

Creative Tourism in Thailand: Problems and Obstacles Case Studies of Ceramic and Cotton Quilt Making

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Abstract

This article utilizes Greg Richard and Crispin Raymond's (2000; 2010) creative tourism concept as a framework for understanding problems and obstacles of creative tourism practice in Thailand. This article reports the results of a survey of perception towards creative tourism by Thai tourists including problems and obstacles in the potential tourist areas that have been developed to be a model of creative tourism in Thailand by a government agency, that is, Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization) or DASTA. A survey of the policies which have initiated and driven creative tourism in Thailand was conducted, followed by a quantitative survey which was carried out by distributing questionnaires to 300 Thai tourists in the target areas (each 150) along with in-depth interviews. The two target areas were chosen, namely, the ceramic manufacturing areas in Muang and Si Samrong District, Sukhothai Province and the cotton quilt fabricating sites in Chiang Khan District, Loei Province, both of which were locations of potential creative tourism activities by using only two hours for learning and were under development as a destination of creative tourism in Thailand. The implementation of creative tourism still faced obstacles in two aspects. Most travelers could only afford short holiday periods and were unable to plan their trips in advance to incorporate creative tourism activities into their travelling itineraries. In terms of the tourist industry in the areas, creative tourism was still experiencing problems in management and communication of the concept of creative tourism to the target tourists.

[Thammasat Review, Volume 17, No.1, 2014]

Keywords: Creative Tourism, Problems and Obstacles, Ceramic Making, Cotton Quilt Making

Introduction

In the year 2001, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2004) adopted the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity as a means to protect and promote cultural diversity. In the following year, UNESCO established the Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity to foster the exchange of knowledge and cross-cultural communication in order to promote peace and the sustainability of communities around the world.

To support the policy of cultural diversity promotion, in 2004, UNESCO proposed the “Creative Cities Network” project to promote the development of Creative Industries. This Network will lead to new forms of international cooperation among the public and private sectors, and various communities. In addition to the goal of supporting local cooperation to create peace and sustainability of international communities by connecting various cities together, UNESCO has mentioned the possibility of creating new tourism opportunities, whereby tourists can directly experience a certain culture by immersing in and becoming an active member of the culture of a specific city.

The Creative Cities Network and UNESCO’s idea of new tourism opportunities emphasize the concept of engagement through authentic experiences by promoting activities that will deepen tourists’ understanding of the specific cultural features of a place. This is in line with the behavior of the new generation of travelers.

Crispin Raymond and Greg Richards have jointly named this new form of tourism as “Creative Tourism”, and have defined it as “tourism which offers visitors the opportunities to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken” (Raymond, 2000).

Later, in the Creative Cities Network meeting organized in October 2006, with the purpose of preparing for the first international conference on Creative Tourism which was called the “Santa Fe International Conference on Creative Tourism” (2008), the definition of the term Creative Tourism was discussed and revised to “a tourism directed towards an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage or special character of a place” (Wurzburger, 2010).

Therefore, Creative Tourism is a new tourism opportunity that emphasizes the engagement between hosts (locals) and guests (tourists) who are interested in actively participating in and learning from an authentic experience (authentic – active participation). The form and characteristics of this type of tourism will open the opportunity for tourists and local hosts to exchange knowledge and develop creative potentials together, creating lasting memories and deep understanding of the specific culture of the place. In addition, Creative Tourism is the answer to meet the changing tastes of present tourists who not only want to “see” a society and culture that is different from their own but also want to experience it by “doing”. “Doing” allow travelers to learn and understand the cultural heritage of a place; while at the same time develop their own potential from real practice through various arts and cultural activities in the destination visited. Travelers will receive new kinds of inspiration to use in their normal lives after their vacation has ended.

In Thailand, Creative Tourism was initiated with further studies encouraged by the Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization) or “DASTA”. DASTA plays an important role in formulating policies, and administrative plans for the sustainable development of tourism in designated areas. The organization also coordinates with central and local government agencies as well as communities to foster cooperation in developing tourist destinations in designated areas. DASTA provides funding to the Faculty of Sociology and Anthropology, Thammasat University to conduct the studies, with the main objective of defining the term Creative Tourism and outlining the criteria of related activities in the Thai context. The project also includes the development of a model for Creative Tourism in Thailand by identifying activities with high potential and possibility to sustainably develop communities through means of Creative Tourism (Wisudthiluck, 2012).

However, because this form of tourism is not yet well-known in Thailand and is still in its early stages, all related parties including operators, organizations, activity hosts, and especially Thai tourist are still mostly familiar with Mass Tourism, with limited visiting durations, and are not familiar with a form of tourism that involves hands-on experience and practice in learning the cultural heritage of a specific place. Therefore, a study examining the perception of Thai tourists, the readiness of activity hosts, as well as the issues and challenges associated with Creative Tourism in Thailand is extremely important. The study will serve as a knowledge base to be used in the planning of tourist destination developments,

including the proposal of various solutions to challenges in order to promote sustainable Creative Tourism in the future.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted at two sites; the Si Satchanalai Historical Park in Sukhothai Province and the Chiang Khan Walking Street in Loei Province. Data was collected from a sample of 300 Thai tourists that travelled to the two sites in February 2014. A questionnaire was used to collect information and consisted of two parts; Part 1-Tourist's General Information (General Information, Previous Traveling Experiences, and Experience in Sukhothai or Loei Province); and Part 2- Perception of Creative Tourism (Definition of Creative Tourism, Understanding of Creative Tourism, Attitude Towards Creative Tourism and Opinion On Creative Tourism in Sukhothai and Loei). There are 7 questions under the topic Attitude Towards Creative Tourism and 5 questions under Opinion on Creative Tourism. A 5-level Likert Scale is used to answer these questions. There are 5 Yes/No questions on the topic of Understanding. All questions are close-ended except for the question on the Definition of Creative Tourism, which is open-ended for tourists to freely express their understanding.

Aside from surveying tourists on the perception of Creative Tourism, in-depth interviews with activity hosts in Sukhothai and Loei provinces were also conducted. The activity host interviewed for Sukhothai Province was the owner of "Motana Ceramics" in Si Samrong District. In Loei Province, the owner of "Buay-Hiang Cotton Mill" in Chiang Khan District was interviewed. The in-depth interviews focused on the following topics: communication, readiness of tourists, activity reservation methods, capacity of hosts as well as problems and obstacles that they may have.



Figure 1 Si Satchanalai Historical Park in Sukhothai Province



Figure 2 Chiang Khan Walking Street in Loei Province



Figure 3 “Motana Ceramics” in Si Samrong District



Figure 4 “Buay-Hiang Cotton Mill” in Chiang Khan District

Results

From the 300 questionnaires returned, 280 or 93.33% are of a good quality, reliable, and can be further analyzed to draw a conclusion for the study. Quantitative analysis of the survey sampled during the field study reveals that there are more female than male tourists and more students than elders. The average age of the sample is 27 years. More than two-thirds of the sample are undergraduate students or equivalent and have an income that is less than 20,000 baht. Four out of five are single. The comparison of the general information of sample groups taken from Si Satchanalai and Chiang Khan show similar results.

In general, the survey found that the main purpose of traveling for most of Thai tourists is for leisure during the holidays, education, history and special interest, visiting friends and relatives, cultural and religious reasons, business meetings/seminars, sport and entertainment and hobby respectively. Their sources of travel information are mostly from the Internet, family members or friends, TV/radio, and newspapers/guide books respectively.

However, the main traveling purpose identified by the tourists at the two sites is moderately different. Although the first and second purposes identified by the two groups are the same (leisure during holidays and education), the subsequent order of purpose of travel is significantly different. Following the first two purposes, tourists who visited Si Satchanalai next indicated that they travel for history and special interest, cultural and religious reasons, and visiting friends and relatives respectively. The tourists who visited the Chiang Khan Walking Street, however, listed their main traveling purposes as visiting friends and relatives, business meetings/seminars, cultural and religious reasons. These differences reveal an interesting correlation between the purpose of traveling and the choice of destination that satisfies tourist needs. More specifically, it is believed that the purpose of traveling affects the choice of destination. On the contrary, the sources of travel information used for the two sites are not significantly different as most tourists used the Internet. This may be the result of technological progress that has enabled easy and quick access to information.

Out of the 280 completed questionnaires, only 123 tourists (44%) said they had previously visited these sites. More than half decided to stay at least 1-3 nights while almost one quarter made a day trip. More than 4 out of 5 tourists said that if possible, they will re-visit the sites in the future.

Out of 85 tourists that provided answers to the Si Satchanalai Historical Park, only 33 of them (35%) had previously visited this park. More than half decided to spend at least 1-3 nights while almost half made a day trip. More than 4 out of 5 tourists said that if possible, they will re-visit the sites in the future.

The main reasons why the tourists decide to make their trip to Si Satchanalai Historical Park lies in their desires to learn about its history and culture, to experience one of the World Heritage Site and to relax. The reason why they are coming back is to learn more about its history. Some are impressed and will bring others such as friends or family members to visit the park.

There were 195 tourists that gave the completed answers on the Chiang Khan Walking Street of which 94 (51%) had visited this site before. More than two thirds decided to spend at least 1-3 nights and almost one fifth made a day trip. More than two thirds decided they will re-visit the place.

Their main reasons to visit the Walking Street include their interest in the place, their enjoyment of the atmosphere, the weather, the beautiful landscape, the place's reputation and peacefulness and their desire to take some rest. Those who wish to come back said they were impressed with the friendly people, the environment, the simple lifestyle and the beauty of the place.

The study found that many tourists misunderstand the concept of Creative Tourism as a means for finding inspiration for work and involve the exchange of culture between the tourists and the hosts. However most tourists understand correctly that Creative Tourism concentrates on the values of the community; creates a bond between the tourists and their hosts; as well as enable tourists to live like a member of the community. The level of understanding on the concept of Creative Tourism in Si Satchanalai Historical Park and Chiang Khan Walking Street is very similar and in the same conception.

Regarding the attitude tourists have, more than 65% of the 280 Thai tourists surveyed have positive attitude towards and support the concept of Creative tourism. They expect that these tourist sites maintain their identities and believe that tourism can truly help develop the communities. These tourists love to learn about culture and are more interested in participating in community activities rather than just being passive observers.

As for the perception on the molding of ceramics and Sangkhalok wares in Sukhothai province, the result of the survey on 85 Thai tourists revealed that more than 65% agreed that molding the ceramics and Sangkhalok wares could be a tourist activity for Sukhothai. They believe that making ceramics at Sangkhalok can help them to deeply understand the social and cultural values of the community. They are interested in learning and molding Sangkhalok wares to bring back for use at their homes and believe that the knowledge gained can be applied in their daily life or work.

Similarly, the perception of hand-made quilt in Loei province show that 60% of the 195 Thai tourists surveyed have positive opinions and agreed that quilt-making can be one of the site's tourist activities. The activity can help them to deeply understand the social and cultural values of the community. In addition, they are interested in learning and practicing how to make quilts and believe that the knowledge gained can be applied in their daily life or work.

A Multiple Regression Analysis was conducted to explain the relationship between attitudes toward Creative Tourism and other factors. The analysis indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship between monthly income and the attitude towards Creative Tourism; the lower the income, the more positive the attitude. As for the purpose of travel, cultural and religious reasons have a small correlation to attitudes, while traveling for education have a larger correlation. Relating to experiences, the study shows that the desire to re-visit the site is strongly correlated to the attitude towards Creative Tourism, implying that those who want to re-visit have a better attitude towards Creative Tourism than those who are not sure or do not want to re-visit.

Similarly, the result from Si Satchanalai Historical Park shows that the decision to re-visit the site has a strong and positive correlation to attitude. Tourists who wish to re-visit Si Satchanalai have a very positive attitude towards the Creative Tourism.

In the case of Chiang Khan Walking Street, the tourists' attitude towards Creative Tourism is correlated to their profession. The comparison among different groups of tourists shows that students have a more positive attitude towards Creative Tourism than other profession groups. Aside from this, the level of education also correlates to attitude in that those who have undergraduate degree or higher tend to have a more positive attitude towards Creative Tourism than those with a lower level of education. When considering the traveling purposes, it was found that the purpose of education for travelling shows a high correlation to attitude; the tourists who visit Chiang Khan for the purpose of learning or education have a more positive attitude than those who visit Chiang Khan for other purposes. (Table 1)

Table 1: Estimated Multiple Regression Coefficients and Significance for Attitude toward Creative Tourism

Attitude toward Creative Tourism	Amount		Si Satchanalai		Chiang Khan	
	b	Std.Error	b	Std.Error	b	Std.Error
Sex (Ref: Male)	0.598	0.404	0.953	0.754	0.498	0.521
Age	-0.012	0.036	0.037	0.056	-0.042	0.076
Occupation (Ref: student)	-0.91	0.671	1.523	1.236	-2.178**	0.976
Education (Ref: Lower than Bachelor degree)	0.705	0.437	-0.055	0.681	1.242*	0.636
Income	-0.329*	0.193	-0.488	0.313	-0.442	0.296
Marital Status (Ref: Single)	0.027	0.696	0.516	1.06	-0.137	1.024
Traveling Purpose						
Resting on holiday	0.004	0.489	0.096	0.842	-0.247	0.708
Culture and Religion	0.841*	0.507	0.652	0.783	0.182	0.765
Education	1.405***	0.53	0.779	0.965	1.921***	0.685
Sport and Entertainment	0.029	0.613	2.442	1.478	-0.298	0.762
Historical and Special Interest	-0.541	0.498	-0.984	0.752	-0.286	0.91
Hobby	0.206	0.711	-0.228	0.982	0.408	1.214
Visiting Relative	0.193	0.526	0.623	1.115	0.385	0.662
Meeting/Seminar	0.618	0.545	2.082	1.337	0.545	0.637
Sources of Traveling Data						
Friends and Family	-0.124	0.453	0.519	0.763	-0.694	0.616
TV/Radio	0.233	0.528	0.169	0.809	0.947	0.799
Internet	-0.385	0.484	-1.178	0.808	-0.284	0.661
News Paper/Guild Book	-0.375	0.612	0.209	1.014	-0.496	0.883
Have you ever been here? (Ref: No)	0.065	0.4	-0.031	0.777	0.048	0.52
Period of traveling (Ref: Day Trip)	-0.03	0.45	-0.383	0.692	0.131	0.706
Will you visit here again? (Ref: No/Not sure)	1.164***	0.516	3.209**	1.272	0.437	0.624
Perception What Creative Tourism is	0.347	0.278	0.892	0.555	0.14	0.342
Adjusted R Square	0.065		0.161		0.011	
Standard Error of the Estimate	2.812		2.814		2.796	
Constant	23.844***		18.038***		26.591***	

Note: * Sig. at 0.1, ** Sig. at 0.05, ***Sig. at 0.01

A Multiple Regression Analysis was also conducted to explain the relationship between tourist's interests in activities and other factors. The result shows that sources of travel information are correlated to the interest of travelers. Those who did not receive information from family members or the Internet will have more interest to travel to the sites. Moreover, the decision to re-visit both sites is correlated to the interest to travel. Tourists who decide to re-visit have more interest in Creative Tourism than those tourists who are not certain and those who decide not to re-visit.

Meanwhile, the attitude towards Creative Tourism has a low correlation to the interest in Creative Tourism activities, implying that attitude only minimally impacts the level of interests in activities. This means that no matter what attitude the tourists have toward Creative Tourism, their interest to join activities is not significantly affected.

Regarding the activities in making ceramics and Sangkhalok wares, the study found that the source of travel information is correlated to the interest to participate in activities. Tourists who use the newspaper as their source of information will have more interest in the activities than those who receive information from other sources. Similarly, the attitude towards Creative Tourism of tourists sampled in Sukhothai Province has a low correlation to their interest in activities. This means that tourists' attitude has almost no effect on their interest to participate in activities.

In terms of interest in the quilt making activity, the study found that previous traveling experiences are correlated to interest in Creative Tourism activities. Those who had visited Chiang Khan before are more interested in the activities than those who had never visited. Aside from this, the decision to re-visit the place is also correlated to the interest to join activities. Tourists who think that they will re-visit the place will have more interest in the activities than those who are not certain or who will not re-visit. At the same time the attitude towards Creative Tourism in Chiang Khan is also only slightly correlated to the interest in activities. Therefore, no matter what attitude the tourists have toward Creative Tourism, the interest to join the activities is not significantly affected.

In the second part of the questionnaire, the open-ended question asking tourists to define Creative Tourism revealed that most tourists do not understand the term correctly. Large numbers of tourists defined it as the conservation of nature, environment and tourist destinations; tourism for educational purposes; tourism that benefits the community; or a new and exotic kind of tourism. There are only a small number of tourists that provided the right definition. These answers include: Creative Tourism is the type of tourism that preserves the identity of the community and is open for tourists to join in activities and exchange their experiences with the local people. This shows that most tourists do not yet understand the concept of Creative Tourism and are more familiar with Ecotourism and Cultural Tourism. (Table 2)

Table 2: Estimated Multiple Regression Coefficients and Significance for Interest in Creative Tourism activities

Interest in Creative Tourism activities	Amount		Ceramic Making		Cotton Blanket Making	
	b	Std.Error	b	Std.Error	b	Std.Error
Sex (Ref: Male)	0.283	0.342	0.265	0.61	0.016	0.461
Age	-0.015	0.031	-0.017	0.045	-0.034	0.067
Occupation (Ref: student)	0.284	0.569	0.597	0.998	-0.216	0.877
Education (Ref: Lower than Bachelor degree)	-0.359	0.371	-0.677	0.544	0.046	0.569
Income	-0.056	0.164	-0.058	0.254	-0.145	0.263
Marital Status (Ref: Single)	0.44	0.588	1.011	0.848	0.285	0.902
Traveling Purpose						
Resting on holiday	-0.332	0.413	0.016	0.673	-0.533	0.624
Culture and Religion	0.189	0.43	0.25	0.629	-0.337	0.673
Education	0.397	0.454	0.867	0.774	0.545	0.622
Sport and Entertainment	-0.066	0.517	-0.402	1.204	0.51	0.671
Historical and Special Interest	-0.228	0.421	-0.618	0.609	-0.4	0.801
Hobby	-0.573	0.6	-0.338	0.785	-0.58	1.069
Visiting Relative	-0.243	0.444	-0.411	0.893	0.349	0.584
Meeting/Seminar	-0.019	0.461	-0.226	1.087	0.621	0.562
Sources of Traveling Data						
Friends and Family	-0.917**	0.383	-0.63	0.611	-1.043*	0.545
TV/Radio	-0.139	0.446	0.35	0.646	-0.338	0.707
Internet	-0.952**	0.409	-1.044	0.656	-1.226**	0.582
News Paper/Guild Book	-0.073	0.517	1.483*	0.81	-1.588**	0.779
Have you ever been here? (Ref: No)	0.376	0.337	-0.12	0.621	0.799*	0.458
Period of traveling (Ref: Day Trip)	0.186	0.38	0.297	0.554	0.322	0.622
Will you visit here again? (Ref: No/Not sure)	1.329***	0.441	0.973	1.063	1.334**	0.551
Perception What Creative Tourism is	0.15	0.235	0.742	0.452	-0.123	0.301
Attitude toward Creative Tourism	0.243***	0.058	0.211**	0.098	0.219***	0.08
Adjusted R Square	0.152		0.148		0.135	
Standard Error of the Estimate	2.373		2.248		2.462	
Constant	8.576***		7.009**		11.172***	

Note: * Sig. at 0.1, ** Sig. at 0.05, ***Sig. at 0.01

Conclusion

Creative Tourism is a new form of tourism that gives importance to the engagement of tourists and hosts by providing opportunities for tourists to participate in various activities and learn from authentic, hands-on experience in the local community. This allows tourists to learn and gain a deep understanding of the cultural heritage in various communities. In addition, Creative Tourism does not only create relaxation or excitement, but also personal pride, a bond with hosts and memorable experiences from the place of visit.

Based on the result of the survey taken from a sample of 280 Thai tourists, most tourists have a positive attitude toward, and in favor of, supporting Creative Tourism. Most are also interested in taking part in various activities under Creative Tourism that provide the opportunity for tourists to learn from real practice. However, the implementation of Creative Tourism still faces obstacles from both the tourists and the hosts. Tourists are still mostly familiar with the traditional kind of tourism and therefore have very limited traveling time of only 1 – 3 days. Taking part in activities under Creative Tourism that require more time and planning in advance may therefore, not be most suitable. At the same time, the hosts at the tourist destinations still face challenges in terms of the management and communication. For example, there are limitations concerning numbers of tourists, activity duration, and the explanation of meanings and significance of the activity. Most importantly, there is a lack of appropriate human resource in the tourist destinations. For these reasons, there is a high need for relevant agencies, especially DASTA, to commit to taking part in the planning or the formulating of policies in the development of different tourist destinations to answer to the needs of the community in the social and cultural context. DASTA must play a direct role in formulating policies and administrative plans for the sustainable development of tourism in designated areas.

This study also shows that in addition to the sustainable development of Creative Tourism, the development of “communication” that effectively utilizes information technology is extremely important. Information technology can be used to create a platform for sharing news, knowledge, and understanding on Creative Tourism in a convenient and fast way that is also consistent to the current information consumption behavior. In addition, such a platform facilitates the communication between activities’ hosts and tourists that can be used to explain the meaning and significance of various cultural activities. Therefore, “information technology” is an important tool and should be developed quickly for use in the sharing of knowledge and understanding as well as for communicating between

tourists, hosts and various relevant agencies. This is an example of how to effectively use technology in the “Information Era” to facilitate the sustainable development of Creative Tourism.

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