



The Potentiality of Border Tourism Elements in Creative Economy Context of Ubon Ratchathani Province

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Abstract

This research aimed to (1) investigate the potentiality of border tourism element in Ubon Ratchathani province and (2) present the development guideline of the border tourism element potentiality in Ubon Ratchathani province with creative economy. The researchers conducted this research in border districts of Ubon Ratchathani province. There were Khemmarat, Natan, Khong Chiam, and Sirindhorn district. In-depth interview was used as the research tool for qualitative research. Key informants were twenty persons from the tourism stakeholders such as government sectors (four persons), private sectors (three persons), local communities (three persons) and Thai tourists (ten persons). The concept framework was focused on concept of tourism element (5 As: attraction, activity, amenity, accessibility, accommodation) and creative economy.

The research found that the border area of Ubon Ratchathani province had potentiality in terms of natural and cultural attractions. Many tourist attractions still lacked of tourist activities. The tourist could take only photo and shop the local products. In terms of tourism amenity such as tourist guide, restaurant, transportation signs, parking areas, souvenir shops, toilets, and accommodations were adequate to the tourists. The tourists could access to the tourist attraction conveniently by their personal vehicle or rental vehicle but the public vehicle was limited.

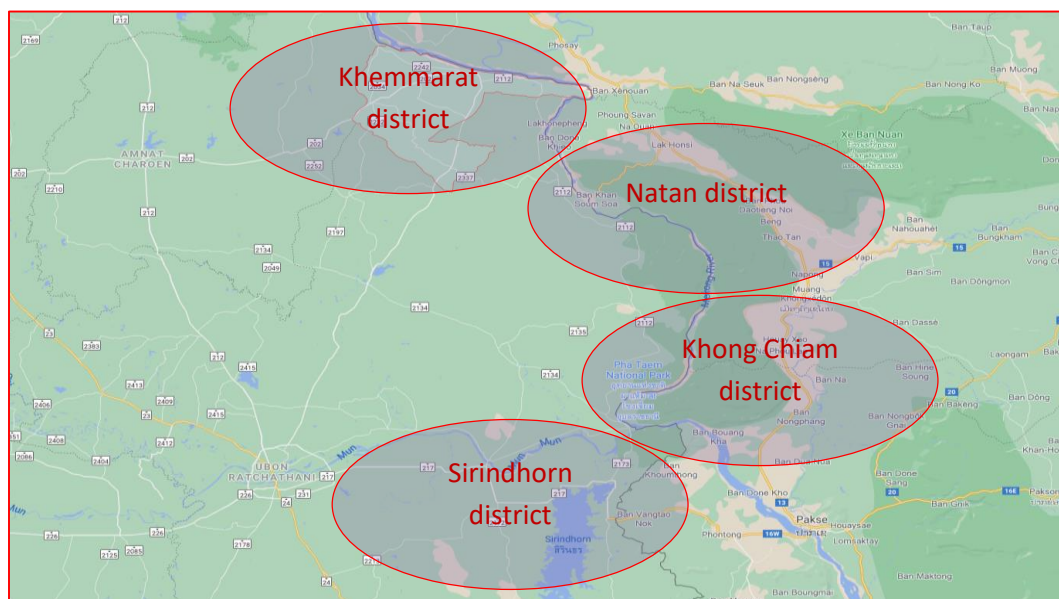
Therefore, the border tourism in Ubon Ratchathani province could be developed and promoted as the creative tourism due to the unique natural and cultural attractions. Creative tourism could give the possibility to develop tourists' creative potentiality through experience linked to the unique nature and culture of the border area in many fields, such as local cookery, painting, photography, crafts, and arts holidays. Moreover, the development of the potential of border tourism element in Ubon Ratchathani province with creative economy should be integrated operation. For example, the government sectors could contribute the results of the research to apply for their plan and policy to develop and promote creative tourism in border area in Ubon Ratchathani province. The private sectors such as tourism business could support and promote the communities including cultural and natural attraction in border area as the destination for the tourists.

Keywords : Potentiality of Border Tourism Element, Tourism Element, Creative Economy, Ubon Ratchathani Province

Introduction

Ubon Ratchathani province was located in the lower region of Northeastern Thailand, it was about 630 kilometers from Bangkok. The province featured plateaus and mountain ranges with the Mun River running through the middle. Sandstone cliffs along the Mekong River served as a natural border between Thailand and Laos. This region, where Ubon Ratchathani province borders both Cambodia and Laos and the Mekong flew into Cambodia had been coined “the Emerald Triangle” in recognition of its magnificent green landscapes. Adding to Ubon Ratchathani’s natural appeal, Phu Chong Nayoi and Pha Taem National Parks were two of Isan’s most unspoiled and unvisited natural preserves. There was unique festival for the tourists to witness the annual candle festival, a charming Buddhist celebration.

Moreover, there were various destinations for the tourists to visit as the border province between Thailand and Laos. The famous districts in the border area of Ubon Ratchathani province were Khemmarat, Natan, Khong Chiam, and Sirindhorn district as could be seen in the picture below.



Picture 1: The location of border district, Ubon Ratchathani province

Source: Googlemap. (2021)

There were natural and cultural destinations. For natural attraction, there were Mekong river, geopark, waterfalls, national parks, Sirindhorn dam, and Mun river. In terms of the cultural attraction, there were local cultural street, local dance, local fishery, local textile with natural dyeing, and community-based tourism.



However, although there were many natural and cultural destinations in border district in Ubon Ratchathani province, there was not the tourism development with the concept of creative economy as Thai government has been supporting creative economy into three classifications as the national policy (Office of the National Economic and Social Development, 2009) into four categories: cultural heritage, arts, media, and functional creation. There was other area in Thailand such as Sukhothai province with pottery wisdom and local production for paper lamp in Nan province could upgrade their cultural resources with the concept of creative economy through creative tourism. Therefore, this research was focused to investigate the potentiality of border tourism element in Ubon Ratchathani province in order to find out the development guidelines of the border tourism element potentiality in Ubon Ratchathani province with creative economy.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the potentiality of border tourism element in Ubon Ratchathani province
2. To present the development guidelines of the border tourism element potentiality in Ubon Ratchathani province with creative economy

Theoretical Framework

The researchers used the concept of tourism element (5 A's) and creative economy to conduct this research.

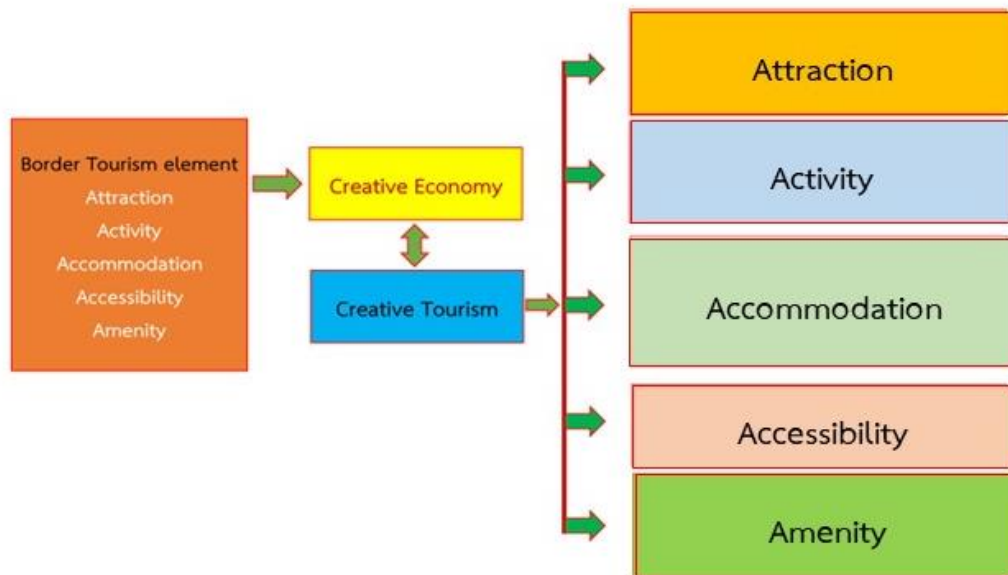
For the concept of tourism element (5 A's), Leiper (2004) stated that there were five tourism elements as the important key success for tourism development. There were attractions, activities, accessibility, accommodations, and amenities. Samuel (2020) also supported that five components were important for the tourists' trips in recent years, especially attraction and activities had become the heart and soul of successful tourism. Furthermore, Verma (2020) had explained that main components of a better tourism product were attractions, accessibility, **destination facilities/ amenities, images, and price. Therefore, according to these tourism element concept, the important tourism element comprised of** attractions (natural and cultural attraction), activities (It includes activities which a place or attraction holds such as nature walks, history & architecture, boating, views, health, etc.), accessibility (how to access or reach to that place of attraction. It could be mode of transportation, vehicle and traffic), accommodations (place to stay or accommodate while travelling for rest or overnight stay such as hotel, resort, apartment, guesthouse and homestay), and amenities (All the other services which we require while travelling for good and comfortable living while travel such as food, drinking water, sanitary, etc.).

The concept of creative economy, The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2008) defined the creative economy as "An evolving concept based on creative assets potentially generating economic growth and development". Besides, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO, 2003) gave the definition of creative economy as the creative economy/ industries that included the cultural industries plus all cultural or artistic production, whether live or produced as an individual unit. The creative industries are those in which the product or service contains a substantial element of artistic or creative endeavor. In Thailand, Thai government has been supporting creative economy into three classifications as the national policy (Office of the National Economic and Social Development, 2009). First classification was cultural heritage (crafts, historical and cultural tourism, Thai Food, and Thai traditional medicine). Second classification was arts (visual arts and performing arts). Third classification was media (film, publishing, broadcasting, and music). Final classification was functional creation (design, fashion, architecture, advertising, and software).

Moreover, the concept of creative tourism also had been applied for the development guidelines of the border tourism element potentiality in Ubon Ratchathani province with creative economy. Greg Richards and Lenia Marques (2012) defined the creative tourism that it reflected a fundamental shift in the creation of value from production (the tourism industry) towards consumption (the tourist), with the essential nexus between the two being provided by the encounter, the space/event node in the new social networks of tourism. In the network society, value was collectively created through relationships and the circulation of relational and other forms of capital through networks. Creative tourism was a form of networked tourism, which depended on the ability of producers and consumers to relate to each other and to generate value from their encounters. Creative tourists were cool hunters in search of creative hot-spots where their own creativity could feed and be fed by the creativity of those they visit.

Due to the concept of tourism element and creative economy above, the tourism stakeholders in Ubon Ratchathani province could develop the potentiality of border tourism element in Ubon Ratchathani province with creative economy through creative tourism as could be seen in the figure 1 below. This kind of tourism could use unique cultural resources in border area in Ubon Ratchathani province (four districts) to develop and promote cultural tourism.

figure 1: Conceptual framework



Research Methodology

This research was exploratory research and qualitative research. The researchers used exploratory research to gain an existing phenomenon of border tourism in Ubon Ratchathani province (four districts: Khemmarat, Natan, Khongchiam, and Sirindhorn) and acquire new problems of tourism management. Moreover, in-depth interview was the research tools to collect the data from the purposive sampling population in order to investigate the potentiality of border tourism element in Ubon Ratchathani province and develop the potentiality of border tourism

element in Ubon Ratchathani province with creative economy. The population was tourism stakeholders in Ubon Ratchathani province such as government sectors (the officers in the office of provincial sport and tourism, the office of local administration, and the office of provincial culture), private sectors (tour agency, local restaurant owner, transportation business, souvenir and local product shop), local people and the Thai tourists. The concept used in this research were the concept of tourism element and creative economy. The researchers used descriptive analysis to analyze the research data in order to find out the potentiality of border tourism element in Ubon Ratchathani province and development guidelines for the border tourism element in Ubon Ratchathani province with creative economy.

Research Results

According to the objectives of the research, this paper could be presented into two parts. The first part was the potentiality of border tourism element in Ubon Ratchathani province. The second part was the potentiality development guidelines of border tourism element in Ubon Ratchathani province with creative economy.

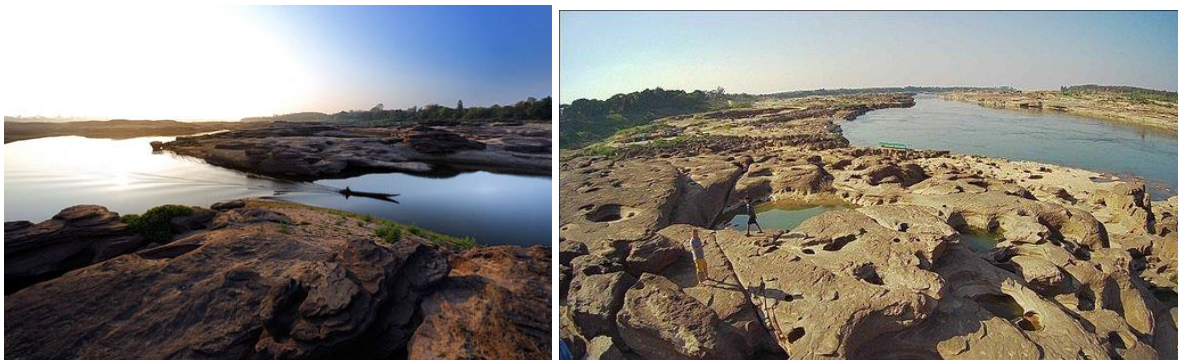
The potentiality of border tourism element in Ubon Ratchathani province

The potentiality of border tourism element in Ubon Ratchathani province could be presented into five elements: attraction, activities, accessibility, accommodation and amenities. (Leiper, 2004)

1. Attractions

The research found that the border area of Ubon Ratchathani province (Khemmarat, Natan, Khong Chiam, and Sirindhorn district) had potentiality in terms of natural and cultural attractions. For the natural attraction, there were Mekong river, geopark, waterfalls, national parks, Sirindhorn dam, and Mun river as could be seen in the below pictures.

Place to stay or accomodate while travelling for rest or overnight stays



Picture 1-2: Mekong river (left) and Sam Pan Bok, geopark in Ubon Ratchathani province (right)

Source: Remawadee. (2010)



Picture 3-4: Saengjan waterfall (left) and Phataem national park (right) in Khong Chiam district

Source: Travel kapok. (2020)



Picture 5-6: Maenam Song Si (left) and Sirindhorn dam (right)

Source: Thailand guidebook. (2021)

Maenam Song Si was the two-colored river or the Mun Rivers alluvium which was the spot where the brown of Mekong River and the blue of Mun River were joined. Boats were available at Khong Chiam for visitors to sail around the alluvium.

For cultural resources, there were various types of unique local culture such as local cultural street, local dance, local fishery, local textile with natural dyeing at Khemmarat district, Pak Saeng temple, the temple for Thais and Laotians in Natan district, community-based tourism in Sasom community, Kan Tah Kean community, Ta Mui community, and Tah Lhong community in Khong Chiam district. Moreover, there were unique way of life of the local people in Sirindhorn district, especially the local people lived in Sirindhorn dam area. Their wisdom was local fishery that the tourist could join the activities as could be seen in the picture 7-8 below.



Picture 7-8: Local fishery in Sirindhorn dam in Sirindhorn district

Source: Guideubon (2017)

2. Activities

Many tourist attractions still lacked of tourist activities. The tourist could take only photo and shop the local products. However, the tourists could join local dance and local cultural activities in cultural road at Khemmarat district on Saturday of the second and the fourth week every month as could be seen in the picture 9 and 10 below. Moreover, the tourists could join the cultural tourism activities in community-based tourism in Sasom community, Khong Chiam district. The local people would present and share their unique culture through local cotton dyeing activity (picture 11) and sticky rice making merit in the morning (picture 12).



Picture 9: local dance in Khemmarat district Picture 10: local products at Khemmarat district

Source: guideubon (2020)

Source: siamrath (2017)



Picture 11: local cotton dyeing in Sasom CBT

Source: TVPoolonline (2018)



Picture 12: Making merit in the morning

Source: ThaiPBS (2018)

For natural tourism activities, the tourists could join trekking in Phataem national park and Kaeng Tana national park in Khong Chiam district.



Picture 13 - 14: Trekking trail (left) and camping site (right) in Phataem national park

Source: Bangkokbiznews (2016)

Due to the distinctive natural resource of the Mekong river and the Geopark at Sam Pan Bok, the tourists could take a boat trip to see the significant Geopark there. The camping sites were also interesting activity in Phataem and Kaeng Tana national park and communities beside Mekong river. Furthermore, canoeing was alternative activity for the tourists who interested in adventure tourism in Sirindhorn dam, Sirindhorn district.



Picture 15 - 16: Taking boat trip at Sam Pan Bok, Mekong river and canoeing at Sirindhorn dam

Source: Gotouchthesky (2021)

3. Accessibility

The tourists could access to the tourist attraction conveniently by their personal vehicle or rental vehicle but the public vehicle was limited. There were about two buses from the Ubon Ratchathani city to each district in border area.

4. Accommodation

There were many types of accommodations for the tourists to stay during their trip in border tourism area in Ubon Ratchathani province. For example, there were hotel, resort, apartment, guesthouse including homestay and camping site. Most accommodation was small and medium size. There were approximately 20-30 rooms to serve the tourists. The tourists could book the rooms through website, Facebook and contact to the staff directly.

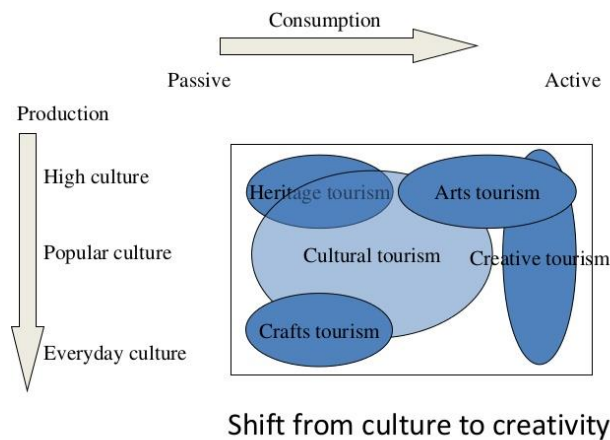
5. Amenities

There were many tourism amenities for the tourists such as local hospitals, tourist guide, restaurants and cafe, transportation signs, parking areas, souvenir shops, toilets, and accommodations. These amenities were located in the city and destination and adequate to the tourists. The tourists could consult tour agencies for package tours and tourist guide for their trips. Tour agencies could provide package tours and useful tourism information such as local restaurants, souvenirs and local shops, including accommodations and important events or festivals.

The potentiality development guidelines of border tourism element in Ubon Ratchathani province with creative economy

1. Attraction, the tourism stakeholders should design unique tourist attraction as border tourism destination. It included attraction landscape, border tourism landmark and destination mascot.

2. Activity, creative tourism activities could be linked to the local identity of the communities located along the Mekong river . The tourist creative activities should be based on local cultural resources such as heritage, craft, arts, and other unique culture as could be seen in the picture 17 below. Furthermore, the design and creation of creative tourism should be related to the characteristic of the creative tourism as the picture 18 below. It should increase tourist experience and participation while they work and join the activities with the local people. The activities should be able to encourage the tourist to have active engagement. The sample creative activities were local craft workshop, learning traditional dance, cooking local food, learning Mekong river way of life culture, and local agriculture wisdom workshop.



Picture 17: Shift from culture to creativity

Picture 18: Characteristics of creative tourism

Source: Richards., G. (2015)

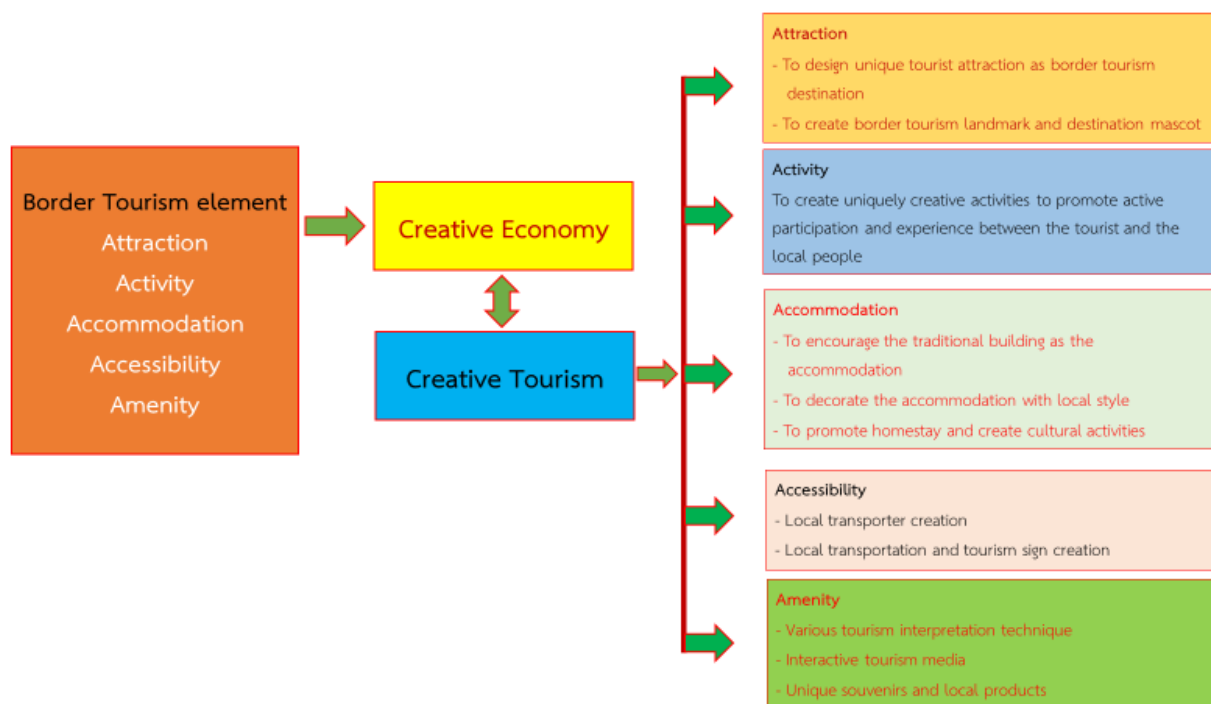
Source: Sudirah., S. and , Febriani., R. (2020)

3. Accessibility, the tourism accessibility and transportation were inexorably linked (McIntosh et al, 1995). The transportation was very important for the border tourism because it could encourage the creation of new attractions and the growth of existing attractions as Khadaroo and Seetanah (2008) linked the importance of an effective and accessible transportation system to the length of time any given tourist would stay in one particular area in a destination. The tourists had been traveling by various modes of transporter. Thus, most tourists would use all forms of transportation available. However, the mode of transportation presently in the border tourism area in Ubon Ratchathani province was limited. There was limited public bus, thus the tourists decided to used rental car for travelling. Therefore, there should be providing more public transportation for the tourists between the destinations such as public bus and inside the destinations such as local boats, rental motorbikes in the communities to support the tourists.

4. Accommodation, the accommodation business owners and local people could design their building with the concept of traditional architecture. The government sector should encourage the local people or local tourism enterprises renovate the traditional building as the accommodation, guesthouse, and homestay to serve the tourists.

5. Amenity, although there were many tourism amenities to serve the tourists, there were some tourism amenity items to improve and serve for the tourists such as tourist interpretation tool, restaurant, souvenirs and local products. Thus, the government sectors should encourage the destination manager to create various tourism interpretation technique such as interactive tourism media and local business owners to design and produce unique souvenirs and local products.

Therefore, the development guidelines for border tourism in Ubon Ratchathani province could be concluded in the below picture



Picture 19: The development guidelines for border tourism in Ubon Ratchathani province

Research Discussion

According to the investigation of the potentiality of border tourism element in four districts, Ubon Ratchathani province, it could conclude the differences and similarities of five elements in each area in below table.

| Five elements of tourism | Khemmarat district | Natan district | Khongchiam district | Sirindhorn district |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Attraction | local cultural street, local fishery, | Geopark, waterfalls | Waterfalls, national parks, Maenam Song Si, | Sirindhorn dam, local fishery |
| Activities | local dance, local textile with natural dyeing | local homestay, local cotton dyeing, camping site, and taking boat trip | local homestay, local cotton dyeing, trekking trail, camping site, and taking boat trip | canoeing at Sirindhorn dam |
| Accessibility | personal vehicle or rental vehicle, limited public vehicle | personal vehicle or rental vehicle, limited public vehicle | personal vehicle or rental vehicle, limited public vehicle | personal vehicle or rental vehicle, limited public vehicle |
| Accommodation | small and medium size of hotel, resort, apartment, guesthouse including homestay | small size of resort and local homestay | small and medium size of hotel, resort, apartment, guesthouse including homestay | small size of resort and local homestay |
| Amenity | local hospitals, tourist guide, restaurants and cafe, transportation signs, parking areas, souvenir shops, toilets, and accommodations | local hospitals, local restaurants and cafe and limited transportation signs, parking areas, souvenir shops, toilets, and accommodations | local hospitals, tourist guide, restaurants and cafe, transportation signs, parking areas, souvenir shops, toilets, and accommodations | local hospitals, tourist guide, restaurants and cafe, transportation signs, parking areas, souvenir shops, toilets, and accommodations |

Due to the concept of tourism elements (Leiper, 2004), the researchers found that the important factors for border tourism development in Ubon Ratchathani province were five tourism elements: attractions, activities, accessibility, accommodations, and amenities. The preparation of these elements should be balanced the tourists of different gender, age, groups and backgrounds. The attractions and the activities including amenities should have enough interesting for them to explore. Generally, even though the five components were important for the tourists, attractions

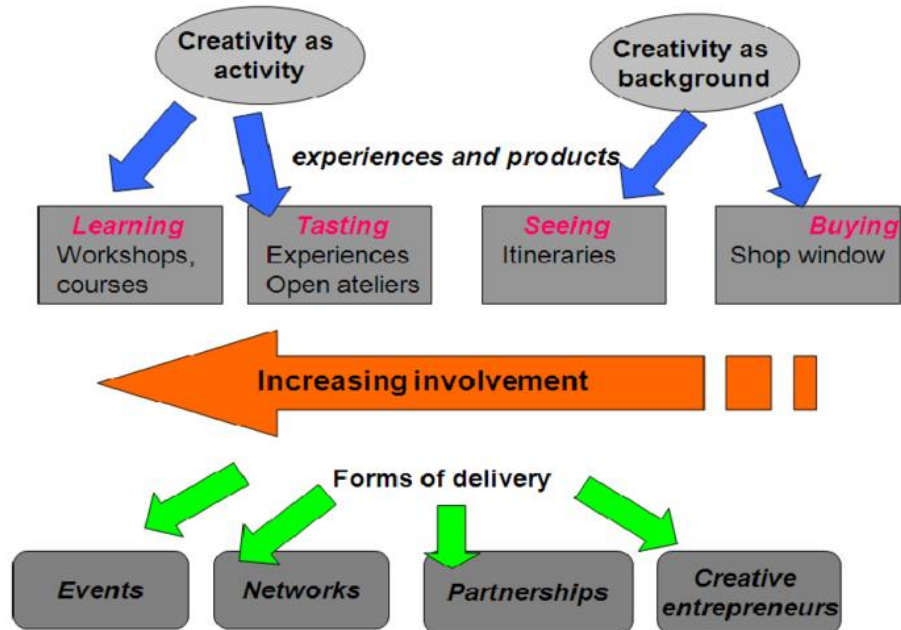


and activities had become the heart and soul of successful tourism in the tourism industry because they could present the uniqueness and identities of the border tourism. Thus, the tourism stakeholders should be aware that involved tourism sectors could provide all these 5 A's.

Apart from the classic five 'A's of tourism that could attract the tourists to visit the border area in Ubon Ratchathani province, the researcher could suggest the sixth 'A' (affordability) which was important for border tourism development (Samuel, 2020. Online). The tourist expenses such as the transportation costs, accommodation charges, entrance fees, and other expenditures should be at an affordable price for the tourists.

Moreover, the involved tourism stakeholders of border tourism in Ubon Ratchathani province could use the concept of creative economy to apply for the border tourism development in terms of creative tourism. For example, they could create creative tourism activities, creative souvenirs, and creative tourism interpretations in order to increase and share more experience about the local cultural identities between the tourists and the local people in border communities. The concept of cultural tourism of ICOMOS (2002) and the concept of creative tourism of Greg Richards (2002), the developing creative tourism for border tourism in Ubon Ratchathani province could be conducted as below figure, the models of creative tourism (Greg Richards and Lenia Marques. 2012). Border tourism in Ubon Ratchathani province could be promoted their creative tourism in terms of creativity as activity and background. Firstly, they should encourage the tourists to learn and test creative activities related to their unique cultural resources including design and promote local tourism itineraries and local products or souvenirs for the tourists as the optional activities. Secondly, the community could increase the involvement from related tourism sectors to promote their creative tourism in terms of local, regional, and national events, networks development in order to increase partnerships and creative entrepreneur development.

Models of creative tourism



Picture: The Model of creative tourism

Source: Greg Richards and Lenia Marques (2012)

Further Research Suggestions

1. In terms of tour operators, they should prepare package tours keeping affordability in mind. These group tours work out cheaper than individuals booking their own tickets and making itineraries for themselves. A successful destination should have a suitable balance between the five A's and the six A and ensure that there was something to see and do for people of different ages and backgrounds so that many tourists visit the destination in border area.

2. There should be the development of tourism route linked to the identity and distinctive cultural and natural tourism resource in the border area such as taking part in a photographic route, craft workshop route, learning traditional dance route, local gastronomy route, camping route, Mekong river way of life route, naga route, and local agriculture wisdom route.

3. The provincial and local government should cooperate with the educational institutions to encourage local communities to upgrade local souvenirs and local products in terms of arts and culture more attractive. Moreover, to strengthen the brand of local product and souvenir was also important



4. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) should promote border tourism in Ubon Ratchathani province including find out niche tourists such as camping and special interest tourists who interested in local identities and border areas. There should be social media tools to encourage the tourist participation in sharing their experience during and after the border tourism trip with creative tourism activities.

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