

Tourism Campaign in Thailand Second Tier Cities during COVID-19 Considering Usability

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Abstract

There is a lack of research on We Travel Together Project evaluation, especially in the secondary tier tourism cities of Thailand. This article focuses on; the government supported COVID-19 campaign in Thailand compared to other countries; analyzing the number of hotels available and comparing website and mobile application ease of use in We Travel Together Project in the secondary tier tourism cities of Thailand. The results found that Japan is the only country that has a similar tourism campaign as Thailand during COVID-19 but with a greater budget and unlimited rights. There are not enough hotels available for tourists in the second tier tourist cities when compared to the primary tier tourist cities and other channels of booking hotels. Thirty users took part in an experiment. Expert validation and review was used to confirm data. The results found that there was a significant difference at the .05 level for two platforms between the users' System Usability Scale (SUS) ratings and the experts' SUS ratings (Agoda and Direct to Hotel). The experts rated all three platforms GOOD, whereas the users rated two platforms OK and one platform GOOD (Ascend). There was a significant difference at the .05 level between users' SUS scores for Ascend Travel website booking direct to hotel, and Agoda App but not between the other platforms. The participants are more satisfied in the usability of Ascend Travel website than the other two platforms. Further research needs to be undertaken on how to improve the platforms.

Keywords COVID-19, tourism campaign, second tier tourism cities, Thailand, usability

I. Introduction

COVID-19 affects all sectors, especially the tourism industry and both domestic and foreign trade. It has caused a severe recession (Baum and Hai, 2020; Karim and Haque, 2020; Ranasinghe et al., 2020). The top five countries with the highest infections were the United States (4,498,343), Brazil (2,484,649), India (1,532,135), Russia (823,515), and South Africa (459,761), respectively (data on 31 July 2020). As for the epidemic situation in ASEAN countries, the overall picture shows that the number infected in many countries has continued to decline and the epidemic can be controlled. Thailand has a serious crisis in the second round of infection in Thailand (December 18, 2020); there was a big outbreak in the province of Samut Sakhon due to the smuggling of illegal foreign workers. As a

result, up to a third of all people tested were infected with COVID-19. This has raised concerns that the number of infected people will rise after more visits with the Myanmar labor community. The third round of infections in Thailand is related to entertainment venues in the Thonglor area (Crystal Club and Emerald) which revealed the first case of the infection came from a person infected with COVID-19 with friends on March 25, 2021, and a number of employees of the club and restaurant were infected. This situation seems to be rapidly spreading all around Thailand and it is the most worrying for Thai people (Thairath Online, 2021). Moreover, several countries around the world, including New Zealand, Australia, China, and other countries closed their borders completely to non-nationals. Similarly, countries in Asia such as Vietnam withdrew Visa on Arrival schemes (Baum and Hai, 2020).

Thailand has a substantial income from tourism. In 2019, it accounted for 16% of GDP, with foreign tourist income at 10% of GDP, accounting for 61% of total tourism revenue. While in 2020, foreign tourists cannot come to Thailand due to the situation of the COVID-19 outbreak, the number of foreign tourists shrank 80%, or to 8.1 million, down from 39.8 million in 2019. Therefore, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) released various campaigns to encourage domestic tourists to travel in Thailand. One of the campaigns was called "Travel share happiness" during the second quarter. From the Travel Share Happiness Project, this offers benefits in terms of lower prices of accommodations. An overview of the domestic tourism situation during the first six months of 2020 (January - June), found that the number of Thai tourists travelling in total were 28.3 million people each time. It decreased 63% from the same period of 2019 which generated an income of 200,000 million baht; which was a decrease of 62%. The Fiscal Policy Office released the latest figures as of August 23, 2020, with a total of 625,000 hotel bookings, totaling 1,874 million baht. A total of 3,823 hotels have been booked and 207,243 rooms (check-in) have been booked. There have been a total of 198,241 rooms (check-out) and the average room price is 2,980 baht. The top five provinces with the highest hotel occupancy were: 1) Chonburi with 33,960 rooms; 2) Prachuap Khiri Khan Province, total 17,371 rooms; 3) Bangkok, 14,148 rooms; 4) Chiang Mai Province 13,831 rooms; and 5) Phetchaburi Province, total 12,063 rooms (MGR Online Newspaper, 2020). All five of these provinces are in the first tier city.

The Thai government has issued 22.4 billion baht worth of tourism subsidies under the names "We Travel Together" and "Encouragement" to encourage people to travel within the country during July 2020 until April 2021. Travelers are entitled to a 40% discount on accommodation, up to 3,000 baht per person per night; food or eat vouchers of 900 baht per room per night on weekdays; and 600 baht per room per night on weekends. In addition, domestic travelers can also get a 40% discount on airfare or car rental fees up to 1,000 baht per person. The special aspect of the encouragement campaign is for medical workers and village health volunteers who made a lot of sacrifices during the COVID-19 epidemic. They will be entitled to a free

vacation for 2 days and 1 night of not more than 2,000 baht per person by both Thai tourism stimulation campaigns (We Travel Together Project, 2021). However, the campaigns described above have many obstructions in registration and application e.g., the registration can only be opened for 2 hours, then people have completed the registration; the OTP code is delayed or some of them don't have the code sent. The problem of the app "Pao Tang" crashing etc. (We Travel Together Website, 2020). Therefore, this paper will focus on the use of the We travel together project about booking accommodations and finding restaurants and souvenir shops (OTOP) in Thailand Second Tier Cities during COVID 19 by considering usability.

From information in the secondary tier tourism cities of Thailand, there are still a very small number of stays if compared with the occupancy rate in the primary Thai cities. The Thai government should promote tourism to the secondary tier tourism cities to help reduce the concentration of people in the primary Thai cities. This article also considers the government supported COVID-19 campaign in other countries compared to Thailand; to analyze the numbers of hotels that are available in We Travel Together Project in secondary Thai cities of Thailand; and to compare website and mobile application ease of use and usability of We Travel Together Project in the secondary tier tourism cities of Thailand. There is a lack of research on We Travel Together Project evaluation, especially in the secondary tier tourism cities of Thailand. Therefore, this paper will focus on the use of SUS to do the usability testing by utilizing the SUS technique to measure satisfactions of 30 users the in using the We travel together project about booking accommodations and finding restaurants and souvenir shops (OTOP) in Thailand Second Tier Cities during COVID 19 by considering usability. The rest of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews literature; Section 3 illustrates methodology; Section 4 shows results; Section 5 analyses and discusses the findings; Section 6 concludes the research paper.

2. Literature review

2.1 We Travel Together Project

We Travel Together Project is a project organized by the government to stimulate public spending money through domestic tourism. It helps to increase liquidity for hotel business operators and related businesses and support the creation of jobs and restore the national economy as a whole. Registration commencement for citizens has conditions for participating in the public sector project as follows: 1) being a Thai national having an identity card; 2) 18 years old or more as of the date of registration to receive the rights for citizens. A starting date of application for the program for hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions starts on 1 July 2020 (We Travel Together Website, 2020). The Fiscal Policy Office clarified issues and criticisms for the We Travel Project together that since the project opened for entrepreneurs to register to participate in the project on July 1, 2020 and opened for public registration on July 15, 2020; there were 7.3 million registered citizens, 8,514 registered hotel operators, 67,527 restaurants, 2,098 attractions, 1,383 OTOP stores, and 204 spa or massage parlors and tourism transportation services. As of January 1, 2021, there are 5,106,470 rights to reserve rooms through the project (out of 6 million rights). It is worth approximately 13,634 million baht. It is booked through a total of 5,274 hotels, including spending through an E - Voucher of approximately 5,711.6 million baht total. The value of air tickets is approximately 1,001.87 million baht. Overall, there is a cash flow in the economy through the project of not less than 20,000 million baht (Fiscal Policy Office, 2021).

Types of businesses that can join the project are hotel / accommodation with a hotel business license and hotel/ accommodation without a license but with VAT registration, restaurants, tourist attractions as listed by TAT, OTOP shop that has an operating license according to the Ministry of Interior, spa / massage for health (having a certificate of establishment standard), and car rental / boat rental (with business license) (We Travel Together Website, 2020). There are six channels to book accommodation with the We Travel Together Project: 1) book directly with the hotel ; 2) Agoda Mobile application; 3) Ascend travel website; 4) Sure 2 trips website; 5) Traveloka website; and 6) OH Hotels.com. However, there are three popular ways to book a hotel in the We Travel Together Project which were used in the experiment of

this research: 1) contact the property directly; 2) book through AGODA mobile application, and 3) book through Ascend Travel website (Thairath Online, 2020).

2.2 Heuristic Evaluation

Heuristic Evaluation is a usability engineering method for finding problems in user interface design. Nielsen (1994) proposed ten aspects of Heuristic Evaluation as follows:

- 1) Visibility of system status: the design should always allow users to know about what is going on, with appropriate feedback and enough time.
- 2) Match between system and the real world: the design should use words, phrases, and concepts familiar to the user, avoiding jargon. They should provide information in a natural and logical order.
- 3) User control and freedom: users need a clearly marked "exit" to leave the unwanted action without having to go through a process.
- 4) Consistency and standards: the design should provide consistency of words, situations, or actions, and follow platform convention.
- 5) Error prevention: the best designs carefully prevent problems from occurring with errors. Therefore, good error messages are important.
- 6) Recognition rather than recall: making elements, actions, and options to be visible. Field labels or menu items should be visible or easily retrievable when needed.
- 7) Flexibility and efficiency of use: the design should be catering to both inexperienced and experienced users and allow users to tailor frequent actions.
- 8) Aesthetic and minimalist design: interfaces should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed.
- 9) Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors: no error codes, indicate the problem, and suggest a solution.
- 10) Help and documentation: provide an easy documentation to help users understand how to complete their tasks.

2.3 Universal Design Principles Evaluation

Universal design is essentially for everybody. Universal design advocates accessibility and usability of a system for users irrespective of their ages and different abilities. Universal design principles are as follows: (Connell et al., 1997)

- 1) Equitable use: a design is useful for people with diverse abilities.
- 2) Flexibility in use: a design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- 3) Simple and intuitive use: The design is easy to understand, uncomplicated, no language restrictions. There is a response after the task is completed.
- 4) Perceptible information: The design communicates important information effectively to users. Provide compatibility of techniques or devices used by people with sensory limitations.
- 5) Tolerance for error: Design that minimizes the harm and unwanted effects of accidental or unintentional actions.
- 6) Low physical effort: A design that can be used efficiently and comfortably with minimal fatigue.
- 7) Size and space for approach and use: Providing appropriate size and space for accessibility and functionality that covers the user's body size, posture or mobility.

2.4 Usability

Usability is one of the key important factors for developing technology. The System Usability Scale (SUS) provides a quick and reliable tool for measuring the usability. It is suitable for evaluating wide ranges of products and services including mobile devices, websites and applications. The SUS scale shows effectiveness of validity and reliability for usability evaluation but there is a lack of universal consensus (Orfanou et al., 2015). There are 10 questions with five point scales for respondents: (Usability.gov, 2021)

- 1) I think that I would like to use this system frequently
- 2) I found the system unnecessarily complex.
- 3) I thought the system was easy to use.

- 4) I think that I would need the support of a technical person to be able to use this system.
- 5) I found the various functions in this system were well integrated.
- 6) I thought there was too much inconsistency in this system.
- 7) I would imagine that most people would learn to use this system very quickly.
- 8) I found the system very cumbersome to use.
- 9) I felt very confident using the system.
- 10) I needed to learn a lot of things before I could get going with this system.

2.5 SUS Scores

System usability scale (SUS) is one of the most widely used testing techniques to evaluate the usability testing with the most extensive questioning techniques to achieve perceived usability. The SUS provides a quick and reliable tool for measuring the usability. It is suitable for evaluating wide ranges of products and services including mobile devices, websites and applications (Lewis, 2018). Another important aspect of program testing is the testers. The minimum and maximum number of testers needs to be considered for testing activities. The sampling technique is one of the statistical methods for a portion of the population. It can be used to determine the optimal number of testers (Herdoost, 2018). The test participants' scores for each question are converted to a new number by subtracting 1 from the score in an odd number question and subtracting the score in an even number question from 5. After that the sum is multiplied by 2.5 to convert the score to the range 0-100. Although, the score is 0-100, it is not a percentage and should only be considered in terms of percentile rankings (Xiong et al., 2020). Lewis (1996) reported that users will have difficulty using products with SUS acceptability scores below 50 whereas, scores above 70 are acceptable as shown in Figure 1.

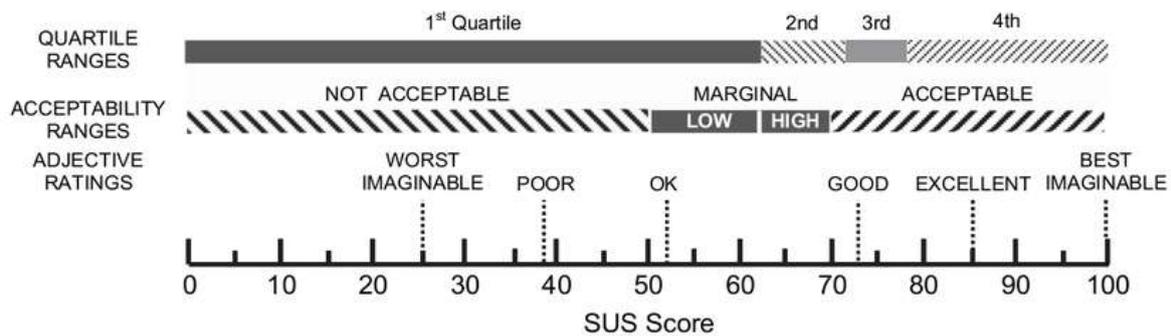


Figure 1. A comparison of mean System Usability Scale (SUS) scores by quartile, adjective ratings, and the acceptability of the overall SUS score (Bangor et al., 2008)

2.6 Analyze the satisfaction of use "We Travel Together Project"

This project attracts tourists and has the power to travel during COVID-19 because most people may not have traveled for a long time and would like to travel. This may be a different group from other projects in the past which could be a group of people, such as a new generation and employees etc. In addition, it must be someone who can fluently use different platforms in this project. There are various reasons in using a small number of rights: (Techsauce, 2020)

- 1) Many steps are complicated: Eligibility for the discount is a more complicated process than any other program that they have been through. The process of registration started from filling out information to register on our website "We Travel Together" > wait for the SMS > enter the app "Pao Tang". If anyone does not have the app, they will go through the process of downloading > booking through the relevant platforms. Initially, only the Agoda app was able to book accommodation in our travel projects together, or travelers could book accommodation directly through the hotel. When tourists contact to book accommodation directly from the hotel, some hotels ask travelers to book through the Agoda app, which is only available on smartphones. It can be seen that there are many parts involved in the booking process and a reservation must be made 3 days prior to the stay. It is different from registering to receive money from other government projects.
- 2) There are still a few participating hotels, and they may not match to the target audience. Due to the trend, most travelers choose

accommodations that are popular in various social networks. As a result, it may affect a new generation of people who are not yet satisfied with the style of the rooms that are participating in the project. In addition, most of the accommodations lower their room rates to very low. The price is similar to the participating hotels. As a result, tourists may not choose a hotel that is participating in the "We travel together Project". It is because the Project requires more steps and a complex system in booking hotels compared to booking through other channels.

- 3) The hotel privilege is required before the air ticket can be used. With a hierarchical exercise process, it may not be possible for real travelers to receive a discount on airfare. It is because they did not choose a participating hotel.
- 4) It is a discount that cannot be taken out in cash. Therefore, it is not attractive to tourists as much. Many hotels or accommodations are on sale and run promotions to attract guests. Therefore, tourists have a wide variety of options so they may not choose to stay in the project of "We Travel Together".

There is an important final step which is to test the program usage in the process of designing and developing information systems. The program developers will have to test the functionality by using white box and black box techniques in testing to verify the correctness of the functionality (Uddin and Anand, 2019); then, to apply validated program to real users to receive feedback from their use. There are a variety of testing methods that are accepted by users or businesses such as alpha or beta testing. A usability testing method shows the importance

of the quality of the customer to decide whether to accept or reject the product (Sasmito et al., 2019).

Thai News Agency (2020) reported that TAT held a meeting to discuss with the Thai Hotel Business Association, Agoda and Traveloka to protect consumers' right in order to resolve problems after complaints about high room rates in We Travel Together Project were found. After opening for hotel reservations in the "We Travel Together Project" to receive a 40% discount since July 18, 2020 there have been 27 complaints through the hotline 1672. There are 21 issues about the prices that are booked through an online travel agency are more expensive than booking direct to hotels. There are four more complaints about the unstable booking system: when there is a wrong booking, it cannot be canceled. The other two issues are providing incomplete hotel information. After the discussion, it was found that there was an error in the data connection system and unstable transactions. The rooms' prices on the website include both the price that has not yet been discounted and the price that has already been reduced and that can cause confusion. TAT stressed that it must be the price that has already been reduced in order to participate in the project. TAT is in the process of examining whether there are any operators taking advantage of price hikes during this period.

Thairath Online (2020) reported on 15 September 2020 that almost 80% of hotels do not have a hotel license. There are more than 16,000 licensed hotels, but there are 7,130 participating hotels. Forty percent of hotels across the country are temporarily closed. Tourists will be able to spend money on the We Travel Together Project, having to check-in the hotel first. Secretary General of the Domestic Travel Business Association analyzed project problems of "We Travel Together" Campaign that was not successful because of these three factors:

- 1) COVID-19 epidemic, as a result, people have the ability to buy less resulting in fewer people traveling.
- 2) People, especially those with the main purchasing power such as the elderly people do not understand a systematic process such as registration methods and payment methods of the We Travel Together Project

- 3) The hotel choice problem, which is a systemic problem. The person who will be participating in the program must be a licensed hotel. There are about seven thousand hotels but in fact, the number of hotels in Thailand is much bigger than that.

The TAT Governor stated that what needs to be improved is to target new and clearer target groups by finding suitable methods. In the past, TAT received advice on elderly groups who are not good at using apps, but TAT wants this group to travel as well especially on weekdays. TAT will increase the accessibility to make it easier and reduce costs.

3. Research Methodology

In this research paper, methodological triangulation is concerned with the use of more than one method for conducting data in evaluation the use of We Travel Together Project's service. The methodological triangulation (Altrichter et al., 2008; Cohen, 2000; O'Donoghue and Punch 2003) is based on theories and documents, expert validation and expert review, and user evaluation. The validation and review of the use of We Travel Together Project's service was considered by web and mobile application development experts. The three experts were asked for their ratings using the System Usability Scale (SUS) 10 questions about the We Travel Together Project's service. Moreover, this paper also considers investigator triangulation using three experts in each group with similar experience or background knowledge to increase the reliability of results about the use of We Travel Together Project's service. Experts chosen for the validation and review were three developer experts who have used We Travel Together Project's service selected for their development expertise and with a Computer Science background and over five years' experience. The 10 questions of SUS were used to ask the experts' opinions about the We Travel Together Project' service. Turner et al. (2006) recommended when collecting quantitative usability metrics, it should be tested with at least 20 users. This is a rather wide confidence interval. In this research, 30 participants were used in the experiment which selected from users who have experience in using We Travel Together Project.

The experiment design was as follows:

- 1) Review the government supported COVID-19 campaign in other countries compared to Thailand
- 2) Analyze the numbers and percentages of hotels that are available in "We Travel Together Project" in the secondary tier tourism cities of Thailand
- 3) Experiment task using the same 10 questions as experts to ask 30 users about ease of use and usability of websites and mobile applications of Thai travel Thai campaign in the secondary tier tourism cities of Thailand.
- 4) Using a questionnaire to ask three experts' about the ease of use and usability of websites and mobile applications of We Travel Together Project in the secondary tier tourism cities of Thailand after the experiment task
- 5) Experiment task using the same 10 questions as experts to ask 30 users about ease of use and usability of websites and mobile applications of Thai travel Thai campaign in the secondary tier tourism cities of Thailand.
- 6) Compare results between the experts and users about the ease of use and usability of websites and mobile applications of We Travel Together Project in the secondary tier tourism cities of Thailand using One-Sample Test and One-Way ANOVA.

This research has developed the proposed procedure based on the process of SUS activity. The SUS scale shows effectiveness of validity and reliability for usability evaluation but there is a lack of universal consensus (Usability.gov, 2021). There are three main stages: questionnaire deployment; score calculation; and classified the rating based on grade. There are 10 questions with five point scales for respondents (Xiong et al., 2020). The test participants' scores for each question are converted to a new number by subtracting 1 from the score in an odd number question and subtracting the score in an even number question from 5. After that the sum is multiplied by 2.5 to convert the score to the range 0-100. Although, the score is 0-100, it is not a percentage and should only be considered in terms of percentile rankings (Bangor et al., 2008). Lewis (2018) reported that users will have difficulty using products with SUS acceptability scores below 50 whereas, scores above 70 are acceptable.

4. Results

There are three sections of the results following the research questions.

4.1 Research Question 1: Which countries have similar government supported COVID campaign as Thailand?

Table 1 Comparison between the Go To Travel and We Travel Together Project

	Japan	Thailand
Campaign's name	Go To Travel	1) We Travel Together 2) Encouragement
Budget	1.33 million yen (384,000 million baht)	22,400 million baht
Period of Time	Until March 2021	Until April 2021
Benefits	1) The state helps out half of the expenses up to 20,000 yen / overnight trip or 10,000 yen / day trip. 2) This money 70% is a discount on accommodation and 30% will be coupons that can be used for restaurants and souvenir shops.	1) Accommodation discount 40%, no more than 3,000 baht / person / night 2) Food coupons 900 baht / travel / room / night on weekdays and 600 baht / travel / room / night on weekends 3) 40% discount on airfare / car rental, no more than 3,000 baht / person 4) Medical personnel and village health volunteers are entitled to have a right of two days

	3) There is unlimited use of the right.	and one-night free travel but more than two thousand baht per person. 5) Limit 15 rights per person
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Source: Nikkie Asia (2020); Timeout (2020); The Japan Times (2020); We Travel Together (2020); Bangkok Biz News (2021)

From Table 1, There is only one country that has a similar tourism campaign of a government supported COVID-19 campaign as Thailand. Thailand has a campaign called "We Travel Together" registered on 15 July 2020 that hopes to recover domestic tourism after the heavy stagnation during the COVID-19 period. The Japanese also launched a similar campaign called "Go To Travel" on 22 July 2020 which covers up to 50% of the public's expenses including travel expenses, accommodation, meals, entrance fees to tourist attractions, and shopping fees while traveling around the country. Table 6 shows the comparison of the two campaigns. From Table 3, there is more budget and rights of Go To Travel compared to We Travel Together Project. While the We Travel Together Project supports a discount on airfare and car rental, the Go To Travel does not provide support in this aspect. Both of the campaigns have a similar goal to encourage domestic tourists travel in their own countries.

4.2 Research Question 2: Are there adequate hotels in "We travel together project" that provide for tourists in the secondary tier tourism cities of Thailand?

To answer research question 2, the researcher went through We Travel Together website and collected related data and analyzed and synthesized the data in order to answer this research question. Most of hotels in second tier cities that participate in "We travel together project" are in the north region (35.25%), followed by northeast region (23.47%), and the least is in central region (6.83%). It can be found that there were 145 hotels in second tier cities in central region that were available on We Travel Together website. Most hotels were in Samut Sakhon Province (33.79%), followed by Ratchaburi Province

(22.07%) and the least is in Ang Thong Province (5.52%). There were 285 hotels in second tier tourism cities in east region that were available on We Travel Together website. Most hotels were in Trat Province (34.04%), followed by Chanthaburi Province (22.46%) and the least is in Sa Kaeo Province (4.21%). It can be found that there were 748 hotels (20%) in second tier tourism cities in north region that are available on We Travel Together website. Most hotels were in Chiang Rai Province, followed by Phrae Province (14.47%) and the least is in Uthai Thani Province (0.82%). There were 498 hotels in second tier cities in northeast region that are available on We Travel Together website. Most hotels were in Roi Et Province (19.08%), followed by Udon Thani Province (15.66%) and the least is in Nong Bua Lam Phu Province (1.61%). It was found that there were 446 hotels in second tier cities in north region that were available on "We travel together" website. Most hotels were in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province (37.05%), followed by Ranong Province (19.28%) and the least is in Narathiwat Province (2.41%). The results suggested that there are enough hotels in the primary tier tourism cities. However, the greatest number of hotels in second tier cities that participate in "We Travel Together Project" are in the north region, followed by northeast region, and the least is in central region. As can be seen in the central region, there are a lack of hotels that participate in the Project. However, in some provinces like Uthai Thani, Narathiwat, Ang Thong, Nong Bua Lam Phu, Chai Nat, and Chumphon they have less than 10 hotels in those provinces.

4.3 Research Question 3: Which platform is the easiest and the most useable to book the service in "We travel together project" that provides for tourists in the secondary tier tourism cities of Thailand? and why?

To answer research question 3, the researcher asked three experts to validate and review the We Travel Together Service by using the We

Travel Together Service and answering the 10 SUS questions. Then, the researcher also asked 30 participants to take part in the experiment by using the We Travel Together Service and answering the same 10 SUS questions as the experts. Then, the results of the two groups were compared.

4.3.1 Experts' validation and review results

A validation confirms accuracy of an instrument in order to measure the construct in the context of the concepts being studied (Polit & Beck, 2006). Without the validation, untested data might need revision in a study (Coombes, 2001). Three experts were asked to verify and review the experiment task.

Table 2 Experts' validation and review results of SUS scores

Questions	Average (N=3)					
	Direct to hotel	S.D. Direct to hotel	Agoda	S.D. Agoda	Ascend Travel	S.D. Ascend
1. I think that I would like to use this system frequently.	2.33	0.00	3.67	0.58	4.00	0.00
2. I found the system unnecessarily complex.	1.33	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.33	0.00
3. I thought the system was easy to use system.	2.00	0.58	3.33	0.00	3.67	0.58
4. I think that I would need the support of a technical person to be able to use this.	3.33	0.00	3.00	0.58	2.67	0.58
5. I found the various functions in this system were well integrated.	1.00	0.58	3.00	0.58	3.67	0.58
6. I thought there was too much inconsistency in this system.	2.00	0.58	1.33	0.58	1.33	0.00
7. I would imagine that most people would learn to use this system very quickly.	3.33	0.58	2.00	0.00	3.33	0.58
8. I found the system very cumbersome to use.	2.67	0.00	1.00	0.00	2.00	0.58
9. I felt very confident using the system.	4.00	0.58	2.00	0.58	2.67	0.58
10. I needed to learn a lot of things before I could get going with this system.	2.00	0.00	0.67	0.00	1.33	0.58
SUS scores (Sum *2.5)	60.00	8.66	55.00	2.50	67.50	4.33

From Table 2, three experts had used the service of the We Travel Together Project and had booked the hotels from the three methods: booking direct to hotels, Agoda App, and Ascend Travel Website. They have had good experience in using each tool. The results found that overall SUS scores of the 3 expert's average ratings were different between the three platforms. The Ascend Website has the highest

SUS scores ($\bar{x} = 67.50$) of satisfaction on usability in using the service, follows by booking direct to hotels ($\bar{x} = 60.00$) and Agoda App ($\bar{x} = 55.00$).

4.3.2 Users Evaluation Results

Thirty participants who have experiences in using the We Travel Together Project rights and have booked a hotel at least once were asked to

take part in the experiment and answer the 10 questions provided. There were 18 females and 12 males, ages between 25-45 years old. The data were collected between February and April, 2021. The results found that 10 interviewees have experienced in using to the We Travel Together website by contacting hotels directly.

Fifteen users have experienced in booking through the Agoda App (50%) and five users (17%) reported that they booked their accommodation through the Ascend travel website (33%). Overall expert's SUS score and user's score as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Overall expert's SUS score and user's score

Expert				User			
Expert	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Hotel	3	60.0000	8.66025	30	51.2500	5.15911	30
Agoda	3	55.0000	2.50000	30	48.3333	4.56435	30
Ascend	3	67.5000	4.33013	30	70.1667	6.19139	30
Valid N	3			30			30

Table 3 shows the experts rated all three platforms GOOD, whereas the users rated two platforms OK and one platform GOOD using the

definitions shown in Figure 1. An overall One-Sample Test for three methods is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 An overall of One-Sample Test for three methods

One-Sample Test							
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Expert Test Value
					Lower	Upper	
Hotel	-9.289540	29	.000	-8.750000	-10.676442	-6.823558	60.00
Agoda	-8.000000	29	.000	-6.666667	-8.371025	-4.962309	55.00
Ascend	2.359071	29	.025	2.666667	0.354763	4.978570	67.50

From Table 4, there was a significant different at the .05 level for all three platforms between the users' SUS rating than the expert's SUS rating. The users rated the hotel 8.75 less than

the expert rating. Users rated Agoda 6.67 less than the expert rating. The users rated the Ascend 2.67 greater than the expert rating.

Table 5 One-Sample Test Booking direct to hotel

One-Sample Test Booking direct to hotel							
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		

					Lower	Upper	Expert Test value
Question 1	-2.518	29	.018	-.46333	-.8397	-.0869	2.33
Question 2	3.922	29	.000	.87000	.4164	1.3236	1.33
Question 3	.462	29	.647	.10000	-.3424	.5424	2.00
Question 4	-5.989	29	.000	-1.23000	-1.6501	-.8099	3.33
Question 5	5.656	29	.000	1.23333	.7874	1.6793	1.00
Question 6	.643	29	.526	.13333	-.2911	.5578	2.00
Question 7	-5.975	29	.000	-1.2967	-1.7405	-.8529	3.33
Question 8	-2.852	29	.008	-.67000	-1.1504	-.1896	2.67
Question 9	-10.933	29	.000	-2.16667	-2.5720	-1.7614	4.00
Question 10	.000	29	1.000	.00000	-.4494	.4494	2.00

Table 5 shows that the participants ratings for SUS Questions for booking direct to hotel differed significantly at the 0.05 level from the

average expert ratings for all questions except for Question 3, 6 and 10.

Table 6 One-Sample Test Booking through Agoda App

One-Sample Test Booking through Agoda App							
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Expert Test value
					Lower	Upper	
Question 1	-12.063	29	.000	-1.83667	-2.1481	-1.5253	3.67
Question 2	-.961	29	.344	-.16667	-.5214	.1880	2.00
Question 3	-11.001	29	.000	-1.43000	-1.6959	-1.1641	3.33
Question 4	-7.899	29	.000	-1.06667	-1.3429	-.7905	3.00
Question 5	-6.279	29	.000	-1.10000	-1.4583	-.7417	3.00
Question 6	4.941	29	.000	.67000	.3926	.9474	1.33
Question 7	-.205	29	.893	-.03333	-.3656	.2990	2.00
Question 8	7.131	29	.000	1.10000	.7845	1.4155	1.00
Question 9	-1.044	29	.305	-.16667	-.4931	.1598	2.00
Question 10	9.763	29	.000	1.36333	1.0777	1.6489	0.67

Table 6 shows that the participants ratings for SUS Questions for booking through Agoda App differed significantly at the 0.05 level from the

average expert ratings for all questions except for Questions 2, 7 and 9.

Table 7 One-Sample Test Booking through Ascend Website

One-Sample Test Booking through Ascend Website							
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Expert Test value
					Lower	Upper	
Question 1	-10.576	29	.000	-1.50000	-1.7901	-1.2099	4.00
Question 2	3.382	29	.002	.47000	.1858	.7542	2.33
Question 3	-5.432	29	.000	-.93667	-1.2893	-.5840	3.67
Question 4	-5.455	29	.000	-.73667	-1.0129	-.4605	2.67
Question 5	-4.767	29	.000	-.77000	-1.1004	-.4396	3.67
Question 6	11.610	29	.000	1.67000	1.3758	1.9642	1.33
Question 7	-1.769	29	.087	-.23000	-.4959	.0359	3.33
Question 8	5.887	29	.000	.70000	.4568	.9432	2.00
Question 9	.542	29	.592	.06333	-.1755	.3022	2.67
Question 10	9.874	29	.000	1.50333	1.1919	1.8147	1.33

Table 7 shows that the participants ratings for SUS Questions for booking through Ascend website differed significantly at the 0.05 level from the average expert ratings for all questions except for Question 7 and 9.

4.3 To compare Users' SUS Scores

Anova for users' SUS scores

Table 8 Descriptive of the three platforms

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1 Hotel	30	51.2500	5.15911	.94192	49.3236	53.1764	42.50	60.00
2 Agoda	30	48.3333	4.56435	.83333	46.6290	50.0377	40.00	57.50
3 Ascend	30	70.1667	6.19139	1.13039	67.8548	72.4786	57.50	82.50
Total	90	56.5833	11.07590	1.16750	54.2635	58.9031	40.00	82.50

From Table 8, participants rated Ascend Travel website higher ($\bar{x} = 70.16$) than booking direct

to hotels ($\bar{x} = 51.25$) and Agoda App ($\bar{x} = 48.33$) respectively.

Table 9 Test of Homogeneity of Variances**Test of Homogeneity of Variances**

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
score	Based on Mean	.925	2	87	.400
	Based on Median	.768	2	87	.467
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.768	2	77.597	.467
	Based on trimmed mean	.883	2	87	.417

Table 10 ANOVA Result**ANOVA**

score					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8430.417	2	4215.208	147.414	.000
Within Groups	2487.708	87	28.594		
Total	10918.125	89			

Tables 9-10 show the SUS mean scores of platforms were significantly different at .05 level. There is therefore a difference in usability of the use of the We Travel Together Project in the three platforms.

Table 11 Multiple Comparisons**Multiple Comparisons**

Dependent Variable: score

	(I) platform	(J) platform	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Tukey HSD	1 Hotel	2 Agoda	2.91667	1.38068	.093	-.3755	6.2089
		3 Ascend	-18.91667*	1.38068	.000	-22.2089	-15.6245
	2 Agoda	1 Hotel	-2.91667	1.38068	.093	-6.2089	.3755
		3 Ascend	-21.83333*	1.38068	.000	-25.1255	-18.5411
	3 Ascend	1 Hotel	18.91667*	1.38068	.000	15.6245	22.2089
		2 Agoda	21.83333*	1.38068	.000	18.5411	25.1255
Scheffe	1 Hotel	2 Agoda	2.91667	1.38068	.114	-.5219	6.3553

	3	-18.91667*	1.38068	.000	-22.3553	-15.4781
2 Agoda	1 Hotel	-2.91667	1.38068	.114	-6.3553	.5219
	3 Ascend	-21.83333*	1.38068	.000	-25.2719	-18.3947
3 Ascend	1 Hotel	18.91667*	1.38068	.000	15.4781	22.3553
	2 Agoda	21.83333*	1.38068	.000	18.3947	25.2719

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

From Table 11, there was a significant difference at the .05 level between users' SUS scores for Ascend Travel website to booking direct to hotel and Agoda App. However, there was not a significant difference at the .05 level between users' SUS scores for booking direct through hotel and Agoda App. The participants are more satisfied in the usability of the use of using Ascend Travel website than the other two platforms.

Moreover, there are critical comments on booking accommodations through the three booking platforms and Problems with a registration of we travel together project and using the Pao Tang application as follows.

1) Booking Direct to Hotels

The problem was that some hotels participated in the program but did not process the booking using the discount of the project, or the hotel system did not support the booking. The hotel therefore recommends customers to make reservations through the agency system, such as Agoda. There are some examples of good and bad experiences from participants as follows: The 9th participant reported that *"I have booked a hotel at Phi Island, Krabi Province via the hotel's Facebook page by using the privilege of 40% discount in the we travel together project. I chat to the hotel directly to ask for details on the discount through Facebook Messenger. I am impressed with this booking because the booking is not complicated. I also got a huge discount including accommodation, ferry, diving package and food discounts as well."* The 14th participant reported that *"I have booked a hotel in Phatthalung Province directly from we travel together project. I called to the hotel and a staff advised me to book a hotel through the agency system. It is because the hotel does not connect to the website we travel together project. I have booked the hotel and paid. There*

is a message on my e-mail informing that it has been booked but in the Pao Tang app, I don't have any reservation information. I have to contact Krung Thai Bank and deal with this problem."

2) Booking through the Agoda Application

Booking accommodations from the Agoda Application (App), there is a huge list of hotels compared to booking through other participating apps but Agoda's system is not very stable. There was a jam in the process i.e., press and do not go, need to link information between rights and accommodation booking, somewhat tricky for non-tech-savvy users. These participants suffered from booking through the website then changed to book through Agoda Application as they are familiar with the web. However, a drawback is that users need to install Agoda app on the smart phone and book through mobile platform only. The example experiences' details of participants in booking accommodation through the Agoda app are: The 5th participant reported that I had bad experience in booking accommodation thorough the Agoda website and found that *"On January 2, 2021, I went to Agoda website to book a hotel in Chaing Rai to stay between 11 and 13 January 2021. I click to reserve accommodation through Agoda website and later I realized that if I would use my rights to travel together, I must book accommodation through an application, not a website. I found that the reservation could not be canceled, and could not be changed. Reservations must meet the conditions only. I was therefore not impressed with the use of the project's services."* The 24th participant reported that *"the We Travel Together Project is difficult to use. There are several steps that must be taken in exchange for a 40% discount on hotels with a limited number of rooms. Now, most hotels offer simple discounts, without the hassle of booking through*

Agoda and no government registration required. Therefore, I tend to book rooms directly through hotels because there are more options and easier steps at a similar discount price."

3) Booking through the Ascend Travel Website

Five participants who have experience in booking accommodation through the Ascend travel website reported that they booked their accommodation through the Ascend travel website. The system is pretty good and has a smooth link. The hotel lists are specified. All hotel details with discounted prices are displayed. The drawback is that the hotel listings are less than those in Agoda app. The system is unstable sometimes. The example experiences' details of participants in booking accommodation through the Ascend travel website are: The 7th participant reported that *"I have bad experience booking hotels through Ascend Travel website as the system kept showing there was busy system most of the time I went to the website."* The 27th participant reported that *I think booking hotels from the Ascend Travel Company has fewer choices of accommodations, only a few hotels showing after I search the hotels in Chumphon Province.*

4) Problems with a registration of we travel together project and using the Pao Tang application

However, 19 out of 30 participants (63.33%) also have problem with a registration of we travel together project and using the Pao Tang application. The examples of problems are: The 9th participant found that *"the problems that occurred during the registration such as a delayed system, and many people wait for the OTP number to confirm the registration, but the OTP number does not come to make the registration fail, etc."*. The 18th participant reported that *"a problem I encountered was an unusually high hotel room charge. I am having trouble verifying my Pao Tang app fails while checking in because the system is unstable. I have already made a hotel reservation but when arriving at the accommodation, unable to scan to check-in the hotel. I suggest using the discount coupon is easier than using the application in booking hotel for the campaign."*

5 Discussion

5.1 Discussion on research question 1

Japan is the only country that has a similar tourism campaign during COVID-19 as Thailand. They have a greater budget and unlimited rights of Go To Travel in Japan compared to We Travel Together Project in Thailand. While, the We Travel Together Project supports a discount on airfare and car rental but the Go To travel does not support this aspect. Both of the campaigns have a similar goal to encourage domestic tourists travel in their own countries (Nikkie Asia (2020); Timeout (2020); The Japan Times (2020); We Travel Together (2020); Bangkok Biz News (2021). However, this campaign does not run very well both in Japan and Thailand as COVID-19 comes back from time to time which is similar in Thailand. The big spread of COVID-19 normally comes in holiday times in Thailand e.g. New Year and Songkran festival which are a long holiday in Thailand. Therefore, this campaign had to expand the duration time of the campaign as people cannot use the right during those times. As the We Travel Together Project ends at the end of April, 2021, therefore if there is more information it can be compared in more detail in a future work.

5.2 Discussion on research question 2

The results suggested that there are enough hotels in the primary tier tourism cities. However, the greatest number of hotels in second tier cities that participate in "We Travel Together Project" are in the north region (35.25%), followed by northeast region (35.25%), and the least is in central region (6.83%). As can be seen in the central region, there are a lack of hotels that participate in the Project. However, in some provinces like Uthai Thani (0.82%), Narathiwat (2.41%), Ang Thong (5.52%), Nong Bua Lam Phu (1.61%), Chai Nat (6.21%), and Chumphon (2.71%) they have less than 10 hotels in those provinces. Therefore, there are not enough hotels available for tourists in the second tier tourism cities when compared to the primary tier tourist cities and other channels of booking hotels (We Travel Together website, 2021). As, there are now a lot of hotels with a sale of up to 60% and there are various types of accommodations are offered, so, tourists may be interested in booking those hotels as they do not have to get involved with all the steps of the We Travel Together registration process and booking hotels process.

Some users suggested that they should be offered a coupon discount instead of going through all the complicated process from the We Travel Together Project as people with low technology skill may miss the chance of getting the We Travel Together right.

5.3 Discussion on research question 3

The experts rated all three platforms GOOD, whereas the users rated two platforms OK and one platform GOOD. There was a significant difference at the .05 level for all three platforms between the users' SUS rating than the expert's SUS rating. The users rated the hotel 8.75 less than the expert rating. Users rated Agoda 6.67 less than the expert rating. The users rated the Ascend 2.67 greater than the expert rating. Therefore, it is clear that there is a difference between experts' SUS scores and users' SUS scores in terms of the order of the easiest and the most useable to book service in "We Travel Together Project". It is because experts had more experiences in using and developing software than participants, so the experts rated all three platforms higher than the users except for Ascend Travel website. Although, 50% of users had experience on booking accommodation through Agoda they still found the system was unstable, a jam in the process, and somewhat tricky for non-tech-savvy users. These might be the reasons for the lowest mean SUS scores.

There was a significant difference at the 0.05 level between users' SUS scores for booking direct to hotels, Agoda App, and Ascend Travel website with booking direct to hotels scoring higher. However, participants' ratings for SUS questions for booking direct to hotel differed significantly at the 0.05 level from the average expert ratings for all questions except for Questions 3, 6, and 10. It is because users thought the system was not easy to use and had inconsistency in using the system. It corresponds to Techsauce (2020) who stated that many steps are complicated: eligibility for the discount is a more complicated process than any other program that they have been through. The open questions' answers found that participants required a lot of things to learn before they could get to the system e.g. register to get the We Travel Together right, download Pao Tang App, find the hotels that register with the project, go to hotels' websites, face with different hotels' websites which had various problems

differently. It agrees with Techsauce (2020) who found that many steps are complicated, the process of registration started from filling out information to register on the "We Travel Together" website > wait for the SMS > enter the app "Pao Tang". In addition, staff of various hotels have different skills or knowledge about booking accommodations in We Travel Together project.

Participants' ratings for SUS Questions for booking through Agoda App differed significantly at the 0.05 level from the average expert ratings for all questions except for Questions 2, 7, and 9. According to participants' open answering of questions found that the Agoda App was not easy to use. Users needed to download the Agoda App on a mobile phone only to book the hotels in We Travel Together Project as the hotel does not connect to Agoda. There were not enough hotels rooms on Agoda App as while users searching the rooms wanted to come back to book the room: then, that room had already disappeared. It is also difficult to contact staff as Agoda is not a Thai system compared to the others two platforms. Moreover, users sometimes did not get any reservation information from the Pao Tang App after they paid etc. (Techsauce 2020). It is in accordance with Thai News Agency (2020) report that Agoda was an unstable booking system: when there was a wrong booking, it could not be canceled. The rooms' prices on the website included both the price that has not yet been discounted and the price that has already been reduced and that can cause confusion. Users thought using the Agoda App needed to learn a lot of things on this system. Therefore, participants felt not so confident using the Agoda App.

Participants ratings for SUS Questions for booking through Ascend Travel website differed significantly at the 0.05 level from the average expert ratings for all questions except for Questions 7 and 9. It might be because some participants had bad experience booking hotels through Ascend Travel website as the system kept showing there was a busy system most of the time and had fewer choices of accommodation compared to the other two platforms. It is also corresponds with Techsauce (2020) who stated that there are still few participating hotels, and they may not match the target audience due to the trend. Most travelers

choose accommodation that are popular in various social networks. In addition, most of the accommodation lower their room rates to very low. The price is similar to the participating hotels.

There was a significant difference at the .05 level between users' SUS scores for Ascend Travel website to booking direct to hotel and Agoda App. However, there was not a significant difference at the .05 level between users' SUS scores for booking direct through hotel and Agoda App. The participants are more satisfied in the usability of using Ascend Travel website than the other two platforms. Booking through Ascend Travel website seemed to be the easiest platform to use compared to the other two. It is because it required fewer steps in booking accommodations with the We Travel Together Project. There is only the requirement of registration to Pao Tang App and it will connect to the Ascend Travel App very easily. It also corresponds with Thairath Online (2020) who stated that those booking hotels through Ascend Travel see the full room price and the net price that must be paid after discount is clearly displayed, and filter only the hotels that are participating in the project we travel together. There are area filters to find out if the province has an area with interesting accommodation. These might be the reasons that participants are more satisfied in booking hotels through Ascend Travel Website than the others two platforms.

6 Conclusion

This paper sheds some light on evaluating usability on tourism campaign in Thailand especially in the second tier cities during COVID-19. The hotel industry around the world including Thailand is going through a very difficult time. Therefore, TAT released the main tourism campaign "We Travel Together Project" which is only similar to Japan during COVID-19 to help the hotel industry in Thailand. However, there are several choices of hotels available in the primary tier cities but there are not enough hotels available for tourists in the second tier tourism cities. Experts and participants agreed that booking accommodation through Ascend Travel website has the easiest usability, followed by booking direct to hotels, and Agoda App. There are

various problems in using the three platforms of web and applications. Further research needs to be carried out on how to improve the platforms.

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