

**Master's Thesis**

**Promotional marketing of theme parks among Vietnamese visitors**

**– A case study of Suoi Tien Theme Park, Ho Chi Minh City**

By

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## **Certification Page**

Tran Thi Thuy Lien (Student ID 52117605) hereby declare that the contents of this Master's Thesis are original and true, and have not been submitted at any other university or educational institution for the award of degree or diploma.

All the information derived from other published or unpublished sources has been cited and acknowledged appropriately.

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Tran Thi Thuy Lien

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## ABSTRACT

This research is a qualitative study of promotional marketing campaign pursued by Suoi Tien Theme Park. Findings show that Suoi Tien Theme Park's promotional marketing has integrated six marketing communication modes. They are: media advertising, place advertising, direct response and interactive advertising, trade- and consumer-oriented promotions, personal selling and marketing-oriented public relations and publicity. It has been found that, among these modes, television commercial advertising as a subset of media advertising is emphasized more than other marketing communication modes because it attracts the most visitors.

And because it's pioneer in studying about theme park's promotional marketing in Vietnam, it has significant practical contributions of integrated marketing communications to promotion of theme park in Vietnam, which will be helpful for future research.

Keywords: Promotional marketing, marketing communication, integrated marketing communication, theme park, Suoi Tien Theme Park, Vietnam

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research background

According to 2017 report of Themed Entertainment Association (TEA), the attendance growth at the top amusement and theme parks in the Asia Pacific region was 5.5% at an average. Meanwhile, the number of worldwide was 4.7% (AECOM, 2017, pp. 11,39).

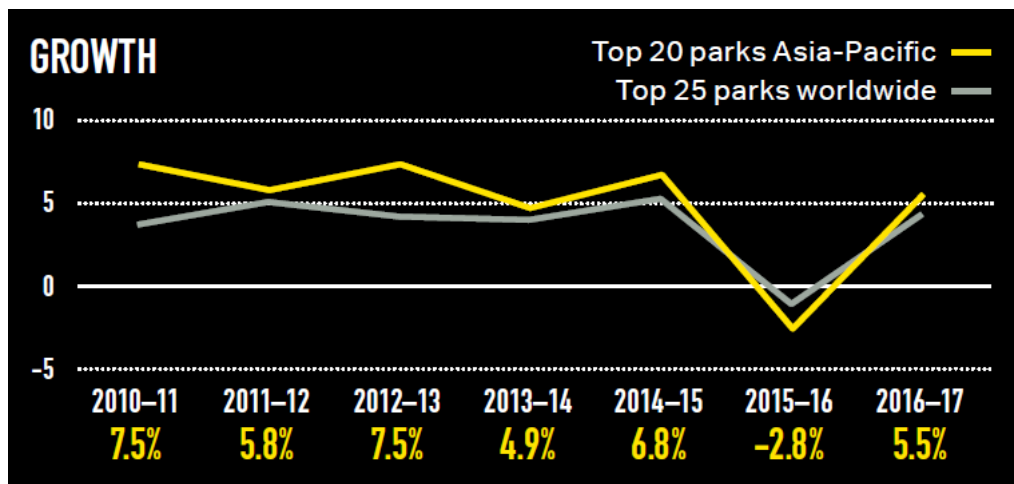


Figure 1: Growth attendance of top amusement/theme parks in Asia-Pacific and Worldwide

Source: Themes Entertainment Association (2017)

Although this growth was mainly driven by Mainland China where many parks appeared in the top list because of double-digit and year-over-year increases, TEA still mentioned about Southeast Asia as a promising market with many entertainment projects. With the advantage of a booming middle class, large young populations and increasing income, Southeast Asia is forecasted to become a potential theme park market in the near future. Besides Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Bangkok and Manila, Ho Chi Minh City is also expected as potential destination of theme park growth (AECOM, 2017, p. 43).



In order to increase the number of attendance, theme parks in Southeast Asia have integrated guest attraction strategies since visitors always expect amazing things which cannot be met elsewhere. According to TEA, the Sunway Lagoon, Malaysia increased 2.6% of visitors in 2016 because of its new Nickelodeon themed water park, accommodation and amazing catering services to their customers.

In Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Suoi Tien Theme Park is the only theme park operating over twenty years with a growth in attendance over the last two years by 9% (Mr. Duy – Sales and Marketing Dept.).

## **1.2 Introduction of Suoi Tien Theme Park**

Suoi Tien Theme Park is located about 40 minutes from downtown Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and is one of the most popular theme parks in Vietnam and is also known as one of the best tourist sites in Southeast Asia (Ministry of culture, n.d.). With its main themes to Vietnamese Buddhism and folktales, the Park's landscaping and attractions illustrates and focuses on Vietnamese traditional and spiritual culture for the purpose of creating large, unique, rich projects evoking in visitors' patriotism and national pride (Ms. Huong- Deputy Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept.). Among its attractions, Buddhist works of art impressively reflect one of Vietnamese typical culture- Buddhism, the predominant religion in Vietnam- with plenty of Buddhist statues, sculptures, iconography all over the park (Park, n.d.)

Prior to 1987, Suoi Tien was a fallow land, sparsely inhabited with a little stream running through the desolate nature. In 1987, with his business acumen, Mr. Dinh Van Vui – Suoi Tien Theme Park's Chairman- had a vision of the strong prospect of this area

and started to build his dream. Suoi Tien Forest Farm was born for a long-term purpose: “Forestry Farm is a prerequisite for a large scale- Tourist Area in the future”. The name “Suoi Tien” - Fairy Stream was originated from a tale about 7 girls who passed away by the little stream. And their souls became fairies as a sign of strong vitality of a barren land (Park, n.d.).

In early 1992, when the investment capital was available and the social economy of Ho Chi Minh city was developed. The project was a tourist attraction to serve the spiritual and cultural life of the people. This was the imperative demand. On September, 1995, Suoi Tien Theme Park was officially opened on the National Day of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Park, n.d.).

More than 20 years of development, Suoi Tien has become the biggest theme park in Ho Chi Minh city. In an area of 55ha, Suoi Tien provides over 150 entertainment items, invests 4,000 billion VND (about 174 million US dollar) of the capital and employs more over 800 employees. It annually welcomes about 4.5 million visitors. “Currently Suoi Tien continues expanding its scale area of over 50 hectares up to 105 hectares in 2019 with the second investment capital of 2,000 billion VND (about 87 million US dollar)” (Park, n.d.).

### **1.3 Significance of the Research**

According to the research background, theme park industry has developed around the world with plenty of theme parks attracting an impressive number of visitors annually. And Asia-Pacific has also many countries in which growth attendance has increased significantly. Although Ho Chi Minh city in Viet Nam is considered as a potential

destination to develop the park industry, presently, Suoi Tien Theme Park is the only theme park in this city. It has existed for over twenty years, there is no research or study which can be found about how its promotional marketing can attract visitors for many years. The author could not find any research papers about Suoi Tien and Vietnamese Theme Park's promotional marketing. And online data consisted of nothing, when the author researched with the keys "Promotional marketing of Suoi Tien, studies/research about Suoi Tien's promotional marketing, about Suoi Tien Theme Park's Marketing" on the internet and database websites such as EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Cambridge Journals. All information found is only about Suoi Tien's introduction or advertising contents on tourism websites or online newspapers. Its official website does not mention about its promotional marketing either.

Moreover, in order to ensure "a comprehensive, unbiased search" based on keywords and search terms as a requirement of "Systematic review" (Bell, 2011, p. 98), the author expanded the scope of searches about this study in books, related theme park industry, on the internet and database system of EBSCOhost, ProQuest, ScienceDirect. The author used keywords "About theme park's promotional marketing, marketing of theme park, researches/studies about theme park's marketing, theme park industry in Vietnam, Vietnamese theme park's promotional marketing, marketing of theme park in Ho Chi Minh City". Hence, there were articles, journals and reports about promotion marketing of theme parks such as Disneyland Hong Kong, Lotte World, Korean, Universal Studios Japan. However, Vietnamese theme parks' information has just appeared on travel or tourism websites; with pictures and sentences of introduction. There is no result concerning about their marketing strategies or even related contents such as promotions, advertising strategies. Therefore, this study will provide information about

promotional marketing in a theme park in Vietnam and identify the most effective marketing communication in attracting visitors by analysing promotional marketing in the case of Suoi Tien Theme Park in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. It will analyse characteristics of marketing communications including the way they are conducted in Suoi Tien Theme Park.

There are many marketing communications which can be used in a theme park. Which factors will affect selection of marketing communications? How to run these marketing communications? Integrating or separating them? And which marketing communication is most effective to attract visitors? This study will answer the above mentioned questions.

Vietnamese theme park industry includes many theme parks. Because of time and ability limitation, it is impossible to make a study throughout Vietnam. Thus, this research studies a case of theme park in Ho Chi Minh city, which is Suoi Tien Theme Park.

This research may help to work in the theme park industry in Vietnam, especially in jobs about marketing. Especially for people who are interested in promotional marketing in theme parks, this study will provide information of how to select and run marketing communications effectively in the Vietnamese market.

#### **1.4 Research questions**

This research will analyse promotional marketing activities of a park to understand the characteristics of its promotional marketing. From this result, this study will then identify the strengths and weaknesses in order to give recommendations to

increase the number of Vietnamese visitors. This study will answer three following research questions:

- What marketing communications do Suoi Tien Theme Park currently use to attract Vietnamese?
- What marketing communication has so far worked best for Suoi Tien Theme Park to attract Vietnamese until now?
- How does Suoi Tien Theme Park conduct marketing communications to attract Vietnamese?

### **1.5 Research objectives**

The long-term goal of the research is to explore the most effective method of promotional marketing to attract Vietnamese visitors to the theme park so that it can contribute to the development of theme park industry in Vietnam.

The objective of the current study is to provide a comprehensive review of literature and promotional marketing practices of theme park. Particularly, the study has the following sub-objectives:

- To provide information about theme park in Ho Chi Minh City.
- To encourage to protect cultural value of country via religious and cultural themes of the park.

The result of this study will be valuable in marketing of theme park industry as well as related tourism researchers in developing better practices for considering theme parks as a potential destination.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Overview of theme park**

#### **2.1.1 Definition**

When people talk about theme park, they talk about a place where they can enjoy plenty of attractions such as landscapes, shows, games, food courts, etc...This is a destination for people of all ages who want to spend leisure time with families, friends and sweethearts. “For Ren (1998), a theme park is, more specifically, the landscape resulting from a cultural representation: a place where knowledge and technology are applied to the creation of new form of organization production based on signs and space. Based on this, parks are planned in order to materialize a commercial atmosphere in which the basic management principle is that of getting visitors to move, have a good time and spend” (Clavé, 2014, p. 31). According to this definition, the attractions in a theme park have reflected cultural value which visitors can see and experience via architectures, shows, games used to tell its own stories. And each story has played a role in building the theme for the park.

In addition, “theme parks represent extraordinary spatial and social forms, they offer some of the most basic needs, reflect deep and powerful emotions and cognitive modes, and present some of the most telling and controversial representations of the world” (Lukas, 2012, pp. 7,8). Because unlike when you watch television or read a book, you have seen, heard and sometimes just imaged about the stories which the films and books have been conveying to audiences and readers. But with theme parks, they can bring visitors to the most popular fantasies which visitors are able to touch, taste, and even walk

through via shows, landscapes, foodservices, etc...In order words, theme parks have been helping visitors actualizing their dreams about fantasy stories.

### **2.1.2 Types**

Theme parks can be distinguished by two basic criteria. (i) The size, which can be evaluated by the number of visitors, the surface area that they occupy, the number of employees. (ii) The dominant markets according to their origin (Clavé, 2014, p. 29). By using these two criteria, theme parks are categorized into urban, regional and destination parks (Table 1). These criteria are less clearly related when dealing with niche parks. “However, this typological categorization may be purely illustrative since, depending on other variables, significant variations may occur in each of the types of parks” (Clavé, 2014, p. 29).

According to order of following table (Table 1), destination park is the type that has the biggest scale of number of visitors and investment which usually must be over €1,000 million and from 3.5 million visits a year. It also includes different areas in which the main attractions brand images are located (Clavé, 2014, p. 29). Regional and urban parks are the second and third of scale in order because of the less of visitors and investments. In addition, the number of their attractions is 35~50 with a regional park and 25~35 with an urban park. And finally, the niche park is the smallest type. Its investment is between €10 million and €80 million and number of visitors is about 0.75 million a year (Clavé, 2014, pp. 30,31).

About visitors of each type of park; *Destination Park* attracts a large number of visitors who are far away from the park and often spend a night in it. That’s why destination park often includes accommodation facilities. Meanwhile, *Regional Park* is

for visitors who come from areas located some 100-200 km away and spend a few hours in the park. And *Urban Park* is local scope, designed for urban area with limited themes in a park. Finally, in the rural area in which a certain number of tourist can be attracted, *Niche Parks* will be located (Clavé, 2014, pp. 29,30)

Type	Investment (million €)	Visitors (million)	Attractions	Demand
Destination	Over 250	From 3.5	Over 55	Tourist demand can reach over 50%
Regional	Between 100 and 250	From 1.5 to 3.5	35-50	Tourist demand up to 25%
Urban	Between 80 and 100	Between 0.75 and 1.5	25-35	95% from the immediate urban areas
Niche	Between 10 and 80	Up to 0.75	Variable	Variable

*Table 1: Types of theme parks*

Source: (Clavé, 2014)

### **2.1.3 Theme(s)**

The fundamental issue which gives a park its character is its physical and symbolic structuring around a theme. “The theme must refer to a story, an argument, which the visitor will assimilate during his visit in a progressive process of identification. The physical, landscape and aesthetic characteristics of the surroundings provide the forms” (Clavé, 2014, p. 32). Theming is to use the technology, spectacle and story in order to create an atmosphere of entertainment that fosters a fantasy, location and idea (Clavé, 2014, p. 33).



Because it's a product of creation, theme is not mere fantasy stories, it can be any contents; such as environment, culture, science, etc..."Theming is, in fact, a process of the physical and social construction of a type of reality which, being imaginary, magnifies the characteristics of contemporary society: a creative exercise which mixes imagination, technical capabilities, artistic concepts" (Clavé, 2014, p. 35)

To be noticed that a theme park can contain one or more theme areas (Clavé, 2014, p. 28), there are some typical attributes which can be developed. Table 2 summarizes some of the attributes of groups of themes in 1999.

Type	Attributes
Adventure	Excitement and action
	Frightening
	Mysterious
Futurism	Discovery
	Robot
	Scientific
International	International village
	World expositions
Nature	Animals
	Floral displays
	Landscaping
	Marine life
Fantasy	Animation
	Fairy tale
	Magic
History and Culture	Aboriginal
	Authentic
	Cultural heritage
	Ethnic appeals
Movie	Comedy
	Show business
	Motion picture

Table 2: Attributes of groups of themes

Source: (Clavé, 2014)

## **2.2 Vietnamese Buddhism and folktales culture**

### **2.2.1 Vietnamese Buddhism**

“Buddhism came to Vietnam in the early part of the Christian era by way of China and India. Vietnamese Buddhism, heavily influenced by China, absorbed elements of Taoism, Confucianism, and ancestor worship along with the veneration of local deities” (Topmiller, 2000, p. 233).

“Most Vietnamese lay people adhere to Pure Land Buddhism and hope that their actions today can influence their fate tomorrow. Thus, they have faith in the importance of performance meritorious acts to ensure their future will be easier” (Topmiller, 2000, p. 233). Because of this thinking, Buddhism has a great influence on behaviour of Vietnamese. Buddhism believers always try to do good things to others in order to receive a better future for themselves. And temples and pagodas are built throughout Vietnam to satisfy the belief in Buddhism.

According to statistics released by the Government Committee for Religious Affairs (CRA) in 2017, 26.4 percent of Vietnamese population is categorized as religious believers, and in which there is 14.91 percent is Buddhist, 7.35 percent Roman Catholic, 1.09 percent Protestant, 1.16 percent Cao Dai, 1.47 percent Hoa Hao Buddhist and other persons professing some kind of religious or spiritual beliefs (Bureau of Democracy, 2017). With over 50% of religious believers (among 26.4% percent of religious believers), Buddhism has shown its role be higher than other religions in spiritual life of Vietnamese. And with a large number of it believers, Buddhism has been easy to present in Vietnamese daily life throughout this country.

### **2.2.2 Vietnamese folktales**

The Vietnamese teach their children not only the language, but also the history and cultural values of their people, using folktales passed down from generation to generation. “As these tales have been passed down for centuries through the oral tradition, cultural notes have been included for a full and thoughtful understanding of how the characters’ natural and social environments caused them to behave and interact within the societal structures of their time” (Le, 2017).

Because folktales contain historical and cultural stories in there and to get it easy to understand even with children, folktales have appeared just in storytelling of grandparents but also in books of primary schools as an official education program. This has been proved that over time folktales have always had its stand in Vietnamese society.

There are many folktales which are popular in Vietnamese society such as the legend of ancient Vietnam: Legend of Lac Long Quan and Au Co, Son Tinh and Thuy Tinh (Mountain God- Water God), and Thanh Giong (Saint Giong). In which legend of Lac Long Quan and Au Co explains the origin of Vietnamese. Lac Long Quan is admitted as all Vietnamese’s father and Au Co as Vietnamese’s mother (Hien, 2005). Meanwhile, Son Tinh and Thuy Tinh is a myth to explain about natural phenomena such as rain, storm, earthquake, etc...since they are the Mountain God and Water God who can create and control nature. With Thanh Giong, who is also called Phu Dong Thien Vuong (Phu Dong the Sky King), he represents the Vietnamese’s spirit in protecting the country from invaders (Viet, 2012). They are three Vietnamese folktales which all Vietnamese have known and reflected historical, cultural and spiritual sites of Vietnamese (Hien, 2005).

## **2.3 Promotion marketing in theme parks**

In order to attract customers, theme parks use promotion and communication instruments “via common techniques such as advertising, brochures, press and public relations, sponsorship or the use of the Internet, among other methods” (Clavé, 2014, p. 415).

Parks need to understand their media options (print media, electronic media, outdoor advertising, flyers, etc...). Major parks can run expensive television advertising since they can afford high budget. With medium-sized and small parks tend to be present only in the media through paid advertisement in the local, regional and/or specialized press. Radio is less used (Clavé, 2014, p. 416)

There are other promotional tools which theme parks use such as the following (Clavé, 2014, p. 416):

- Free coverage in the media through press and public relations.
- Direct marketing strategies.
- Sponsorship of events, people or organizations.
- Agreements between parks to run joint advertising campaigns.
- Internet promotion.

In order to choose the promotional tool(s) which is suitable for targeted customers, theme parks need to identify suitable market segment. That's why it's primordial to know market in terms of demographics, geography, behaviour, benefits and psychographic (Clavé, 2014, p. 410).

## **2.4 Integrated marketing communications (IMC)**

“IMC is a communications process that entails the planning, creation, integration, and implementation of diverse forms of marketing communications- or, for short, marcom- (advertisements, sales promotions, publicity releases, events, etc.) that are delivered over time to a brand’s targeted customers and prospects. The goal of IMC is ultimately to influence or directly affect the behaviour of the targeted audience. IMC considers all touch points, or sources of contact, that a customer/prospect has with the brand as potential delivery channels for message and make use of all communications methods that are relevant to customers/prospects” (Shimp, 2010, p. 10) .

In the other definition, “IMC is defined as a research-based, audience-focused, result-driven, communication planning process that aims to execute a brand communication program over time so that there is clarity and consistency in the positioning of the brand. This is achieved by coordinating different communication disciplines and integrating the creative content across different media. The ultimate aim is to achieve short-term financial gain and long-term brand equity” (Ang, 2015).

In which definitions, they are expressing that integrating marketing communications is combination of marketing communication tools. In other words, it’s running marketing communication tools simultaneously to increase the effect in getting attention of targeted customers.

“Using multiple communication tools in conjunction with one another can produce greater results than running tools individually since there is a synergistic effect of using multiple well-coordinated marcom tools” (Shimp, 2010, p. 9). Each marketing tool has its own strengths and weaknesses. This means when we coordinate marcoms

activities, we try to choose marketing tools which support each other so that the strength of one marketing tool is able to make up for any weaknesses in another. “For example, advertising is very effective in creating brand awareness but much less so in converting sales, while personal selling is the reverse” (Ang, 2015)

Table 3 provides the list of marketing communication elements which are the collection of advertising, sales promotions, public relations, event marketing and other communication devices that are identified. These communication tools and media constitute has been known as *promotion* of “marketing mix” (Marketing mix includes *product, price, place* and *promotion* or the “4Ps”). However, “marketing communications” is the expression which marketing practitioners and many educators use the most. (Shimp, 2010, p. 8)

1. Media Advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● TV</li> <li>● Radio</li> <li>● Magazines</li> <li>● Newspapers</li> </ul>	5. Trade and Consumer-Oriented Promotions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Trade deals and buying allowances</li> <li>● Display and advertising allowances</li> <li>● Trade shows</li> <li>● Cooperative advertising</li> <li>● Samples</li> <li>● Coupons</li> <li>● Premiums</li> <li>● Refunds/rebates</li> <li>● Contests/ sweepstakes</li> <li>● Promotional games</li> <li>● Bonus packs</li> <li>● Price-off deals</li> </ul>	6. Event Marketing and Sponsorships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sponsorship of sporting events</li> <li>● Sponsorship of arts, fairs, and festivals</li> <li>● Sponsorship of causes</li> </ul>
2. Direct Response and Interactive Advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Direct mail</li> <li>● Telephone solicitation</li> <li>● Online advertising</li> </ul>		7. Marketing-Oriented Public Relations and Publicity
3. Place Advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Billboards and bulletins</li> <li>● Transit ads</li> <li>● Cinema ads</li> </ul>		8. Personal Selling
4. Store Signage and Point-of-Purchase Advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● External store signs</li> <li>● In-store shelf signs</li> <li>● Shopping cart ads</li> <li>● In-store radio and TV</li> </ul>		

Table 3: The tools of Marketing Communications

Source: (Shimp, 2010)

## **2.5 Integrated marketing in theme park: A case of Hong Kong Disneyland Theme Park**

If there is suspicion about feasibility of conducting integrated marketing in a theme park, Hong Kong Disneyland will be a convincing answer since it has integrated marketing communications for promotional marketing from the beginning of its operation and become one of the most famous theme park in Asia. Therefore, Hong Kong Disneyland Theme Park is a perfect example to understand about promotional marketing in a theme park, especially implementation of integrated marketing.

Hong Kong Disneyland Theme Park is one of the most famous theme park in Asia. According to 2017 Theme Index and Museum Index: The Global Attractions Attendance Report, Hong Kong Disneyland was ranked 18<sup>th</sup> in top 25 amusement/theme parks worldwide (based on attendance calculation) (AECOM, 2017, p. 11). This achievement could derive from many internal and external factors which have been analysed on magazines, reports and journal articles. And one of the factors which has been mentioned as an important role in attracting visitors is its promotional marketing. There are many articles written about how Hong Kong Disneyland has conducted its promotional marketing with many marketing communications running simultaneously.

### **2.5.1 Overview**

In September 12, 2005, Hong Kong Disneyland was opened. It was the first Walt Disney Co.'s park in China and 5<sup>th</sup> theme park worldwide (the other parks are in United States (Florida, California), Japan (Tokyo), France (Paris)). In other words, Hong Kong Disneyland was the first Walt Disney Co.'s in Asia (Co., 2011, p. 178)

After the first year of operations, Disneyland became one of the top three most popular attractions in Hong Kong. There were 5 million visitors coming the park in its first year, just missing its target of 5.6 million visitors. At that time, Hong Kong Disneyland was the smallest Disneyland park so this number of visitors was an impressive quantity (Miller, 2007, p. 31).

About the ownerships, The Walt Disney Co. owns 43 percent of Hong Kong Disneyland, and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government owns 57 percent. This is distinct from other Disneyland parks since there is no other park in partly government-owned as Hong Kong. (Miller, 2007, p. 31).

## **2.5.2 Marketing Disney to Hong Kong**

### **2.5.2.1 Target visitor**

Hong Kong Disney aims to increase visitors are through three types; (Co., 2011, pp. 181,182).

- *Tourists from mainland China.* Because of strict People's Republic of China (PRC) travel policies, residents from the mainland encountered difficulties when travelling abroad. However, Hong Kong was the exception, it welcomed more than 3 million mainlanders in 1999. The number of mainlanders entering Hong Kong was controlled by a quota system. Therefore, Hong Kong was expected to continue to increase regardless of Hong Kong Disneyland.
- *Tourists from Taiwan and Southeast Asia.* According to Hong Kong government's estimation, Taiwanese and Southeast Asian tourists would be more likely interested in going to Hong Kong because of its proximity and lower costs relative to Tokyo. And with Taiwanese tourists, in Hong Kong, they would be more



comfortable than others since they could not encounter language barrier instead of travelling to U.S, Japan, or France.

- *Tourists from other countries.* Hong Kong was admitted as one of the world's busiest cities and a world-class tourist destination. Therefore, it would have many side-trip opportunities to tourists attracted by Disneyland.

#### **2.5.2.2 Market barrier**

“A theme park in Hong Kong would prove culturally challenging for a number of reasons, including language, food, souvenirs, entertainment, environmental concerns, contract relationships, local employees, cultural sensitivities, and the Chinese central government” (The Walt Disney Company: Launch of a Hong Kong Theme Park, 2017).

Although Disney is a famous symbol in the West, it's totally new with Asian. “There are challenges to building and marketing a Disneyland park outside of the United States. Disney has to work twice as hard to market itself in mainland China because most Chinese have not grown up with Disney” (Miller, 2007, p. 32).

The American theme park would further dilute the Chinese culture in Hong Kong. There were doubts about feasibility of the survival of Disneyland from legislators. Japanese cartoon characters were also a worrying factor since they present and were familiar with Hong Kong then Disney characters. Therefore, Hong Kong Disneyland might encounter challenges in promoting its image to the general public (The Walt Disney Company: Launch of a Hong Kong Theme Park, 2017, p. 8).

#### **2.5.2.3 Promoting Disney image**

In order to prepare for its grand opening in late 2005, Hong Kong Disneyland has started many promotional campaigns. It co-operated with the Hong Kong Television

Broadcasts Limited (TVB), the largest broadcasting network in Hong Kong, to start a series of Disney productions. TVB broadcasted three new Disney TV programs from July 2004. This showed the kick-off of Hong Kong Disneyland's prelaunch marketing and publicity efforts (The Walt Disney Company: Launch of a Hong Kong Theme Park, 2017, p. 10)

To help guests be familiar with Disney and Disneyland attractions, the park gives tourists an introduction when they went to the park. There is Disneyland Story building in the park, exhibits artwork and film footage on Disney history, from the creation of Mickey Mouse through the attractions of Hong Kong Disneyland (Miller, 2007, p. 32).

They also executed running tests on tour groups from two operators in mainland China. When these tour groups come to the park, they are welcomed by a Disney host who introduces them to Walt Disney, the founder of the company, the park's characters, attractions, and other background (Miller, 2007, p. 32).

Disney has implemented many marketing initiatives to raise awareness of, and spark interest in, Hong Kong Disneyland. They include cooperative advertising programs with travel agencies and the Hong Kong Tourism Board; offer "salute programs" to travel agencies, airline and hotel industry staff in the region so that they are able to visit the park as park representatives; and make a website to promote Disney culture, news, and all promotion campaigns to travel agents (Miller, 2007, p. 32).

Disney has also advertised information in mainland magazines to promote "the public about Disneyland and inspire them to visit the Hong Kong Disneyland website—and order a vacation planning kit." (Miller, 2007, p. 32).

Disney conducts promotions during the year. One big promotion is called ‘Stay and Play for Two Days.’ This was run to encourage tourists experiencing the park for a longer period of time. Since many Chinese tourists come to Hong Kong by bus they arrive at Disneyland mid-day. With this the promotion, “if a guest stays at a Disneyland hotel and purchases a one-day ticket, we give the guest a second day at the park for free. In addition, the company has offered special hotel rates for Hong Kong residents” (Miller, 2007, p. 32).

Disneyland also has a promotion program for students, in which student groups enter the park 30 minutes before the park’s opening and receive a special introduction and tour of the park. It builds a program to make it more educational. For instance, students can learn physics by studying light, sound, and motion on Space Mountain. In addition, Disney offers youth programs, “such as performance opportunities in the park and school fun days, to primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong during the 2006 Christmas season” (Miller, 2007, p. 32).

Because the Hong Kong park is derived from the original Disneyland in Anaheim, California and many aspects of the park are the same. For instance, the Hong Kong park provides classic attractions such as Space Mountain, the Sleeping Beauty Castle, and Mad Hatter Teacups. Also, after visitors come to the park, they pass through Mainstreet, USA, which looks like an American town in the early 1900s (Miller, 2007, p. 32).

Besides that, Disney took local culture into account to ensure that tourists who come from China, Taiwan and Southeast Asia would feel welcomed and easy to accept an American-style- theme park in a Chinese culture since there were still decoration

which had Chinese style. For instance, it consulted a feng shui master to help with the park's placement, orientation, and design. (Miller, 2007, p. 33).

Moreover, Hong Kong Disneyland has modified many aspects of the park to be able to suit its Chinese visitors. Its cast members can speak three languages. Its leaflets, Signs, audio-recorded messages, and attractions are in several languages. Also, the park also offers various kinds of food from many countries – from Chinese, Japanese, to America and Indian cuisine (Miller, 2007, p. 33).

Appearing in Hong Kong as the first Walt Disney Co.'s theme park in Asia, Hong Kong Disneyland was known as pioneer in bringing Disney image to Asia. This was not an easy mission to promote a Western cultural image to a country deeply embedded in Chinese culture. Moreover, its target visitors were mostly from China, Taiwan and Southeast Asia where residents still felt strange to Western culture. Therefore, Disneyland needed to create deep impression enough to get the attention of publicity from the beginning. That's why Hong Kong Disneyland run a range of promotion campaigns simultaneously in order to ensure that people would be able to see and hear about it on all advertising channels.

At the same time, Hong Kong Disneyland run two media advertising channels with television and magazines. It also organized exhibits artwork and uploaded all information on its website for anyone to easily to approach. About promotions for visitors, Disneyland had programs for students and offered free ticket for long-stay-visitors. In addition, it did not forget to create connection with travel agents to increase the number of visitors by groups. In co-operating with these marketing communications, it helped

Hong Kong Disneyland to gain about 5 million visitors in the first year. This number showed effectiveness of integrating marketing communications.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study used Qualitative research method to collect and analyse Primary Data and Secondary Data.

### 3.1 Primary Data

In order to collect primary data, deep individual interviews were conducted with selected persons under *purposive sampling method* in which “the researcher does not seek to sample research participants on a random basis. The goal of purposive sampling is to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions being posed” (Bell, 2011, p. 442). Interviewees are persons working in Sales and Marketing Department of Suoi Tien Theme Park. Since interviews would be made during working time of people, to prevent from time conflicts, the author had contacted Deputy Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept. in advance via emails to set up and confirm the most convenient time for interviews. And interviews were implemented during the time when the author came back to Vietnam in the middle of February, 2019 in three weeks.

About interview questions, they are open-ended-questions which help interviewees to present their thoughts comfortably and freely. In addition, they were based on three research questions to make sure that the interview questions would focus on finding the answers to research questions.

After receiving professor’s comments, these questions were adjusted to focus on research questions the most and translated into Vietnamese. This Vietnamese version was

checked by other Vietnamese graduate student who is studying Master of Business Administration (MBA degree) in Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University.

The followings are interview questions:

Research questions	Interview questions
1. What marketing communications do Suoi Tien Theme Park currently use to attract Vietnamese?	1. What is the message which Suoi Tien Theme Park's marketing communications conveying to visitors?
	2. How many marketing communications is Suoi Tien Theme Park using to approach visitors?
	3. What is the role of each marketing communications to convey Suoi Tien Theme Park's message?
	4. What is (are) advantage(s) and disadvantage(s) of each marketing communications?
	5. What's the main marketing communication of Suoi Tien Theme Park?
	6. Is there marketing communication for specific visitors according to the ages, sex...? If yes? What is it?
2. What marketing communication has so far worked best for Suoi Tien Theme Park to attract Vietnamese until now?	1. What is the most effective marketing communication in getting attention of visitors?
	2. How does Suoi Tien Theme Park run it?
	3. How do you measure effectiveness (via profit, the number of visitor, survey, etc.)?
3. How do Suoi Tien Theme Park's marketing communications attract Vietnamese?	1. How many marketing communications has Suoi Tien Theme Park implemented at the same time to motivate visitors?
	2. How do marketing communications support/affect each other to get visitors' attention when they are run at the same time?
	3. What is (are) advantages and disadvantage(s) when integrating marketing communications instead of running them separately?

*Table 4: Interview questions*

Because of limitation of time and busy schedule of interviewees, there were five members of Sales and Marketing Dept. participated in face-to-face interviews which were conducted in three days and taken about 30 minutes for each person:

- Mr. Dam Phuong Duy (Mr. Duy) – Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept.
- Ms. Mai Thi Huong (Ms. Huong) – Deputy Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept.  
(In charge of Marketing)
- Mr. Le Hong Hao (Mr. Hao) – Deputy Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept. (He was person in charge of Marketing before taking responsibility for Sales in 2018)
- Ms. Nguyen Kieu Oanh (Ms. Oanh) – Specialist of Sales and Marketing Dept.
- Ms. Le Thi Hue (Ms. Hue) – Staff of Sales and Marketing Dept.

In addition, during interviews, the author asked interviewees to provide information about marketing strategies which Suoi Tien Theme Park has conducted in last four years from 2015 to 2018 according to Mr. Duy (Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept.), there were many changes in conducting Suoi Tien Them Park's marketing strategies in this period of time.

### **3.2 Secondary Data**

A lot of data were collected via several sources such as books, online databases on EBSCOhost and other websites. This study also utilized data from sources in Vietnamese.

- Official website of Suoi Tien Theme Park
- Official website of Ministry of Culture, Sports & Tourism – Vietnam National Administration of Tourism
- Official website of Ho Chi Minh City Department of Tourism



## CHAPTER 4: FINDING

Data was collected for this study to find answers to three research questions (1) What marketing communications do Suoi Tien Theme Park currently use to attract Vietnamese, (2) What marketing communication has so far worked best for Suoi Tien Theme Park to attract Vietnamese until now and (3) How do Suoi Tien Theme Park's marketing communications attract Vietnamese. The result of this study is summarized as below:

Research questions	Key-findings
1. What marketing communications do Suoi Tien Theme Park currently use to attract Vietnamese?	1. Media Advertising 2. Direct Response and Interactive Advertising 3. Trade- and Consumer-Oriented Promotions 4. Personal selling 5. Marketing -Oriented Public Relations and Publicity 6. Place advertising
2 What marketing communication has so far worked best for Suoi Tien Theme Park to attract Vietnamese until now?	- Media Advertising (especially Television Commercials Advertising (TVC advertising))
3. How do Suoi Tien Theme Park's marketing communications attract Vietnamese?	- Integrate marketing communications based on the target visitors' characteristics. - Simultaneously running marketing communications but focusing on TVC advertising the most.

Table 5: Research's result: Research questions – Key-findings

### 4.1 Marketing communications which Suoi Tien Theme Park currently use

#### 4.1.1 Suoi Tien's marketing message

The message which Suoi Tien Theme Park's marketing activities are conveying to visitors is "entertainment paradise for people of all ages". In 2017, it was changed from

the message of "return to roots of national culture" since Suoi Tien wanted to approach as many as target visitors who are not only the old but also the youth. "In the past, almost Suoi Tien's visitors were the old but from a few years ago, a large number of visitors have been the youth and families. That's why Suoi Tien needs to change to adapt to new requirement" – Ms. Huong, Deputy Manager of Sales and Marketing Department.

#### **4.1.2 Marketing communications which Suoi Tien Theme Park is using to approach visitors**

Suoi Tien has two main target visitors: the first one is visitors from group tours organized by companies, schools and tourism agencies and the second one is individual visitors. And Suoi Tien has implemented a variety of marketing communications to promote its services to these visitors effectively. There are six marketing communications which Suoi Tien are using: Media Advertising, Place Advertising, Direct Response and Interactive Advertising, Trade- and Consumer-Oriented Promotions, Personal Selling and Marketing -Oriented Public Relations and Publicity. With marketing communication, there are many marketing tools to run on it. In Media advertising, it has TVC advertising, radio, newspapers... With Place Advertising, Suoi Tien has run Point of Sale Materials (POSM) method. Direct marketing includes solicitation and direct email. In while Suoi Tien gives a variety of coupons, gifts issue and trade deals for Trade- and Consumer-Oriented Promotions. It also has a team called "Customer Service" who will contact to companies, schools and tourism agencies to promote their services for Personal selling. And about public relations, Suoi Tien has organized press releases in some times of needs.

Suoi Tien has also used Trade- and Consumer-Oriented Promotions for specific visitors according to certain time periods. Firstly, we have to say about the annual sales

for students who achieved good study result in every summer. The second special promotion is for visitors of groups who tour in the end of year since this is the time of Vietnamese Lunar New Year. And it is not definitely indispensable sales promotion campaign to outstanding festivals such as coupons, gifts for women in Valentine or Women's day.

#### **4.1.3 The role of each marketing communication**

Because each target visitors have their own characteristics which are suitable for a certain marketing communication, the role of each marketing communication is focusing on the target specified initially. To approach individual visitors, Suoi Tien has used Media advertising which is deployed into many detailed marketing communication tools. Since Southeast and Southwest (Also known as Mekong Delta Areas) provinces has about eighty percent of agricultural land (Figure 2) (DEVELOPMENT, 2016), people living here are mostly farmers. Therefore, “TVC advertisements are broadcasted on the channels for the Southeast and Southwest provinces in certain time slots about 8pm to 9pm since people often go to sleep early.” – Ms. Oanh (Specialist of Sales and Marketing Department).

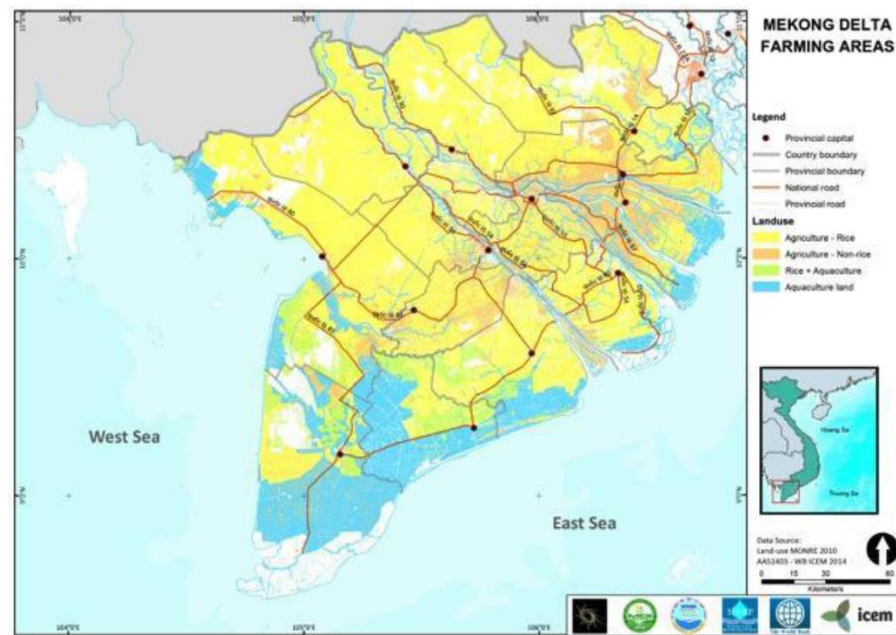


Figure 2: Mekong Delta Farming Areas

Source: (DEVELOPMENT, 2016)

These TVC advertisements are clips introducing Suoi Tien's highlighted games, events and landscapes with images and sounds selected by marketing team carefully in order to be sure that they will get the attention of viewers as much as possible. The below image cut from TVC advertisements of Southern Fruit Festival event, one of the biggest annual events of Suoi Tien.



*Figure 3: Southern Fruit Festival in Suoi Tien Theme Park*

Source: Suoi Tien Theme Park

In addition, they have also run advertisements which are short, focused audio talks promoting newest events, games and constructions of Suoi Tien on radio. With newspapers, Suoi Tien has published articles on some popular newspapers such as *Nguoi Lao Dong* and *Tuoi Tre* and other tourism magazines. Content of these articles are the same with advertisements on television and radio, which has been written about Suoi Tien's highlighted events, games and constructions. Besides, it also run Out-of-home advertising in almost events by placing banners on taxis to get attention of people. Suoi Tien also has its own Facebook page and Youtube channel to upload the news and video concerned about newest events and promoting programs. This is the way to use social network to help Suoi Tien reach and inspire a wide range of visitors of all ages.

And with visitors from group tours, Personal Selling, Direct Response and Interactive Advertising are progressed via Direct email and Telephone solicitation tools which are controlled and executed by "Customer service" in order to collect the contacts of visitors, Suoi Tien has two sources. The first one is tourism agencies. They have

contacted to Suoi Tien by themselves to organize entertainment and sightseeing tours since Suoi Tien has a plenty of Buddhism statues, constructions and games. The second source is from internet searching which is implemented by “Customer Service” team. Since Direct Response and Interactive Advertising focuses on visitor from group tours, “Customer Service” team has found companies, schools’ information on the internet, sent promotional information emails and made contacts to companies, schools directly to promote Suoi Tien Services. In addition, based on Trade- and Consumer-Oriented Promotions marketing, Suoi Tien has also promoted business contracts with 0~80% prepaid offers. And with its reputation in more than twenty years, Suoi Tien has had good relationship with tourism companies via many years working and cooperating in organizing the tours. This helps it reaching tourism agencies via telephone and email marketing also.

Moreover, Trade- and Consumer-Oriented Promotions helps to spur short-term sales. It includes coupons, gifts issue and other sales campaigns. “Suoi Tien has particular events in a year such as Teacher Day, Compassion Day, etc... With each events, Suoi Tien has promoted distinct sales campaigns. For example, we have discounted from 20% to 100% of ticket price for student and teachers only in Teacher Day and given free tickets for disabilities in Compassion Day event made disabilities have a chance to enjoy Suoi Tien for free” (Mr. Duy – Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept.) And there is one more marketing communication has the same purpose to attract visitors in short-term sales, especially in Suoi Tien’s events. The one being described here is Place Advertising with banners, band-rolls, stages decorated in events such as Southern Fruits Festival. These banners or stage decoration according to the theme of events will get attention of visitors to attract them more.

And finally, public relations marketing organized to ensure the image of Suoi Tien is in the best light when visitors see or hear about it in anytime and anywhere. When Suoi Tien has launched new items such as constructions, games, marketing team will contact to press agencies to provide highlighted and relevant information about new item(s). This information will be published in tourism magazines, newspapers and online newspapers to inform listeners and readers in details of new launch(s). And since “product announcements by a newspapers editors, a television broadcaster or blogger are notably more believable” (Shimp, 2010, p. 537) public relations marketing has not only enhanced awareness of visitor about new item(s) releases but also built the faith of Suoi Tien reputation. “However, Suoi Tien does not focus on this marketing strategy since its reputation is steady in Ho Chi Minh city market and instead of that it has been concentrated on Media advertising marketing, especially TVC adds” (Mr. Duy, Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept.) since Suoi Tien has identified people who are from Southeast and Southwest is its main visitors and they are interested in television watching.

The next table summarized highlighted marketing strategies which Suoi Tien has been applying.

<b>Marketing communications</b>	<b>Marketing communication tools</b>	<b>Marketing strategy(es)</b>
Media Advertising	TVC advertising	Airport, malls, buildings, supermarket: TVC/Layouts
	Radio	Radio advertising
	Out-of-home advertising (OOH)	Taxi banners
	Newspaper	Newspapers advertsing
Place advertising	Point of Sale Materials (POSM)	Banners, bandrolls, stages, giant fruits model, decorations
Direct Response and Interactive Advertising	Direct email	
	Telephone solicitation	

	Online marketing	Online website, Facebook, online newspapers Youtube Ads (in-stream)
Trade- and Consumer- Oriented Promotions	Coupons/Gifts	Gifts
	Rebates	Discount ticket price, free tickets,
	Trade deals	Business Contracts (0% - 80% prepaid)
Personal selling		
Marketing -Oriented Public Relations and Publicity		Press release

*Table 6: Summary of Suoi Tien's highlighted marketing strategies*

#### **4.1.4 Advantage(s) and disadvantage(s) of each marketing communications**

Although it's undeniable that the effectiveness of each marketing communication in promoting Suoi Tien's image and reaching visitors, each of them still have advantages and disadvantages contemporarily. These points are extracted from many years in experience of marketing department. Media Marketing with TVC advertising, radio and newspaper is a favourite choice of middle-aged audiences and readers since they often watch television and read newspapers. That's why Media Marketing can approach middle-aged visitors easily. But it still has weakness since the youth nowadays usually use internet searching and social network for information approach, and television or newspapers cannot satisfy the young visitors. "And although out-of-home advertising can reach many kinds of people, it is only run when events are happening with a short of times. Therefore, its viral effectiveness is not highly valued" (Mr. Duy, Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept.)

About Direct Response and Interactive Advertising and Personal Selling, they can only focus on visitors of group tours from tourism agencies, companies and school via direct emails and telephone solicitation. This is the same weakness of Trade deals since



Business contracts are only offered to tourism agencies, schools and company. In addition, Direct Response and Interactive Advertising also has Online Marketing with social network such as Facebook or Youtube which is comfortable for the young visitors to approach its information. But the with the older visitors who are almost farmers, they rarely use the internet, this is the disadvantage of Online Marketing.

Trade- and Consumer-Oriented Promotions with coupon or gift issue is often implemented in events, it helps Suoi Tien enhance visitor's interest immediately in those times. However, it is not able to reach the wide visitors who don't come to the events. It's the same with Place advertising since banners, band-rolls and stage decoration are only set up at event places. This advertising can attract visitor's attention in events but no long attraction is out there.

And finally, in order to enhance visitors' awareness and reliance, Marketing - Oriented Public Relations and Publicity is a useful marketing communication. However, Suoi Tien does not organize press release regularly since it does not focus on this marketing communication. Next figure summarizes advantage(s) and disadvantage(s) of each marketing communications.

<b>Marketing communications</b>	<b>Marketing communication tools</b>	<b>Advantage(s)</b>	<b>Disadvantage(s)</b>
Media Advertising	TVC advertising	Be effective to approach almost the middle-age visitors	Not effective to approach the youth
	Radio		
	Newspaper		
	Out-of-home advertising (OOH)	Be effective to approach many kinds of visitors	No-long effectiveness since short-term running
Place Advertising	Point of Sale Materials (POSM)	Enhance visitor's awareness in short-term	Not able to reach the wider visitors
	Direct email		

Direct Response and Interactive Advertising	Telephone solicitation	Be effective to approach visitors of group tours	Not able to reach the wider visitors
	Online marketing	Be effective to approach the youth	Not effective to approach the older visitors
Trade- and Consumer-Oriented Promotions	Coupons/Gifts	Enhance visitor's awareness in short-term	Not able to reach the wider visitors
	Rebates		
	Trade deals	Be effective to approach visitors of group tours	Not able to reach the wider visitors
Personal selling		Be effective to approach visitors of group tours	Not able to reach the wider visitors
Marketing - Oriented Public Relations and Publicity		Enhance visitor's awareness	Not implement regularly

*Table 7: Marketing communications: Advantages and disadvantages*

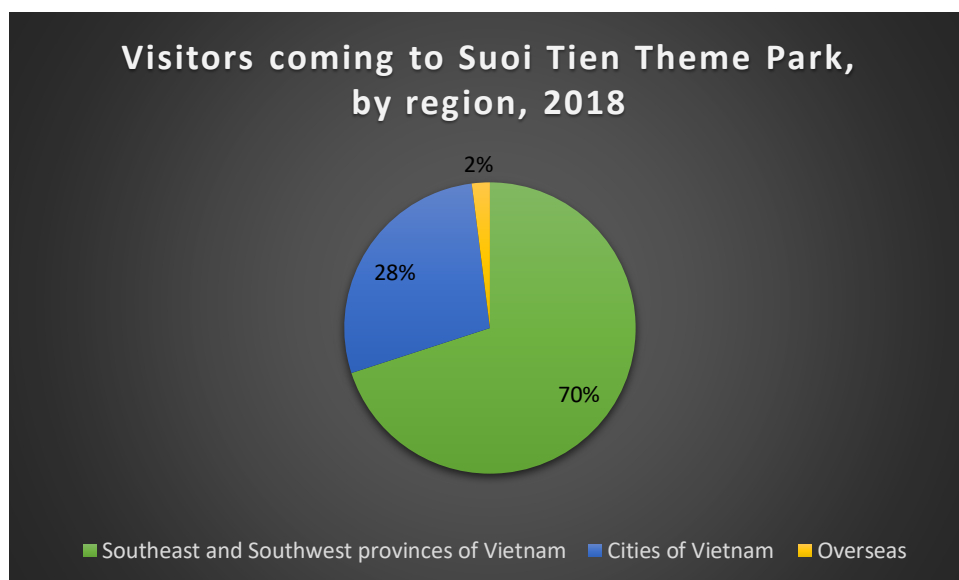
## **4.2 Marketing communication of Suoi Tien Theme Park has so far worked the best**

### **4.1.5 The most effective marketing communication in getting attention of visitors**

From the point of view of interviewees, they all supposed that Media Advertising, in which TVC advertising is the most effective marketing communication in Suoi Tien's promotional marketing. This judgement is based on the observation of amount of Southeast and Southwest provinces' visitors coming to Suoi Tien in many events. Moreover, "Media Advertising is conducted to aim to individual visitors who are mostly from Southeast and Southwest provinces and it actually bring them to us" (Mr. Hao – Deputy Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept.). And "Percentage of Southeast and Southwest provinces' visitors based on experiences in running many marketing strategies

accounts for the highest proportion of the total visitors” (Figure 4) (Mr. Duy – Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept.)

“From now TVC advertising has been the key to attract visitors of Suoi Tien. Besides that, radio and newspapers have supportive role to enhance efficiency in attracting visitors who are mostly from Southeast and Southwest provinces” (Ms. Oanh, Specialist of Sales and Marketing Dept.). That’s why Suoi Tien has been keeping Media Advertising tool as a key strategy in its marketing plans.



*Figure 4: Visitors coming to Suoi Tien Theme Park, by region, 2018*

Source: Suoi Tien Theme Park

#### **4.1.6 Measurement of effectiveness of marketing communications**

Although Suoi Tien hasn’t investigated the exact number of visitors who have come to Suoi Tien because of each marketing communications, after each event, marketing team has made reports to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of marketing communications.

There are many marketing communications which have been conducted in any event but these reports will show which marketing communication was focused the most and the number of visitors of this event. “By analysing these information from plenty of events in many years, Suoi Tien is able to understand effectiveness of each marketing communications and identify the most effective marketing communication” (Ms. Oanh – Specialist of Sales and Marketing Dept.)

Moreover, in the annual summaries, the number of visitors will show how effective all marketing communications were (Figure 5). “This chart shows that from 2016 the number of visitors has increased gradually, this is admitted that marketing activities are being run effectively” (Mr. Duy - Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept.).

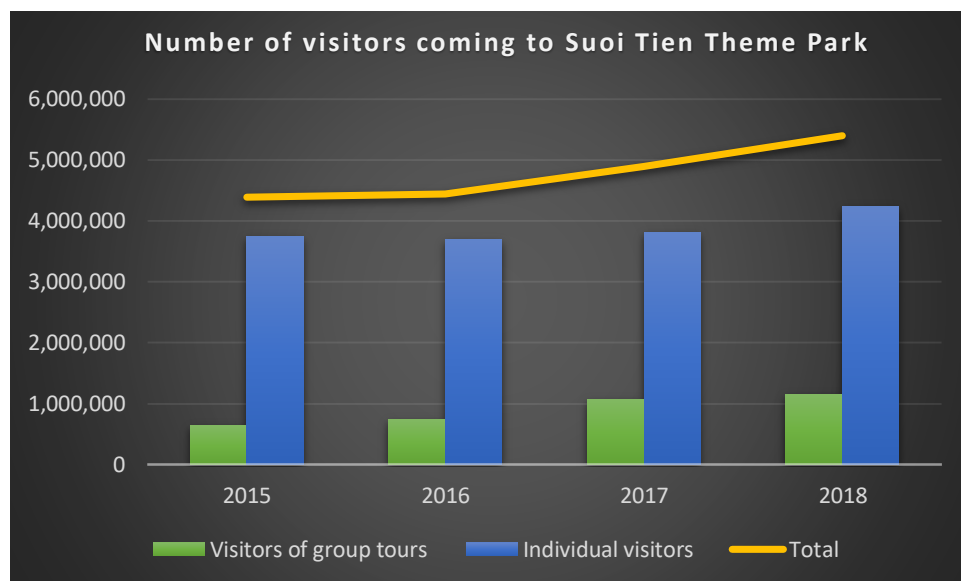


Figure 5: Quantity of visitors coming to Suoi Tien Theme Park, 2015~2018

Source: Suoi Tien Theme Park

#### 4.3 How Suoi Tien Theme Park integrates marketing communication to attract visitors

#### 4.3.1 Simultaneously running many marketing communications

“Before 2016, Suoi Tien executed marketing communications separately but it was not effective enough to increase the number of visitors. That's why Suoi Tien changed the way to run marketing methods from 2016. This has helped the number of visitors increasing gradually year by year” (Mr. Duy, Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept.) Its marketing plan has integrated and blended Media Advertising, Direct Response and Interactive Advertising, Trade- and Consumer-Oriented Promotions, Personal Selling and Marketing -Oriented Public Relations and Publicity. According to distinctive events, marketing team has chosen which marketing communication will be mixed to promote event's information.

The next table is the summary of marketing strategies used in events in Suoi Tien annually from 2015 to 2018:

Calendar	Events	2015	2016	2017	2018	Marketing methods
Jan	Spring Festival; Lunar New Year				○	Audience research
						PR website, Facebook, online newspapers...
		○	○	○	○	Press release, television ads, radio, newspapers
						magazines..
		○	○	○	○	OOH: taxi banners
				○	○	Facebook advertisement
					○	Youtube advertisement
		○	○	○	○	Gifts
Feb	Valentine	○	○	○	○	POSM: banners, bandrolls, stages, decorations..
		○	○	○	○	PR website, Facebook
		○	○	○	○	Gifts
		○	○	○	○	POSM: Photo booths, decorations...
March	International Women's Day	○	○	○	○	banners, bandrolls
		○	○	○	○	PR website, Facebook
		○	○	○	○	Gifts, free tickets

		○	○	○	○	POSM: banners, bandrolls...
		○	○	○	○	Sales: 50% ticket price (female only)
Apr-May	Hung Kings Commemorations; Liberation Day International Workers' Day				○	Audience research
		○	○	○	○	PR website, Facebook, online newspapers...
						Press release, television ads, radio, newspapers
						magazines..
		○	○	○	○	OOH: taxi banners
				○	○	Facebook advertisement (suggestion posts)
					○	Youtube advertisement (in-stream)
		○	○	○	○	Gifts
		○	○	○	○	POSM: banners, bandrolls, stages, decorations...
		○	○	○	○	Sales: 25% - 50% ticket price
					○	Audience research
Jun-Aug	Southern Fruit Festival	○	○	○	○	PR website, Facebook, online newspapers...
						Press release, television ads, radio, newspapers
						magazines..
				○	○	OOH: taxi banners
				○	○	Facebook advertisement (suggestion posts)
					○	Youtube advertisement (in-stream)
		○	○	○	○	Gifts
		○	○	○	○	POSM: banners, bandrolls, stages, giant fruits model, decorations...
		○	○	○	○	Fruits model contest, exhibitions, floated market...
		○	○	○	○	PR website, Facebook
		○	○	○	○	Gifts
Jul, Aug, Sep	Mid-Autumn Festival	○	○	○	○	banners, bandrolls
		○	○	○	○	Sales: Free ticket (Children only: <1.4m height)
	Ghost Festival National Day				○	Audience research
		○	○	○	○	PR website, Facebook, online newspapers...

		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Press release, television ads, radio, newspapers
						magazines..
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Facebook advertisement (suggestion posts)
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Youtube advertisement (in-stream)
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Gifts
Oct	Vietnamese Women's Day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	POSM: banners, bandrolls, stages..
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	PR website, Facebook
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Gifts
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	banners, bandrolls
Nov	Teacher's Day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sales: 50% ticket price (female only)
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	PR website, Facebook
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Gifts
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	banners, bandrolls
Annually (not fix time)	Compassion Day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sales: 25% - 100% ticket price (student/teacher only)
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	PR website, Facebook
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Press release
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Gifts
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Banners, bandrolls
Dec	Christmas; New Year	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sales: Free ticket (disabilities only)
					<input type="radio"/>	Audience research
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	PR website, Facebook, online newspapers...
						Press release, television ads, radio, newspapers
						magazines..
				<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Facebook advertisement (suggestion posts)
					<input type="radio"/>	Youtube advertisement (in-stream)
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Gifts
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	POSM: banners, bandrolls, stages, decorations..

Table 8: Marketing strategies used in events in Suoi Tien annually

Source: Suoi Tien Theme Park

### **4.3.2 Advantage(s) and disadvantage(s) when integrating marketing communications**

#### **4.3.2.1 Advantage(s)**

Running many marketing communications simultaneously helps each other to bring Suoi Tien's image to wider visitors since it increases chances to approach visitors in many ways at the same time. For instance, visitors can watch Suoi Tien's advertisement on television, read its information on newspapers. Meanwhile they are able to see advertising clips on Youtube, Facebook and advertising contents on online newspapers. Moreover, they have also received promoting email or calls from Suoi Tien. That means Suoi Tien's information is around visitors and easy to approach.

This leads to increasing the number of people known about Suoi Tien's information at all time when events are happening. While advertisements on television, newspapers, radio are supposed to reach the visitors from the middle age. The online advertisements via social network such as Youtube and Facebook are aimed at the youth. Imaging that if a father or a mother watches television or reads newspapers, the can see Suoi Tien's advertisement and tell to their children. And children can ask their parents come to Suoi Tien if they are interested in Suoi Tien's introduction video on Facebook or Youtube. That means all members in families at all ages can approach Suoi Tien's advertisements by the way they like.

Whatever the case maybe the chance for visitors approaching Suoi Tien's information is higher since the times of advertisements appearing are regular. "Suoi Tien's integrated marketing communications are running as an effective reminder to



visitors about Suoi Tien's image" (Mr. Hao, Deputy Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept.).

#### **4.3.2.2 Disadvantage(s)**

Besides of effectiveness in promoting Suoi Tien's image, integrated marketing could bring some disadvantages to marketing team. Firstly, it's about the budget. Implementing many marketing communications simultaneously takes more money than running them one by one. The second problem is human resource since they need more personnel split into many groups to take part in different marketing strategies. Finally, there is a high ability of waste when the target visitors of an event maybe need one marketing communication to focus on them but the other marketing communications are still run as they always are. The example is the event for the older visitors, it's better to focus on TVC advertisement only instead of running online advertisements simultaneously. In this case it will be a waste on budget for an event.

#### **4.4 Summary of result**

Before going through discovering about Suoi Tien Theme Park's marketing information, there are target visitors' information which interviewers emphasized how important it had been to be with marketing plan's decisions.

According to interview's content, Suoi Tien has two types of target visitors. The first one is individual visitors and the second one is visitors of group tours organized by companies, schools and tourism agency. And both of them have same characteristics. Firstly, most visitors are from Southeast and Southwest provinces where are pretty near from Suoi Tien location. To make clear that Suoi Tien is the only theme park in Ho Chi Minh City where the people who are from Southeast and Southwest provinces are easy to

approach. The second characteristic is that they are farmers, and their educational background is in average level. This has affected their habits of approaching entertainment information. They use traditional marketing tools such as television, radio, newspaper as much instead of updating social network's advertisements or coming to a press release. Finally, “while people who living in the cities are maybe interested in chasing modern trends, these citizens of Southeast and Southwest provinces do love spiritual and traditional value of Vietnam very much.” (Ms. Oanh, Specialist of Sales and Marketing Dept.). All these information are totally extracted from actual experiences of Suoi Tien in more than twenty years of operation and development.

Based on thorough understanding about target visitors, Suoi Tien's marketing activities reveal characteristics which can answer three research questions. Firstly, about marketing communication communications Suoi Tien currently uses, and it uses six marketing communications which are Media Advertising; Direct Response and Interactive Advertising; Place Advertising; Trade- and Consumer-Oriented Promotions; Personal selling and Marketing -Oriented Public Relations and Publicity. But the one is used the most is Media Advertising with TVC advertising since that is the interest of its target visitors- Southeast and Southwest provinces' people.

The answer to the second research question about the marketing communication of Suoi Tien Theme Park have so far worked the best, “It's definitely Media Advertising with TVC advertising which are broadcasted a lot because of its popularity in target visitors' community. The effectiveness of TVC advertising has been displayed by the proportion of visitors who are from Southeast and Southwest provinces is the majority in Suoi Tien Theme Park’s visitors. And they are the target of TVC advertising” (Mr. Hao, Deputy Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept.)

To answer the last question about how Suoi Tien Theme Park integrates marketing communications to attract visitors, it has been revised that there are two types of target visitors and with the only Media Advertising Suoi Tien cannot reach visitors from group tours. It needs the support of Direct Response and Interactive Advertising and Personal Selling tools to approach companies, schools and tourism agencies. And online marketing is the most convenient way for the youth living in cities. Meanwhile, Trade- and Consumer-Oriented Promotions and Marketing -Oriented Public Relations and Publicity tools help Suoi Tien enhancing their image in visitor's mind. Last but not least, simultaneously running many marketing tools will increase the chance for those who are able to see and hear about Suoi Tien's image in many ways.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Suoi Tien theme park has based its target visitors' characteristics to integrate six marketing communications which includes Media Advertising; Direct Response and Interactive Advertising; Place Advertising; Trade- and Consumer-Oriented Promotions; Personal selling and Marketing-Oriented Public Relations and Publicity in its promotional marketing. Cooperating these marketing communications helps Suoi Tien bring its information approaching visitors easily since these communications are conducted simultaneously. And among of them, Media Advertising with TVC advertising tool has been focused most, since its target visitors often use television to approach the news. This is acknowledged by understanding the Suoi Tien's targeted visitors, by basing on the geographical location and habituals. These experiences have been accumulated in over twenty year of Suoi Tien's operation (Ms. Oanh – Specialist of Sales and Marketing Dept.). The actual practices collected from Suoi Tien case have shown that in order to attract visitors effectively, theme park operators need to understand the targeted visitors to choose and incorporate marketing communications reasonably. While running marketing communications simultaneously, theme parks can focus on one marketing communication up to the targeted visitors' characteristics and requirements.

Suoi Tien's practices show effectiveness of the integrated marketing communications in attracting visitors in a theme park. Moreover, this study brings significant contribution to previous literature and practices in three explorations.

Firstly, the research has shown that theme park can apply IMC in promotional marketing in order to attract visitors effectively. Previous literature mentioned advises theme parks to promote their products through such *common techniques* as advertising,

brochures, press and public relations, sponsorship or the use of the Internet, among other methods” (Clavé, 2014, p. 415). The case of Suoi Tien theme park shows the ways these “*common techniques*” can be combined as the integrated marketing communications. The application of integrated marketing communications in a theme park’s marketing, enriches previous literature by adding an effective method to run promotional marketing. The findings of the study also show that this integration of marketing communication methods has led to an increase in the number of visitors to Suoi Tien Theme Park in 2016 (Please refer to page no. 37)

The second contribution of this study is the finding that one method is emphasized more among many marketing communications. Although the Park is running all the marketing communications at the same time, there is still one marketing communication which is used more frequently than the others. One theory says that “Using multiple communication tools in conjunction with one another can produce greater results than running tools individually since there is a synergistic effect of using multiple well-coordinated marcom tools” (Shimp, 2010, p. 9). In support of this claim, the finding of Suoi Tien Theme Park shows that running many marketing communications simultaneously helps increasing the chances to approach many visitors at the same time. Disseminating information via such marketing tools as TVC advertising, online marketing, OOH advertising...IMC makes sure the target visitors can see, hear, and know with or without intention. Suoi Tien Theme Park has used many communication tools in promotional marketing but TVC advertising is the one Suoi Tien focus on the most. As Mr. Duy, Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept. said “Suoi Tien’s marketing budget paid for TVC advertising is always more than the others”. This is because requirements of target visitors who are mostly attracted by the only one marketing communication. In case

of this, the theme park can focus more on one marketing communication for its main target visitors, but it still run other marketing communications to aim to target visitors. With Suoi Tien Theme Park, almost its marketing's budget invests for Media Marketing with priority of TVC advertising since its main target visitors are people who are from Vietnamese Southeast and Southwest provinces and interested in television channels.

Thirdly, via Suoi Tien's practices, TVC advertising has proved its importance in promoting a theme park. Nowadays, besides of marketing communication tools such as public relations, personal selling and consumer's promotions, online advertising is interested and applied in many businesses because of the popularity of internet. However, with a theme park, it maybe does not follow the trend since its target visitors do not use internet so much. Comparing Suoi Tien theme park with other theme parks, Hong Kong Disneyland is one famous theme park in Asia has also integrated marketing communications in its promotional marketing. It has also used the range of marketing communications which are the same with Suoi Tien theme park to promote its information to visitors. However, there is difference in target visitors between Suoi Tien and Hong Kong Disneyland. While target visitors of Suoi Tien are from domestic market, Hong Kong Disneyland's are tourists from mainland China, Taiwan and Southeast Asia and other countries (Please refer to page no. 17,18). Therefore, it has conducted all marketing communications almost evenly instead of focusing on TVC advertising as Suoi Tien has done. Because its promotional marketing purpose is to enhance awareness of visitor domestically and internationally, Hong Kong Disneyland needs to utilize all tools marketing communications such as TVC/online/newspapers advertising, trade deals with tourism agents, exhibits...

And in other articles written about theme park marketing, they are mentioned different aspects in theme parks' marketing. For instance, in Taiwan theme parks, they have applied "*Experience marketing* is a brand new concept which is capable of continuously creating innovative experience economy in life and scenarios, shaping sensational experience and thoughts recognition, and further changing consumption behaviour and generating profit" (Liu, 2016). With Universal, it differentiates itself from Disney-MGM by using "aggressive, in-your-face marketing" which focuses on the "unique, one-of-a-kind properties that we offer". That's why it promotes Halloween as its holiday since Halloween is off-limits to Disney. Universal wants to highlight uniqueness in its marketing message for holiday season (Tayllor Lillestol, 2015).

These articles are showing that there are many ways to conduct promotional marketing in a theme park. It's up to theme parks' target visitors or market condition, theme parks are able to applied different promotional marketing. In addition, promotional marketing can be changed overtime according to changes of market or visitor's requirements.

Last but not least, this study has made practical contributions of integrated marketing communications to theme park's promotional marketing in order to identify the most effective method to market a theme park in Vietnam. This is a significant contribution because there were no other studies on theme park in Vietnam when the author made the researches on papers and online data such as EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Cambridge Journals also. Hence, it will be helpful for other researchers who want to study about theme parks and marketing of theme parks in Vietnamese market.

However, this study still has limitations. Because the research just studied one theme park so the findings cannot reflect the result for theme park industry in Vietnam. Also, the small number of interviewee can affect generalisation of this study. On the other hand, because it is the first and only research about theme park's promotional marketing in Vietnam, this study will be a good reference for future research.



## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

After conducting interviews with persons in charge of marketing of Suoi Tien Theme park and analysing secondary data, this study concludes that Suoi Tien Theme Park has used six marketing communications included Media Advertising, Place Advertising, Direct Response and Interactive Advertising, Trade- and Consumer-Oriented Promotions, Personal Selling and Marketing -Oriented Public Relations and Publicity in order to attract visitors.

Before 2016, Suoi Tien conducted these marketing communications separately but afterwards it changed to cooperate with marketing communications to attract different targeted visitors at the same time instead of focusing on one target visitor when conducting one marketing communication. And based on the number of visitors increasing, Suoi Tien has continued integrating all six marketing communications simultaneously.

Among these marketing communications, Media Advertising with TVC advertising tool has the best effectiveness in attracting visitors because it's more suitable in interesting Suoi Tien's main target visitors. That's why Suoi Tien's marketing budget paid for it is always more than the others (Mr. Duy – Manager of Sales and Marketing Dept.).

In case of Suoi Tien Theme Park, the findings showed effectiveness of integrating marketing communications in increasing visitors. In addition, the priority of TVC advertising in promotional marketing is convincing the fact that target visitor's characteristics have an important role in deciding which marketing communication will

be focused on and the case of having a bias in conducting one marketing communication is entirely possible.

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