

# Value Creation of Local Identity in Thailand: Marketing Promotion for Enhancing Community-Based Cultural Tourism

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This research aims at defining a strategy to develop marketing promotion for community-based cultural tourism of the Bang Mae Mai community in the central part of Thailand and analysing a model of marketing promotion used to enhance community-based cultural tourism through value creation of local identity. The study was conducted by using qualitative focus group discussion which found that in order for a community to be able to attract tourists it is required to analyse the distinction of resources and tourist attraction capacity as a fundamental factor in defining marketing strategy for cultural tourism. For the case study of the Bang Mae Mai community, 7 strategies have been defined, which consist of organising tourism promotional activities, advertising community's tourist attractions, conducting online marketing, improving tourism-related skills for community's members and personnel, encouraging the participation of a new generation, developing offline advertising media for community's tourist attractions, and developing cultural market of the community to become more distinctive. These will be used for analysing a marketing promotional model for enhancing community-based tourism in order to be applied to other communities with the corporation of five parties including tourism group leaders in the community, public sector, tourism association, tourism enterprise, and mass media. This study can be utilised as a guideline in supporting community-based tourism for other places.

**Key words:** *Marketing, tourism, culture.*



## Introduction

Tourism is an important mechanism that can help humans respond to their desire for learning by travelling to other places rather than living in their own place. As a result, there are several historical evidences around the world showing that humans have been travelling for thousands of years. This desire to travel has resulted in continuous elements of tourism until today. Tourism has become the main global industry and affects economic drives significantly. Moreover, it is crucial for bringing peace and understanding among nations. From a survey in 2018, it showed that tourism still plays an important role in driving global economy. The number of tourists around the world has increased by 1.4 billion people which accounts for 5.6 percent. This has brought export income of 1.7 trillion US dollars from tourism service sectors. In 2019, Asia and Pacific region received the second highest number of tourist in the world (Tourism Economic Review, 2019).

Many countries therefore give importance in tourism support continually. In Thailand, there has been a focus on concrete tourism management since 1981, which was enclosed in the National Economic and Social Development Plan until 2019. Thailand's tourism was affected by the global economic situation and the pandemic situation of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). From 1981 the number of international tourists continuously visiting increased until 2019 to more than 39.73 million people which were accounting for more than 1.933 trillion baht income (Thai News Agency, 2020). This income was distributed to locals and created value, adding to the tourism industry in the country (Gordin, 2011; Vargas Hernandez, 2012; Khampuanbutra, 2014). In addition, Thailand has encouraged the expansion of tourists from main cities to emerging cities which had not attracted tourists' interest as expected. To support this policy is challenging because attracting tourists to emerging cities requires various factors especially on the aspect of marketing and creating strengths from related parties in a certain attraction.

Amidst the success of a country's goals in tourism, places in each region need to be improved in order to become more competitive, while tourist behaviours nowadays turn to the current mainstream which is sustainable tourism. According to the regulation of Earth Summit 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2001), it has been specified that all aspects of development are sustainable development on the basis of economy, social, culture, and environment. At the same time, Thailand was ranked in the 10<sup>th</sup> place as the country with highest natural resources strength and in the 14<sup>th</sup> place in tourism's hospitality infrastructure by the World Economic Forum ranking in 2019 (Forbes Thailand, 2019). This makes community-based tourism more important as it is a linked factor to sustainable tourism. Furthermore, all tourist attractions certainly consist of community or local owners which were considered performing a crucial role in preserving and giving value to these tourism resources. This is relevant to the information of the World Tourism Organisation which

confirms that cultural tourism is accounting for 39% of tourism arrivals and there has been more research on cultural tourism and motivations for cultural tourism and conservation that need to be carried on. And more research on relationships between cultural tourism and the creative economy to tend (Greg, 2018).

In addition, tourists become more interested in traveling to smaller cities and being close to local people due to the boredom of the crowds in big cities and the problem of overtourism occurring all around the world. According to the survey of Airbnb, it discloses that 84% of the guests selected Airbnb because they desired to perceive the living of locals (The Standard, 2019; Jermstittiprasert & Chankoson, 2019). Therefore, in order to make tourist attractions become attractive to tourists, the requirement to seek local identities is essential to express the way of living and to encourage participation of the community (Haukeland, 2011). Apart from visiting the main attractions, tourists can visit community's attractions. In the central region of Thailand, Ayutthaya World Heritage is highly popular. There are more than eight million tourists coming to witness its beauty. It is the most visited place in the central region, excluding Bangkok. There are other nearby emerging cities with unique identities and long histories like Suphan Buri, a city with agricultural society, pollution-free environment, and the peaceful life of locals. In this city, there is an interesting community called Bang Mae Mai. The uniqueness of this community is numerous. Thai traditional houses and the way of life of the people living along the river has the charm of a humble life style and the friendliness of local people is a unique tourism resources, rich with beliefs, local wisdoms, impressive rice field landscape, and close proximity to Ayutthaya World Heritage site. It is a good opportunity for this community to conduct tourism promotion and attract tourists from the country's main attractions. Due to the aforementioned reasons, it is desirable to improve the community's capacity in community-based tourism. We conducted research on marketing promotion here for enhancing their community-based tourism. This case study investigates value creation of the Thai local identity and central local life style in the Bang Mae Mai community.

### **Objectives**

- 1) To define a marketing development strategy for community-based tourism of Bang Mae Mai community
- 2) To analyse a model of marketing promotion for enhancing community-based tourism through value creation of local Thai community

### **Literature Review**

Community-based tourism is a type of tourism that consistently grows. If any city possesses community-based tourism attractions, this will enhance tourism growth for that particular city

with cultural tourism resources like a museum, art gallery, historical park, festival event as well as participation in cultural activities. This will promote the understanding that culture is an important factor in attracting tourists and valuable in maintaining the sustainability of tourism in the area. It also discloses the importance of cultural tourists for the local community and the importance of local community itself. Culture has become a considerable product of international tourism when tourists takes part in more than 40% of cultural activities. Cultural tourism is not only interesting for tourists, but also encourages local people to recall the local culture and creates unity of people in the community (Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2012; Styliadis and Terzidou, 2014; Andes, 2018).

In order to develop community-based tourism effectively, it requires the community to participate in taking care of tourism resources, and create integrated processes for community to receive some income and benefits from tourism. Moreover, community needs to participate in maintaining standards and sustain conservation. If the environment is decayed, it will affect the return of the tourists visiting previously. This will then result in loss of income for people in the community. The love for community will also fade away and people will not appreciate the participation of community. Later, there will be no one to conserve the resources in the community. In the end, the community will be faced with tourism decadent that is not easy to restore (Thanarat et al., 2017).

### **Research Method**

Qualitative research methods were used to determine a marketing development strategy for community-based tourism on a cultural basis in the Bang Mae Mai community, Bang Yai Sub-district, Bang Pla Ma District, Suphan Buri province. To develop marketing for cultural tourism, it includes

- 1) Distinction of tourism resources and attractions
- 2) Marketing development strategy for Bang Mae Mai community-based tourism
- 3) Model of marketing promotion for enhancing cultural community-based tourism

Each issue will be analysed on tourism's current competitive environment. Focus group discussions with key informants and stakeholders will be organised in order to provide opinions and conduct content analysis to determine marketing strategies for the cultural community-based tourism of Bang Mae Mai. There was also a familiarisation trip of the Bang Mae Mai community.

**Key Informants** include community leader, head of community group, head of Ruen Thai Bang Mae Mai Homestay group, Local Administrative Organisation, Community

Development Office, Office of Tourism and Sports, and stakeholders related to the tourism of Bang Mae Mai community (in total 20 people).

**Research Tools, Data Collection, and Data Analysis** employ focus group discussions in qualitative format by collecting data from key informants, verifying accuracy of data retrieved from the discussion, filtering and classifying data into different issues, conducting content analysis according to topics, and creating inductive narrative. This was done for the community to proceed marketing management for cultural community-based tourism of the Bang Mae Mai community to be relevant to the target group within the process of creating engagement of all parties and the community's identity.

## Research Results

### *The Distinction of Resources and Capacity of Attractions*

**Photo 1.** Lan Tarn Roi Ton view point in the middle of the field



The Bang Mae Mai community is a community in Suphan Buri province. It is located near Ayutthaya World Heritage, so there has been an opportunity to create a connecting route from the main attractions. This community has been inhabited for hundreds of years. Therefore, there is an inheritance of traditional life style. In addition, it is located between the centre of Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya and Suphan Buri in the central part of Thailand. It is 100 kilometres away from Bangkok and 50 kilometres away from Ayutthaya World Heritage. It is not in the economy zone of the city. For this reason, this community has been living by relying on nature and local wisdom, especially living by river. Therefore, this community is a source of knowledge for studying the way of living and the local wisdom of the central part of Thailand. Futhermore, it is a recreational place for tourists with a beautiful landscape. The

data collection reveals that the Bang Mae Mai community possesses an identity that displays the local lifestyle of people in the central part of Thailand which consists of:

- Attractiveness of attractions like community's cultural market, artistic art of Aan temple, nature of Tha Chin River, and Lan Tarn Roi Ton view point
- Accommodation like central traditional Thai house homestay
- Tourism activities like sightseeing with a farm truck, practicing making traditional brooms, making Thai desserts, seeing the artwork of the temple and traditional Thai houses, watching the view at Lan Tarn Roi Ton view point, cruising to enjoy the nature, and visiting habitat of lyle's flying fox
- Community traditions like the rice ceremony, Thai folk dance, Thai New Year festival, Loy Kratong festival, community's annual festivals
- Accessibility and facilities like reaching via private care and public transportation and public utilities

### **Marketing Strategy for Cultural Community-Based Tourism of Central Local Lifestyle at Bang Mae Mai Community**

In a discussion with key informants, the distinctiveness of resources and attraction capacity were analysed. It led to the analysis of the Bang Mae Mai community's tourism marketing. As the community is considered a new tourist attraction, there are not many tourists visiting here. However, we see an opportunity to attract more tourists from Ayutthaya World Heritage, a nearby site, which has had more than 8 million tourists visit. Therefore, it is essential to determine some effective marketing strategies, as follows:

#### **Strategy 1: Organising Fam Trip**

It is crucial to make use of mass media and business enterprises to draw tourists to participate in the community tourism activities of the Bang Mae Mai community. Creating networks of public organisations, associations, and tourism enterprise networks, will help create partnerships and promote tourism. A test tourism route activity can be organised by inviting representatives from those partnerships. The community is required to present the value of tourist attractions and tourism activities in order for these representatives to utilise the location in developing tourism routes for visitors.

#### **Strategy 2: Advertising Community Attractions**

This is for creating awareness and alternatives for tourists in connecting main attractions with community's attractions in popular cities. It is a way to advertise community's attractions through media such as brochures, visual media, multimedia, or online media, for the main attractions in Suphan Buri in order to create awareness and alternative routes for tourists to

connect in with main attractions with community's attractions in popular cities. In the area of Ayutthaya World Heritage in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province, there are many tourists both Thais and foreigners, so we can request for cooperation from partners in the main attractions in order to advertise to tourists who visit, as well as create advertising medias that inform tourists of travelling methods and duration.

### **Strategy 3: Conducting Online Marketing**

It should be relevant to the target group by using effective and diverse methods. The accomplishment of creating a network of people in this research made by cable TV program producers, satellite, Facebook online media and YouTube come to produce tourism programs to promote Bang Mae Mai attractions, which can be exposed to more than 10,000 viewers in February 2020. This can be used as a guideline for advertising media production through a mass media network. This also results in an increasing number of tourists visiting the Bang Mae Mai Community.

### **Strategy 4: Developing Tourism Skills and Knowledge for Members and Personal**

The development should be relevant to the tourism of the Bang Mae Mai community. This includes training, knowledge supports, field study, lesson learned, working, systematic management plan, and improving capacity in tourism and hospitality in order to help local people have up-to-date knowledge in response to a continual change in the tourism situation. Moreover, this contributes to bringing value awareness for local tourism and unity of community's tourism network.

**Strategy 5: Encouraging Participation from a New Generation** who live in the area to take a role in driving the Bang Mae Mai community's tourism in terms of media creation technology and different methods of advertising. This research uncovers that most of the people who drive the tourism movement are elderly people. This may result in a lack of successors and continuity in the future. Therefore, it is necessary to educate new generations to participate and be aware of local wisdoms values, identity, and a local lifestyle in order to create a guideline for conservation and inheritance of tourism network in the form of sustainable self-reliance.

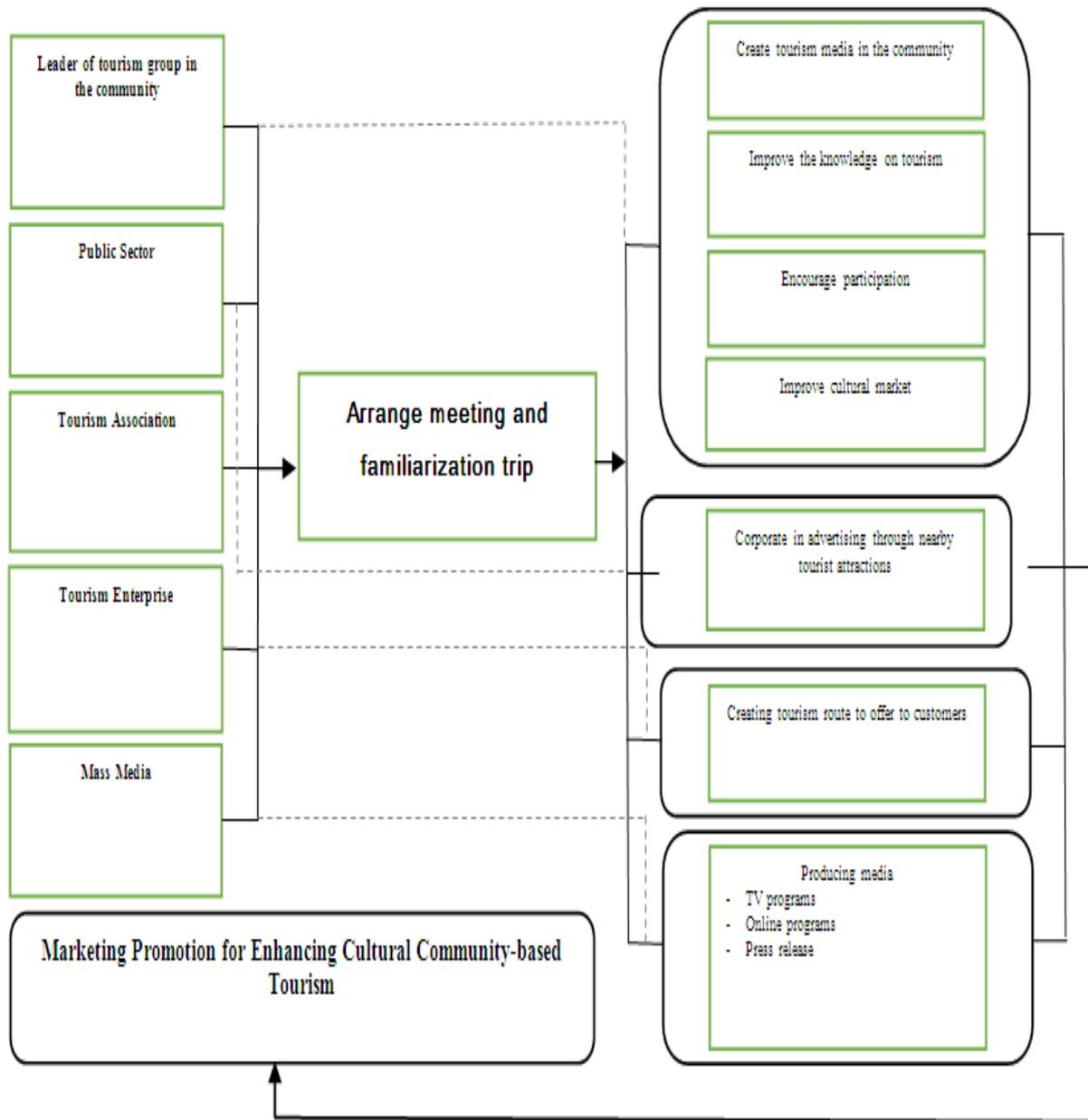
**Strategy 6: Developing Offline Advertising Media within Community's Attractions** by using posters, brochures, as well as other types of advertising media. In some activities, the information or photos provided may not be clear or interesting enough to attract or impress tourists. Therefore, it is essential to develop advertising media by changing, editing and improving content and format to be more suitable and interesting in order to attract tourists to be willing to visit the Bang Mae Mai community.



**Strategy 7: Developing Community's Cultural Market to Have Distinctiveness** and differentiation from other local markets. From the information given by key informants, it reveals that local literature of Suphan Buri called Khun Chang Khun Phan is valuable and well known among Thai people. The literature features a central region lifestyle, so it is used as a content to develop a local culture market that cannot be imitated by competitors. The story is combined with special local foods and creating photo booths for tourists to follow the food mentioned in the literature. This is relevant to the location of community that is a passage way and connection to main attractions of Suphan Buri and nearby cities. At the same time, there should be an improvement on packaging that needs to be environmental friendly and express a community's identity, especially consisting of a section to present short and long term tour programs for tourists who come to buy products at community's cultural market.

### Model of Marketing Promotion for Enhancing Cultural Community-based Tourism

**Diagram:** Model of Marketing Promotion for Enhancing Cultural Community-based Tourism



By specifying marketing strategy for cultural tourism of the central Thai way of living in the Bang Mae Mai community this case study in marketing promotion for enhancing cultural community based services through Duluth creation of Thai local identity that led to analysis of marketing promotion model cultural community-based tourism, it shows that important

parties include leaders of tourism groups in the community, public sector, tourism association, tourism enterprise, and mass media. There was a meeting and familiarisation trip as well as work together on analysing marketing strategy for cultural tourism in the community. This strategy will determine the roles and responsibility of related parties for maximum benefits as well as participants and community who share the benefit of marketing promotion for enhancing cultural tourism which are responsible for the strategy as follows

**Leaders of Community's Tourism Group** have the responsibility to support production of tourism media in the community, improving the tourism knowledge of people in the community, encouraging participation of young people in the local area for inheritance and sustainability, and improving the community cultural market.

**Public sector and tourism association** have the responsibility to create cooperation among organisations, and advertise tourist attractions to nearby main tourist attractions in order to attract tourists.

**Tourism enterprises** have the responsibility to design and offer touristic routes to target visitors outward.

**Mass media** has the responsibility to publicise news, and create TV and online media. After proceeding accordingly, media will bring a concrete marketing promotion model for enhancing cultural community-based tourism.

This study examined the marketing promotion for enhancing a cultural community-based tourism opportunity through value creation of a Thai local community identity. The case study focussed on the central Thailand local lifestyle of the Bang Mae Mai community. The study found that the tendency and motivation of tourists nowadays is cultural tourism. For the community to be able to attract tourists, the distinctiveness of resources and tourism attraction capacity needs analysing. These will be the basic factors determining marketing strategy for cultural tourism of a central Thai local lifestyle. It is relevant to the idea of Bob Mckercher and Hilary du Cros (2003) that classified types of cultural tourism. It found out that awareness activities and cultural diversity are significantly different in reflecting travelling motivations. Netchanok R. (2018); Wang, Yamada, and Brothers (2011) also revealed that maintaining cultural originality is very necessary for cultural tourism where a cultural tourism manager has a duty to preserve the inheritance of culture that will reflect the originality as it has been in the beginning. If the person is lacking a good knowledge of successful factors, it will affect sustainability. In the case study of the Bang Mae Mai community, there are 7 strategies to determine that push forward for cultural diversity and originality. These compose of organising tourism supporting activities for the community, advertising the community's tourist attractions, conducting online marketing, improving

skills on tourism for members and personal, encouraging participation from the new generation, developing offline advertising media within the community's attractions, and developing the community's cultural market to become more outstanding. This can be done through analysing a marketing promotion model for enhancing cultural community-based tourism in order to be a model for other communities. There is a corporation of 5 parties. This includes a community tourism group leader, public sector, tourism association, tourism enterprises, and mass media. These parties are important in order to bring financial supports, corporation, and information for locals (Akama, 2002; Tosun, 2006; Qin, Wall, & Liu, 2011; Anuar, Ahmad, Jusoh, & Hussain, 2012). This includes a good relationship at the local and regional level, integrating toward achievement (Blackman et al., 2004 Murphy & Boyle, 2006). Moreover, the study result shows a similar direction to Noel B. Salazar (2010); Wang and Wall (2007); Muganda, Sirima, & Ezra (2013) who completed studies on community-based tourism which disclosed that community-based tourism can reflect the truth. There are important factors that local guides need in order to be a community's cultural ambassador and to receive positive responses from people in the community. This requires image promotion and training encouragement for the community to appreciate and perceive the value.

### **Recommendation**

Community-based tourism development is sensitive because it requires the creation of understanding and positive attitudes toward people in the community with the help of tourism group leaders. In the beginning, development should be gradual steps taken together within the developing tourism attraction's capacity. These things cannot be achieved by only the community, but also need direct corporation from stakeholders who take on roles, especially for communities with new tourist attractions which are capable of attracting tourists from other nearby sources.



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