

A TOOL TO PROMOTE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF CREATIVE TOURISM OF THE CANDLE FESTIVAL, UBON RATCHATHANI

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Abstract

This article aims to study the creative tourism. The tools to promote a cultural identity of candle festival in Ubon Ratchathani province is by the literature review of theories related to Candle Festival in Ubon Ratchathani province, cultural identities and creative tourism. The main content of this article consists of analysis cultural identities of candle festival and analysis of creative tourism. In currently, Ubon Ratchathani province's candle festival brings tourists can visit the candle-making process in their communities and opportunity to participate in the take action themselves with local and diversity of art and culture of the community together. The candle festival has presented in the exhibition creatively to make a frolic and engaged exotic experience with tourists.

Keywords: Cultural identity, creative tourism, candle festival.

INTRODUCTION

Identity is not something that occurs naturally without thinking, but is caused by the creation of a culture in a time. Culture is considered as a social construction and is not motionless or fixed. It has a circuit format called "Circuit of Culture". Therefore, the identity concludes the process of being produced, being consumed and being regulated in those cultures. Moreover, meanings were created through various systems to be used or built our own identity. From the wisdom creation to propel the lifestyle of people in society and becoming a culture that stands out uniquely, it is worth preserving as a cultural heritage (Ramitanont, 2007; Hall and Du Gay, 1996). Apart from maintaining the identity as cultural heritage, Thailand emphasizes creative tourism, a new form of tourism, which is related to the lifestyle of the people in the society. Because of its interest, it gets support from both the public and private sectors. It is to modify the existing culture, tradition and attractions in the community in a new and interesting form. The community should have the strength to maintain the community's identity as a sustainable tourist attraction. The key of sustainable tourism is it can be developed but it should not be completely

changed. The community should manage the tourism resources effectively and economically. It should maintain what to be maintained and it should change what to be changed according to the current situation. It can be done on the awareness of Thai wisdom and traditional culture as well as natural resources (Sindecharak and Sangsanit, 2013).

Key elements in sustainable development of creative tourism are economics, society, culture, and participation of people as a stakeholder. If there is a proper development, it will become a beneficial part that creates awareness of the stakeholders in the community. Tourists and local entrepreneurs help preserve local resources and it creates learning process especially experience transfer. It also creates the value of tourism resources on the basis of local Identity. It can create jobs and income to the community in every sector. Moreover, the tourism development meets the needs of the tourists (Thongsamak *et al*, 2013). The importance of creative tourism in identity, traditional and cultural aspects results in inheriting Thai wisdom and culture, promoting cultural tourism and promoting Thai identity and the way of life including the local traditions and customs (Department of Cultural Promotion, 2013).

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Creative tourism, cultural identity and tradition of Ubon Ratchathani are considered distinction in strong culture. It also is a major place of civilization in the lower northeast with several tourist attractions such as religious tourism, historical tourism, natural tourism, including the festivals. The famous festival is the candle festival which is held in the eighth month every year. (Adapted from Katthamat, 2013). It has a long history of hundreds of years and it is the local wisdom inherited from ancestors to the present day. Each community will make a big candle for the contest. It also allows tourists to see the candle making process, including the opportunity for the tourists or those who are interested to participate in the candle craving which attracts tourists ' interest. It is in accordance with the creative tourism that allows tourists or visitors to develop their potential through participation and get direct experience besides participating in the main festival day. (Adapted from Richards and Raymond, 2010)

For these reasons, the researcher realizes the importance of cultural identity which is a part in promoting the creative tourism of the Candle Festival in Ubon Ratchathani as it allows the tourists to contribute to the community. It also is important to cultural identity of the Candle Festival. Candle Festival of Ubon Ratchathani helps promote creative tourism in the interaction between local people and tourists as well as sharing tourism experience.

OBJECTIVES

To study the creative tourism as a Tool to promote cultural identity of Candle Festival, Ubon Ratchathani.

METHODOLOGY

The document, theories and research related to cultural identity, creative tourism and Candle Festival of Ubon Ratchathani were reviewed as follows. 1) study the definition of cultural identity by Ministry of Culture and Erikson, elements of the circuit of culture and the identity creation by Ramitanon, Erikson, Hall and Du Gay, cultural values by Lertchanrit 2) study the definition of creative tourism by UNESCO, Richards and Raymond, the principles of creative tourism by Pasching, the benefits of creative

tourism by OECD 3) study the history of development and the creation of Candle Festival of Ubon Ratchathani by Konkaew and the Board of Textbook Department.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural Identity

Identity means characteristic expressing oneself. In Thai, it is attributed to both uniqueness and identity. Therefore, identity refers to the specific characteristic as well as cultural identity and social identity (Ministry of Culture, 2011). It also means the rights of the community based on the belief in the value dimensions including the values based on the traditional belief and the values adjusting through the production process in order to be able to respond and adapt to the new situation. There is the interaction in a society which is the foundation of identity and self-expression. Identity is very important to the mental stability because the identity is associated with the knowledge, pride and value acceptance. If a person satisfies his or her identity, he or she will be proud of his or her values and accept them (Erikson, 1998).

Culture is considered as a social construction. It is not something motionless or fixed but it has a pattern called "Circuit of Culture." Therefore, the pattern of community life, art, and art created language, painting, culture and tradition including the meaning of cultural identity can explain the elements of the circuit of culture and the identity creation as follows.

- Identity relates to knowledge, pride and value acceptance. If a person satisfies his or her identity, he or she will be proud of his or her values and accept them (Erikson, 1998).
- The production processes create identities.
- Identity can be consumed. The consumers acknowledge identity-related information.
- It is regulated in the culture and its meaning are created through the systems.
- Symbolic systems of representation relate to various identities that we choose to use or create our own identity. (Adapted from Ramitanon, 2007; Hall and Du Gay, 1996)

Apart from the circuit of culture, identity is regarded as something valuable and important. It consists of cultural values which, in this case, mean what people today give priority to their cultural resources. It may be different in each society. The cultural values of the cultural resources are also divided into 3 groups. 1) Identity Values relate to the feelings and emotions toward cultural resources. 2) Relative artistic or technical values depend on historical background. 3) Rarity values mean the cultural resources with similar characteristics including economic and social values. They are divided as follows. 1) Economic value means the value that cultural resources can help human to be well-being and well-living. 2) Educational value means the value that human today uses to learn about the cultural resources. 3) Social value is the social activities that are useful in the current society based on social tradition (Lertchanrit, 2009).

Creative Tourism

Creative tourism is a form of cultural tourism. It especially is the journey that enables tourists to get the real experience and participate in learning the arts, heritage, or special characteristics of that tourist attraction. It creates the cultural interaction between the tourists and the local people. Tourists have the opportunity to develop their potential in terms of creativity which is more than typical tourists do. The opportunity is created through participation and learning experience. It involves tourists in learning the culture of the place where they spend time participating in different activities such as craft, art, cooking and other creative activities. Therefore, a close participation between tourists and local people including learning cultural heritage of the local area are created. (Adapted from UNESCO, 2006; Richards and Raymond 2000; Urry, 1990; Ohridska-Olson, 2010) Creative tourism Relating to the community and visitors including the principles of creative tourism are mentioned as follows.

- The methods involve creative living of the tourists in the attractions.
- Creativity is to use existing resources creatively.
- Creative tourism is to strengthen identity and uniqueness of the attractions.

- Creative tourism is a form of expressing and discovering oneself.
- Creative tourism is a form of entertainment and self-study from the local people's knowledge.
- There is a relaxing atmosphere to learn from the best attractions.
- Creative tourism is an appropriate source for building and reconstructing those attractions. (Adapted from Paschinger, 2014)

Besides the principles of creative tourism, creative tourism is useful in both concrete and abstract. The benefits from creative tourism in concrete forms include cultural capital, the increasing of creativity and cultural values (both tangible and intangible). The market expansion is the geographical growth and the access to cultural and creative industry through creative tourism. Innovation is the increase of existing facilities including tourism created for the benefit of the community. Maintenance of cultural heritage is the preservation as a renewable resource for creativity in cultural tourism. Sustainability is one of the most important benefits; tourism creativity is a process of creation and development to improve or replace the old one. The identity of the local arts and crafts is often unseen to tourists, but creative tourism help seeing a clear and distinctive identity. Create a job. In addition to the traditional tourism, creative tourism creates employment for artists, artisans, and other professionals. The benefits from creative tourism in abstract are: the local identity and uniqueness focusing on unique art and crafts including accuracy that will lead a focus to local. Social capital promotes social cooperation in order to create and use the products of creative tourism and the increase of service in the society. Thanks to the creative tourism that promotes social development. Preserving cultural values, rather than destroying the cultural values, will surely turn to "pay attention" to the visitors and local community. They will learn that preserving their cultural value helps develop creativity in tourism. The interaction of people all over the world creates exchange of cultural and experience. The participation of creativity and tourism products and services promote increasing collaboration among people and cultural exchange. Cultural diversity, which is in the race of succeed, is

important enough to be the local identity. The offer of community tourism is that the cultural identity has to be maintained, as well as the pride of the tourism resources in their community (OECD, 2000).

CANDLE FESTIVAL OF UBON RATCHATHANI

In the past, the candle festival was not as big as it is in the present day. The villagers just donated the candles. They attached them to a bamboo trunk and covered the seam with silver and gold paper cutting in zigzag pattern. Later, they tied the bamboo trunk to the kerosene bucket. Flat wooden plank was used as the base of the candle or it was raised up and attached

with the paper. Finally, they made a procession to the temple and gave it to a monk. A cart towed by oxen or men was popularly used as the means of transportation. The parade of villagers would have gongs, drums, wooden rhythm clappers and dancing with fun (Guide Ubon, 2012). Wisdom was conveyed to the descendants. There is the development of skills and creativity to make the candles and holding the famous candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani to the present. The identities of candle festival and the activities promoting creative tourism are issued in the following tables.

Table 1: Summary of issues on identity of the candle festival and activities promoting the creative tourism

Identity of the candle festival and activities promoting the creative tourism		
Time	Identity of Candle Festival	Creativity
1937	There was a development of the candles by casting from the mold.	Simple Thai decorative patterns were created and attached to the main candle.
1951	The province promoted the candle festival as an annual festival.	There were two types of candle; one was candles tied the together and decorated with color paper, another was candles with molded beeswax attached.
1954	New method was developed. The plaster molds were carved and the candles were casted from the molds in flower shape.	The color of the flower beeswax was different from the trunk so it was easily and clearly seen.
1957	The candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani was greatly supported including the processions and a beautiful lady representing each float.	The processions and the beautiful ladies on the float made the festival colorful.
1979	Because candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani was a national festival and was publicized internationally, the Board informed the King and asked him to give the royal candle to the province as a special case.	The royal candle was ready-made and was decorated with Thai patterns. The base and the top were golden. The base is a wooden eight-sided tray-like support. It was equipped with three candle items including a skein of cotton as a candle wick, a slate candle made from beeswax and a matchbox.
Present	Besides the exquisite and beautiful candle processions, there are activities promoting tourism in the festival. One is "Visiting Candle Community".	Tourists can visit the communities participating in the activity, have an opportunity to learn from the source, exchange ideas with local people and get direct experience from this festival.

Source. Adjusted from Konkaew; the Board of Textbook Department, 1955; <http://www.dmc.tv/pages/scoop/>; Guide Ubon

DISCUSSION

Analysis of cultural identity and creative tourism of the candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani.

Cultural identity of the candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani

From the theory of circuit of culture by Ramitanon, Erikson, Hall and Du Gay, it can be used to analyze the identity of the candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani. It is considered as the indicator of identity which has been inherited from the ancestor. It

started from making of candles to offer to the monk in the Buddhist Lent. Later, it has been creatively developed to be the processions of beeswax candles carved on the surface and candles with molded beeswax attached. Stories represented on the candles relates to Buddhism. Even the patterns and the processes were developed, the identity in Buddhism still exists to the present. It can be considered that identity is important to the stability of mid and it is the pride of local people. The identity in the candle festival has the production process. That is, it creates cooperation of people in each community of Ubon Ratchathani that makes candles for the contest. The candle processions are greatly created and consumed through sight and participation of Thai and foreign tourists. They are regulated by people involving in the festival to make the festival perfect and impressing. The symbolic systems of representation are the result of candles from each community that are carved and decorated and become the important identity of Ubon Ratchathani.

From the theory of cultural values and contemporary economic and social values by Lertchanrit, it can be used as a tool to analyze the value and the importance of the identity as follows. Cultural values: 1) Identity Value is the candles carved on the surface and candles with molded beeswax attached representing Buddhist stories. 2) Relative artistic or technical value is the value that the artists transfer their art and technical knowledge to their lineage. The uniqueness and the skills are different in each community and they indicate the identity of the community. 3) Rarity value is that even today the candle festival is held in many provinces, Ubon Ratchathani still maintain the identity and the genuineness of the festival. It presented only Buddhist stories which are finely elaborated and are worthwhile. Contemporary economic and social values: 1) Economic value is the result of the employment, money earning and money spending. When people travel, it causes economic flow in the community and it is the same case of candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani. 2) Educational value is the candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani has an outstanding identity. It presents Buddhist stories that the visitors can learn from the festival. Moreover, It has the activity called “Visiting Candle community” which the tourists can visit the community and learn the candle-making process by

themselves. 3) Social value is the cooperation of people in each community to make the candles and organize the festival. It results in social value that promotes unity in the community.

Creative tourism: Candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani

From the principles of creative tourism by Paschinger and the benefits of creative tourism by OECD, they are used to analyze the creative tourism of the candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani that related to the community and the tourists as follows.

- “Visiting candle community” is a project that allows the tourists to visit the community and learn the candle-making processes by themselves. It makes the tourists impressed and they get direct experience. Exchanging opinions with villagers also creates good interaction.
- The candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani uses the existing resources creatively. The beeswax is casted in order to be carved and decorated into Buddhist stories. The theme is specified in advance.
- The candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani promotes identity and represents the genuineness and tradition of Ubon Ratchathani that inherit from the ancestors. All stories created relate to Buddhism.
- The candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani is a creative tourism with several forms of local entertainment, such as dance and music, in the processions. The tourists can learn by themselves and from the local people.
- The candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani has a learning environment from good attractions because local people gladly welcome the tourists and visitors. They are nice and friendly hosts and they can educate people who are interested or need information about the candle festival.
- The candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani is suitable for creating and restoring culture and tradition because it is a valuable tradition and is strongly important to Buddhism.

CONCLUSION

This article aims to study the creative tourism as a tool to promote cultural identity of candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani. The literature is reviewed and the data were analyzed as follows.

The candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani indicates the identity inherited from ancestors. From making candles to offer to the monks in the Buddhist Lent, it was creatively developed to be the procession of beeswax candles carved on the surface and candles with molded beeswax attached. Stories presenting on the candles are still the stories related to Buddhism and they are regarded as the pride of the local people. It is the result of the cooperation of the local people. The identity can be seen through the eyes of the visitors including their participation. The festival is valuable in both cultural aspect and contemporary economic and social aspect. The importance is that the beeswax candles carved on the surface and candles with molded beeswax attached, which are the cultural identity of the festival, present the Buddhist stories. The inheritance to the present still retains its original identity.

The creative tourism of the candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani relates to the community and visitors. Currently, there is project called “Visiting candle community” which allows tourists to visit the community and learn about the process of making candles including making the candles by themselves. It makes the tourist impressed and they get direct experience. The tourists has a chance to exchange opinions with local people and it creates interaction. The important art creativity is the beeswax candles carved on the surface and candles with molded beeswax attached relating to Buddhism. It shows the original identity and genuineness of Ubon Ratchathani that inherits from the ancestors. As mentioned above, it can be seen that the cultural identity of the candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani creates good relationship between local people and the visitors. Besides the importance to the tourists and local people, creative tourism is a tool to promote the cultural identity of the candle festival of Ubon Ratchathani which corresponds to the purpose of the study.

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