



# Increasing values and worth of the Naga fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province: Creative learning of cultural tourism for international tourists

Asst. Prof. Dr. Thirachaya Chaigasseem\*

Head of Ph.D. Program in Tourism, MICE and Hospitality Innovation Management  
Faculty of Business Administration and Accountancy, Khon Kaen University, Thailand  
E-Mail: [thirachaya@kku.ac.th](mailto:thirachaya@kku.ac.th)

Patipat Tunming

Student, Doctor of Philosophy Program in Tourism and Hospitality Innovation Management  
Faculty of Business Administration and Accountancy, Khon Kaen University, Thailand  
E-Mail: [tpatipat@kkumail.com](mailto:tpatipat@kkumail.com)

Corresponding author\*

## Abstract

The study has three major objectives. Firstly, it aims to study the local community participation in the conservation and preservation of the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province. Secondly, it attempts to investigate international tourists' behavior and demand for cultural tourism concerning the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province. Lastly, it attempts to search for guidelines to increase the value and worth of the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province for the creative learning of cultural tourism for international tourists. The study was a multi-research design i.e. a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The researcher identified samples in four (4) groups which included 1) people in the local community 2) local philosophers and representatives of the local community 3) international tourists and, 4) involved public and private organizations. To attain the research objectives, questionnaires, semi-structure interviews, a focus group discussion and a workshop were used as the research tools. The results uncovered that: 1) Local community participation in the conservation and preservation of the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province was at a high level. 2) Most of the international tourists (61.80%) were males aged between from 31 – 40 years of age and 57.20% of the international tourists were from member ASEAN states. Most of the tourists were interested in cultural tourism about the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province because of its supernatural phenomenon status. The demand of international tourists for cultural tourism to learn about the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province was at a high level. 3) Guidelines to increase the value and worth of the Naga Fireball tradition for the creative learning of cultural tourism to international tourists that were proposed included 1) Publishing books about the legend of the Naga, 2) Tourists activities involved with the legend of the Naga, 3) Establishment of Homestays along the banks of the Mekong River. 4) Making amends at the end of the Buddhist Lent period. 5) Designing an official cultural tourism website for Nong Khai Province and, 6) Creating a course for spiritual tourism about the Naga.

**Keywords:** Naga fireball tradition, cultural tourism, creative learning, Nong Khai Province, Thailand.

## Introduction

Travel and tourism is undoubtedly an important economic activity in most countries around the world. Its direct economic impact is huge and the industry also has significant indirect and induced impacts. The UN Statistics Division-approved Tourism Satellite Accounting methodology quantifies only the direct contribution of Travel and Tourism. But the WTTC recognizes that Travel and Tourism's total contribution is much greater and aims to capture



its indirect and induced impacts through conducting its valuable annual research (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017).

Thailand travel and tourism generated 2,313,500 jobs directly in 2016 (6.1% of total employment) and this was forecast to grow by 6.3% in 2017 to 2,458,500 (excluding commuter services) (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017). It also includes, for example, the activities of the restaurant and leisure industries directly supported by tourists. By 2027, Travel & Tourism will account for about 4,009,000 jobs directly, which is an increase of 5.0% pa over the next ten years (Authority of Thailand Tourism of Nong Khai Province, 2017). The total contribution of Travel and Tourism to employment (including wider effects from investment, the supply chain and induced income impacts (Authority of Thailand, 2017), was 5,739,000 jobs in 2016 (15.1% of total employment). This was correctly forecast to rise by 6.9% in 2017 to 6,137,500 jobs (16.1% of total employment) (Authority of Thailand Tourism, 2017).

There is cultural tourism in the form of an unusual or some would say paranormal event, that takes place year-round in the Mekong River. Unexplained Naga fireballs (in Thai: Boong Fai Phaya Nak) rise out of the river, shoot into the sky and then disappear (Carson & Hartmann, 2017). Traditionally this is held in Nong Khai province (in Northeastern Thailand), especially Phon Phisai district, and across the border in Laos in the villages of Pakngum, Nonxai and Nongkhiet. The number and intensity of fireballs increases around the full moon of the 11th lunar month, marking the end of the rainy season and the Rains Retreat. This two-day festival features long-tail boat races, a sound and light show and, of course, plenty of unexplained fireballs (Zhang & Xie, 2017).

Traditionally, the fire balls are believed to come from the Naga, a mythical serpent that lives in the water. According to legend, the Naga was so amazed by the Buddha's teaching, that he assumed a human form and became ordained as a monk. However, the Buddha's teaching stipulates that only humans can become monks. One night, while the Naga was sleeping at the temple, it returned to its serpent form. Another monk saw the giant snake sleeping in the temple and was alarmed. The Buddha summoned the snake and informed him that he could not remain a monk. This crushed the Naga's spirit, and the Buddha felt great compassion for it. He gave it the five precepts, which would allow it to be reborn as a human and become a monk. In the meantime, the Buddha consoled the Naga by telling it that all candidates for monkhood would take the name of the Naga in honor of this noble creature. Even today, all candidates for the Sangha are called Naga. Furthermore, every candidate has to answer the question, before being ordained as a monk. This present study is about "Increasing the value and worth of the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province for the creative learning of cultural tourism to international tourists". The study thus has three major objectives:

- Study the local community's participation in the conservation and preservation of the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province
- Study the investigate international tourists' behaviour and their demand for cultural tourism about the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province
- Proposes the guidelines to increase the value and worth of the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province for the creative learning of cultural tourism to international tourists.

## **Research Methodology**

This study uses a mixed method model between quantitative and qualitative research. In order to get the most accurate information, two types of data collection tools were used in this study, which were structured interviews and focus group discussions according accepted to quantitative and qualitative research approaches. There was conducting of a content and discourse analysis to propose a way to increasing the value and worth of the Naga Fireball



tradition in Nong Khai Province for the creative learning of cultural tourism to international tourists.

## Population and sample

Populations and samples used in the study were divided into 4 groups as follows:

### People in Nong Khai province

The population of Nong Khai province totaled 416,901 peoples (Department of Provincial Administration, 2017). The research samples were analyzed using the Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1973). Therefore, 400 samples of the data collection in this study was collected by a random sampling methodology. In addition, a quota sampling method, as shown in Table 1, determined the sample size.

Table 1 People in Nong Khai province

Sample	Number of people (person)	Number of sample (person)
Muang District	145,181	139
Sang Khom District	23,966	23
Sri Chiang Mai District	30,549	29
Tha bor District	82,527	79
Phon Phi Sai District	97,059	94
Ruttanawapee District	37,619	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>416,901</b>	<b>400</b>

### Local philosophers in the research area.

Local philosophers in the research area were included from Muang district, Sang Khom district, Sri Chiang Mai district, Tha Bor district, Phon Phi Sai district, and the Ruttanawapee district. Structured individual interview techniques were used to collect the data. In addition, 3 people per district, totaling 18 people, were collected by means of a purposive random sampling method.

### Government agencies and private sector stakeholders

Government agencies and private sector stakeholders included chief executives and local administrators in the study area that are in each of the Muang district, Sang Khom district, Sri Chiang Mai district, Tha Bor district, Phon Phi Sai district, Ruttanawapee district, as well as tourism entrepreneurs related to cultural tourism. Structured individual interviews were used to collect the required data. Moreover, 16 people were selected by means of a purposive random sampling method, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Government agencies and private sector stakeholders.

No.	Key Informant	Number of sample (person)
1	Governor of Nong Khai province (or representative)	1
2	Director of Provincial Office of Tourism and Sport, Nong Khai provincial offices (or representative)	1
3	Director of Ministry of Culture, Nong Khai province (or representative)	1
4	Mayor of Nong Khai (or representative)	1
5	President of Tourism Business Association, Nong Khai province (or representative)	1
6	District Chief of Muang District (or representative)	1
7	District Chief of Sang Khom District (or representative)	1
8	District Chief of Sri Chiang Mai District (or representative)	1
9	District Chief of Tha bor District (or representative)	1
10	District Chief of Phon Phi Sai District (or representative)	1
11	District Chief of Ruttanawapee District (or representative)	1



No.	Key Informant	Number of sample (person)
12	Tourism business entrepreneurs (or representative)	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>

### **Group of foreign tourists who had traveled to the Nong Khai Province.**

The group of foreign tourists who had traveled in Nong Khai Province was 39,112 people (Authority of Thailand Tourism, 2017). The research samples were analyzed using the Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1973). Therefore, 400 samples of the data collection in this study was collected by means of the sample random sampling method. In addition, the quota sampling method was also utilised.

### **Research Instruments**

Research instruments consisted of: 1) An interview form for local philosophers, 2) An interview form for government agencies and private sector stakeholders related to cultural tourism, 3) A questionnaire for the people in Nong Khai Province, 4) A questionnaire for foreigner tourists who had traveled in the province, 5) Focus group discussion and 6) A workshop. Measuring instruments consisted of measuring the reliability of the questionnaire by finding the Coefficient Alpha value by Cronbach's approach. The sample size was 40 people equals 10% of the questionnaire. The test results showed that the Coefficient Alpha was greater than 0.8, which can be used to collect data (Srisa-ad, 2010). The measuring of the reliability of the interview form by finding the Index of Item-Objective Congruence value or IOC was also undertaken. In order to finding the index of OIC, the questionnaire was sent to 3 experts to determine content validity (IOC). The results showed that IOC values of interview form was more than 0.67, which can be used to collect data (Rohwer, 2010).

### **Data collection**

Primary data were collected from the questionnaires of the population in Nong Khai Province and groups of tourists from foreign countries who had traveled in the province. Interviews were held with local philosophers in the research area, government agencies and private sector stakeholders, as well as focus group discussions and a workshop.

Secondary data collection was collected from the study of concepts and theories related to cultural tourism identity, cultural economy, creativity, tourist behaviors, community involvement, planning and development of tourism markets. In addition, contextual data of Nong Khai Province was collected from research papers, journals, booklets, books, theses and related research, both nationally and internationally, including the study of information from Internet media which were considered to be reliable sources of information.

### **Data analysis**

The data from questionnaires were analyzed by means of descriptive statistics by an SPSS computer program. Then, the researcher analyzed the interview data using both content analysis and discourse analysis methods. After that, he applied the results from: 1) The study the local community participation in the conservation and preservation of the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province, 2) He then studied and investigated international tourists' behavior and demand for cultural tourism about the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai province and performed a data synthesis and proposed guidelines to increase the value and



worth of the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province for the creative learning of cultural tourism of international tourists.

## Results

### **The results of the question on local community participation in the conservation and preservation of the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai province**

The majority of respondents were male 52.50%, aged 41-50 years 32.50%, single 61.50%, with a career in agriculture 49.20% and and income less than 10,000 baht/month 37.00%. In the overall population the research area is involved in promoting the conservation and continuation of the Naga fireballs in Nong Khai Province at a high level, and it was found that most of the people in the study area were involved in the accommodation sector, followed by other facilities, activities, attractions, aiding accessibility and having good attitudes.

Attitude: 'People in the study area are involved having the correct attitude' was at the moderate level. It was found that most of the villagers were involved in supporting local community tourism management. Secondly, there is mutual learning between the community and the tourists to build good relationships and to share ideas, plan, and drive the development of the tourism model.

Attraction: 'The people in the study area are involved in the attraction' scored very highly when considering the case, and it was found that the majority of the public had a part to play. The second aspect including the beautiful scenery, tales of the community, the volcanic shrine of the serpent, the light and sound of the legendary fireballs Naga, were all important attractions.

Accessibility: 'People in the research area participating in the field of access provision' was found to be very high considering that most of the people were involved in making the tourist route safe. Secondly, the ease of access to tourist attractions, the signs to the tourist, road conditions and the connection of routes was good.

Accommodation: 'People in the research area are involved in accommodation' was very high considering that it was found that most of the citizens were involved in arranging sufficient accommodation for tourists. Secondly, the accommodation / room type is diverse, the accommodation is also creative, and it links with the identity of the community and facilities show this.

Activities: 'People in the study area participating in tourism activities' was found to be very high and many people were involved in building community-to-community relations. Secondly, activities can convey the culture of the community, local guides are knowledgeable, activities are appropriate, encouraging learning, and promote diversity and creativity.

Amenity: 'People in the research area are involved in the amenities' was also very high considering that it was found that most of the citizens were involved in mainly the safety of tourists. The second aspect was the supply of vehicles in the tourist attractions and the infrastructural system including electricity, plumbing, telephone, and internet availability.

Advertising: 'People in the research area are involved in advertising' was the moderate level considering that it was found that most of the citizens were involved in the credibility of information resources. Second, the ability to access tourist resources and diversity of the advertising channels was good.



### **The results of the investigation of international tourists' behavior and demand for cultural tourism about the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai province**

International tourist's respondents were mostly male 61.80%, aged between 31-40 years 38.20%, married 52.00%, with a bachelor's degree 54.20%, in the private sector 37.00%, with an income is more than 20,000 baht / month, or 45.80%, and were mainly domiciled in ASEAN countries. 57.20%.

Most international tourists stated that the purpose of traveling to Nong Khai was to relax 61.80%, traveling with friends 46.80%, travel by bus 55.00%, travel on public holiday 45.20% had three-day travel 34.50%, with travel expenses more than 15,000 baht 41.80%.

Most international tourists stated that the reason to travel in Nong Khai as a tourist attraction was the Naga fireballs because of the miraculous phenomenon 39.50%, experiencing the phenomenon of fireballs Naga in Nong Khai province while at Phon Phisai district 30.80%, of international tourists participated in the cultural tourism festival. The Naga fireballs of Nong Khai province were visited for the first time as accounted to by 41.80%, there is thus a need to travel to see the traditional culture of Naga fireballs in Nong Khai. 93.50%, which was most international travelers experience the cultural tour of the Naga fireballs of Nong Khai as a special phenomenon 39.20%. Most of the international tourists think that value is important in the culture of Nong Khai province, as this is a unique lifestyle, where they can gain in wisdom and knowledge 39.50%, and they create special memories by involvement in cultural tourism activities. For example the cultural belief in faith was important to 49.50% of the respondents. Most international tourists think that cultural tourism activities can convey the values of the Naga fireballs 41.00%, and most international tourists receive tourist information on the Naga fireballs through the website of the Tourism Authority of Thailand 51.50%. International tourists think one should be respectful of the beliefs and faith of the local tradition 42.50%, and they believe there should be an improvement in the cultural tourism of the Naga fireballs of Nong Khai and thus the management of tourism 41.00%. is the most important aspect.

### **The results of the investigation of international tourists' demand for cultural tourism on the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province**

Most international tourists are in need of good amenities and such demand is at the highest level. The second demand is a good attitude, accessibility, good advertising, reasonable activities, fair accommodation and attractions. The attitude aspect is very high considering that most international tourists have a need for a warm welcome. Secondly, the community needs to support tourism in the research area since people want to learn together with the community and build a good relationship with them. The attraction value is at a high level and it was found that most international tourists had a need for clean, beautiful scenery. Secondly, the narrative of the phenomenon related to Buddhism, made them want to see the show of light and sound, and opening up of the legendary fireballs serpent, they wanted to also 'worship' the serpent and had a need to atone with others during the Buddhist lent. The accessibility aspect was also at a very high level considering that most international tourists have a need to access safe tourist destinations. Second, they need to facilitate easy access to tourism sites, want to have signs to help them travel and need good roads. Good accommodation was also at a very high level of need considering mainly individuals, and it was found that most international tourists demand quality accommodation. Secondly there was a need for accommodation at reasonable prices, with good in-house facilities, diverse accommodation / room types and there was also a need for creative accommodation which reflects the unique identity of the community.



The tourism activities are at very high level of value but the majority of international tourists are in need of local guides who are knowledgeable. Secondly, activities need to convey the culture of the community, and also build a relationship between the community and tourists. There is also a need for variety and creativity of activities and the activities must appropriately encourage learning.

The amenities are at the highest level of concern and it was found that most international tourists had a need for especially safety. Secondly there is the need to have good public utilities available. Also advertising was rated as very high in importance and it was found that most international tourists demand diversification of advertising channels. Secondly, the credibility of information resources is important as is the need and ability to access tourist resources.

### **Proposals and guidelines**

Dimension of tourism: The value added aspects and traditions of the Naga fireballs through cultural tourism based on faith and the legendary serpent of the local community are important (Sutriadi & Anindito, 2016). There are three major tourism activities: the sight of the serpentine fireballs in the Mekong River during the Buddhist lent and the light show of the legend to the legendary Naga, the sightseeing tour of the faith sacred places related to the serpent, such as pagoda, museum, grandfather, Tescete, rays at the temple stone in Si Chiang Mai, and the experience of the culture of the Mekong River community by staying at homestays and living in a local way in the community including the worship ceremony and the annual serpent worship events (Bonetti, et al., 2014).

The procedure to succeed in planning and developing tourism is important in building a tourism network including government, private and local communities (Tan, et al., 2013). Government agencies must play a role in promoting and supporting the operating budgets needed (Aguirre & López, 2017). Advertising to promote international travel and the media from abroad (Tan, et al., 2014) is also needed. Private agencies should be supportive about personnel and marketing planning so as to enhance the attractiveness of tourism activities. Finally, the local community in the role of the research area owner, must be ready to welcome and create good interactions between the community and international tourists so as to be able to present a good image and a complete tourism cycle in a cultural tourism dimension based on beliefs of the Naga serpent and also the local community (Pappalepore & Duignan, 2016). Culture is obviously an important dimension in cultural tourism based on faith in the story about the serpent of the local community (Shoshanah, et al., 2017) in Nong Khai. An exchange of learning activities will create interaction between the community and tourists, who can then understand the culture, and the deep spirituality of the community better (D'Ovidio & Morató, 2017). For example, attending a ritual of serpent worship or living in homestay on the Mekong River and living in the style of the local community is important to many tourists (Alvarez, 2010).

Tourism is an important economic tool for local people in that it creates jobs, increases revenue and alleviates poverty (D'Auria, 2009). It can be said that the support for tourism activities is the one activity that promotes the quality of life of local communities (Letunic, et al., 2008). Therefore, the promotion of cultural tourism activities based on faith and the faith in the serpent for local economic support and the development of the community for tourism activities are more meaningful (Richards, 2002). It is also a part of value creation and the value of cultural tourism in the belief in and faith of the serpent (Marques & Borba, 2017).



Environmental preservation in the cultural heritage sites to faith in the story of the serpent (Etemad & Motaghi, 2018), such as temples, sacred places should be more noticeable (Kakiuchi, 2016), such as setting up road signs, improving access via roads to tourist attractions and better cleaning of areas (He, 2017). Cultural tourism based on faith in stories related to the serpent is bringing out the spiritual culture of the local community (Murray, 2017), and it is the tradition of Naga fireballs with its related tourism activities to attract the attention of tourists and provided the opportunities to live in a local community living (Liu, 2018) in the Mekong River and also to experience the culture of faith of the local community and veneration towards the serpent (Mitchell & Shannon, 2018).

Cultural tourism based on the faith in the stories related to the serpent (Darvishmotevali, et al., 2018), is a form of conservation and cultural heritage (Liang & Chan, 2018), and also traditions related to the serpent (Boccella & Salerno, 2016), such as the fireballs Naga, sacrifice of the serpent, etc. Sustainability derives from the belief in value and the cultural continuity of local communities (Grodach, 2017) towards tourists in helping them to understand the value of the Naga fireballs tradition, which is a spiritual culture of local communities living along the banks of the Mekong River. The culture is spread through tourism activities that include both entertainment and knowledge about these values which are inherited continuously, and keep going in the form of community culture (Bonetti, et al., 2014).

In conclusion, it is important to increase the value and value of Naga Kai Naga Fireballs to create cultural learning experiences for international tourists. The truth of the tourism activities can convey the meaning and value of the tradition of the fireballs of Naga and join up with the faith in the serpent of the local community. Tourism planning should focus on three themes: 1) Visiting the Naga fireballs on the Mekong River during the Buddhist lent and displaying light and sound to tell the legend of the Naga to international tourists. 2) Visiting the sacred sites at the sacred places associated with the serpent, such as the pagodas, and the museums at Wat Hin Mak Peng, Si Chiang Mai, Nong Khai and Piang Din cave, Sang Khom district, Nong Khai province and wat Pha Tak Seu, Sang Khom district, Nong Khai Province. 3) Experience the cultural heritage of the Mekong River by living in a homestay style accommodation and living in a local community including visiting the ceremony to worship the mythical serpent.

Cooperation between public and private sectors is essential, as is that with local communities, as it plays an important role in planning and formulating tourism activities in order to be able to offer international travelers including the entertaining activities and knowledge related to the spiritual culture of local communities (Mulero & Rius-Ulldemolins, 2017). Because of the value of the fireballs of Naga is already there and it is the only festival in the world that is a natural phenomenon with hidden Buddhist moral value, it is important to many tourists. But value added requires a variety of marketing tools and the most important tool is people themselves in the cultural area who have awareness of the identity of the local community and continue to promote it (Comunian & England, 2018).

## **Discussion**

### **The local communities participation in the conservation and preservation of the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province**

The research showed that the participation of people in the study area in efforts to promote the conservation and the tradition of Naga fireballs in Nong Khai Province is very high. Most people in the study area were involved in the accommodation sector (Bujdosó, et al., 2015). The second most were involved in the amenities, activities, attractions, accessibility, portraying a good attitude while the least involvement was in advertising (Richards, 2011).



There was synergy between this research and that conducted in a study on influence analysis of community support for sustainable tourism development by Comunian & England, (2018). As a research area owners, the local communities influence sustainable tourism development and community attachment (Gu, 2014), community involvement (Li & Liu, 2016), perceived benefits (Sangchumnong, 2018), perceived cost (Douglass, 2016), support for sustainable tourism (Ellis, et al., 2018) and the results also showed that the community attachment and community involvement has a very strong relationship in supporting sustainable tourism (Comunian & Mould, 2014). This is because when the local community has a good relationship and support each other, far more can be done (Moore, 2014). The planning of local tourism development is just about ready, and people now focus on local interests (Torre & Scarborough, 2017). Therefore, the balance between development and sustainable development (Tucker & Shelton, 2018) is important to consider.

According to the results of this study, international festivals are an experience production system as stated by Sofield, et al., (2017). The research presents a guideline for the development of valuable festivals (Grodach, et al., 2017) and can help attract tourists by promoting the participation of relevant sectors such as government agencies (Kim & Jeong, 2018). It provide support on the issue of budgets and media private sector support in planning and organizing as stated by Falco (2018). This is all in addition to the involvement of local communities in the presentation of meaning (Zakaria, et al., 2014). The value of traditional folk festivals will help make the tourists feel greater value and the festivities that they attend have more meaning for them (Townsend, et al., 2017).

In addition, it is consistent with research in modeling perceived quality, visitor satisfaction and behavioral intentions at destination level that cannot be tangible (Pappalepore, et al., 2014). Therefore, the quality and image of tourism products is the first thing that can create trust (Seraphin, et al., 2018) and confidence for tourists meeting the needs of tourists is a way to bring satisfaction to travel (Desbiolles, 2018). The basic needed factors are attitude, attraction, accessibility, accommodation, activities, amenities and advertising. Finally, quality and satisfaction are factors affecting the behavior of tourists (Gnoth & Zins, 2013). Therefore, effective tourism management and the value of the attitude of tourists, planners and related agencies must be taken into account (Shen, et al., 2012). Value in quality of tourist attractions and tourism activities is critical (Hani, et al., 2012). Value in satisfaction through the experience, tourists will receive is also vital (Warren & Dinnie 2018). This will affect the positive behavior of tourists towards tourism (Scott & Szili, 2017). The enveloping creativity in tourist experiences offer a solution to the serial reproduction of culture and show that the culture is an important element that reflects the well-being of a society (Lee, et al., 2015).

The development of the economy and culture is an interesting issue in creating tourism routes and can attract a large number of visitors (Whiting & Hannam, 2014). The true nature of local tourism is a global phenomenon and a new tourist inflow makes changes in the style of presentation of the culture so as to convey the identity of the local community and create value for tourism and the travel experience of tourists (García, et al., 2018). With creative tourism linked to traditional cultural capital, these can represent the importance of creative tourism in re-creating or differentiating a product (Liu, et al., 2017). Tourism is interesting when it invites visitors to discover new local experiences (Fahmi, et al., 2016). Cultural tourism has been organized to allow tourists to visit the local traditions (Setyaningsih, et al., 2016). Local culture and its festivals are inherited and preserved (Sung, 2015). In addition, local people also participate in tourism management to bring benefits to the local community (Luger, 2017). The main principle of cultural tourism is the preservation of the inherited things that are so distinctive in their culture and which can be traced back and forward to the next generation



(Lee, 2016). Cultural tourism is also a form of heritage preservation identity of local identity (Alberti & Giusti, 2012).

### **Investigating international tourists' behavior and demand for cultural tourism**

The results show that most of international tourists have a reason to travel to see the culture of the Naga fireballs of Nong Khai because of the mythical miraculous phenomenon. The most popular experience is the phenomenon of Naga fireballs in Nong Khai province at Phon Phisai district. Most of international tourists however tend to participate in the cultural tourism festival, the Naga fireballs of Nong Khai. The model of community-based festival image was based on the participation of the local communities (Pratt, 2011) including attributes, family and friends, and affective association (Aritenang, 2015). Overall, this study is important for the development of the tourism experience and expectations of repeat travel from tourists or visitors to the festival, which have been enhanced by the community (Bonet, et al., 2011). The importance of the activity was in helping to promote and public relations (Tan, et al., 2018). Community based festivals are a good way to develop tourism so as to bring local benefits and also create value (Bălan & Vasile, 2015). Most tourists consider as important the value of cultural tourism (Zhang, 2017), since Naga fireballs is a unique way of life, wisdom and knowledge, it adds value. As a creative destination the festival is a part of creative tourism where visitors have the opportunity to interact (Malenkina & Ivanov, 2018). They can also learn local culture through artistic works, such as local cultural performances (Divisekera & Nguyen, 2018). The festival is an incentive for tourists to visit local attractions and to promote tourism at such destinations which can create memories for international tourists in the cultural tourism arena (Chambers, 2018). The Naga fireballs serpent of Nong Khai is a cultural tourism activity, which enhances cultural media and beliefs (Chung, et al., 2015).

The model of creative experience in creative tourism is one in which tourists have the opportunity to create interactions between the environment and themselves (Lane, 2018). Local community participation in local culture learning activities is a process of creating positive attitudes towards perceptions and help one learn more about the destination (Yan & Bramwell, 2008), and an impressive travel experience and good memories for tourists affects the motivation to travel again or return to the same tourist site (Moscardo, et al., 2017). Most international tourists think that the cultural tourism activities that can convey the value of the Naga fireballs the most is the flow of the hippopotamus. These tourists get tourist information on the Naga fireballs through the website of Thailand Tourism. The social media in tourism behavior in this research shows that the internet plays an important role in planning tourism (Prince & Ioannides, 2017). Most tourists search for and analyze the facts about tourist sites through websites, texts and the internet (Shan, 2014). The research also focuses on the issue of credibility of tourist information sources and encourages entrepreneurs and relevant agencies to create channels for accessing tourist markets through integrated media (Pabel & Pearce, 2018). The Internet is clearly the main motivation and stimulates the travel of tourists (Chien, et al., 2018). Most international tourists treated the cultural tourism of the Naga fireballs in Nong Khai in a respectful manner and accepted the local beliefs and faith of the local traditions, and stated what should be improved.

The Naga fireballs of Nong Khai when classified by the domicile of international tourists, and different international travelers, showed different tourist behaviors at the significant 0.05, and there was a study area where international tourists were exposed to the phenomenon. The international tourists consider the places to be a memorable and happily explored the traditional culture of Naga Khai Naga fireballs (Khlaikaew, 2015). However human behavior is different from one social situation to another when considering personal satisfaction (Bell &



Jayne, 2009). For some tourists, travel is part of their need to show off their status and gaining the social acceptance and praise for travel, is one activity causing a motivation to travel. Some travel to avoid debts, or a monotonous lifestyle, while others want to research and experience new things. The statistical significance at 0.05 level gives the reason why international tourists prefer the tourism of the Naga fireballs in Nong Khai. The value of the tradition of fireballs Naga, for the international tourists is good, and some think it should be treated as a cultural tourism that can be improved in the cultural tourism arena of especially the Naga fireballs of Nong Khai.

The results of the research found that the needs of international tourists to the cultural tourism of the Naga fireballs of Nong Khai is very high level when considering each aspect, but mainly facilities are important (Hsu, 2018). The attitude of locals, accessibility, advertising, attractions, accommodation are the least important aspects (Pinheiro & Hauge, 2014). In addition, the concept of tourism focuses on what tourists' find attractive (D'Ovidio & Cossu, 2017). An impressive environment, culture, traditions, festivals, facilities, accommodation, restaurants, souvenir shops, laundry facilities or other services, infrastructure in communication and transport infrastructure, transportation and hospitality are also important considerations (Canavan, 2016). There must be careful preparation of tourism resources since their potential to support of tourists is important to help meet the needs of tourists (Idajati, 2014).

In general, international travelers had different needs at the significance 0.05. In each case, there were 4 different needs which consisted of landmarks, access to accommodation, tourism activities, and other tourists had similar needs. The result of this study show that tourists travel needs vary according to the economic conditions in which they find themselves (Pedro, et al., 2017). Social and leisure time factors result in incentives for tourism (O'Connor & Liu, 2014). This study mentions important tourist incentives. There is a need to encourage people to travel more. Cultural and educational motivations (cultural / personal education motives) are also incentives for curiosity (Camargo, et al., 2016). Tourist want to know different people, places, and countries that are generally unknown to them. They are interested in art, culture, music, architecture, folk arts, festivals, landmarks, natural history, and feel a need to be educated about other races and ecotourism activities (Magalhães, et al., 2017).

### **Guidelines to increase the value and worth of the Naga Fireball tradition**

Guidelines to increase the value and worth of the Naga Fireball tradition consisted of various dimensions: Touristic, social, cultural, economic, environmental, creative, conservation and sustainability. The beliefs around Naga impact the cultural identities of the communities living in the area. The Mekong River is remarkable and attractive, attracting the needs of tourists such as frontier tourism, and retracing mythic journeys and stories. Tourism is critical for the identity of the destination and especially in remote study areas. When traveling to the border city, a tourist not only finds new, uncharted attractions, but also links between geographic research areas. Traveling to a border town is a journey requiring respect for the local identity.

This research proposes that the value and value proposition of Naga Khai Naga fireballs to create a cultural tourism experience for international tourists concerns seven issues:

- 1) Making a collection of stories about faith.
- 2) Organizing tourism activities according to the legendary Naga.
- 3) Setting up a Home Stay availability in the research area along the Mekong River so that international visitors can experience the connection between the Nong Khai and the Mekong River.



- 4) Organizing of charity activities.
- 5) Creating an official tourism site for the Nong Khai province.
- 6) Showing the path of faith tourism to places related to the legendary Naga and
- 7) Promotion of the area in general.

Local community involvement specifically, the role of youth in the research area to developing creativity in tourist experiences can be a solution to the serial reproduction of culture (Kujawa, 2017). This reflects the well-being of society and the development of the economy. Culture is an interesting issue to use to create a tourist route and attract many tourists to visit the study area and see the original sites (Yue, et al., 2014). Tourism has transformed the style of cultural presentation to convey the identity of local communities, adding value to tourism and travel experience to tourists with creative tourism on traditional cultural capital (Valdez, et al., 2017). These represent the importance of creative tourism in re-creating or differentiating tourism products, making it interesting to invite visitors to discover truly new local experiences. In this study, cultural tourism as an economic development strategy for local neighborhoods and its role in promoting of traditional history of for example, art, among the tribes or nationalities and all the cultural opportunities provide further opportunities for learning the differences between peoples and teaching about diversity (McGladdery & Lubbe, 2017).

Cultural tourism also promotes the local economy by creating jobs and extending the employment rate and alleviating the difficulties in the study area, therefore, amidst the changes of society and culture, cultural tourism brings opportunities and also some challenges (Zhang & Xiong, 2017). Tourism and the development of research areas related to tourism in the dimension of the economy is vital. The festival as a creative destination shows that festival management is part of creative tourism where visitors have the opportunity to interact with others (Wengel, et al., 2018).and learn about local culture through artistic works of the local culture. The festival is an incentive for tourists to visit the local area and it is an opportunity to promote tourism marketing at the destination (Dincer, et al., 2015).

Promoting creative learning activities of international tourists to participate in cultural tourism activities on the Naga fireballs is important. It also promotes interactions between tourists and local communities so that they can exchange attitudes between their diverse communities (Veselá & Klimová, 2015). This also allows tourists to understand the true meaning of local culture that is consistent with travel and learning: a neglected tourism research area mentions that promoting learning while traveling is similar (Farsani, et al., 2017). The extending of knowledge and researching new places to travel to is important. The importance of learning tourism is to learn more deeply about the destinations that affect the travel experience that is a force to be reckoned with because of the long-term exposure and learning which occurs at destinations, often affecting the attitudes of travelers and expectations of future travel (Sulaiman, 2014). The model of creative experience in creative tourism has the opportunity to create interactions between the environment in travel to local communities and participation in local culture learning activities and is a process of creating positive attitudes towards the perception about and also teaches the tourists about a destination (Magno, 2017). This is an impressive travel experience and positive memories for tourists this will affect their motivation to repeat their trip or return to the tourist site again (Yáñez, 2013). In addition, the practicalities of a tourism destination: for example a case study of the Ningaloo coast was important in developing tourism and was based on a shared learning process between the community (Henderson, et al., 2018) and tourists and the promoting of learning in tourism has led to changes in the attitudes of local communities and tourists alike and it invariably affects the development of tourism at flexible destinations which can adapt to the changes from the environment (Guerrón, 2015). In tourism, performance can be clearly demonstrated when



cooperation is established between related sectors and short-term and long-term tourism development policies are planned (Lee, 2016)

## Conclusions

The conclusion of the study the increasing the value and worth of the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province for the creative learning of cultural tourism of international tourists consisted of the following aspects: 1) Local community participation in the conservation and preservation of the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai province was at a high level. 2) Most of the international tourists (61.80%) were males aged between from 31 – 40 years old and 57.20% of the international tourists were from member ASEAN states. Most of the tourists were interested in cultural tourism about the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province because it is considered to be a supernatural phenomenon. The demand of international tourists for cultural tourism about the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province was at a high level. 3) Guidelines to increase the value and worth of the Naga Fireball tradition in Nong Khai Province for the creative learning of cultural tourism to international tourists that were proposed included and range of ideas including publishing books about the legend of the Naga, tourists activities involved with the legend of the Naga, the establishment of Homestays' along the banks of the Mekong River, making amends with the Creator at the end of the Buddhist Lent period, the designing of an official cultural tourism website for Nong Khai province and finally, creating a course for spiritual tourism about the Naga so as to enlighten tourists about Thai culture.

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