

A Study of Historical Overview and Current Situation of Thailand Film Tourism

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the historical overview and current situation of Thai film tourism, based on texts and documents research. Research offers the categorization by original stakeholder's producing, in which, consists of Western film production, Bollywood production, China film production and Thai local film production. Tourism discipline primarily focused on the numbers of people visiting the places featured in movies and Hollywood has played an important role. The nail-shaped island popularized by *The Man with The Golden Gun*, classic films such as *The Deer Hunter*, *The Killing Fields*, box office hit *The Hangover Part II* and *The beach*, the country has proven itself as a favorite location for international filmmakers. In recent years, Indian filmmakers have introduced Thailand's destinations on their films, Bangkok, Phuket and Pattaya emerges as hubs for filming Bollywood movies. And the last evidence is *Lost in Thailand* which causes Chinese want to experience Thailand more, especially Chiang Mai. Meanwhile, Thai local cinemas could meet success in international market, for example, *Ong Bark*, *Shutter*, *Pee Mak* and the latest hit in China *Bad Genius*, all could not do their best in promoting the filming location, but these films act in the form of cultural tourism and become the source of information on certain aspects of the country such as nature, culture and people which result in the construction of the attitudes towards the country, contributing factor to making a decision to actually visit the country rather than to follow filming locations.

Keywords: film tourism, cultural tourism, Thai cinema

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Introduction

The phenomenon of people visiting locations appearing in popular films or TV series become the situation which a lot of countries focus on, because of the major economic benefits of film can induce tourism and bring higher revenues of the city or local community. The rapid growth of film-induced tourism was mainly due to increasing international travel and entertainment industry development. Films can have a strong influence not only on decision making for short-term holiday, but also on effect of tourism revenues and long-term prosperity of destinations (Claudia-Elena & Puiu, 2011).

The World Tourism Organization identifies eight specific tourism categories: ethnic, cultural, heritage, environmental, recreational, sport, business, and special interest. Many researchers have placed film tourism under the umbrella of cultural tourism because of the perceived cultural view, range of meanings, and value the tourist places on the film location (Gjorgievski & Trpkova, 2012).

Busby and Klug (2001) referred to this phenomenon as cinematographic tourism, or when somebody visits a destination because they have seen it on a film, video or television. Connel (2012) identified the variation of terms used to define the concept of film tourism. It has been referred to in literatures as 'Film Induced Tourism', 'Media Induced Tourism', 'Movie Induced Tourism', 'Screen Tourism' and 'Cinematographic Tourism'.

For example, Tourism in New Zealand boomed following *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. The country launched a huge marketing campaign which aimed at making the country synonymous with 'middle-earth' with Hobbit-themed images. Hobbiton then became one of the country's most visited attractions (Buchmann, 2010). Another example is the Louvre Museum in Paris, which received a record number of visitors in 2006 following *The Da Vinci Code* (2005), which contributed to thousands of tourists making their way to the Louvre in order to see and confirm with their own eyes the location the fictional murder in the bestselling novel had taken place (Kim & Reijnders, 2017).

Within Asia, South Korea is at the forefront, the government policy fully supports entertainment tourism as an approach to attract tourists. The growth of Korean Wave '*Hallyu*' (popular culture including films, TV, music and food) has been well documented. Many tourists travelled to South Korea because they wanted to track their favorite movies series at the filming location (Phomsiri, 2015). The movie based on the popular video game series *Lara Croft: Tomb Rider* (2001), has shown many sacred sites of the ancient Khmer empire (goasean.com). As the film gained international fame, Tomb Raider-themed tours also became popular in Cambodia where tourists were taken to see the various locations where the film was shot (blogpandabed.com). *Lost in Translation* (2003), prominently featured Tokyo. And since the film was shown internationally, many *Lost in Translation*-themed tours sprang up in the city, tracing the various locations the film featured like Park Hyatt and Shibuya Crossing. In addition, the film *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) came with the 'reality tours' of the slums of Mumbai (Diekmann & Hannam, 2012).

In Thailand, from classic films such as *The Deer Hunter* (1978) and *The Killing Fields* (1984) to action hits like *Rambo film series*, *martial arts film of Bruce Lee* (*The Big Boss*, 1971) and *Jackie Chan's action* (*The Medallion*, 2003 & *Around the world in 80 days*, 2004), Thailand has proven itself as a favorite location for international film-makers (thailandfilmdestination.com). Directors including *Ridley Scott* (*American Gangster*, 2007), *Oliver Stone* (*Alexander*, 2004), *Danny Boyle* (*The Beach*, 2000), and *George Lucas* (*Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith*, 2005) have created some of their finest works in Thailand.

In terms of Thai governmental policy, what they call film tourism is the way Thai locations are screened in foreign productions, where Thailand Film Office is the body mainly appointed by the Thai government Department of Tourism to oversee international film production in Thailand. They provide foreign filmmakers with guidance about the steps they have to take in order to realize their projects in Thailand and to promote the country as an attractive location for foreign talent and film production service companies. An increasing number of Thai screen talents and crews got to play key roles in foreign film productions through various marketing tools and activities as follow:

1. **Online publishing:** e-magazine since 2009s: to update information about filming in Thailand
2. **Creating awareness:** via Website, Facebook page, Twitter page
3. **Organizing the events**
 - The Bangkok International Film Festival (BKIFF) founded since 2003
 - Thailand International Film Destination Festival debuted in 2013 (prnewswire.co.uk), which is set to promote the provinces that the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) recommended to tourists and to promote Thailand as an international film destination. With regular road shows and booths at international film festivals; such as, the Cannes International Film Festival in France (tatnews.org), the plan was that films and tourism industries would support and strengthen each other (Huttasin, 2016).
4. **Commercial Part:** In 2014, Department of Tourism initiate the first planned and artificially generated 'film-induced' attraction in Thailand in the form of *James Bond 007* and *Alexander the Great projects*, using locations in Phang Nga and Ubon Ratchathani provinces, which were reproduced into various scenes to attract film tourists.

Klemm (2016) stated that, when foreign filmmakers wanted to realize their film projects in Thailand, they needed to spend capital on Thai crews, screen talents and coordinators, and on shooting permits, accommodation, transportation, catering, export fees for the film materials, etc. And the foreign film production companies usually collaborated with domestic ones that were specialized in providing services needed by their international counterparts. Therefore, Thai film production service companies were vital to the success of foreign film-related productions in Thailand. In 2013, Thailand Film Office listed 390 coordinators, 254 companies and 136 individuals, as well as another 23 companies for

related services. Living Films, De Warrenne Pictures, and Benetone Films are among Thailand's leading film production service companies. They have been involved in the majority of some most expensive foreign films shot in Thailand (Klemm, 2016). Statistically speaking, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports found that there were 730 overseas film crews filming in Thailand, with a total budget of US\$ 77.01 million (2,541.45 million baht). In term of Advertising shooting, the country which has the most total number of productions shot in Thailand included Japan and Bollywood-another key player of film tourism in Thailand especially in feature film shooting. India ranks the second country after Japan that has filmed the highest number of films (all types), generating a huge revenue to the Thai tourism industry (thaiindia.net). Tables 1 and 2 below show the number of foreign film-related productions realized in Thailand between the years 2010 and 2017.

Year	Advertising	Documentary	Music Video	TV Program	Sensitive Content TV Program	Game Show/ Reality	TV Drama	TV Series	Feature Film	Others	Total	Revenue (Million Baht)	Percentage
2010	255	178	50	34	4	0	6	2	49	0	578	1,869.15	+108.19%
2011	296	155	34	67	8	0	4	7	35	0	606	1,226.45	-34.38%
2012	314	122	41	80	8	3	6	9	53	0	636	1,781.93	+45.29%
2013	346	150	47	86	6	0	7	8	67	0	717	2,173.35	+21.97%
2014	294	159	44	74	6	1	1	7	41	4	631	1,934.18	-11.00%
2015	329	176	57	62	8	9	1	16	63	3	724	3,164.30	+63.60%
2016	376	155	47	80	14	3	3	16	50	35	779	2,371.10	-25.07%
2017	328	146	49	81	30	0	2	14	80	0	730	2,541.45	-25.72%

Source : Thailand Film Office (28 Dec 2017)

Figure 1: Number of Foreign Productions and Revenue in Thailand 2010-2017.

Year	Asia Production						Western Production				Others	Total	Percentage
	Japan	India	China	Korea	Hongkong	Taiwan	USA	UK	Europe	Australia			
2010	123	128	22	41	24	16	22	12	79	8	103	578	+16.53%
2011	113	107	33	47	24	9	35	22	97	15	104	606	+4.84%
2012	149	125	24	33	37	1	27	32	73	6	129	636	+4.95%
2013	140	150	29	29	38	7	34	41	71	22	156	717	+12.74%
2014	133	107	37	22	28	2	26	37	85	18	136	631	-11.99%
2015	119	125	48	33	29	7	42	45	108	19	148	724	+14.74%
2016	117	124	65	42	21	35	47	40	96	36	186	799	+7.60%
2017	130	100	65	36	22	7	47	52	101	16	154	730	-6.29%

Source : Thailand Film Office (28 Dec 2017)

Figure 2: Countries and Number of Foreign Productions Filmed in Thailand 2010-2017.

Methodology

This study will set the framework on feature film based on document research. It offers the categorization by original stakeholders' production, in which, consists of Western film production, Bollywood production, China film production and Thai local film production.

Western Film Production

Hollywood has played an important role in the development of Thailand's film industry (tourism.go.th). One of the first feature films made in Thailand, 1923's *Nangsao Suwan* (*Miss Suwanna of Siam*) was made by *Henry A. MacRae*, a Hollywood film maker under the permission of *King Vajiravudh (Rama VI)* (Wongchalard, 2015). The production was co-produced by the State Railway Topical Film Service of the Royal Siamese Railway Department, which gave the production free use of their 52 automobiles, 600 horses, use of the Royal Thai Navy, the Grand Palace, the railways, the rice mills, rice fields, coconut groves, canals and elephants. It was a film with an unmistakably Thai theme (Barmé, 2002) using all Thai cast and was aimed at showcasing beautiful locations of Siam to the outside world. Then, the 1927 first foreign documentary, *Chang*, was made in Thailand. (The Thai Film Office).

The first film that put Thailand in the light of film-induced tourism is the Hollywood classic *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), a British-American epic war film directed by *David Lean*. The Burma-Thailand Railway, known as the Death Railway, was built by the Japanese army during World War II to secure transportation facilities between two existing lines - one from Singapore to Bangkok and the other along the Andaman coast to Rangoon – in order to provide a more direct route to Rangoon (Rungchawannont, 2015). The film borrowed the construction of the Burma Railway in 1942-1943 for its historical setting, filmed in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) with the same name, repeat the same message (Emerson, 2008). Fortunately, the film sweeps out of Hollywood's seven golden awards in 1958 and makes the Death Railway not only a symbol of the wartime tragedy in Thailand, but also a legendary focus for more than a million tourists annually from all over the world (Braithwaite & Leiper, 2010). It has thus become part of Thailand Tourism strategies to lure visitors to the old Burma-Thailand Railways sites (Gerster&Pierce, 2004). It is now used as an important instrument in Kanchanaburi's 'city branding', because it brings a huge economic benefit to the region. (Freire, 2009).

The first movie, itself, which has influenced Thai film tourism was *James Bond: The man with the golden gun* (1974). The production came to Thailand in 1973 with famous actors, *Christopher Lee and Roger Moore*. In the past, *Phuket* and *Phang Nga* were not recognized widely, but the film has made these fabulous places become world-class tourist attractions, especially *Kao Phingun* and *Ko Ta Pu*, which were the filming locations. Later, it was nicknamed as James Bond Island. (Kanasawat, 2006). This movie is still a major draw for tourism operators.

Santa International Film Production founded by Mr. Santa Pestonji, who has initiated and

pioneered production services for foreign filmmakers for over 50 years. His father is Rattana Pestonji, who is regarded as the father of contemporary Thai cinema helped bring in many Hollywood film projects to be filmed in Thailand, such as *The Killing Fields* (1993), *Good Morning Vietnam* (1987), *Air America* (1989), *James Bond 007's Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997), *Alexander, The Great* (2004) and many more. As a result of these feature films having been shot in Thailand, the production service industry has grown and prospered. With these films and others screening Thailand's resources, tourism was promoted along (Film in Thailand-e magazine, 2011).

Making movies that are filmed in one place created to look like another country, often in Thailand for financial reason, is known as 'Runaway productions' (Beeton, 2005). The example could be setting to be a Vietnamese landscape as in *Good Morning Vietnam* (1987), *Heaven & Earth* (1993) and *Cutthroat Island* (1995). In contrary, some films needed the storytelling that especially occurred in Thailand, to strengthen the stories such as *The Beach* (2000) which was shot in Koh Phi Phi, and *Bangkok Dangerous* (2008) shot in Bangkok.

The Beach (2000) comes with successfully follow *James bond Island* phenomenon, the impact of visitor number heading to Thailand, is shown at 22% increase in youth market in 2000's, it thus captures some tensions of 'alternative' tourism in Thailand, especially for those wanting to move beyond spaces staged for tourists and outside the predictable trails created by guide books. (Law, Bunnell, Ong., 2007). Thailand's most beautiful islands, specifically *Koh Phi Phi* and *Maya Bay* are the film locations, in which can create a bigger boom of the traveling backpacker lifestyle.

Next is *The Hangover Part II* (2011), which became one of the biggest movies of 2011 – its set in Bangkok sparked a renewed interest in the city, especially the locations where the movie was filmed. The travelling in the story, enhances tourists who called themselves as a 'Wolfpack' (followed the movie's dialogue) to visit the filming location. All the films have been shot in Thailand, for example, the 'Wolfpack' looks back their funny night life at *US. Soi Cowboy*, meets the hectic city on *Chinatown*, sit on *Tuktuk*—an icon vehicle of Thailand, and negotiated scene with Mafia shot at *Sirocco* restaurant, *Sky Bar at Lebua*, *State Tower*.

As mention above, Department of Tourism generated the Commercial Part attraction in the form of *Alexander The Great* projects. Huttasin (2016) investigated this place and found that, there is nothing at Alexander the Great Park, it is only inanimate props and displays, it's such a lifeless park and there are no activities here, nothing could draw film tourists back to visit the park. Besides, the tour guides seem to be poorly trained and unknowledgeable. No narrative script had been prepared for them to follow *Alexander the Great*'s story to engage tourist interest and communicate knowledge of ancient Greek culture. Whist, Phuketandaman news reporter went to *James Bond 007 Projects*' area to check out after there was an official opening ceremony along with *Alexander the Great* project on 2013. It appears that it has never been open to visit again (manager.co.th).

While the Thailand film office specializes in the presenting the location to foreign production, but the development of attractions in the form of Commercial Part meet an unsuccessful return. It seems that they were still limited on movie tourism package.

Bollywood Production

India has become the largest film producing nation in the world and has brought many Bollywood film sets to Thailand in the last decade. Benetone Films is recognized as a service brand of Bollywood. Two brothers Kulthep and Rachvin Narula, co-founders, started their career in films as almost an accident. In the 90's, when they met a film producer from Bombay, he was merely planning to shoot film in Australia but wanted to stop off in Thailand on the way to shoot one scene. Whilst they had no experience in the film, they offered production teams to use Thailand locations and Thai crews. Amazingly, the shoot was so successful that the Australia shoot was canceled. The director, as it turned out, shot the entire film in Thailand for forty days. Nowadays, Benetone Films provide production services to over 80 commercials each year and at least five feature films and clients coming from all over the world (Film in Thailand, 2013).

In November 2009, Thailand was presented with the top locations award at the Locations World Exhibition and Conference held in Mumbai (filmjournal.com), and was named the 'Best Destination International' at CINEMASCAPE 2012 (thaiindia.net.com). According to the interview with D'Suza-Bollywood movie director, with Film journal international (2010), 'overall, infrastructure for shooting in Thailand is better here'. While India has the same or better landscapes, communication, transportation and professional crews are all superior in Thailand. The answer to the question of what brings the Indian film industry to Thailand's shores is an easy one: Indian productions in Thailand save time (and thus save money) because of Thailand's proficient production service crews.

Bangkok BRT Skyway, *Sathorn* was appearing on *Bloody Ishq* (2013) and *Rascals* (2011). Dream World Amusement Park in *Pathum Thani* province was on *Entertainment* (2014) and *Rascals* (2011). The Ancient City, Bangkok was on *Awarapan* (2007) (en.mthai.com). Bollywood hit, *Kaho Naa Pyar Hai* (2000), captured the eyes of the audience with the location of *Phra Nang Beach* in *Krabi* province, which showed the ethereal white sand, calm water and picturesque desolation of some islands in Thailand (makemytrip.com). Other Bollywood movies like, *Student of The Year* (2012), *Housefull 2* (2012), *Ready* (2011), and many others show the grand hotels with the classy galleries and luxurious villas, the gorgeous islands and beaches, the rocky waterfalls, majestic pavilions, massive structures, solemn monuments and impressive idols which included the beautiful idol of Buddha. Thailand is a country to witness the spectacular backgrounds used in various Bollywood movies and to experience the feel of the mesmerizing locations (itraveller.com).

These films have been the most successful at the box office. When it was released. It can therefore be said that the visibility of Thailand in Indian cinema has hardly diminished

(Advani,2014). But the audiences cannot remember these films as film tourism, because they could not contribute an impact on visiting filming location by viewers.

China Production

Film tourism discipline is primarily focused on the numbers of people visiting the places featured in movies. Significantly, the evidence of the most remarkable phenomena on Thai film tourism have been provided by the Chinese production that has been met with a continuous growth in the number of Chinese's tourists in Thailand (150,000 - 160,000) since October 2012, generating the revenue of US\$181.8million to the country (Phomsiri, 2015). Chinese people know more about Thailand, particularly *Pattaya*, after the Chinese Film titled *Go LALA Go! (Du Lala sheng zhi ji, 2010)* was shot in Thailand. After the movie was aired, lots of Chinese were fascinated by the scenery of the floating market there with almost all of the structures at the market, such as bridges, walkways, high-feet houses and unique traditional balconies in Thai style, being made of wood (Chinadaily.com.cn). The taste and the lifestyle of the Chinese middle-class identity are manifested and contributed through international leisure travel as well as fashion in the films (Marsh & Li, 2016). Thus, it (the floating market) became a destination for Chinese's tourists to visit when coming to Thailand.

The last impact of film tourism has been boosted again with the Chinese movie titled *Lost in Thailand* (2012), which is a low-budget comedy road movie using *Chiang Mai* as a main filming location. The film grossed more than US\$200 million at the Chinese box-office, becoming the highest grossing movie of all time in China when it was released (npr.org) and made a recent 15-20% increase in Chinese tourist number to about 80% of 2016s levels (in.reuters.com). Ordinary Chinese were attracted to the film for its fantasy of mobility and the humorous outlook of a stressed-out Chinese society of which they were all a part (Yang, 2015). The foreign trip in the films was not merely a thrilling adventure of exoticism but more importantly was a formative experience where a new personalized dream emerged from the ruins of the Chinese Dream (Li & Luo,2017).

Thai Local Film

On the contrary, Thai government sets priority on revenue through 'film tourism' from overseas production by selling places in Thailand as products. Promoting such location and production service to foreign countries could not directly strengthen Thai film industry. (Piyakhun, interviewed 2008, cited in Somboonkerd, 2009). This phenomenon does not lift up sustainable development of Thailand film tourism by itself because they do not take into account Thai local film as one of their main marketing promotion tool.

Film tourism can take a number of different forms and activities (Busby and Klug 2001; Beeton, 2005). Using Thai film as an image making tool of tourism promotion evolved in similar fashion, even they could not offer an account of visitors visiting to a location marketed as a filmic location. They however can induce touristic value in recognition of Thai national identity and culture.

Cultural tourism is seen as an educational form of tourism through what people can learn more about others' ways of life, through the ways that a country presents itself to the visitors in terms of food, music, hospitality, architecture, handicrafts and entertainment (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006). Thai movies in world markets could distribute tourism in the form of cultural tourism, recommending 'Being Thai' to foreigners and showed cultural artifacts in movies such as Muay Thai, Thai food, impressive Thai festival and even elephant or Tuk Tuk, rather than aiming for the tourists to follow filming locations. This is indirect marketing.

Many of the films portray Thai cultural values. The great example is *Ong-bak (Muay Thai Warrior)* (2003), which presented stories about the uniqueness of Muaythai. It acted in the field of Thai cultural product, promoting Muay Thai internationally. The film did not only enjoy financial success at home and abroad, it was also able to establish a new territory challenging the dominance of Hong Kong action cinema (Hunt 2005). *Tony Jaa*, the main character, himself was also seen as comparable to *Jackie Chan* and *Jet Li*, the martial arts living legends (Wongchalard, 2015). After the success of *Ong Bak*, the second *Prachya* (film director)-*Tony Jaa* collaboration, *Tom Yum Goong* (The Protector) (2005) seemed to follow the success formula of *Ong Bak* in terms of both the filmic narrative and aesthetics or if one may prefer, elements of pleasure. The phrase *Tom Yum Goong*, is one of the most favored Thai food presented to the world. It integrated Thai culture and traditions into the movie. The commercial success of the film, earning US\$43,044,087 worldwide (Wongchalard, 2015), has caused a great passion for this martial art, a significant number of tourists from all over the world love to visit Thailand at least once just to learn Muay Thai (301gym.com) or see the real fight on the stage.

Consequently, from the international success of *Ong Bak*, SHOW DC Corp, which are the joint investment between Thai and Malaysia private investors launched an original concept perfectly suited to the needs of international visitors as '*Ong Bak Live*' which is directed by *Prachya Pinkaew*, the original director and the stunt performers are from *Panna Stunt*, team as well (showdc.co.th/ongbak).

After setting a landmark in the unique Thai ghost film by *Nang Nak* (1999) (Ingawanij, 2007), folklore and superstitions about Thai witch doctors, child ghost and black magic have spread across South East Asia (Boey, 2012). The mobility of film production crews has allowed Asian horror films from other countries produce in Thailand, allowing elements of Thai national culture to contribute to other Asian horror cinemas. For example, *The Eye* (2002), was a co-production of *MediaCorp Raintree Pictures* in Singapore and *Applause Pictures* of Hong Kong, and *Three* (2002), the collaboration between directors from three Asian countries (South Korea, Hong Kong and Thailand).

Shutter (2004) was a huge box office success, making it one of the best horror movies of Thailand that was recognized worldwide (Boxofficemojo). After that, it became a staple item of horror movie on GTH Studio's repertoire, which was shown on Sentosa Spooktacular by Universal Studios Singapore's Halloween Horror Nights. The features were based on GTH's international horror hits such as *Laddaland* (2011), *Alone* (2007), *Countdown* (2012) and *The Swimmers* (2014) (tiffanyyong.com).

Meanwhile, Comedy films could represent the nation as 'The Land of Smile'. *Pee Mak* (2013), all-time no. 1 Thai box office hit, followed a formula not of the horror film but of the contemporary rising and overlapping popular Thai genres of romantic and teen comedy. What the audiences will get is laughter. The film broke storytelling rules with new tale interpretation of 'Pee Mak' through the film media like watching a group of clown playing in the role in the Ta-lung shadow play. Using the Thai/Belgian model, Davika Hoorne and Thai/Chinese/German well-known actor, Mario Maurer, as main characters opened the new era of the storytelling. Plus the teen cool dialogue presented by 4 comedians have made *Pee Mak* a miracle comedy feature film (Vekin, 2013).

Another unexpected achievement of Thai cinema is contributed to the popularity of Thai pop culture all over Asia, especially in Chinese-speaking and Southeast Asian territories. (This include cinema and television drama) Thai stars have also become popular around the region, Mario Maurer debuted from *Love of Siam* (2007) a gay romantic movies, and Aom Sushar, with the leading role in her lesbian romance *Yes on No* (2010). Locals called this phenomenon as 'T-Wind' (Thailand-Wind'). Besides, these films show the transgender community in Thailand was thriving and strong, the country significantly welcomed trans people to be their guests.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is to target young travelers in China and three ASEAN countries with an expanded marketing campaign featuring a popular entertainment celebrity Mario Maurer. Launched on 2016 in Bangkok, the '*T-Pop*' campaign will see Maurer participating in a number of high-profile activities and events in China, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam where he has in each country a fan following of nearly one million and more than 5 million in China.

The latest success of Thai local film was represented by *Bad Genius* (2016) Poonpiriya director calls out Asia's rote-learning and grades-obsessed academic culture. The film rocked domestic box office and was sold all across Asia and could well get noticed in the west after premiering stateside at the New York Asian Film Festival. It has also got good ratings on major film review websites, such as 100 percent on Rotten Tomatoes, 8.3 points on IMDb and 8.5 points on China's douban. The film's theme and conception together with social and educational issues were presented in a totally new way. Some audiences even said that the film was better than any Hollywood film they had ever seen (chinadaily.com).

Lastly, Thai Art cinemas groups proclaimed Thai victory in many world-class festival, as well as bringing the Thai flag to the top of the pole. The dominant leader, *Aphichatpong*, made a legend by bringing the first Thai film *Tropical Malady-Sud Pralad* to the official competition in Cannes and won Special Jury Prize. Partly a gay romance, partly a trippy jungle ghost story, it was for some a pioneering experiment in Thai storytelling. His *Syndromes and a Century* (Sang Sattawat, 2006) was Thailand's first film to be entered into the competition at the Venice Film Festival. And his *Uncle Boonmee –who can Recall his Past Lives*, a dreamy, quasi-realist exploration of Thai belief in phi-spirits, won the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 2010. Also *Pen-Ek Ratanaruang* always opened new records

of Thai cinema oversea (Chaiworaporn, 2013). He is coming back with his late film *Samui Song* (2018). These films were inspired by historical, social and political background and presented their ideology of '*Being Thai*' through their works (Sukhsvasti, 2015).

Conclusion

Thai government agencies are focused on using films as a tool to promote tourism to foreign production and expect to get revenue foreign film shooting in Thailand. Thai film office do their duty considerably well to promote 'Being Thai', '*Please Film Thailand but also please include Thailand in your scripts*' (Thailand Film Office-e magazine, 2009). In 2017, there is a step forward for official efforts to draw more production crews to the country by the new incentive programme, which offered a 15% rebate on international productions that spend at least \$1.5m in the country. On top of this, productions can qualify for further rebates of 3% for hiring local cast or crews, which assists in skills transference and local talent, and another 2% if the completed film shows Thai culture and locations in a positive light, thus promoting tourism. (bdo.co.th).

Thai local films can even smoothly land on an international runway. These films can act in the form of cultural tourism and become the source of information on certain aspects of the country which results in the construction of certain attitudes towards the country. Such attitude would serve as factors of the decision to actually visit the country in a long term. This however seems intangible. To achieve profitable destination marketing and product development through a film, the involved tourism stakeholders and the film production companies must establish a good working relationship from the beginning of the film production (Roesch, 2009). Collaboration must come from all sectors and represent some long-term planning. There are also some positive attitudes towards the potential of Thai films generating revenue back to the country in the form of creative industries which can be ever-beneficial to the tourism and film businesses.

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