



# Identity for cultural tourism of the Bueng Kan Province, Thailand

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## Abstract

This study aimed to: 1) To study identities and cultural tourism potential in Bueng Kan province. 2) To study the participation of people in promoting cultural identities in Bueng Kan province. 3) To study tourist behavior of Thai and foreigners traveling on cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province. 4) To develop a strategic plan for the development of cultural tourism. The study was conducted by an integrated research methodology combining (Mixed-Method Research), quantitative research and qualitative research, using two types of data collection tools which are questionnaires for local philosophers, government agencies and private sector stakeholders related to cultural tourism. In addition, discussions (Focus Group) including questionnaires for the travelers and foreign tourists heading to Bueng Kan province were utilised. This was followed by conducting a content and discourse analysis, and analyzing data by using descriptive statistics with a computer program. The results showed that: 1) The cultural tourism of Bueng Kan has sufficient potential for development. There are 3 types of the cultural identity of Bueng Kan province which are cultural attractions related to the belief and faith, architectural, cultural attractions and attractions related to local food culture 2) Local communities' involvement in the promotion of cultural identities in Bung Kan province is at a very high level. 3) Most of the tourists are females representing 53.20%, and aged between 31-40 years old. The reason why Bueng Kan is famous for cultural trips is because it easy to access Laos and the preferred method of travel is a group of friends by private car and mainly during public holidays. The accessibility of the province was the most highly sought requirement. This was followed by other important aspects such as tourist destinations, facilities, advertising, tourism activities in tourist attractions, and accommodation availability. The authors argue that A Strategic Plan for the Development of Cultural Tourism Identities in Bueng Kan province should focus on the balance between tourists and the cultural identity of the area by applying needed tourism resources which need to consider the impact of tourism development for sustainability.

**Keywords:** Cultural Tourism, Identity, People's Participation, Tourist Behavior, Strategic Plan, Thailand

## Introduction

Thailand's tourism industry in the past year of 2017 generated total revenues reaching up to 2.76 trillion Baht and representing 20% of the gross domestic product (GDP) (Authority of Thailand, 2017), and the tourism authority has prepared a marketing plan for tourism since the beginning of 2018. Otherwise the revenue from foreign tourists was about 1.8 trillion Baht from the total number of foreign tourists which was approximately 35 million people. Moreover, revenues from the domestic tourism market in Thailand was 9.5 hundred billion Baht. It also predicted that the 2018 year would be a year in which Thailand's tourist industry faced huge challenges especially due to competition from several countries that give priority to tourism



marketing as well as different risk factors in international exchange rates and political unrest events in different regions across the world (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017).

Bueng Kan province is the seventy-seventh provinces of Thailand. Moreover, Bueng Kan has various tourism potentials both in tourist attractions and in accommodation, including a variety of tourism activities (Bueng Kan Provincial Office, 2018). These can cause the economic and social status of the province to grow continuously. Because of the province's economic growth, Bueng Kan district in Nong Khai province was developed to become the seventy-seventh province of Thailand. Another distinctive characteristic of this province is the location of province's borders with the Lao People's Democratic Republic. There is a border checkpoint that offers easy access to the Lao People's Democratic Republic and this provides more opportunities to develop and increase the huge tourism potential (Authority of Thailand, 2017).

Close contact with neighboring countries and the developing of more border trade and investment in the future is another interesting advantage. In addition, the National Tourism Development Plan 2017-2021 has also indicated its current social and environmental responsibility (Office of the National Economics and Social Development Board: NESDB, 2016). The conservation of tradition and traditional culture are growing in popularity and more so from a tourist's perspective. The concept of sustainable development has been sequentially transformed into an overall tourism industry and is modifying the management conditions concerning the capabilities of the nature, local community, traditions and cultures, lifestyle and well-being of the community. In addition, tourism must pay more attention to environmental responsibility and the resources available in the tourist area. Therefore, it is a great opportunity to find and create identity as well as enhance the image of cultural tourism of Thailand to be more recognized and accepted internationally (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017).

According from the current trend of cultural tourism and the growth of the tourist market in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (Botiş, 2017), cultural tourism is one of the models of tourism based on the special interests that have been popular with tourists (Meirinhos, et al., 2017). It also stimulates and promotes tourism in the region, including the economic and social development of the Northeast (Rich & Franck, 2016). An analysis of both the internal and external environments of cultural tourism and development as a tourism strategy for economic and social development of the region is another strategy that will help the growing tourism of the Isan culture become more popular and help the locals in the area to generate income from tourism (Khlaikaew, 2015). This is a strategy for tourism development in Thailand, and it aims to help people in the area to have a career and earn income from tourism. Bueng Kan has a good identity and image for cultural tourism through cultural beliefs in many aspects such as faith, respect, and worship of the serpent. Moreover, this province also provides a blend of outstanding architecture of religious places and an exotic local food culture. Furthermore, combined with the adjacent geographical characteristics with the Mekong River, Bueng Kan is a border town with a rich cultural heritage and offers a good way to exchange the way of life between two neighbors on the Mekong River. In order to develop the tourism of Bueng Kan province, which is a new province in Thailand and the border town between the Kingdom of Thailand and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, it is necessary to promote employment and generate income for the community. Therefore, the researchers conducted this research on "the identity for cultural tourism of Bueng Kan province". The purposes of this study are as follows:

- To determine the identities and cultural tourism potential in Bueng Kan province.
- To study the participation of people in promoting of cultural tourism identity in Bueng Kan province.
- To study travel behavior of both Thai and foreign tourists traveling on cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province.
- To prepare a strategic plan for the development of cultural tourism identities in Bueng Kan province.



## 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 discussion using an open-ended questionnaire, according to quantitative research and qualitative research. The researchers then conducted a content and discourse analysis to propose a way to manage the cultural tourism identity of the province.

## Population and sample

### People in Bung Khan province

The population of Bueng Kan province totals 411,789 people (Department of Provincial Administration, 2017). After that, the research samples were analyzed using the Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1973). Thus 400 samples of the data collection in this study were collected by means of a random sampling method. In addition, a quota sampling method, as shown in Table 1, determined the sample size.

Table 1 People in Bung Khan province

Sample	Number of people (person)	Number of sample (person)
Bueng Kan District	89,718	252
Si Wilai District	39,482	111
Bung Khla District	13,389	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>142,589</b>	<b>400</b>

### Local experts in the research area

Local experts in the research area were included from each of Bueng Kan District, Si Wilai District, and Bueng Khla District. Structured individual interview techniques were used to collect the data. In addition, 5 people per district, totaling 15 people, were collected by using 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 emanated from each of Bueng Kan District, Si Wilai District, and Bueng Khla District, as well as tourism entrepreneurs related to cultural tourism. Structured individual interview techniques were used to collect the data. Moreover, 18 people were selected by using 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 Bueng Kan province (or representative)	1
2	Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Udon Thani provincial offices (or representative)	1
3	Director of Ministry of Culture, Bueng Kan province (or representative)	1
4	Director of Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Bueng Kan province (or representative)	1
5	President of Tourism Business Association, Bueng Kan province (or representative)	1
6	District Chief of Bueng Kan province (or representative)	1
7	District Chief of Si Wilai District (or representative)	1
8	District Chief of Bung Khla District (or representative)	1
9	Tourism business entrepreneurs (or representative)	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>



## Group of Thai and foreigner tourists who had traveled in the province

The amount of Thai and foreigner tourists who had traveled in Bueng Kan province was 137,455 peoples (Authority of Thailand, 2017). The research samples were analyzed using the Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1973). Some 400 samples of the data collection in this study were collected by using a random sampling method. In addition, a quota sampling method, as shown in Table 3, determined the sample size.

Table 3 The number of tourist samples in Bueng Kan province

Types of tourists	Number (person)
Thai tourists	397
Foreigner tourists	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>

## Research instruments

The interviews form for local experts consisted of 4 parts, which were 1) Interviewee's information 2) Overview of cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province 3) Identities and potential of cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province and 4) Comments and suggestions. The interview form for government agencies and private sector stakeholders related to cultural tourism consisted of 5 parts, which were: 1) Interviewee's information 2) The role of personnel, public and private organizations involved in cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province 3) Overview of cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province 4) Identities and potential of cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province and 5) Comments and suggestions.

A questionnaire for the people in Bueng Kan province consisted of 4 parts, which were 1) Personal information of local residents 2) The participation of local residents in promoting cultural tourism identity in Bueng Kan province 3) The identity of the cultural tourism attractions of Bueng Kan province 4) Comments and suggestions.

A questionnaire for Thai and foreigner tourists who had traveled in Bueng Kan province consisted of 3 parts which were 1) General information of the respondents 2) Tourist behaviors 3) The needs of tourists in the development of cultural tourism of the province 4) Comments and suggestions.

## Measuring instruments

Measuring the reliability of the questionnaire was by finding Coefficient Alpha value by Cronbach's approach. The sample size was 40 people equalled 10% of the questionnaire. The test results showed that the Coefficient Alpha is greater than 0.8, which can be used to collect data (Rohwer, 2010; Hall, et al., 1997). Measuring the reliability of the interview form was by finding the Index of Item-Objective Congruence value or IOC. In order to find the index of IOC, the questionnaires were sent to 3 experts to determine content validity (IOC). The results showed that IOC values of the interview form was more than 0.67, which can be used to collect data (Srisa-ad, 2010).

## Data collection

Primary data were collected from the questionnaires of the population in Bueng Kan province and groups of tourists from Thailand and foreign countries who had traveled in the province.



Interviews were held with local experts in the research area, government agencies and private sector stakeholders and in small group meetings (Gruber, et al., 1978).

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 Bueng Kan province which was collected from research papers, academic journals, booklets, books, theses and related research, both nationally and internationally, including the study of information from Internet media with clear and reliable source of information were used.

### **Data analysis**

The data from questionnaires were analyzed with descriptive statistics by a computer program. Then, the researchers analyzed the interview data by means of content and discourse analysis methods. After that, they applied the results from 1) Identity and cultural tourism potential 2) Local residents' participation in promoting cultural tourism identity 3) Tourism behavior of Thai tourists and foreigners who had traveled on cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province to perform the data synthesis and propose a strategic plan for the development of cultural tourism identities in Bueng Kan province (Yvette & Turner, 2003).

### **Results**

#### **The results of the study of identity and cultural tourism potential in Bueng Kan province.**

Identity and cultural tourism potential in Bueng Kan province consisted of the culture of the community living in the border city, which has been trading between the two banks of the river, namely one in Thailand and one in Laos which has created a similar cultural identity whether the way of life by faith, beliefs, the unique local cuisine, or outstanding architecture. The differences between the areas are the key to attract tourists to visit the province. These can be analyzed as follows:

Local beliefs and faith: the way of life and the culture along the Mekong river banks, faith and beliefs in the stories related to the serpent are all a part of local culture. All these aspects have caused the interest in local traditions and attracted many tourists to *inter alia*, the Serpent Rocket Festival, Rocket Festival, Lai Reua Fai tradition and the Long Boat Racing Festival.

Local cuisines: Bueng Kan province, is located next to the Mekong river bank, and has a distinguishable lifestyle including both Thai and Laos traditions. In addition to Thai and Laotian living in the border areas and the exchanging of cultures, the Vietnamese are also considered part of the local culture mix of Bueng Kan province. When the food culture of Bueng Kan province was mentioned, besides the spicy and salty tastes of Northeastern food, there are many Vietnamese dishes such as Vietnamese Spring Rolls, Vietnamese Noodle Soup, Grilled Sticky Rice, French Bread Laos and Vietnam Recipe, which are also some of the famous local food of the Thai province.

Outstanding architecture: The famous and well-known tourist attractions include the "Kaeng Ahong" scenic spot for the "Mekong River Basin" at Wat a-Hong Silawas Khai Si, Mueang Bueng Kan District or Phu Thok, a sandstone mountain where the location of Wat Chetima Khiri Wihan at the foot of the mountain, and a wooden bridge are built up to the mountain are in existence. These are considered to be "Amazing" tourist attractions of Bueng Kan. Moreover, these places are not only remarkable with magnificence and which fill one with wonder, but also serve as landmarks of Buddhism in the city of Bueng Kan and have done so for a long time.



The diversity in the culture helps Bueng Kan in cultural tourism development as it accommodates many domestic and foreign tourists. Cultural tourism promotion and the development of Bueng Kan province is also an important tool to improve the quality of life of local communities with various accruing economic benefits, and also social and cultural benefits that cause an increase in the investment in the community. What impresses tourists and is expected when traveling to Bueng Kan province is the identity of cultural tourist attractions. Whether the tourist attractions are associated with belief, faith, famous culinary aspects or outstanding architecture tourist attractions. Cultural tourism encourages exchanges of learning knowledge between the community and tourists, and enables local communities to be proud of their cultural heritage. An effort must thus be made in order to attempt to raise awareness of the environmental consciousness of locals and foreigners and subsequent generations so as to ensure sustainability.

The potential of cultural tourism based on the cultural identity of Bueng Kan province is ready for tourism development and can create the needed difference in cultural tourism. For example, architectural cultural attractions, cultural attractions related to the belief and faith, cultural attractions related to local food culture or the combination of those tourism activities will all serve to create a variety of tourism routes and destinations and hopefully meet and exceed the expectation of all visitors.

### **The results of the study of public participation in promoting cultural tourism identities in Bueng Kan province**

The results of the public participation in promoting of cultural tourism identities in Bueng Kan province found that local communities participated in promoting of cultural identities and this was at a very high level. When considering each aspect we found that the highest level of the participation of local communities was at the attitude level of people in the community. This was followed by seven high level aspects of participation in an average order from the most to the least which are attitude, accessibility, accommodation, tourism activities in tourist attractions, facilities and advertising respectively.

The identities of cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province aspect found that the overview characteristic was the most important. When considering each aspect we found that tourist attractions where representing the identity of cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province and are important at every level. Sorted by average in descending order these include cultural attractions related to the belief and faith, architectural cultural attractions and cultural attractions related to local food culture, respectively.

### **The results of the tourism behavior of Thai and foreign tourists traveling for cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province**

Concerning the general information of tourists, it was found that most of the visitors were female (53.20%), aged of 31-40 years (32.80%), Thai nationality was 99.20%, married status was 54.50%, graduated with at least a Bachelor's degree was 49.80%, company officers was 21.20%, with an income of 15,001 baht/month - 20,000 Baht/month was at 30.00%

Travel information from tourists found that most tourists intended to explore cultural tourism at Bueng Kan province and then cross over to Laos (37.80%), travelling as a group was 36.50%, travelling by private car was 48.00%, traveling during public holiday was 50.00%, two days duration trips was 49.20%, travel expenses between 5,001 – 10,000 Baht during the trip was at 49.00%.

The behavior of tourists traveling for cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province is important and we found that most tourists have a reason to choose to travel to this province because of its convenient access to Laos which was the case for 44.20% of respondents. Most visitors thought that the distinctions of cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province are remarkable



characteristics of cultural tourism, that is the cultural distinction between the two sides of Thailand - Laos, representing 41.80 percent of respondents views. Most of the travelers were interested in cultural destinations related to beliefs and faith representing 41.00 percent of responses. Most tourists appreciated the historical value representing 28.00%. Most tourists considered that the identities of cultural tourism of Bueng Kan province are the cultural tourist destinations related to belief and faith and this aspect was at 46.20%. Most tourists expected an original and authentic visit at the tourist attraction representing 37.00 percent of respondents.

The activities that most tourists were interested in participating in were cultural and traditional activities within local communities and this accounted for 42.20 percent of respondents. Most visitors followed the cultural tourism information available of Bueng Kan province through the main website of the Tourism Authority of Thailand representing 41.00%. All the tourists thought that cultural tourism in this province could be recognized for the good image of cultural tourism to tourists representing 100.00%. Most visitors thought that what created the identity of cultural tourism memories in Bueng Kan province were cultural tourism activities representing 44.80%. Moreover, the aspect that the tourists mentioned required greater focus on in the development of cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province was the management of learning in tourism with a special emphasis on identities and culture which accounted for 38.00% of responses.

The requirements of travelers visiting cultural tourism in the Bueng Kan province aspect of the questionnaire found that tourist demands were at a high level in general. When considering each aspect we found that accessibility was the most important requirement level. This was followed by six other high level aspects of requirements in an average order from the most to the least which were found to be tourist destinations, attitude, facilities , advertising, tourism activities in tourist attractions, and accommodation respectively.

### **The strategic plan for developing of cultural tourism identities in Bueng Kan province**

This consisted of the following three strategies:

#### ***Tourism products strategy***

##### **Creating cultural tourism identities:**

- Procedure: Presenting the local cultural tourism by using cultural identities of each area. Creating cultural tourism routes on the basis of local identities including the cultural destinations related to beliefs and faith route, cultural attractions related to local food culture route and outstanding architectural cultural attractions route. Project duration 1 – 3 years.
- The results: The area will have a variety in cultural tourism routes. Get a clear image of cultural tourism of Bueng Kan province and stimulate tourists to travel in the area more than is presently the case.
- Responsible person: Government agencies and private sector stakeholders related to cultural tourism. Academic tourism offices and local tourism entrepreneurs.

##### **Enhancing the potential of cultural tourism destinations:**

- Procedure: Analyzing and evaluate the status of cultural tourism destinations. Improving the facilities and infrastructure to accommodate tourists. Improving the landscape of the tourist attractions. Project duration 1 – 3 years.
- The results: Enhancing the quality of cultural tourism will increase the number of tourists this also increasing both direct and indirect local income and elevating local utilities.
- Responsible person: Government agencies and private sector stakeholders related to cultural tourism. Academic tourism offices and local tourism entrepreneurs.



### ***Human Resource Development for Tourism Strategy***

#### **Encourage the participation of the local communities:**

- Procedure: Analyzing the attitudes of the local communities. Study the requirements and benefits that local communities should receive from tourism. Tourism knowledge management processes focused on tourism by the community. Establishing high school student tourist guide projects. Project duration 1 – 3 years.
- The results: Strengthening of the local community. Improving the quality of life of local communities from the benefits accruing from tourism. Encouraging the local youth to play a role in promoting cultural tourism and cultural inheritance of local identities.
- Responsible person: Government agencies and private sector stakeholders related to cultural tourism, academic tourism offices, local tourism entrepreneurs and local communities.

#### **Enhance professional skills of tourism personnel:**

- Procedure: Provide foreign languages training for tourism personnel by focusing on English and other language skills in the ASEAN Economic Community. Provide knowledge of tourism management training. Project duration 1 – 3 years.
- The results: Increasing the number of people who are knowledgeable and skillful in tourism activities and increasing the number of community-based tourism personnel.
- Responsible person: Government agencies and private sector stakeholders related to cultural tourism, Academic tourism offices, local tourism entrepreneurs and local communities.

### ***Public Relations Strategy***

#### **Expanding access channel to both domestic and international tourists:**

- Procedure: Providing website to guide cultural tourism in Thai-English languages. Providing brochures or leaflets to guide cultural tourism in Thai-English languages. Organizing personal communication training by using the direct communication skills with tourism processes. Project duration 1 – 3 years.
- The results: Increasing convenient access to the tourist market and this can help keep track of the situation in the tourism market and in any changes in tourists' behaviors. Acquiring local community workers who can effectively present their tourism products in the own community and have an income from this.
- Responsible person: Government agencies and private sector stakeholders related to cultural tourism, Academic tourism offices, local tourism entrepreneurs and local communities.

### **Conclusion and discussion**

The strategic plan for the development of cultural tourism identities in Bueng Kan province comprises of the establishment of a strategic plan, which is destination-branding strategy. It consists of 3 supporting strategies including a tourism product strategy, a human resource development in tourism strategy and finally, a public relations strategy. The five envisaged project plans comprise of: 1) the plan to create an image of cultural tourism identities, 2) a plan to enhance the potential of cultural tourism attractions, 3) a plan to promote the local community's participation, 4) the plan to promote the professional skills of tourism and 5) an expansion plan for channeling access for both domestic and international visitors.

Bueng Kan province is the seventy-seventh provinces of Thailand that has the outstanding tourism potential, especially in cultural tourism due to the geography of Bueng Kan province



which is adjacent to the Mekong River, and forms the border between Thailand and Laos. These aspects provide for the diverse and interesting culture of the border town. Furthermore, when combined with the local community that has an interest in tourism development to promote the identity of the area and improve the quality of life of the community, these are important considerations (Guerrón, 2015). This is consistent with the study by Gelbman and Timothy (2011) about border town complexity, its tourism and international exclaves. Boundary communities in the two border countries (Haverbeck, 2006) often find the diversity in their lives as intermediaries between two cultures, two societies and two economies (Hughes, 1996), which affects the cultural identity of the border region (McIntosh & Goeldner, 1986). These factors illustrate the potential of places to promote tourism in border regions (Verite, 2002) and this is one of the popular travel patterns at the present time. As mentioned in Ferreira and Perks (2018) study from authenticity to significance, tourism on the frontier of the cultures and places is a future trend of tourism and is focusing on getting more involved with the tourist community and assuming more responsibility for the tourism environment they travel in (Anglin, 2015).

Travelers like to travel to discover the true value of their travel experiences and the support they get is important (Bresner, 2014). Also critical are the principles of sustainable development, heritage conservation, cultural diversity (Samsudin & Maliki, 2015; Verite, 2002), while understanding the localization issues and respect for the local community are essential (Chami, 2018). Such aspects bring the opportunity for travelers and also the locals to develop themselves more than merely travelling (Anglin, 2015). This is consistent with the study of frontier tourism and retracing mythic journeys (Runyowa, 2017) who said that traveling to a border city has a strong motivation factor (Lew, 2014) and can attract the attention of the tourists because of an ambition in the study of history (McCarthy, 2013), the challenge of the journey (De la Barre, 2013) and the inspiration to find a wonderful travel experience (Duran, 2012). Especially the history of a place and its legendary myths are the main discussion points between tourists and these have an influence on the decision making process in travel to a distant area or travel to a border city (Hughes, 1996).

Local communities' participation in the promoting of cultural tourism identities of Bueng Kan province was found to be very high. When considering each aspect we found that the highest level of the participation of local communities was the attitude of people in the community (Chambers, 2009; Njovo & Makacha, 2018). The following are the seven high level aspects of participation (Gedecho & Guangul, 2017) given in an average order from the most to the least, which are accessibility (Light, 2007), accommodation (Soper, 2007), tourism activities in tourist attractions (Burns, 2006), facilities (Van Rekom & Go, 2006), advertising and respect (World Tourism Organization, 2006).

The identities of cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province aspect found that the overview facet is the most important. When considering each aspect it was found that tourist attractions were representing the identity of cultural tourism in Bueng Kan province and these are important at every level. Sorted by averaging in descending order they are included as: cultural attractions related to the belief and faith (Timothy, 1995), architectural cultural attractions (Sanchez, 2009) and cultural attractions related to local food culture (Wurzburger, et al., 2009).

The relationship between public participation and cultural tourism identities in Bueng Kan province has a high level of relationship overall. When considering each aspect in the relationship between public participation and cultural tourism identities in Bueng Kan province it was found that, there are three aspects in the participation of local communities at a high level which are 1) Accessibility (Duran, 2012) 2) Accommodation (Grydehøj, 2012) and 3) The tourism activities in tourist attractions (Hunter, 2011). In addition, there are four aspects of the participation of local communities at quite high levels in an average order from the most to the least, which are 1) Attitude (Riganti, 2010) 2) Tourist attractions (Cave, 2009) 3) Facilities (Picard, 2008) and 4) Advertising (Palmer, 2007). The results summary of the hypothesis



found that public participation contributes immensely to the cultural identity of Bung Kan province.

Most of the tourists who answered the questionnaires intended to explore cultural tourism at Bueng Kan province and then aimed to cross into Laos. Most travelers think that the main draw in cultural tourism of this province is the cultural distinction between the Thailand and Laos communities which also corresponds to what was mentioned by Haverbeck, (2006) and the town is a place that has its own identity (Yaapar, 2005), namely agreed upon by Govers and Go, (2004), the diversity of the community (Erikson, 2003), the convenience of moving back and forth (Carville, 2003) and the language diversity also makes this border area a popular tourist destination (Hampton, 1998). Although it is far away, for tourists it is a journey which offers a challenge and stimulates great excitement (Stebbins, 1997).

The most popular tourist attraction is the cultural tourism destinations related to belief and faith (Oakes, 1993). This also corresponds to the aforementioned 6 A's elements of the tourist attractions (Jafari, 1987) and cultural heritage attractions are one of the attractions that tourists visit (Nocca, 2017). Most tourists appreciate the historical value of such places and think that the cultural tourism identities of Bueng Kan province are a cultural tourism attraction related to belief and faith (Chen & Rahman, 2018). Most tourists have great expectations when traveling on a cultural trip (Mitchell & Shannon, 2018) and Bueng Kan province is a traditional and authentic tourist attraction (Stratan, et al., 2015) accordingly thus mentioned as one of the elements in promoting tourism (Lynch, 2011). The authenticity aspect which is the original nature of tourism resources is vital (Su, et al., 2018) and it is a key factor in heritage tourism (Frías-Jamilena, et al., 2017) because it can convey the evolution of local communities living in tourism destinations (Liang & Chan, 2018) including their cultures and diverse traditions (Bujdosó, et al., 2015). Most tourists are interested in attending cultural (Shishmanova, 2015) and traditional activities (Esiyok, et al., 2017) with local communities (Vana & Malaescu, 2016) and follow up on the cultural tourism news of Bueng Kan province through the main website (Torre & Scarborough, 2017) of the Tourism Authority of Thailand.

All visitors think that the cultural tourism in this province can be recognized for the image of cultural tourism attractions in portrays to tourists (Matei, 2015). One may ask, what can create a good memory for tourists to identity of cultural tourism in the province other than cultural activities? (Weaver, et al., 2017). Most tourists think that the province should focus on the development of cultural tourism (Guedes & Jiménez, 2015). There must also be a learning of management in the tourist area (Zakaria, et al., 2014), focusing on key issues (Lussetyowati, 2015). The identity and culture are also important elements of tourism promotion (Korunovski & Marinoski, 2012) that tourism activities can promote (Lynch, et al., 2011) and create good interaction between tourists and local communities (Korunovski & Marinoski, 2012). In cultural tourism, there is thus an opportunity to create mutual exchanges which bolster the understanding of the identity of the local community at the destination (Raptis, et al., 2018).

The strategic plan is consistent with the study of Lingle, (1993) who has said that tourism is a tool for promoting peace (Lee, 2016) and alleviating poverty (Arbieu, et al., 2017). Local communities play an important role in tourism development (Altunel & Erkurt, 2015). Therefore, any tourism development planning should focus on four issues, which are: 1) opportunities to facilitate community tourism through local participation (Rodzi, et al., 2013). 2) Alternative tourism management brings income to the local (Gnoth & Zins, 2013). 3) Community tourism is a combination of direct tourism benefits (Thurnell-Read, 2017). 4) Waste disposal is the main obstacle for tourism in the community (Hsu & Huang, 2016). Local peoples participation is a tool for tourism development (World Tourism Organization, 2004), which consists of four elements: 1) attitude of local people (Hsu & Huang, 2016) 2) Participatory engagement mechanism (Yang, 2011) 3) Benefits from tourism (Ampavat, 2015) 4) The problem of local participation (Azmi & Ismail, 2016).



The result is that the local people have a more positive attitude towards participating in tourism promotion (Cohen, 1985). Accordingly, the suitability of the community environment must take into account the mechanisms of management (Yeniasır & Gökbulut, 2018; Ballesteros & Ramirez, 2007). The researchers conducted research on community participation in tourism management at Bu Sai Homestay, Wang Nam Khiao District, Nakorn Ratchaseema province and they mentioned that the local community plays a key role and participates in effective tourism development (Berg & Houtum, 2003). It makes people feel owned by tourism resources, so they have the right and duty to care (Coltman, 1989).

The tourism development on the basis of local cultural identities is in accordance with studied identity (Camelia, et al., 2016), local culture (Över, 2016), and the application to local products to increase economic value and cultural tourism (Yvette & Turner, 2003) in the Northeastern, Central and South. It is said that local art is an identity presenter and it shows the way of life of local communities (Haverbeck, 2006). Bringing those values and applying them in tourism does not reduce their value or importance (Jensen, 2004), but also leads to the continuation and development of local creative tourism (Lingle, 1993).

In addition, the Strategic Plan for the Development of Cultural Tourism Identities in Bueng Kan province also corresponds to studies by Richards, (1996) and the linkages among biodiversity, livelihood and tourism (Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011). The five key factors to better understanding the interaction between conservation of biodiversity (Kearney, 1998). Development of local quality of life is decentralization local communities (Runyowa, 2017). Strengthening the community (Ferreira & Perks, 2018), distribution of local benefits (McIntosh & Goeldner, 1986), conservation of natural diversity (World Tourism Organization, 2004), environmental services and local facilities development (Myra, 2005) are all essential considerations. Moreover, consistent with studies on monitoring and an evaluation tool for tourism destinations (Smith, 2009), which examines and assesses the impact of local tourism and the surrounding communities, this is a tool that help create sustainable development in the tourist destinations (Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

Mostly, monitoring and evaluating the impact of local tourism need to be analyzed as the main issues worth noting (World Tourism Organization, 2006) and these consist of the local tourism resources (Njau & Losaru, 2017), the interaction between the community and the tourism activities (MacCannell, 1984), maintaining treatment and preservation of their unique and local identities (Chami, 2018). In addition, the social and economic issues that affect the quality of life of local communities in tourist destinations must be very carefully considered (Timothy, 1995).

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