in their research that Swiss Tourism Board has a large share in the Chinese market, and also are trying to shape the representation of Chinese tourists on different online platforms such as Weibo.

2.2 Content Format

According to Ekaterina Melnik (2019), Weibo is a highly interactive microblogging platform due to its diverse content formats: 140-character text posts combined with images, videos or links to embedded interactive H5 (the mobile version of websites opened in mobile browsers) pages. With its interactive and attractive content format, Weibo is often a catalyst for viral posts and just the right platform for discussions on "hot topics".

Chozan (2020) found that multimedia content consumption on Weibo has also seen sustainable growth, with the popularity of short videos, live streaming and Weibo Story, which posts short videos or photos and videos in a slideshow format that disappear in 24 hours, like the story function on Facebook and Instagram.

2.3 Advertising Appeal

According to Belch (2017), advertising appeal is used to catch consumers' attention, generate their interest and affect their perception of products and services. Similarly, Pack (2017) advocates that it is crucial to satisfy consumers' needs with the right appeals in marketing communication.

Advertising appeals are mainly divided into two categories: emotional appeals and rational appeals, and cover 23 types (Middleton, 2018).

1) Emotional Advertising Appeals

The emotion that affects the target audiences can be achieved through gorgeous images, touching text or beautiful music, etc. Emotional advertising requests depend on emotions and perceptions mainly rather than logic or reason to trigger actions, including young appeal, personal appeal, popularity appeal, social appeal, endorsement appeal, humorous appeal, romantic appeal, sexual appeal, fear appeal, music appeal, brand appeal, empathy appeal, potential appeal, and adventure appeal.

2) Rational Advertising Appeals

Rational advertising appeals are based on objective facts, logic, and reasoning. It even works for emotional themes, and plays an important role in helping the target audience determine the value of the product or service. Compared with emotional appeals, rational appeals are sometimes more manipulative. However it is also more authentic and makes the brand more authoritative, including recommendation solutions, scarce appeal, pain appeal, nature appeal, status appeal, statistic appeal, beauty appeal, transparency appeal, and comparison appeal.

2.3.1 Advertising Appeals in Tourism Communication Strategy

According to Kamp and MacInnis (1995), the hedonic nature of the consumption experience in services such as restaurant meals, hotel stays, and vacations may make emotional appeals highly effective. Therefore, for service marketer, emotional appeal may communicate more effective messages. And Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) define hedonic consumption as those aspects of consumer behavior that are associated with the multisensory, fantasy, and emotive elements of product usage experience. Mattila (2001) also mentioned that many hotel advertisements place customers in a pleasant environment to cater to audiences' emotional needs and desires.

Aaker and Stayman (1990) mentioned that the informative/effective factor appears to be the best predictor of advertising likability and brand attitude in the goods marketing literature. And Berry, Conant and Parasuraman (1991) takes it into a service context, and points out that factual information is especially useful when consumers need to understand the service and want to know what they can get before making a purchasing decision.

Zinn and Manfredo (2000) studied the impact of rational and emotional appeals in the context of a trapping ban proposal in the field of leisure science. They assumed that emotional appeals are more convincing and unforgettable than rational appeals. However, results by Ahyoung, Daeyoung, Jinhyung and Ji-Hwan (2019) show that both appeals are equally persuasive, although emotional appeals are more easily aroused.

In a similar vein, the results of a scenario-based experiment with 480 respondents conducted by Saerom Wang, Ksenia Kirillova and Xinran Lehto (2017) show that messages with emotional appeals are more effective than messages with rational appeals in increasing tourists' attitude towards destinations and recommendation intentions.

2.4 Execution Styles

According to Zou and Volz (2010), the method of presenting selected advertising appeals to the target audience is called execution style. The advertiser has to transform the innovative concept into an advertising execution that will attract the target audiences' attention and interest during message execution, and use style, tone, words and format to execute the message. Bakir (2012) advocates that message content differentiates rational appeals from emotional appeals, and message execution distinguishes positive advertising from negative advertising, and positive advertising has more executional elements than negative advertising.

The literature of Bakir (2012) and Zou and Volz (2010) provides the following execution styles to present the advertising appeals when creating and coding advertisement: Demonstration; Testimonial; Factual; Slice-of-life; Animation; Dramatization; Authoritative; Endorsement and Comparative advertising.

2.4.1 Execution Styles in Tourism Communication

In the hospitality field, Kwok and Yu (2013) analyzed the Facebook pages of 12 restaurants and found that photo and text messages receive more likes and comments than Web links and video messages, conversational messages perform better than sales and marketing messages. In addition, the research of Laskey (1994) on travel agency advertising tested that different information strategies produce different advertising effects. The results show that informational messages can cause more positive reactions than transformational messages, and picture messages are more effective than textual information (Xi, Billy & Mehmet, 2017).

2.5 Previous Studies

The results of the research of Basharat, Muhammad, Asghar and Muhammad (2011) show that innovative marketing strategies and effective execution are positively correlated with corporate performance.

2.5.1 Innovative Strategies by the Switzerland Tourism

The Switzerland Tourism (2017, Nature wants you back, Promotion, Segment and experiential strategy) expressed that Switzerland needs to be a "first-class" holiday

destination and to differentiate itself with a surprising, unique and high-quality experience. They also learned that travelers are willing to pay for these attributes. In 2016, in order to be able to promote and offer the right experience for individual markets and groups with more accuracy, ST identified ten segments in leisure tourism and three in business tourism.

For example, the Swiss Tourism focused its 2017 summer campaign on nature lovers with the slogan “Nature wants you back”. This is one of 13 visitor types defined by the Swiss Tourism as part of its 2016 segmentation programme. The advertisement for the summer campaign tells a transformation story - an office worker becomes more and more real and wild in nature. The dramatic staging of the ad played a major role in the online success of the summer campaign.

In addition, it can be seen typically in the 2017 summer and winter campaign that the Swiss Tourism takes full advantage of the opportunities offered by promotion to market many faces of Switzerland to the world. The content marketing formats include key stories and live campaigns. For example, the summer launch in the Swiss embassy in Berlin is an innovative way to promote Switzerland as a vacation destination

According to the Switzerland Tourism (2018, *Storytelling in Tourism, Standards for influencers*), the key stories are the main focus of Switzerland tourism content marketing. Each story is about people or travel experience, developed in cooperation with relevant regional partners or destinations, containing engaging text, attractive images and

inspirational video clips. In 2018, there are 11 city key stories and 12 summer key stories produced. Also, there are nine stories for the winter season 2017/2018 and eight for winter season 2018/2019. In addition, a special cycling key story was produced for the hotels, and published on the MySwitzerland.com website, as canvas ads on Facebook (full-screen displays on the mobile Facebook newsfeed), as “native advertising” (placed by the native ad network Outbrain), as part of media campaigns, in the Switzerland Tourism newsletter, Switzerland Tourism magazines and at partner events.

The Swiss Tourism takes influencer management as a key element of the marketing mix, because influencers with clear strategy and right guidelines are effective marketing tools. In recent years, the Swiss Tourism has gained significant know-how in influencer management. This knowledge is reflected in revised guidelines defining choice, cooperation and objectives, for example. The approach here is to put quality before quantity.

2.5.2 Destination Innovative Strategy Posts on Weibo

Think Staff (2020) gave an example that potential visitors using Weibo (a Chinese social media platform) responded emotionally to posts in the destination Canada about locally grown cranberries. The reviewers compared the sweetness and sourness of cranberries with the inevitable frustration and happiness in daily life, and said they should

embrace life in a sweet and bitter way. These pages are in Chinese, but users can easily translate the pages into English using the Google Chrome browser.

Figure 2.1 Responses of Potential Visitors to Posts in Destination Canada



Source: Think Staff (2020)

According to Think Staff (2020), this unique emotional connection shows that destination management organizations (DMO) need to consider tourists' emotions and senses when communicating with them for tourists to admire brands. The best way to resonate and make friends with Chinese tourists is to humanize the brand. Weibo provides huge opportunities for decision makers to humanize their brands and establish brand-tourist rapport.

China is the country with the largest number of netizens in the world, and most Chinese netizens use social media. Weibo combines many technical features of Facebook and Twitter, and also entails unique consumer online behavior, thus becoming a useful marketing platform. Weibo implements DMO/tourist dialogue through comments, tags, hashtags and other interactive methods, and provides them with customized modules and pages on the official government/enterprise version. This is similar to the idea of a Facebook page, but further expands that idea. Marketers can add modules such as company introductions, announcements, links, videos, votes, and Weibo account lists associated with corporate accounts. These functions provide DMO with more choices and flexibility in establishing brand image and destination promotion. In addition, Weibo also shows trending topics like “#Travel with Weibo#” to users, so marketers are able to encourage tourists to share their travel experiences.

GoDigitalChina (2019) reports that New Zealand is another marketer that successfully markets on Weibo. They invited Huang Lei - a Chinese celebrity who is known for acting, singing, screenwriting and teaching at the university in New Zealand to promote New Zealand as an ideal destination. While in New Zealand, he posted his itinerary on Weibo. This story has aroused a lot of attention. It is liked by 500,000 people and viewed by more than 1.6 million people. There are even 500 publications of articles generated on Weibo, which have great advertising value for New Zealand's tourism industry.

Sienna Parulis-Cook (2019) lists ten tips that people or organizations need to know and do to make their Weibo account successful: 1) Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs), 2) Hashtags, 3) Super Topics, 4) Frequent and Timely Content, 5) User-Generated Content (UGC), 6) Short Videos, 7) Working with Sina-Weibo parent company, 8) Photos, 9) Emojis and 10) Reputation Management.

2.6 Research Hypotheses

Based on the literature review presented above, this study intends to test the following three research hypotheses:

Hypothesis # 1: In terms of content format, text with Image is used most to convey messages in ST Weibo articles.

Hypothesis # 2: In terms of advertising strategy, rational appeal is used more often than emotional appeal in ST Weibo articles.

Hypothesis # 3: Endorsement and dramatisation are used most as key execution style in ST weibo articles.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, research design, population and sample selection, data collection, research procedures and data analysis methods are described, the data of coding is explained in detail, The validity and reliability of this study are also discussed.

3.1 Research Design

This study uses the media information in the selected Switzerland Tourism Weibo official account articles as the research object, and uses quantitative content analysis to examine the advertising strategies of ST Weibo marketing communication. Content analysis is a very important research method to conduct an objective, systematic and quantitative analysis. The basic approach is to establish the study units, and encode the message (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991).

The purpose of this study is to quantify the selected message, then draw conclusions on the most common advertising strategy of the Switzerland Tourism Weibo. It is expected that the results will be helpful not only for tourism practitioners, but also for researchers in the field of tourism communication.

3.2 Research Data and Sample Selection

The samples were selected from articles posted on the Switzerland Tourism Weibo official account in the past two years (from May 2018 to April 2020) with the use of a simple random sampling method. A simple random sample takes a small, random portion of the entire population to represent the entire data set, where each member has an equal probability of being chosen. Researchers can use methods like lotteries or random draws to create a simple random sample (Hayes, 2020).

3.3 Research Procedure

There are three stages: 1) data collection; 2) data decoding; 3) data analysis and summary of results. For data collection, such as content format (text, image, video clips, GIF, emoji, web links, hashtag, trending topic, liked UGC, forwarded article) was recorded first, then classified into three categories: 1) Text with image ; 2)Text with video; and 3) Text mixed with others.

For data decoding, the related elements in selected Switzerland Tourism Weibo article are decoded, take content format as an example, the researcher applies a deductive approach to assess the items as follow:

1) Text:

Data in the following categories are presented in the text format: Nature; Tourist attractions (e.g., mountains, lakes); Transportation (e.g., railway system, Swiss pass); Food and beverage (e.g., restaurant, cheese); Accommodation (e.g., hotels, homestay); Outdoor activity (e.g., hiking, skiing); Custom (e.g., Mascot, tradition); Souvenirs and shopping (e.g., shops, chocolate); Plants (e.g., edelweiss, camilla); Animals(e.g., alpaca, swan); Promotion (eg., quiz price, lottery draw); Trending topic (e.g., Covid-19 pandemic, festivals); Events (e.g., light show, youth Olympic games) and Weather report.

2) Image

Data in the following categories are presented in the image format: Landscapes, attractions, outdoor activities, events, transportation, promotion, plants, animals, hotels, food and beverage, festivals, etc..

3) Video clips

Data in the following categories are presented in the video format: Landscape, attractions, outdoor activities, festivals, transportation system, UGC, etc..

4) Others

Data in the following categories are presented in the other formats: GIF, emoji, hashtag, web links, trending topic, forwarded article, liked UGC.

For data analysis and summary of results, the main elements of each analysis unit, the type of content format, the core advertising appeals and the execution styles of all units of analysis are identified and counted for descriptive statistics, in order to answer the proposed research questions and test the proposed research hypotheses.

3.4 Research Measurement

The Switzerland Tourism Weibo's marketing communication mainly focuses on online advertising and interaction. Operators are busy attracting potential customers and increasing their interest in destinations by disseminating destination information and interacting with followers, thereby attracting them to make travel decisions. In this study, a quantitative content analysis of 238 Switzerland Tourism Weibo official account articles was conducted to better understand the type of content format and the advertising strategy of the Switzerland Tourism Weibo. Each article was coded by the following variables:

(1). Date: Post date of Switzerland Tourism Weibo official account article. For example, April 19, 2020 was coded as 20-04-19.

(2). Content format: text, image, video clips, GIF, emoji, web link, hashtag and others.

(3). Advertising strategy: the strategic methods for communicating tourism marketing messages being called “advertising appeals” which include rational appeals and emotional appeals

(3.1). Advertising appeals which include both rational and emotional appeals.

(3.1.1).Rational appeals include 14 categories as presented in Table 3.1

Table 3.1 Rational Appeals Used in ST Weibo

ITEM NO.	CORE APPEAL ITEM
1	Nature
2	Tourist Attraction
3	Transportation
4	Food & Beverage
5	Accommodation
6	Outdoor activity
7	Customs
8	Souvenir & Shopping
9	plants
10	Animals
11	Promotion campaign
12	Trending topic
13	Event
14	Weather report

(3.1.2). Emotional appeals include 12 categories as presented in Table 3.2

Table 3.2 Emotional Appeals Used in ST Weibo

ITEM No.	CORE APPEAL ITEM
15	Brand appeal
16	Personal appeal
17	Social appeal
18	Humor appeal
19	Sexual appeal
20	Romantic appeal
21	Endorsement appeal
22	Musical appeal
23	Popularity appeal
24	Adventure appeal
25	Empathy appeal
26	others

(3.1.3). Mix of both rational and emotional appeals

(4). Execution style: Promotional messages were presented based on the following five execution styles in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Execution Styles of ST Weibo Articles

Item No.	Execution Style
1	Demonstration
2	Slice of Life
3	Animation
4	Dramatization
5	Endorsement

This coding scheme was based on the research done by Xiaoqing Chang (2018). The number and the name of the following appeal items has been recorded based on the items shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Coding Scheme

Item NO.	Appeal Item	Keyword
1	Nature (the phenomena of the physical world which tourists visit)	Mountain, mountain peak, mountain valley, forest, bridge, sea of clouds. Lake, river, river valley, waterfall, stream. Snow berg, snow-covered landscape, high-altitude glacier.
2	Tourist Attraction (a place of interest where tourists visit)	Mountain, lake, village, city, town, castle, museum, aquarium, vineyard, resort, hot spring, shopping center, gallery, vineyard, park, falls, island.
3	Transportation (the means transporting someone or something)	Swiss airline, Swiss pass, boat, train, express, bus, cable car, ice flyer, tram.
4	Food & Beverage (where and what customers diet)	Cheese, fondue, Raclette, dried fruit, bread, truffles, chestnut, pumpkin, wild vegetables. Wine, spring water. Restaurant.

(Continued)

Table 3.4 (Continued): Coding Scheme

Item NO.	Appeal Item	Keyword
5	Accommodation (the place to stay)	Homestay. Characteristic hotel. Luxury hotel.
6	Outdoor activity (activities engaged in out of doors)	Skiing, sledging, snowboarding, ice hockey, curling, skating. Fishing, rafting, jet-boating, surfing, kayaking, snorkeling, sailing, swimming. Hiking, sliding, camping, mountain biking, rock climbing, golf, shooting, Bungee jumping, paragliding, parachuting.
7	Custom (a traditional and widely accepted way of behaving)	Mascot, folk music, parade, traditional festivals, intangible cultural heritage, Chinese 24 solar terms.
8	Souvenir Shopping (shop for a thing that is kept as a reminder of a place)	Chocolate, cheese, sausage. Shopping center.

(Continued)

Table 3.4 (Continued): Coding Scheme

Item NO.	Appeal Item	Keyword
9	Plant (Plants with local characteristics or seasonal representations)	Cherry flowers, camilla, edelweiss, stone pine, redwoods.
10	Animal (Animals with local characteristics)	Alpaca, swan, cow, horse, highland goat, koala, St. Bernard dog.
11	Promotion (the publicization of a product, organization, or venture so as to increase sales or public awareness.)	Quiz price, lottery draw.
12	Trending topic (a subject that experiences a surge in popularity on social media platforms)	COVID-19, cherry flower season, festival, Davos economic forum, world dog day, Nobel prize.
13	Event (a thing of importance that happens)	Light show, musical festival, youth Olympic games, balloon festival, ice & snow festival, winter carnival, concert, wedding ceremony.
14	Weather report (Weather of the day)	Major cities, attractions.
15	Brand (a product or service made or provided by a particular company under a particular name.)	Destination/Speciality/Brand image
16	Personal (refers to the personal attractiveness or taste that enables you to influence others)	Nature beauty/Health/Joy

(Continued)

Table 3.4 (Continued): Coding Scheme

Item NO.	Appeal Item	Keyword
17	Social (Social factors such as recognition, respect, participation, affiliation...cause people to make purchases)	Pride/Status/Fame /Popularity
18	Humor (make consumers laugh and establish an emotional connection with the product)	Fun/Joke
19	Sexual (to attract the sexual or erotic interests of people)	Sexy
20	Romantic (suggesting that the use of a product or service will enhance the romance and relationship)	Love/ Joy/ Couple
21	Endorsement (attempts to persuade people by using celebrities or credible people to endorse their products or services)	Celebrity/ Fame
22	Musical (The music used to appeal to a person's emotions and senses)	Music/ Melody
23	Popularity (a product or service is good because a lot of people agree with having it.)	Popular/welcome
24	Adventure (to make people like the excitement and entertainment, also the sense of adventure will be enhanced if they purchase or use a product or service.)	Extreme/ Adventurous
25	Empathy (to build or enhance relationships with the audience through empathy)	Resonance

3.5 Data Analysis

Based on the coding scheme above, the researchers recorded the data results of the selected Switzerland Tourism Weibo articles and analyzed them in Office Excel.

Altogether there are three steps. First, collect different types of media information, frequency and percentages are also calculated to show the distribution of data. Second, classify and analyze the content format and advertising strategies (advertising appeal and execution style). Third, summarize the meaning behind each theme.

Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) were used to test the proposed research hypotheses.

3.6 Reliability and Validity of the Study

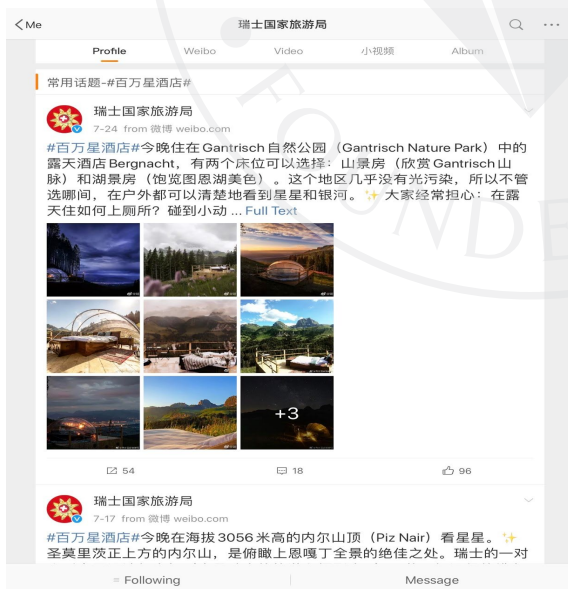
To ensure the reliability of this study, the researchers invited another Chinese graduate student to serve as the second coder in the coding stage. Thirty percent of the data was coded with the second coder through random sampling, and 85% of the coding results of the researcher and the second coder are consistent -- 90% of the items such as emotional appeals were carefully and repeatedly distinguished to achieve the best choice. At the same time, a coding scheme was developed based on market communication/advertising literature to ensure the validity of this study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter reports the findings of the quantitative content analysis of the advertising strategy used by the Swiss Tourism during the past two years from May 2018 to April 2020. Among 238 articles on the official account of Switzerland Tourism Weibo, the results are presented based on the proposed research hypotheses.

Figure 4.1 Cover Page of the Official Account of Switzerland Tourism Weibo



Source: ST Weibo official account

4.1 General Information of Sample

A simple random sampling method was used to select 238 articles from 1008 Switzerland Tourism Weibo official account articles as research samples. Among 238 samples, 219 of them are articles on Switzerland Tourism Weibo from October 2019 to April 2020, the rest 19 samples were selected by an online random sample generator from the Switzerland Tourism Weibo articles from May 2018 to October 2019.

Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 show the number of articles published by the Switzerland Tourism Weibo official account each month and quarter. Obviously, due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the number of articles in the first quarter of 2020 decreased significantly, and there were only 4 articles in February. The number of articles peaked in the third quarter of each year.

Table 4.1: Number of Weibo Articles Per Month

Month	No. of Articles	Percentages (n = 1008)
2020/04	23	2.28%
2020/03	16	1.59%
2020/02	4	0.40%
2020/01	35	3.47%

(Continued)

Table 4.1(Continued): Number of Weibo Articles Per Month

Month	No. of Articles	Percentages (n = 1008)
2019/12	45	4.46%
2019/11	44	4.37%
2019/10	48	4.76%
2019/09	51	5.06%
2019/08	46	4.57%
2019/07	56	5.56%
2019/06	40	3.97%
2019/05	45	4.46%
2019/04	47	4.66%
2019/03	45	4.46%
2019/02	33	3.27%
2019/01	50	4.96%
2018/12	52	5.16%
2018/11	43	4.27%
2018/10	43	4.27%
2018/09	44	4.37%
2018/08	49	4.86%
2018/07	52	5.16%
2018/06	48	4.76%
2018/05	49	4.86%

Table 4.2 : Number of Weibo Articles Per Quarter

Quarter	No. of Articles	Percentage (n = 1008)
1st quarter of 2020	55	5.5%
4th quarter of 2019	137	13.6%
3rd quarter of 2019	153	15.2%
2nd quarter of 2019	132	13.1%
1st quarter of 2019	128	12.7%
4th quarter of 2018	138	13.7%
3rd quarter of 2018	145	14.4%

4.2 Findings

4.2.1 Content Format of ST Weibo Articles

Weibo is a highly interactive Weibo platform because of its diverse content formats-140 characters text posts are combined with pictures, videos, links, etc. The basic elements are text, images and short videos. Others are selectively used, such as web links, voting procedures and stories. All the elements in the Weibo article show the attractiveness of the advertisement to the audience. A good combination of content formats helps achieve better advertising performance.

Table 4.3 shows the frequency and percentage of ST Weibo content formats. Among the 238 articles, the most used format is text (33.3%, n = 693), followed by Image(19.2%, n = 693), Video(11.8%, n = 693), GIF (11.7%, n = 693), Hashtag(11.4%, n = 693), Forwarded UGC(2.6%, n = 693). 2.7% of the articles used Forwarded Article, Account Link and Web Link respectively. Besides, Liked Article (0.1%, n = 693) was rarely used.

Table 4.3: Frequency and Percentage of ST Weibo Content Format

Weibo Content Format	Frequency	Percentage (n = 693)
Text	231	33.3%
Image	133	19.2%
Video	82	11.8%
GIF	81	11.7%
Hashtag	79	11.4%
Forwarded UGC	18	2.6%
Forwarded Article	19	2.7%
Account Link	19	2.7%
Web Link	19	2.7%
Trending topic	6	0.9%
Liked UGC	5	0.8%
Liked Article	1	0.1%
Total	693	100%

As shown in Table 4.4, the most commonly used content format in ST Weibo articles is text with image, accounting for 45.1%% of the total sample size (n = 295), followed by text with video (27.8%, n = 295). There are relatively few texts with others, sorted from most to less: Text with Gif (6.1%, n = 295), Text with Forwarded UGC (6.1%, n = 295), Text with Web Link(6.4%, n = 295), Text with Forwarded Article(6.4%, n = 295), Text with Liked UGC(1.7%, n = 295), Text with Liked Article(0.3%, n = 295). Interestingly, no article has only text.

Table 4.4: Frequency and Percentage of ST Weibo Image-text adoption

Content Format	Frequency	Percentage (n = 295)
Text only	0	0%
Text with image	133	45.1%
Text with Video	82	27.8%
Text with Others		
GIF	18	6.1%
Forwarded UGC	18	6.1%
Web Link	19	6.4%
Forwarded Article	19	6.4%
Liked UGC	5	1.7%
Liked Article	1	0.3%
Total	295	100%

4.2.2 Advertising Appeals Used in ST Weibo Articles

Table 4.5 summarizes the appeal elements, frequency and percentage of appeals of the research sample, indicates that all articles used appeal strategies. Rational appeals were used by approximately 55% of the 238 articles, while emotional appeals were used by 45% of the articles. The total number of appeals in the sample is 733, 61% (n = 733) are rational appeals, and the rest are emotional appeals (39%, n = 733). Most of the 238 ST Weibo articles used mixed appeals (68.1%, n = 238), 31.5% (n = 238) of the articles used rational-only appeals, and only 0.4% (n = 238) used emotional-only appeals.

Table 4.5: Frequency and Percentage of Advertising Appeals

Advertising Appeal		Frequency	Percentage (n = 733)
Rational Appeals		447	61%
Rational Appeal-dominated Articles	132	55%	
Rational Appeal-only Articles	75	31.5%	
Emotional Appeals		286	39%
Emotional Appeal-dominated Articles	106	45%	
Emotional Appeal-only Articles	1	0.4%	
Mixed Appeal Articles	162	68.1%	
Total	238	100%	733 100%

The results in Table 4.6 show the frequency and percentage of the main appeals in ST Weibo articles. In the order of most usage, it goes: tourist attractions (49.0%, n = 238), brand appeals (42.0%, n = 238), Tourist attraction (49.0%, n = 238), Brand appeal (42.0%, n = 238), Musical appeal (36.0%, n = 238), Nature (29.0%, n = 238), Outdoor activity (18.0%, n = 238), Promotion campaign (16.0%, n = 238), Custom (11.0%, n = 238), Trending topic (10.5%, n = 238), Transportation (10.0%, n = 238), Food & Beverage (10.0%, n = 238), Event (10.0%, n = 238), Accommodation (9.0%, n = 238), Social appeal (9.0%, n = 238), Endorsement appeal (9.0%, n = 238), Weather report (8.0%, n = 238), Popularity appeal (8.0%, n = 238), Adventure appeal (5.0%, n = 238), Animal (3.0%, n = 238), Romantic appeal (3.0%, n = 238), Plant (2.0%, n = 238), Humor appeal (2.0%, n = 238), Souvenir & shopping (1.7%, n = 238), Empathy appeal (1.7%, n = 238), Personal appeal (0.8%, n = 238), and Sexual appeal (0.8%, n = 238), respectively.

The finding shows that Tourist attractions (49%, n = 238) are the most commonly used appeal strategy in ST Weibo articles. Brand (42%, n = 238), Music (36%, n = 238) and Natural (29%, n = 238) are common appeal strategies in selected articles. Also, in rational appeals, tourism attraction (49%, n = 238) is the most commonly used appeal among the rational appeals, followed by nature (29%, n = 238), outdoor activities (18%). In emotional appeals, brand appeals are commonly used (42%, n = 238), followed by music appeals (36%, n = 238), while personal and sexual appeals are rarely used.

Table 4.6: Frequency and Percentage of 25 Rational/Emotional Advertising Appeals

	Items	Frequency	Percentage (n = 238)	
Rational Appeal	1	Tourist Attraction	117	49.0%
	2	Nature	68	29.0%
	3	Outdoor activity	42	18.0%
	4	Promotion campaign	39	16.0%
	5	Custom	27	11%
	6	Trending topic	25	10.5%
	7	Event	24	10.0%
	8	Food & Beverage	24	10.0%
	9	Transportation	24	10.0%
	10	Accommodation	22	9.0%
	11	Weather report	20	8.0%
	12	Animal	7	3.0%
	13	plants	5	2.0%
	14	Souvenir & Shopping	4	1.7%

(Continued)

Table 4.6 (Continued): Frequency and Percentage of 25 Advertising Appeals

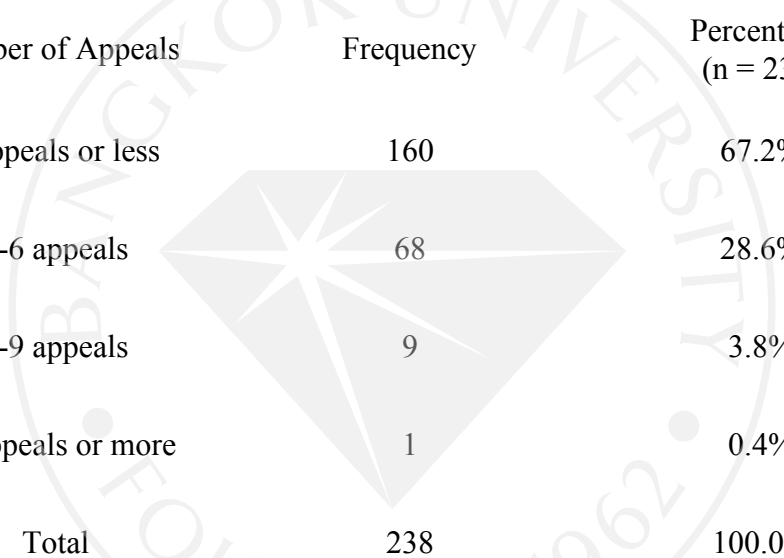
	Items	Frequency	Percentage (n = 238)
Emotional Appeal	15 Brand appeal	100	42.0%
	16 Musical appeal	86	36.0%
	17 Social appeal	22	9.0%
	18 Endorsement appeal	22	9.0%
	19 Popularity appeal	20	8.0%
	20 Adventure appeal	12	5.0%
	21 Romantic appeal	8	3.0%
	22 Humor appeal	5	2.0%
	23 Empathy appeal	4	1.7%
	24 Personal appeal	2	0.8%
	25 Sexual appeal	2	0.8%
	Total		100%

The results in Table 4.7 show that the group with the highest number of appeals is 3 appeals or less (67.2%, n = 238), followed by 4-6 appeals (28.6%, n = 238), 7-9 appeals (3.8%, n = 238), and 10 appeals or more (0.4%, n = 238), respectively. The first two

groups accounted for 95.8% of the total sample (n = 238). These data increasingly reflect the diversity of information and the main interest at multiple levels.

Table 4.7: Quantitative Distribution of Advertising Appeals

(Classified by the number of appeals)



Number of Appeals	Frequency	Percentage (n = 238)
3 appeals or less	160	67.2%
4-6 appeals	68	28.6%
7-9 appeals	9	3.8%
10 appeals or more	1	0.4%
Total	238	100.0%

4.2.3 Execution Styles of ST Weibo Articles

Table 4.8 summarizes the execution style of ST Weibo articles and indicates the frequency and percentage of each execution style. In the order of most usage, it goes from Demonstration, Slice of life, Animation, Dramatization, Endorsement, to Humor.

Demonstration is the most commonly used execution style, accounting for 58.40% of the total number of samples (n = 238), followed by Slice of life (33.60%, n = 238).

Table 4.8: Frequency and Percentage of Execution styles

Execution Style	Frequency	percentage(n = 238)
Demonstration	139	58.40%
Slice of life	80	33.60%
Animation	11	4.60%
Dramatization	4	1.70%
Endorsement	2	0.85%
Humor	2	0.85%
Total	238	100%

4.3 Results of Hypothesis Testing

HP # 1: In terms of content format, text with Image is used most to execute messages in ST Weibo articles.

As shown in Table 4.9, all articles used Text (100%, n = 238), and there are no articles with Text-only, Text with image is used most(56%, n = 238). Also, Image follows Text as the second most used content format(56%, n = 238).

Table 4.9: Frequency and Percentage of ST Weibo Text + other Content Format

Content Format	Frequency	Percentage (n = 238)
Text-only	0	0%
Text	238	100%
Text with image	133	56.0%
Text with Video	82	34.4%
GIF	18	7.6%
Forwarded UGC	18	7.6%
Text with Others		
Web Link	19	8.0%
Forwarded Article	19	8.0%
Liked UGC	5	2.2%
Liked Article	1	0.4%
Total	238	100%

HP# 2: In terms of advertising appeal, rational appeal is used more often than emotional appeal ST Weibo articles.

As shown in Table 4.10, all articles used appeal strategies. Rational appeal strategies were used by Approximately 55% of the 238 articles, while emotional appeal strategies were used by 45% of the articles. The total number of appeals in the sample is 733. 61% (n = 733) are rational appeals, and the rest are emotional appeals (39%, n = 733).

Table 4.10: Comparison of Rational Appeals and Emotional Appeals

Advertising Appeal			Frequency	Percentage
Rational Appeals			447	61.0%
Rational Appeal-dominated Articles	132	55%		
Emotional Appeals			286	39.0%
Emotional Appeal-dominated Articles	106	45%		
Total	238	100%	733	100.0%

HP#3: Endorsement and dramatization are used most as key execution style in ST Weibo articles

Table 4.11 summarizes the execution style of ST Weibo articles and indicates the frequency and percentage of each execution style. Demonstration is the most commonly

used execution style, accounting for 58.40% of the total number of samples (n = 238), followed by Slice of life (33.60%, n = 238). While Dramatization is 1.70%(n = 238), and from the winter and summer sample articles, according to Switzerland Tourism (2018), stories(dramas) are main focus of content marketing in summer and winter campaigns. Endorsement is 0.85%(n = 238).

Table 4.11 Ranking of Frequency of Execution Styles

Execution Style	Frequency	percentage(n = 238)
Demonstration	139	58.40%
Slice of life	80	33.60%
Animation	11	4.60%
Dramatization	4	1.70%
	1 in Summer 3 in winter	
Endorsement	2	0.85%
Humor	2	0.85%

Table 4.12 summarized the results of hypothesis testing.

Table 4.12: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

	Research Hypotheses	Results
HP#1	In terms of content format, text with image is used most to execute messages in ST Weibo articles.	Supported
HP#2	In terms of advertising appeal, rational appeal is used more often than emotional appeal in ST Weibo articles.	Supported
HP#3	Endorsement and dramatization are used most as key execution style in ST Weibo articles.	Not Supported

4.4 Conclusion

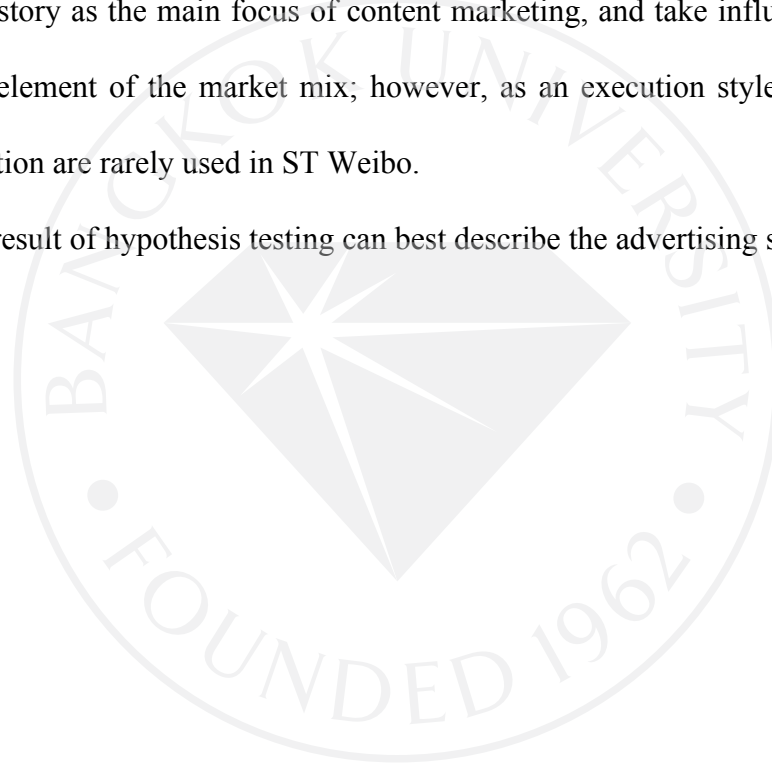
According to the result of hypothesis testing, text with image is used most to execute messages in ST Weibo articles. However, image plays an important role to attract the target audience, just images without text cannot communicate accurate messages of destinations. Therefore, text with image is more appealing and convincing for target audiences to make purchase decisions.

Secondly, rational appeal is used more often than emotional appeal in ST Weibo articles. In this hypothesis, we get to know that ST Weibo adopts rational appeal most to communicate factual information to target audiences, so they could understand the

service and know what they can get before making a purchase decision. In addition, ST Weibo adopts emotional appeal as a second important appeal as it is easily aroused. This result suggests selecting the proper appeal according to the communication purpose.

The last, endorsement and dramatization are not used most in ST Weibo articles. ST may take story as the main focus of content marketing, and take influencer management as a key element of the market mix; however, as an execution style, endorsement and dramatization are rarely used in ST Weibo.

The result of hypothesis testing can best describe the advertising strategy used by ST Weibo.



CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a summary of findings and hypothesis testing. It also discusses general findings and results of hypothesis testing.

5.1 Summary of Findings and Discussion

Through the investigation and analysis of the official account articles of Switzerland Tourism Weibo in the past 2 years (April 2018 to April 2020), the researchers initially learned the current status of the advertising strategies adopted by Switzerland tourism marketing communication.

In sum, there are three important findings:

1) Content format type

The results show that the most commonly used content formats for ST Weibo are text, images and video. And Weibo articles are mainly divided into three categories: text with images, text with videos and text with others. Text with image is the most successful strategy, it can show the destination, service and increase the interest of the audience. Attractive and interesting visual content can create stronger effects.

2) Advertising Appeals

From the perspective of advertising appeal preferences, the most used in these ST Weibo articles are mixed appeals. The data also show that rational appeal is the most commonly used strategy between two types of advertising appeal.

Commonly used rational appeals include Tourist Attraction, Nature, Outdoor Activities, Promotion Campaign, Custom, Trending Topic, Transportation, Food & Beverage, Event. And emotional appeals such as Brand Appeal, Musical Appeal, Social Appeal, Endorsement Appeal, Popularity Appeal are the most used appeals.

Tourist attraction is the most used advertising appeal. Switzerland is a country renowned for its magnificent natural beauty, even though there are many tourist destinations known for their natural beauty, every tourist destination has its own unique attractions. The Swiss Tourism can use its own unique attractions to differentiate itself from other destinations and emphasize its own advantages.

Switzerland is famous for the residence of many rich people and royal families, aristocratic boarding schools, Swiss banks, expensive Swiss watches, and high cost of living. Therefore, when it comes to Swiss tourism, many people first think of luxury, actually luxury appeal in the Switzerland Tourism Weibo is around 14%, the ratio is not large. This is to communicate the message to the target audience that Switzerland is an affordable destination with multiple holiday options.

Sex appeal is hardly used in Switzerland Tourism Weibo, even though sex is certainly one effective way to get the attention of audience, but it might be not good for

family with children and audience in China. Appeal elements such as trending topics are increasingly used in ST Weibo articles. To some extent, Swiss tourism is highly competitive in the Chinese tourism market.

3) Execution Styles

The execution styles used most in ST Weibo are Demonstration and Slice of life, which show the information of the destinations, provide an effective way to convey the advantages of the product or service to the target audience, depict people enjoying life because of their product or service in a setting, and establish an attachment to the product or service by demonstrating how people can enjoy a better life if they participate in the product or service. The messages communicated by the execution style make people happy and convinced.

The findings indicated that the Switzerland Tourism Weibo mainly provides destination messages to audiences to build brand awareness and promote brand.

In terms of content format, text with image is the most dominant, then text with video, GIF, web link, hashtags, forwarded articles and liked articles. Followers of ST Weibo can repeatedly read and view Switzerland travel information without spending and time constraints. In addition, multimedia presentations allow them to have a greater

sensory experience of the destination. More importantly, these are all spontaneous behaviors of consumers, therefore it is more persuasive

From the perspective of advertising strategies, the Switzerland Tourism Weibo articles take mixed appeal as dominant appeal, demonstration and slice of life as dominant execution style. Advertising appeals used in this study are nature, tourist attraction, transportation, food & beverage, accommodation, outdoor activity, custom, souvenir & shopping, plants, animals, promotion campaign, trending topic, event, weather report, brand appeal, personal appeal, social appeal, humor appeal, sexual appeal, romantic appeal, endorsement appeal, musical appeal, popularity appeal, adventure appeal, and empathy appeal. Execution styles used in this study are demonstration, slice of life, animation, dramatization, endorsement, and humor.

5.2 Hypothesis Summary and Discussion

HP#1: In terms of content format, text with Image is used most to execute message in ST Weibo articles.

To test hypothesis 1, the content formats of ST sample articles are identified and counted. The result reveals that text with images is used most to execute messages in the sample articles. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is supported. This finding coincides with Kwok and Yu's study (2013) which found that photo and text messages receive more likes and

comments than Web links and video messages (Kwok and Yu, 2013). This study suggested that text with images is an effective content format to execute the messages of destination. Image will show people the information of destinations, text can communicate the messages with more accuracy, and interact with the target audiences, which is also a good way to resonate with Chinese tourists to establish brand-tourist rapport and humanize the brand.

HP#2: In terms of advertising appeal, rational appeal is used more often than emotional appeal in ST Weibo articles.

To test hypothesis 2, appeals in the sample articles are identified and counted. The result reveals that rational appeals are the most used appeal in sample articles, and emotional appeals are used less than rational appeals. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is supported. This findings coincides with Berry, Conant & Parasuraman's study (1991) which points out that factual/rational information is especially useful when consumers need to understand the service and want to know what they can get before making their purchasing decision (Berry, Conant & Parasuraman ,1991). This study suggests choosing the appeal according to the nature of the product or service and the purpose to be achieved. Rational appeal is especially useful and convincing, while emotional appeals are easily aroused.

HP#3: Endorsement and dramatization are used most often as key execution style in ST Weibo articles.

To test hypothesis 3, the execution styles of sample articles are identified and counted. The result shows that demonstration and slice of life are the most used execution style of the samples articles, endorsement and dramatization are not often used. According to the Switzerland Tourism (2018), the key stories are the main focus of Switzerland tourism content marketing. Also, Switzerland Tourism takes influencer management as a key element of the marketing mix, and has gained significant know-how in influencer management. For example, the approach here is to put quality before quantity (Switzerland Tourism, 2018). ST takes stories and influencers as the main focus and key element, but does not use it often as an execution style in ST Weibo, because they put quality before quantity. Therefore, hypothesis 3 is not supported.

This study suggests using demonstration and slice of life often as execution styles in communicating messages of destinations, because these two execution styles provide information about the destinations and establish an attachment to the product or service by demonstrating how people can enjoy a better life if they participate in the product or service. At the same time, the effect and quality should be considered in the selection of execution style.

5.3 Limitations

The current research has some limitations which are important to acknowledge:

1. Samples are selected from recent two years from May 2018 to April 2020, covid-19 pandemic started from January 2020. Thus, sample articles from January to April can only represent the presentation of ST Weibo during covid-19 pandemic if covid-19 pandemic would end in future. The research plans to complete this research at the end of July, but up to now, there is no news about when covid-19 pandemic will end.

2. Findings of this study are limited to online communication, limited to Weibo, which means it does not represent other types of social media in China.

3. ST Weibo began to post articles from 2011, it has achieved big success in the China market in the past nine years, but every destination is different, every market has its own characteristics. Time is also changing, target audiences are changing. And online communication develops fast.

5.4 Implications

Here are the implications for tourism marketers/advertisers and government offices:

5.4.1 Implications for Marketers/Advertisers

First of all, full attention must be paid to the presentation of destinations on social media commonly used by the target audiences like Weibo, and the use of innovative strategies for quality content and brand equity awareness.

Secondly, the publishing time and frequency of Weibo articles must be properly arranged. Clearly high-frequency interaction and contact with potential customers will be conducted before long public and national holidays.

Thirdly, it is recommended to use eye-catching Weibo content formats like visual contents and new features like hashtags and trending topics. The exposure of high interactive multimedia content can reach more audiences.

5.4.2 Implications for Government Offices

Government offices may take full consideration of the target market and audience according to the presentation of destinations on social media like Weibo when formulating tourism promotion policies.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Studies

Here are some suggestions for future studies:

1. Due to the limitation of this research, future studies may a) consider the unexpected situation, such as covid-19 pandemic; b) pay attention to other social media

in China to fully understand the China market and audience; c) take both online communication and offline communication important; and d) look at communication from the perspective of development.

2. Further exploring the innovation of brand communication strategies in Weibo marketing communication may provide valuable findings for marketers and communicators.

3. More analysis of the impact of communication on consumer decision-making, for example, how user-generated content effectively encourages the audience to participate in brand marketing communication.

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