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Integrating Cultural and Nostalgia Tourism to Initiate A Quality Tourism Experiences at Chiangkan, Leuy Province, Thailand

Nilnoppakun, A.^{a*}, Ampavat, K.^a

^a*Faculty of Management Science, Silpakorn University IT Campus, Petchaburi, Thailand*

Abstract

This study aimed to examine tourists' demands and Chiangkan tourism resources (supply), and recommended an integrative process to Chiangkan to initiate a Quality Tourism Experiences destination. Tourists' questionnaire was used to collect information from domestic tourists visiting destinations in Thailand (n =700, Chiangkan = 200 and other famous destinations =500). Interviews were employed to tourism services providers (accommodation, transport, and food and beverage) and elites persons (n = 15) in Chiangkan District to gain their opinions towards Chiangkan tourism and its resources. It was found that besides its conservative old houses and local way of life, there are many Buddhist temples in Chiangkan. Additionally, there are many cultural conservatives groups that responsible for 12 Buddhist rituals (for 12 month) each year. Majority of respondents strongly agreed that Chiangkan is a potential destination in terms of social components, attraction, activities, and accessibility. With these quality tourism components that match tourists' demand; Chiangkan is appropriate to develop as a Quality Tourism Experiences destination.

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Keywords: Cultural tourism, Nostalgia tourism, Alternative tourism, Quality Tourism Experiences, Tourism components, Tourists' attraction

1. Introduction

With the tourists' behaviour trend gradually change from conventional "mass" tourism to alternative "niche" tourism, tourist destinations have to improve their tourism products and differentiate the destinations' image to

* Nilnoppakun, A. Tel.: +4-345-434-332.
E-mail address: anilnoppakun@gmail.com

motivate the changing market. The important characteristics of tourism niche markets are that they are likely to have more experiences and knowledge about tourism products and services, and they are more enthusiastic to involve in the tourism process such as reserving their own accommodations, and selecting places to visit (Niezgada, 2013).

To be competitive, destinations should create a Quality Tourism Experiences environment to satisfy tourists. However, the notion of Quality Tourism Experiences is complex and involves many parties and factors during the tourism service process.

2. Quality Tourism Experiences

According to Model of Tourism Planning and Development suggested by Middleton and Hawkins (1998), tourism experiences are the consequences of the interaction of demand side (Market focus) and supply side (Resource focus). Therefore, the revised model focuses on quality tourism experiences besides tourism resources and activities available at the destination. This focus forces local stakeholders to develop tourism products and images that can satisfy visitors (Pennington-Gray & Carmichael, 2006).

A potential tourist is a person that has ability and motivation to travel. The potential tourists' demands are also preliminary to tourism planning and development (Pearce, 2005). These factors also described in the work of Holloway and Hudson (Holloway, 1994; Hudson, 1999) and many others scholars in terms of ability to travel (spare time, disposable income, property, health, and mobility) and motivation to travel value, attitude, trend, fashion, motive, demands, socio-demography, working and living condition, and life style) (Niezgada, 2013).

Quality tourism experiences notion has been explained in views of the visitor, the tourism developer, the product, the media and the local community that brings together the complication of "quality" concept and its relationship to tourism (Figure 1) (Nickerson, 2006).

Thus, major components of quality tourism experiences can be described in terms of attractions and activities, the social component, and support service components (amenity).

2.1 Attraction and activity

Attraction and activity are always the main factors that tourists choose to describe their travel experiences, often in terms of the quality of attractions and activities experienced (Andereck, et al., 2006). Besides developing of quality attraction (s), activities that can satisfy tourists are also prioritized to tourism planning. Therefore, attraction and activity can be identified as 'pull factors' that draw tourists to a destination.

Tourism attractions include natural attraction such as beach and seaside, waterfall, and national park with flora and fauna; local culture such as local arts and folks, local festival and ceremony, and local way of life; historical sites such as church, temple, and castle; theme parks such as safari park, and Disney World.

Global trend towards 'green' tourism affected tourism activities at destinations. There is a growing tourists' awareness in global warming, hence, green activities such as hiking, trekking, bicycling; and conservation activities such as nurture of sea-life, and beach cleaning are preferred by these groups of tourists.

2.2 The social component

While travelling mediation with family and friend (s) whom tourists travel with is one of important factors affecting tourism experiences (Prentice, et.al. 1998), it consequently influencing the assessment of quality (Andereck, et al., 2006). Additionally, tourists interacting with others, and tourism environments (natural environment and physical environment) are also parts of their experiences. In tourism context, others include other tourists, service providers, public sectors, relating organization, and local communities, who are also called 'stakeholders' (Jennings & Weiler, 2006). Table 1 showed roles of stakeholders and their interaction with tourists.

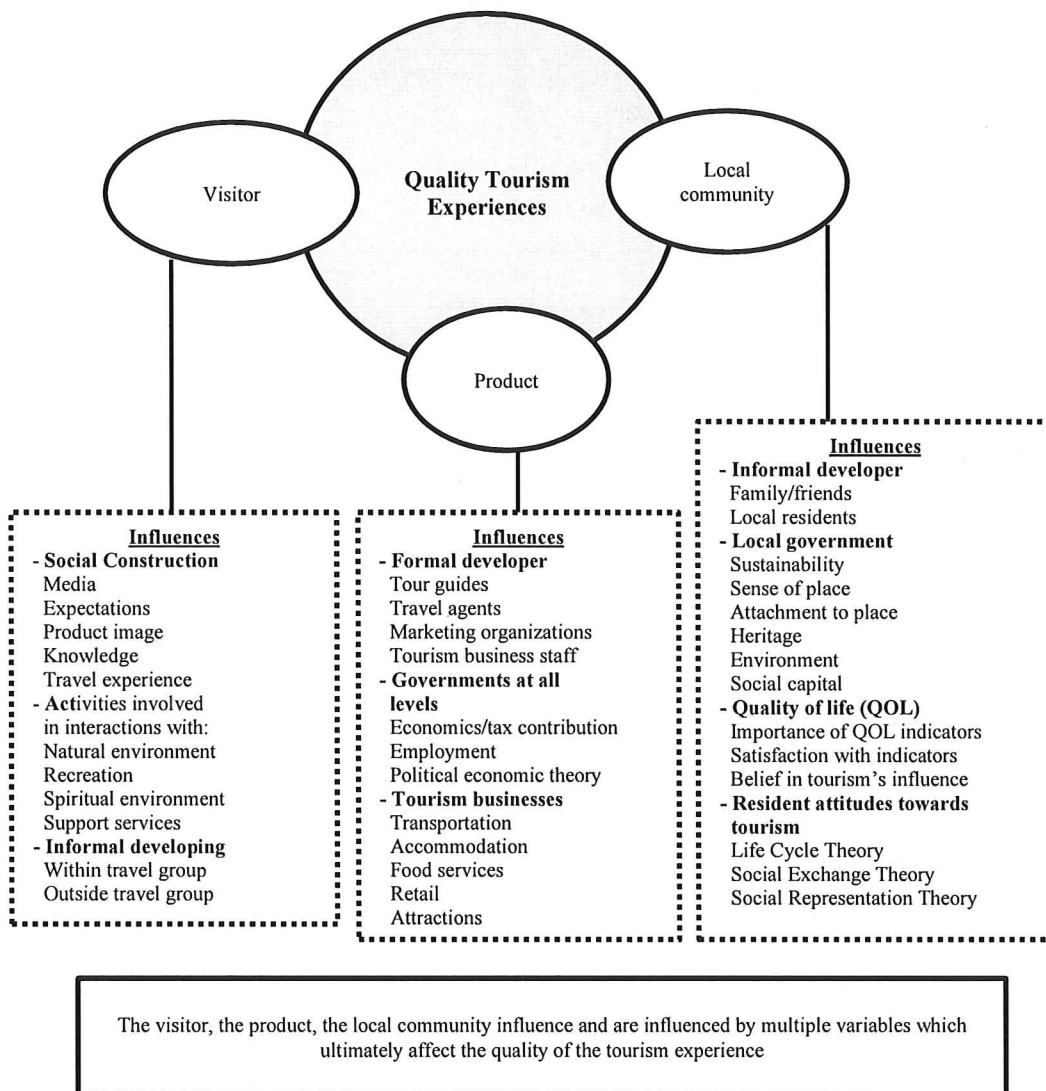


Figure 1 Various Influences on Quality Tourism Experiences
Modified from Nickerson, 2006, p.228

Even though local communities have informal interaction with tourists, they play an important role as ‘host’ who receiving ‘guests’. In his previous work, Murphy (1985) suggests the necessary of community approach to tourism planning and marketing. Local residents who encouraging tourism tend to be good hosts which resulting in positive tourists’ experiences This positive tourists’ experiences increases returning guests and their word-of-mouth recommendation to family and friends (Carmichael, 2006).

Murphy and associates (2000) applied a Partial Least Square analysis to test the assumption that destination

components such as climate, scenery, ambiance, friendliness to cleanliness influencing quality for visitors to Victoria, BC, British Columbia (beta = 0.36). Hence, they recommend that it is important to tourism industry to focus on the more general environmental components as well as infrastructure and related business to tourism planning and development (Murphy, et al., 2000)

Table 1 Roles of stakeholders and their interactions with tourists

Stakeholders	Formal interaction	Informal interaction	Planning and recollection (pre-post visit)	Travel to and from site	On site
Local government	✓		✓		
Travel agent /Tour guide	✓		✓	✓	✓
Transport operator	✓			✓	
Accommodation staff	✓		✓		✓
Food & Beverage provider	✓				✓
Family and friend (s)		✓	✓		✓
Local communities (hosts)		✓			✓
Other tourists		✓	✓		✓
Souvenir /Photo		✓	✓		✓
Non-tourism employee		✓	✓	✓	✓

2.3 Support services component (amenity)

Support services or amenities include transportation, accommodation, food and beverage services, and entertainments. It is necessary that the destinations providing adequate and standard support services to tourists. Infrastructure and public services (hospital, police station) are also considered as support services. Government as developer is responsible in providing infrastructure and public services to residents and visitors (Andereck, et.al, 2006).

Buhalis (2000) also describes five components on supply side that are prerequisites to developing a potential destination in terms of attraction, accessibility, amenity, activity; and ability to develop, manage, and market specific destination.

This study aimed to examine both tourists' demands and tourism resources (supply) at Chiangkan District, Leuy province. Then, initiating an appropriate tourism supply and services (tourism components) that may influence tourists' decision to travel to Chiangkan and proposing a Quality Tourism Experiences framework for the destination.

3. Methodology

Tourists' questionnaire was used to collect information from domestic tourists (demand side) visiting famous destinations in Thailand such as Samui Island, Pai, and Meung Nan (n=700, Chiangkan= 200 and the other famous destinations=500). Convenience sampling and face-to-face technique were used to tourists who agreed to answer the questions.

Semi-structured interviews were employed to tourism services providers (accommodation, transport, and food and beverage) and elites persons (n=15) in Chiangkan District (supply side) to gain their opinions towards Chiangkan tourism and its resources.

Data was collected and analysed during December 2012 to February 2013.

4. Findings

Chiangkan District is a part of Leuy Province which is located in the northeast of Thailand. With its conservative old houses and local way of life, Chiangkan is recognized among domestic tourists as one of the genuine nostalgia tourism destination.

It was also found that besides its conservative old houses and local way of life, there are many Buddhist temples in Chiangkan. Additionally, there are many cultural conservatives groups that responsible for 12 Buddhist rituals (for 12 month) each year.

4.1 Tourists perceptions towards tourism components

In general, the activity that the majority of respondents who were domestic tourists visiting destinations in Thailand would like to experience the most was arts and cultural events (62.4%).The second activity that the majority of them preferred was the local festival/ceremony (53.6%).

Table 2 Activities that domestic tourists would like to experience at a destination in Thailand (n=700)

Activities that tourists would like to attend	Percentage
Arts and cultural	62.4
Local festival/ceremony	53.6
Environmental conservation activities	45.7
Local way of life	39.9

The majority of respondents travelled with friends (42.3%) and family (37.8%), and the main purpose of visiting Chiangkan were for leisure and tourism (86.5%). Table 3 showed tourists’ expectations compared with their experiences during visiting Chiangkan

Table 3 Tourists’ expectations comparing with their experiences during visiting Chiangkan (n = 200)

Chiangkan tourism components	Expectation (%)					Experience (%)				
	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
A conservative destination	16.4	51.2	27.9	4.0	0.5	25.4	44.3	26.8	2.5	1.0
Variety of cultural events and historical sites	16.4	44.8	29.8	9.0	-	19.4	43.3	27.8	8.0	1.5
Maintaining of the local way of life	22.4	40.8	29.8	6.5	0.5	31.8	37.3	22.9	6.0	2.0
Opportunity to engage in cultural events/ ceremony	19.9	40.3	31.3	5.5	1.0	29.4	36.3	25.8	5.5	3.0
Variety of natural attractions	16.9	37.8	36.3	8.0	1.0	20.4	35.3	34.8	8.0	1.5

Remark: 1) Expectation score rating from 5 = the highest (expectation) in quality to 1 = the lowest (expectation) in quality
 2) Experience score rating from 5 = the highest quality (experience) to 1 = the lowest quality (experience)

From Table 3, it was evident that the majority of respondents who visiting Chiangkan had highly expectation (score of 4) in quality of every Chiangkan tourism components as follow: a conservative destination (51.2%); destination with variety of cultural events and historical sites (44.8%); maintaining of the local way of life (40.0%); opportunity to engage in cultural events/ceremony (40.3%); and destination with variety of natural attractions (37.8%).

During respondents' visitation (experience), it was highlighted that the highest score of 5 (the highest quality) increased in every aspect of their expectation from 3.0 percentage (destination with variety of cultural events and historical sites) to 9.5 percentage (opportunity to engage in cultural events/ceremony). Consequently, from their experiences, the majority of respondents perceived that Chiangkan had high quality in tourism components.

These tourism components can be categorized in terms of attraction, activity, amenity, and social components. Respondents were asked if they agreed with the quality of these Chiangkan tourism components. Table 4 showed tourists' perception towards tourism resources or tourism components in Chiangkan.

Table 4 Tourists' perception towards quality of Chiangkan tourism components (supply) in Chiangkan (n=200)

Chiangkan tourism components	Tourists' Perception (%)					\bar{x}
	5	4	3	2	1	
<u>Attraction</u>						
Chiangkan still has its natural beauty.	22.9	54.2	18.4	2.5	2.0	3.94
Chiangkan residents inherit its local culture and heritage.	29.4	42.7	23.4	3.5	1.0	4.66
Chiangkan residents preserve their local way of life.	28.8	40.3	18.9	9.0	3.0	3.83
<u>Activity</u>						
There are environmentally activities for tourists.	26.4	38.3	27.8	5.5	2.0	3.82
There are bicycle lanes provided for site seeing.	32.8	37.8	22.4	6.0	1.0	3.95
<u>Amenity</u>						
There are adequate signposts, and tourist information centre	23.4	47.3	22.8	4.5	2.0	3.86
Buildings and landscapes unify with its environment	31.4	35.8	17.4	12.4	3.0	3.80
<u>Social component</u>						
Chiangkan residents have hospitality mind.	45.8	32.3	19.9	1.0	1.0	4.21
Tourists had opportunity to join local rites and rituals.	31.3	39.3	20.9	6.0	2.5	3.90
Tourists had opportunity to engage in environmental conservation activities with local community.	32.7	35.4	23.4	7.0	1.5	3.91

Remark: Score rating from 5= highest agreeable to 1= least agreeable

The majority of respondents (45.8%) had highest agreeable (score of 5) that Chiangkan residents have hospitality mind. They were highly agreed (score of 4) with the others social components in terms of tourists had opportunity to join local rites and rituals (39.3%), and tourists had opportunity to engage in environmental conservation activities with local community (35.4%).

In terms of attraction components, the majority of respondents felt highly agreeable (score of 4) that Chiangkan still has its natural beauty (54.2%), the residents inherit the local culture and heritage (42.7%), and the residents preserve their local way of life (40.3%).

The majority of respondents also felt highly agreeable (score of 4) that there are environmentally activities for tourists (38.3%), and there are bicycle lanes provided for site seeing (37.8%).

In terms of amenity provided at the destination, the majority of respondents were highly agreed (score of 4) that there are adequate signposts and information centre in Chiangkan (47.3%), and the building and landscapes unify with its environment (35.8%).

4.2 Opinions of interviewees towards tourism in Chiangkan

The interviewing of tourism services providers (accommodation, transport, and food and beverage) and elites persons (n=15) in Chiangkan District can be described in terms of attraction; accessibility; amenity; activity; social components; and ability to develop, manage, and market specific destination (Buhalis, 2000) couple with its related problems.

4.2.1 *Attraction, activity, social components, and ability*

It was recommended that public sectors responsible for tourism development and market of the destinations provided more support in promoting Chiangkan cultural events and ceremonies, and local rites and rituals throughout the years, especially; 12 months Buddhist rituals to attract all year tourists visiting to Chiangkan. It was also suggested that local foods should be promoted to attract tourists as well. Other attractions that can pull tourists to Chiangkan included traditional old houses, and 9 historical temples.

Although the walking street is the most famous destination that almost all of the tourists visiting Chiangkan visited for shopping and experiencing nostalgia tourism, and staying overnight at the old houses in the area; it needed local government support in managing space for the better order, and cleanliness.

It was brought to attention that on one hand increasing number of tourists to Chiangkan may benefit economic of the area in terms of revenue earning, on the other hand it may cause negative impact to local economic in terms of higher cost of living. Other negative impacts included environmental degradation, and social mobilization. Therefore, ability of community to manage the destination for sustainable development is required.

It was informed that almost all of tourism stakeholders welcome tourists to Chiangkan and willing to involve in tourism activities being promoted by public and private sectors. In addition, there are many cultural conservatives groups that responsible for 12 Buddhist rituals (for 12 month) each year.

4.2.2 *Accessibility*

Situated by a river bank, in the former time, Chiangkan main merchandize route was by the river. It was recommended that besides road which is the main mean of transportation to Chiangkan, travelling to Chiangkan or Chiangkan site seeing by the river could the alternative mean of transportation.

5. Discussion and conclusion

From the findings of this study, it was evident that tourists growing demand in cultural tourism because they would like to experience local arts and culture, and would like to engage in local cultural events and activities. Moreover, tourists perceived Chiangkan as a quality tourism destination in terms of quality of attractions, activities, amenity, and social component, especially, the hosts' hospitality mind that tourists appreciated the most.

On the supply site, local stakeholders recognized of their unique cultural resources that could be develop to attract tourists, besides the nostalgia tourism that is the current image of Chiangkan. However, the local community felt the lack of ability to develop, manage, and market the destination; and needed government support to enhance this tourism component.

With those strengths of quality tourism components that match tourists' demands, it was suggested that Chiangkan should integrate their unique cultural resource to the famous nostalgia tourism to differentiate the tourism attractions in the area. Cultural events and ceremony such as 12 months Buddhist rites and rituals could help increasing number of tourists visiting Chiangkan during the events.

To be Quality Tourism Experiences destination; besides enhancing their ability to develop, manage, and market the destination; local community should create this new image to tourists using variety of media. The era of information technology provides opportunity to low cost e-marketing; hence, promoting the new image of Chiangkan would be effective through website and social media.

The proposed framework is shown in Figure 2.

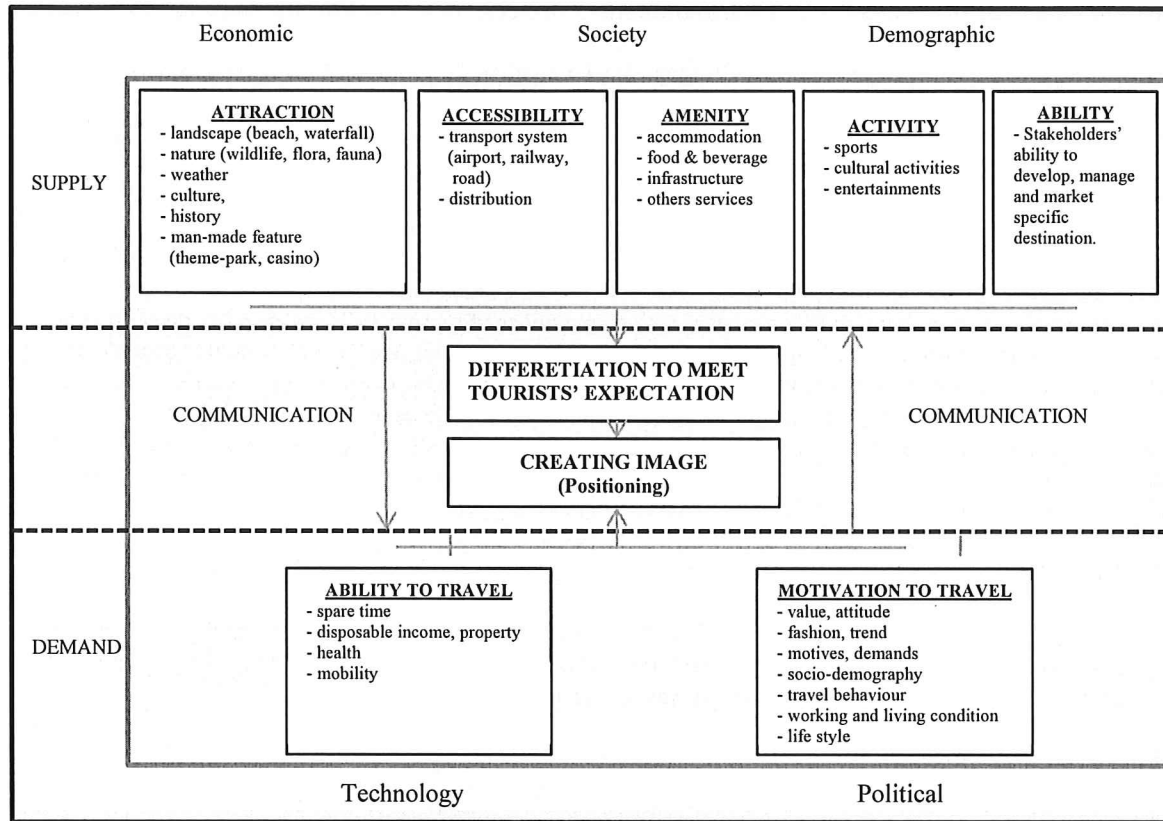


Figure 2 Proposed framework to initiate Quality Tourism Experiences at a destination

It was noted that developing a Quality Tourism Experiences should consider both demand and supply sides. All the tourism components (supply) that influence decision to travel are to be differentiated to match tourists' expectations. It was hope that this proposed framework could be applied to Chiangkan and other tourism destination in Thailand.

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