

STRENGTH, WEAKNESS, OPPORTUNITY, THREAT AND GUIDELINES ON DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN LESS-VISITED AREA IN NONGKHAJ.

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ABSTRACT

The research objectives aimed to study the strength, weakness, opportunity, threat and guidelines on development of cultural tourism in less-visited area in Nongkhaj. The approach of the qualitative research represented in-depth and focus group interviewing, the population represented the head of relevant official agents, scholars and local participants, the sample selection was made one participant per district. The data were collected from the documentary and on-site surveying, observation, interviewing, group discussion and processed with triangulation, purposive analysis and finding discussion. The finding found that besides a place of worship for Buddhist rituals, there were also attractive things that could be developed to be valuable cultural tourism and could be applied for tourist attractions development.

INTRODUCTION

The less-visited tourist attractions represented the tourism resources or tourist attractions with cultural implications and diversity in the northeast caused by cultural borrowing and exchanging and affecting by the improvement of tourism products in accordance with the trend of consumerism. Therefore, social phenomenal perspective through culture as a product by considering the cultural process transformed to be products, product ideas, the definition of tourism products that contributed to explain the social phenomena, understanding the potential of the individual and communities as producers and led to be crucial answering of how, who, whom and what about cultural products. Therefore, products with cultural implications were obtained from natural attractions, religious sites, historical and archeology arts sites, culture and traditions tourist attractions (Yupadi Setaphan. 2000: 376) The temple was considered the interesting tourist attractions.

The economic of Nongkhaj represented the agricultural industry, tourism and hospitality and did not have manufacturing facilities in other areas such as automotive industry, electronics, electrical, textiles or furniture. Most of the industry represented the agricultural products such as ketchup, sweet corn in addition community products as the economic driver. The dramatically changing situation of Nongkhaj after the separation of Buengkan especially the economic and environmental situation changed and impacted to tourism, manufacturing and agricultural industries, trade and forestry resources, but the less affecting situations such as social and security situation. Therefore, the some analyzed information about the potential of Nongkhaj were still belonged of Nongkhaj and Buengkan and some information could be accessed for the past 5 years, conversely, some data could not be accessed and estimated analyzed by the hypothesis to delete some data of Buengkan. The active group with experienced and specialized in Buengkan assured that the analysis of the situation represented the insignificant mistake and acceptability.

Nongkhai was classified a less-visited province with Buddhism and extensive history that represented the prosperity of the kingdom, the Buddhism, traditions and culture with similarity to other provinces in the northeast. Nongkai located on the border with Laos on the Mekong River, receiving the nickname from the Tourism Authority of Thailand that dragon of the northeast due to the shape of the province like a dragon that stretched along the Mekong River. In addition, temples represented a mental center that performed religious ceremony especially the promotion of cultural tourism causing many temples or religious places to be developed and became tourist attractions. Many religious places in Nongkai were nationally important in Buddhism which was spread throughout the province that were valuable to history and cultural tourism. Problems were discovered that many temples still lack of management, supporting and data base for tourists.

Although Nongkhai was identified as cultural tourism and only focused on cultural tourism, traditions and nature especially outstanding tourism of the End of Buddhist Lent Festival, which tourists visited Naga fireballs, a ordinary phenomenon that mentioned to be one of the phenomenal wonders of Thailand. The most popular tourist destinations in Nongkhai represented border transition and traveling in Laos but generated less income to Nongkhai. Therefore, the researcher was interested in studying the strength, weakness, opportunity, threat and guidelines on development of cultural tourism in less-visited area in Nongkhai

Research objectives

1. To study the strength, weakness, opportunity and threat on cultural tourism development in the less-visited area of Nongkai
2. To study guidelines on development of cultural tourism in less-visited area in Nongkhai.

METHODOLOGY

The approach of the qualitative research represented in-depth and focus group interviewing, the population represented the head of relevant official agents, scholars and local participants, the sample selection was made one participant per district. The data were collected from the documentary and on-site surveying, observation, interviewing, group discussion and processed with triangulation, purposive analysis and finding discussion.

RESULTS

The finding found that strength, weakness, opportunity, threat and guidelines on development of cultural tourism in less-visited area in Nongkhai as following.

1. Strength

- 1) The provincial executives had the ability and vision in policies administration resulting to participation administration
- 2) There is a phenomenon of Naga fireballs along the Mekong River such as Si Chiang Mai, Tha Bo , Phon Phisai and Rattanapee attracted cultural and traditional tourism as well as creating value for tourism industry
- 3) Having natural resources, ecotourism and cultural tourism sites with diversity in communities, identification and preservation, the traditions and local customs contributed to promote ecotourism and cultural tourism
- 4) Having suitable area for cultivation, a lot of agriculture along the banks of the Mekong River and center for purchasing agricultural products contributed the agricultural product processing industry such as tomatoes, pineapples, sweet corn, etc
- 5) Providing convenient transportation along the border, many the relief points, international permanent border checkpoints and the Indochina gateway contributed the higher border trade
- 6) People

who lived along the border, had good relations with neighboring countries and contributed villages and communities along the border to be strong.

2. Weakness

1) Farmer had no land right certification, most of the people were poor, lack of executive skills, to be unable to obtain the funding source that affected agriculture, tourism, community, industry and less of developing local products to be international products 2) Lack of management in water resources and the integrated river basin, wetland invasion and shallow water caused the flooding 3) Illegal logging and deforestation of the wood, incorrect waste management, without wastewater treatment system in the urban community at some time, erosion along the banks of the Mekong River affected the effectiveness of natural resource management and the environment 4) Private-sector integration such as industrial networks, network of community enterprises as well as the integration of governmental agencies and private sectors were unstrong and affected the efficiency and effectiveness of the industry of Manufacturing and services 5) The problem of the length of border areas along the Mekong River affected smuggled goods, human trafficking, drug trafficking, animal trafficking as well as illegal foreign workers

3. Opportunity

1) The average annual rainfall in Nongkhai was high compared to other provinces in the Northeast that contributed Nongkhai was suitable for agriculture, fresh water fishery and livestock 2) The magazine mm modern maturity (May-June 2010) organized Nongkhai on the ranked 7th among 40 cities in the world on promoting both domestic and international tourism 3) The 1st Thai-Laos Friendship Bridge, which represented transportation route with Laos PDR, especially Vientiane Capital and countries in the Mekong Sub-region, Laos-Vietnam-China-Cambodia (Great Maekong Subregions; GMS) as well as countries groups Ayeyawadi-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy Between Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam (ACMECS: Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy) contributed on trade promotion, investment and tourism 4) The integration of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) which would be completed by 2015 and the development of logistic systems linking from China, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore, as well as the East-West Economic Corridor Economic Corridor (EWEC) contributed the trade promotion, investment and tourism 5) Trends of the needs of accommodation for the elder, both at home and abroad required the accommodation which affected the development of long stay accommodations, health services, traffic systems, safety systems, etc 6) Trends of clean and safe food including the international standard system (Nontariff Barrier) contributed the trade promotion, investment and tourism 7) Trends of environmental awareness such as global warming, energy, inevitable disaster and law enforcement regarding international treaty agreements such as carbon credits contributed the opportunity to trade development, investment and tourism 8) The Eleventh National Economic and Social Development Plan promoted the economy and created Thai society knowledge based knowledge, education, creativity and the intellectual property that linked with culture, knowledge, local wisdom, technology and Innovation 9) The government promoted the opening of the 24-hour Thai-Laos Friendship border checkpoint and increased the permanent border crossing at Si Chiang Mai that promoted trade, investment and tourism 10) The government supported Nongkhai as a special economic city.

4. Threat

1) Outbreaks in humans, plants and animals, such as bird flu, Influenza 2009, 2010, viruses in pigs, E-coli, dengue fever, urine, rat, BPH including problems of the public health of neighboring countries caused problems about communicable diseases along the border affecting social development and quality of life including tourism 2) International economic cooperation occurred with international treaties and agreements, some programs in Thailand

might be disadvantageous and affected the adaptation of entrepreneurs and people in the matter of trade and service industry in Nongkhai 3) Global warming, higher energy expenses affected trading costs, production and service 4) Regulations of neighboring countries were unclear for Thailand's import-export and tourism 5) The political conflict though and national politics were not stable 6) Budget allocation endured not just in-time.

Guidelines for tourism destinations

Guidelines for the development of tourist attractions in Nongkhai for ecotourism tourism should be conservation and improvement of temple art work, ecological landscape, improving the provincial environment, effective buildings, information signs that provided knowledge about important places, parking, staff who provided information on external tourism components such as restaurants, roads, signs for natural resources that facilitated the visitors.

In conclusion Nongkhai as a place of worship for Buddhist rituals, there were equally interesting that could be improved to have cultural tourism value. This research could be utilized for tourist attraction development as appropriate.

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