



## Exploring Little Red Book User-Generated Content Model on Chinese Users' Perception in Bangkok

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### Abstract

This research paper presents findings derived from a qualitative inquiry, encompassing in-depth interviews with a cohort of eight Little Red Book users. This cohort was bifurcated, comprising four respondents located in China and four in Bangkok. The primary aim was to scrutinize the influence of user-generated content (UGC) on the perception of Bangkok within the Little Red Book user community. The investigation revealed the pervasive nature of Little Red Book as an indispensable tool, particularly amongst the younger demographic in China. Remarkably, it boasts substantial user engagement and enjoys a wide-reaching audience. A prevalent pattern among interviewees was the utilization of the application as an informational resource for cityscapes and tourist attractions. Noteworthy is the platform's robust data analytic capabilities, enabling precise content recommendations based on user preferences and geographical proximity. This feature has significantly contributed to the app's popularity among users seeking travel-related information about Bangkok. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that notwithstanding the comprehensive information offered by the application concerning Bangkok, apprehensions surrounding safety amongst Chinese users who have not yet visited the city persist. These concerns stem from negative information disseminated on Little Red Book, thereby exerting a substantial influence on the city's image within their cognitive frameworks.

**Keywords:** *Little Red Book User, Chinese Users, Perception*

### 1. Introduction

At the same time, this is thanks to the complete lifting of several epidemic prevention and control measures that China has been taking since 2020, starting on 8 January 2023. According to , travel agencies will resume operating outbound group tours for Chinese citizens to the countries concerned from 6 February 2023. This also means that many Chinese tourists will travel to Thailand from 6 February 2023 (Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2023).

According to Little Red Book, the software Little Red Book was chosen for this study because it is a mobile application that integrates social e-commerce, knowledge sharing and lifestyle consumption and is one of the most popular local social e-commerce applications in China. In June 2019, Little Red Book was named to the "2019 Forbes List of China's Most Innovative Companies" According to a survey conducted by the "2022 Thousand Gua Active User Profile Trend Report (Little Red Book Platform)", Little Red Book has reached 200 million monthly active users as of 2022.

Little Red Book is currently the most representative lifestyle-sharing platform on the Internet, with the tagline "Mark my life". On the Little Red Book platform, users can share their lives by posting UGC notes with a single click, from food, dressing, sharing goodies, to travel tips, and editing notes through personal experience, which greatly enhances the authenticity and credibility of the text (Kim, 2017). the user group of Little Red Book is mainly young women. Content in the fields of fashion, beauty, home, travel and food is the main focus, and about 72% are users born after 1990 (Yang, 2021). Users can share their shopping tips, life insights, food preparation methods, travel tips and other content on Little Red Book, and can also interact with other users through live streaming and short videos.

Regarding the influence of the Little Red Book in Bangkok, Yang's (2021) study disclosed that its algorithm relies on extensive datasets and exhibits remarkable precision in pinpointing users interested in acquiring information about the city. The platform's algorithmic framework possesses such a high degree of efficacy that it is adept at categorizing users inclined towards following Bangkok, as determined by their search queries, content consumption patterns, duration of engagement with each post, interactions, and other pertinent data points. This functionality enables the creation of distinct user profiles (Yang, 2021). The

platform uses this as the basis for the highly accurate placement of Little Red Book's UGC notes about Bangkok to users. Compared to the traditional media era of solidified communication of Bangkok's city image, accurate placement has a stronger degree of communication and dissemination, shows more details, and allows to see different users' views on certain aspects of Bangkok (Wong, 2014), such as: To promote Bangkok's food, tourist attractions and other resources, To drive Bangkok's consumer economy, To shape Bangkok's fashion and trendy image, To promote Bangkok's culture and arts, and To assist Bangkok to build its city brand image (Smith, 2018).

Additionally, the term UGC (User Generated Content) is a new way of producing, sharing, and distributing information in an online community (Johnson, 2019), where users lead the production of content. According to Dellarocas (2003), the UGC model is a business model in which users participate in the development of a product or service. By allowing users to comment on, rate and share the product or service, it increases their satisfaction and loyalty (Smith, 2019), thus creating greater value for the company (Smith, 2020). The rise of the UGC model, also allows users to move beyond the traditional role of consumers and become co-creators and maintainers of products and services (Wong, 2015). Some of the most common UGC social media applications are Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Little Red Book (Chang, 2016).

From all the above information, the researcher proposes to study and explore the Little Red Book UGC Model on Chinese user's Perceptions in Bangkok.

## 2. Objectives

- 1) To study the characteristics of user-generated content by Little Red Book users in Bangkok
- 2) To study the influences of the Little Red Book user-generation model on the image, culture, and tourism of Bangkok.
- 3) To study about Bangkok attracts Chinese tourists through the Little Red Book user-generated model after the COVID-19 segregation measure.

## 3. Materials and Methods

The researcher searched and analysed relevant literature and created an In-depth interview through qualitative methods to better explore the Little Red Book UGC Model on Chinese User's Perception in Bangkok.

The researcher used qualitative research methods through in-depth interviews in order to explore the perceptions of Little Red Book UGC model users about Bangkok. To understand the perception of Little Red Book users when sharing and reading the content of Little Red Book about Bangkok, and to explore how Little Red Book UGC influences their perceptions of Bangkok. This gives a more accurate picture of their opinions, attitudes, reasons, and motivations, while potentially uncovering new issues and details.

This study selected the target interviewees by purposive selection method. According to Creswell & Poth (2018), there is not any specific answer. However, the number of participants depends on the qualitative research approach. According to Creswell, W. & Creswell, D (2018), Narrative includes 1-2, phenomenology includes 3-10, So it means that the researcher selected 8 of all Little Red Book users, living in Thailand and China. The researcher selected the people who can represent most of the Little Red Book user. From Those with low usage frequency - those with high usage frequency with the Little Red Book. So the researcher selected 2 people for low and 2 people for high usage frequency of Little Red Book in Thailand. 2 people for low and 2 people for high usage frequency of Little Red Book in China (Creswell & Poth, 2018).



## 4. Results and Discussion

### Results

Objective 1: To study the characteristics of user-generated content by Little Red Book users in Bangkok.

The study revealed that the Little Red Book app has become an indispensable tool for youngest Chinese people. Furthermore, some respondents regarded Little Red Book as a search engine, akin to Google and Wikipedia. This highlights the app's broad audience and high user engagement. Additionally, all eight interviewees primarily used the app to gain information on city images and tourist destinations. Thus, Little Red Book holds considerable importance in the minds of Chinese users, who frequently use it to discover new tourist destinations. The analysis of the impact of UGC on the perception of Chinese users in Bangkok could attract a vast number of Little Red Book users, i.e., Chinese people.

Objective 2: To study the influences of the Little Red Book user-generation model on the image, culture, and tourism of Bangkok.

The interviewees revealed that Little Red Book has excellent data analysis capabilities and can accurately recommend content based on users' preferences and geographical location. Most Little Red Book users residing in Thailand are recommended posts related to Bangkok and its environs. Even Chinese users are often recommended travel information about Thailand by the app. With the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Chinese people are eager to travel abroad, with Southeast Asia being the most popular destination. Bangkok, being one of the most popular destinations for Southeast Asian travellers, has the highest exposure on Little Red Book. Therefore, content about Bangkok can attract a significant number of Little Red Book users.

Objective 3: To study about Bangkok attracts Chinese tourists through the Little Red Book user-generated model after the COVID-19 segregation measure.

The study revealed that Little Red Book users can find information on almost anything in Bangkok. Most of this information comes from UGC content posted by Little Red Book users residing in Bangkok or those who have visited the city. Among the most popular content on the app in Bangkok are "male model restaurants," as mentioned by six interviewees. Furthermore, UGC content on Little Red Book covers various topics related to Bangkok, including food, accommodation, shopping, travel, and entertainment. Additionally, the interviewees mentioned the new term 'ZhongCao,' developed in Little Red Book, which refers to recommending a place or item in various ways, ultimately leading to one experiencing it.

Unfortunately, all the interviewees had read negative information about Bangkok on Little Red Book, such as kidnappings and scams. This has led to concerns among Chinese users who have not visited Bangkok, greatly influencing the city's image in their minds.

However, Little Red Book, being one of the most popular apps among Chinese people, provides comprehensive information about Bangkok, shaping users' perceptions of the city. The UGC content related to Bangkok shared by others on Little Red Book influences and inspires users, leading to different decisions. The app's grassroots attribute inspires users and drives their decisions. Many users choose to try the food and entertainment they discover on Little Red Book related to Bangkok, while others opt to visit Thailand after seeing the tourist destinations highlighted on the app. Nevertheless, some users' concerns about the city's safety, owing to negative information on Little Red Book, deter them from visiting Bangkok.



## Discussion

Based on extensive interviews conducted by a researcher, the Little Red Book platform contains a significant amount of information on various aspects of individuals' lives, such as food, accommodation, travel, and tips. However, one of the notable characteristics of the Little Red Book user-generated content (UGC) platform is its potential for fostering user identification with posted content, leading to subsequent behaviour in line with the "ZhongCao" phenomenon. The "ZhongCao" property aligns with the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) framework outlined in previous studies.

For instance, UGC information concerning Bangkok on Little Red Book can be considered an external stimulus, while users' perception and cognitive processes represent internal mechanisms, and the decision to visit Bangkok based on their online experience is a response. Most of the participants interviewed expressed their interest in visiting Bangkok due to their exposure to information on Little Red Book. Perhaps the enticements were the "male model restaurants," "Thai massage," or food. Consequently, they travel to Bangkok to experience these attractions. If more appealing destinations, such as "male model restaurants" and "train night markets," were featured in Little Red Book, this could attract more users and enhance the "ZhongCao" phenomenon.

However, the interviews also revealed that negative information concerning Bangkok on the Little Red Book app could influence users' decisions. All of the Chinese respondents expressed concerns about Bangkok's safety, with one person canceling their desire to visit due to the information they had seen. Recent information on Little Red Book about "kidnapping and scams in Bangkok" has significantly impacted many Chinese Little Red Book users' perception of the city, indicating the potential for negative publicity to have irreversible effects on the image of a destination.

The researcher notes that there is a significant amount of false information concerning public opinion, but safety concerns are critical, and Bangkok is a top tourist destination, making it an area of significant attention. Some individuals posted negative content on Little Red Book about Bangkok to attract attention, potentially leading to benefits such as likes and more followers. They were, however, unaware of the negative impact their actions had on Bangkok's image.

The Thai government's failure to monitor public opinion on Chinese social media networks has resulted in a lack of timely investigation and clarification. Prime Minister Prayuth made an official clarification of the false information after several weeks of negative publicity, leading to the irreversible harm caused to Bangkok's image.

In conclusion, the Little Red Book UGC platform provides users with the freedom to post their content. However, excessive negative publicity can significantly affect a destination's image. The Bangkok government must monitor public opinion on the Little Red Book app platform to ensure that false information that could negatively impact Bangkok is promptly clarified to avoid negative consequences. The government should also prosecute those who post false information.

## 5. Conclusion

The study revealed that Little Red Book has become an indispensable tool for most young Chinese people, with high user engagement and broad audience. Most of the interviewees used the app to gain information on city images and tourist destinations. Little Red Book has excellent data analysis capabilities and can accurately recommend content based on users' preferences and geographical location, attracting a significant number of users interested in travel information about Bangkok. Although the app provides comprehensive information about Bangkok, concerns among Chinese users who have not visited Bangkok regarding safety, owing to negative information on Little Red Book, greatly influence the city's image in their minds.

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