

The Capacity and Competence in Competitiveness for Promoting Cultural Tourism of Thai Entrepreneurs

Korawan Sangkakorn, Ph.D¹, Pachernwaat Srichai, Ph.D¹ and Ravee Phoewhawm, PhD^{3*}

¹ Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University. 239 Huay Kaew Road, Amphur Muang Chiang Mai, Thailand, 50200.

² International Business School (IBS), Chongqing Technology and Business University No 19 Xuefu Ave., Nan'an District, Chongqing, China.

* Email: rtc999@yahoo.com.

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Abstract

While there are many ways for promoting cultural tourism having the capacity and competence to stay competitive requires entrepreneurs to go through a much deeper level to meet the needs of the foreign travelers. The study examines on how the capacity and competence in competitiveness of Thai entrepreneurs in promoting cultural tourism, and offers some practical points to refine their approach. The work collected data by interviewing 200 Thai entrepreneurs and observing the functions of their tour staff. An open-ended question was asked to learn what challenges or problems that they often encountered with and a chance was given to see how their staff respond to the case events. It is learned that the entrepreneurs do have a good understanding, experience, and networking however there are challenges along the way for gaining grounds in being competitive. Undergoing the promotion of cultural tourism will bring about some lessons for learning.

Keywords: Capacity, Competence, Competitiveness, Promoting, Culture Tourism, Entrepreneurs

Introduction

Promoting cultural tourism is always in need for the best ways that aim towards providing value and sincerity towards the foreign travelers. This type of practice encompasses an open communication channel between the tour agents, groups having indirect role with the traveling program, and local residents to discuss

about any challenges that have to be considered (Underberg-Goode, 2014). These travelers are investing their time and money to enjoy the recreation and leisure at the event of another country. To ensure that these travelers have been highly impressed with the services provided in cultural tourism entrepreneurs will need to assess their own specialized skills and

knowledge to be equipped for getting the positive results (Wu and Parkvithee, 2017). Promoting cultural tourism in Thailand is a long-term idea and not for making a quick cash and running off to the sunset. The message and meaning have to be connected with the showcasing effort, in order to let other travelers know that making the arrangements for cultural tourism is worth the money. While other countries have done their best in copying and imitating the methods of promoting cultural tourism the Thai entrepreneurs have to raise their level of capacity and competency in being competitive for promoting cultural tourism to persuade foreign travelers to come to their country and experience the custom, values and beliefs. Nevertheless, getting all the resources to work as a synergy to obtain valuable evidence for making an effective cultural tourism promotion campaign require a firm collaborative effort from all stakeholders to establish a genuine foundation that assures an extravagant traveling experience for foreign visitors (Chang, Liao and Wu, 2017)

Research Aim & Questions

The purpose of this work is to examine the capacity and competence in competitiveness for promoting cultural tourism on part of the Thai entrepreneurs, and to provide a proposal for the practice

of promotion. To reach this aim the study is guided by the following questions:

1. How are the Thai entrepreneurs' capacity in competitiveness for promoting cultural tourism?
2. How are the Thai entrepreneurs' competence in competitiveness for promoting cultural tourism?
3. How should the Thai entrepreneurs practice cultural tourism promotion?

Literature Review

Capacity in Competitiveness for Promoting Cultural Tourism

Promoting cultural tourism is dynamic and should take into account of all hidden factors for ensuring that what is advertise or communicated will leave a great impression on the travelers. A holistic frame of mind is required to acquire the intelligence on the shifts and changing mood of the stakeholders involved (Fernandes, 2011). In a greater sense of things knowledge needs to be updated as the work involves how each case events are developed in tourism so that it can enhance the value for the cultural tourists or prevent them from being exposed to the unwanted dark side of tourism in general (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). A complacent reliance on the belief that the good things will always outweigh the bad things is not quite healthy for the business of cultural tourism as those who

rely on its livelihood may take drastic measures to disrupt the positive vibes of the tour program just for the sake of ensuring that no financial losses have occurred (Stratana, Perciuna and Gribincea, 2015). The promotion is only good as the message that is conveyed to attract the foreign visitors the key is on managing the cross-functional activities that can sometimes go off the schedule and attending to the behaviors that are quite subjective towards certain situations in the moment (Lo and Lee, 2011).

Competence in Competitiveness for Promoting Cultural Tourism

It's more of an art in promoting cultural tourism whereas one finds innovative and unique ways to maximize the value in the service and product that is offered to the visitors. To understand how promotion can be done in a modernly effective way one has to take into account of the decisions and behaviors on part of the foreign vacationers who have made some previous trips before, motivation for traveling, and the new outlook that has been gathered during and after the trips (Richards, 2011). Questions need to be asked to the foreign travelers so that their responses can be constantly utilized to define some ground-breaking ideas about the location, environment, atmosphere, and the ambiance of the event to develop

a standard appeal for promotion (Zakaria, Salleh and Rashid, 2014). With similarities in capacity, the mindset is on seeing to it that the foreign travelers experience the positive value of the event while skillfully navigating across the oncoming process of the event to deflect any dreadful things from happening so that the message in the promotion is solid (Mathew and Sreejesh, 2017). Nevertheless, in reality not all things go as according to what has been planned. While shortcomings often occur, an assessment is needed to relearn for more practical ways in promoting towards the targeted foreign visitors so that a template can be devised as the critical guidelines for making the concept of cultural tourism capture the mind and soul to come back again and again (Jingyi and Chung-Shing, 2018).

Cultural Tourism Promotion in Practice

Promotion is one of the conceptual tools that is utilized for achieving the stated goal (Korunovski and Marinoski). Attention is paid to the traveling destination as this place is where the experience and events come into junction with each other. The value intention to be received on part of the travelers are systematically planned to observe how much or how little the impact has been made on part of the tourist site (Gezici and Kerimoglu, 2010). As saturation

is bound to settle into the destination at some point in time, entrepreneurs will need to gather the information for the purpose of developing and marketing the tourist spot to add value and make it highly attractive for a re-visit (Hartman, Meyer and Scribner, 2009). Entrepreneurs need an innovative and creative frame of mind for re-enhancing the locality's image and appeal that will evolve into a brand of its own that generates a buzz for must visit (George, 2010). Entrepreneurs will need to collaborate and coordinate with organizers and sponsors in promoting events that harp on the unique ideals and spectacular customary traditions that radiates a positive impression from the foreign visitors (Yuan, 2013). While the functions for developing the promotion of culture tourism is occurring there should also be an awareness to cover the news of negative events for the purpose of creating case studies or lessons to be learned for setting the guidelines of (Chang, Backman and Huang, 2014). To really understand why so much time and energy goes into the promotion entrepreneurs need to get a closer comprehension of the event-goers: they are the segment of the cultural tourism market who are truly dedicated to be immersed in the sight and sound of the events. These groups can add credibility and interest to the promotion of the events by relaying the spectacular

things that they have discovered and come into contact with (Sepe and Di Trapani, 2010). If there's a forehand of what they desire and dislike, require and reject, expect and avoid then the resources gathered will not only be more efficient in arranging but highly effective for obtaining the valued end results the event-goers anticipate on (Ross, 2017).

Methodology

The scope of this research is concentrated in the boundaries of the "Lanna Civilization Route" which is the northern region of Thailand comprising the provinces of Chiang Mai, Lop Buri, Pang, Phayao, Chiang Rai, Phrae, Nan, and Mae Hong Son that form a geographical infrastructure for people to be connected in the midst of traveling. The work collected data by interviewing a sample of 200 Thai entrepreneurs and observing the functions of their tour staff to examine their capacity and competence in competitiveness for promoting cultural tourism. The samples were selected based on their status as business owners of more than two years. An open-ended question was asked to learn what challenges or problems that they often encountered with and a chance was given to see how their staff respond to the case events. The feedback from the open-ended question was checked by

comparing their information with regards to their actions taken relevant towards promoting cultural tourism. The data gathered were analysed for answering the inquiries seeking “how is the capacity and competence in competitiveness for promoting cultural tourism on part of the Thai entrepreneurs, and how should they put this into practice?”

Results

1. Thai Entrepreneurs’ Capacity in Competitiveness

The entrepreneurs have a good understanding of how to build the charm and attraction for enticing the foreign travelers to express a strong interest in visiting and to hopefully come back to visit. Some of the entrepreneurs had the chance to visit other exotic and foreign places that are rich in history and cultural heritage. They look for unique ideas and models to promote the cultural tourism in Thailand to present the best from all over the world. At times, the theme in the promotion is replicated from past events but an extra splash of showcasing events and activities are thrown in for interesting matters. The ways of innovation and creativity are highly called for to put a positive perception for tourists to feel that their time and money invested into the recreation is worthwhile as well as preventing the concept of

cultural tourism to reach a saturation point (Gezici and Kerimoglu, 2010). The message that gets put into the promotion is “must see, must do, and pure pleasure”. Their staff performs the functions that are based on the concept that goes into the cultural tourism promotion; many are young and often have to follow the guidance of their seniors. Despite the ability in configuring for ways to grab the share in the cultural tourism market some of the Thai entrepreneurs can sometimes get into a rut when the competition becomes tough. The study has learned that there is a tendency on part of the entrepreneurs to make a good impression instead of finding ways for the substance to take its course. Problems that have arisen unexpectedly from the past are not given much into consideration thus being under the illusion that the promotion of cultural tourism will exactly deliver all the good things for the visitors. The competition becomes much harder to engage as foreign tourists overlook their business services to find one that is more exclusive and effective in offering the cultural experience. This fails to take into awareness that not all tourists coming from a particular nation behave the same way so when problems or certain issues occur they need to be closely examined before applying the designed method as the remarkable solution (Damonte, Collins and Megehee,

2012). The knowledge, know-how, and the decision-making are all done at the top thus leaving little room for the subordinates to provide valuable input. In vice versa, the staff members expect things to be decided from the top while they just wait for the orders to be sent to them. When one works in a Thai organization or company, the hierarchy culture is highly accepted as a natural order of things (Hsieh, Tsai and Chen, 2017). So when the competition is tough to break the numbers in the group heavily rely on one sole person to say something rather than for all to be the eyes and ears to gather intelligence for challenging the competition in developing an effective promotion campaign.

2. Thai Entrepreneurs' Competence in Competitiveness

The Entrepreneurs have had a great deal of experience in promoting cultural tourism. They are well familiar of the season cycle that determines the influx of foreign visitors coming in and making the necessary arrangements and designs that goes into the details of the promotion. The entrepreneurs know that they are part of a network association in cultural tourism. Therefore, when it comes to promoting they have to cooperate and collaborate with other entrepreneurs in order to deliver the values that are advertised in the promotion. Some arrangements have to be

made with staff members from their respective companies to get a certain agreement on how the services ought to be performed for the visitors and what type of products are most interesting for purchasing. In the task of promotion there are agreements that have to be confirmed beforehand namely in dining, lodging, and entertainment so that the touring process goes smoothly. What the entrepreneurs have demonstrated that in order for the promotion of cultural tourism to take its course in the long run everyone has to be a part of the operation that caters toward the values for the visitors, regardless if the outcome is big or small what is most important is that the travelers are naturally enjoying the sights and sounds of being in the moment (Willis, 2015). The entrepreneurs know that they have to compete with each other sometimes by making contact with the same business suppliers and firms offering a tour service. The entrepreneurs do their best to maintain standards in service and production with regards to the cultural tourism promotion, but sometimes the aim for 100% quality fall a bit short as foreign travelers are looking to spend less on the overhead expenses, such as logistics, and buy more items for their own personal likings. There are some concerns when a tour operator does not comply to the standards or follow through on what is

stated in the promotion. Entrepreneurs are reluctant to make a fuss on others but will resort into lessening the ties with partners who are not willing to provide a good value of service for the tourists. However, they do know that if the partnership is not working then the competition will get a lot harder in trying to sway foreign tourists to take part in their program. Making the promotion of cultural tourism uphold its credibility falls on the business providers and agents to cross-coordinate in tandem by offering a system that demonstrates how each of the stakeholders carry out their role to support the process (Sousa and Martin, 2015).

3. Practice in Cultural Tourism Promotion for Thai Entrepreneurs

In the business of promoting cultural tourism, the Thai entrepreneurs are heavily focused on providing a great value in service and production for the travelers. They understand that getting second chances to create a good impression and appreciation on part of the foreign travelers will be difficult to come by. So, it's up to them to make the cultural tourism experience happen through the promotion in the most positive way. Within their network association they have to keep on developing a sound working relationship with others but will make the necessary changes in the relations in order to ensure

that the business attitude is aligned with the aims and messages in the promotion of cultural tourism. Promoting cultural tourism begins with meeting the needs of the foreign tourists and then developing a harmonized process that makes a delightful impact on the foreign visitors. Giving the opportunities and access to visitors in experiencing the arts and crafts, museums, heritage, festivals, music, dance, theaters, literature, historic sites and buildings, landscapes, neighborhoods and special character of local communities (Vargas-Hernández, 2012) will require for the promotion to be uniquely narrated with regards in coming into contact with something that changes one's life and cherish the moment for a lifetime. The recommendations for practicing cultural tourism for capacity and competence in competitiveness are as followed:

Capacity: Thai entrepreneurs need to keep in mind that promotion is part of a strategic tool for leading towards accomplishing the objectives and goal. It's not so much the photos or words that are colored to attract but it's the promise kept that the course in travels taken actually are being met. Promoting cultural tourism is an art of being mindful of various factors that come into play directly and indirectly, thus creating a balancing act whereas the effort is to ensure that the positive ones are

highly embraced while the negative ones are prevented from happening or simply reduced to having no affect at all (Fondevilla, 2017). The meaning of values is going to vary from one tourist to another or may be termed differently based on one's cultural background. There is no one set potion or pill that will instantly cure away the problem but entrepreneurs will have to anticipate for the incidents to occur that make the tourists uncomfortable and distress. Whatever means are applied to alleviate the situation for the visitors the execution going in should be aimed toward restoring some sense of confidence and trust on part of the staff that they are doing all their best to uphold the well-being and safety (Chim-Miki and Batista-Canino, 2017). The business culture should always be aimed towards tourism satisfaction; therefore, the staff needs to serve as the intelligence node for disseminating information to the higher authorities for deciding on how best to make visitors feel highly grateful for the service provided. Culture is composed of beliefs and attitudes and they can change if the model that is deployed for promoting cultural tourism isn't quite delivering on its promises and guarantees then there must be some freedom to maneuver around the system to adjust it for ensuring that travelers are being heavily satisfied (Lóránt, 2011).

Competence: It takes full commitment, effort and reason from all entrepreneurs involved in promoting cultural tourism because the activities will reflect on demonstrating that there is a brand or maybe the brand is still a work in progress. While each operator of the tour program is acting on its own they still have to coordinate with several factors involved in the activity for the purpose of not only satisfying the foreign tourists but to utilize the good reviews for developing the programs and building on the information to feed the strategy for getting more visitors to come in the near future (Carbone, 2017). For the cultural tour program to receive its accolades on the higher end, a great deal of teamwork will be required from the main tour operators to cooperate in unison for displaying the strengths and developing on the good points while acknowledging for improvements without feeling a sense of shame or shattered pride; events and activities in the cultural tour programs are ongoing and will always offer some valuable lessons to learn (Brent Ritchie, Wing Sun Tung, and Ritchie, 2011). The livelihood of promoting cultural tourism is quite challenging when some partners turn a bit rogue for the sake of exploiting on the situation for their own monetary gain. The arrangements discussed and made with other tour company partners have to be in

solid compliance otherwise the message in the promotion could be distorted and destroy the reputation of one's profession in the cultural tourism business (Pulido-Fernández, Cárdenas-García, and Carrillo-Hidalgo, 2017). It's imperative to be in a partnership that aims to promote the values and be mindful on the importance of applying the resources to make the cultural tourism sustainable in the long run for all.

Discussion and Conclusion

Promoting cultural tourism is competitive in nature for all stakeholders involved. When things go as according to plans participants gain a better sense of appreciation for the events and activities arranged for them. But things become quite challenging or difficult at times when the values being conveyed in the promotion starts to go awry (Anderson et al., 2017). Given how the nature of this business is fragile the whole onus falls into the capacity and competence of the Thai entrepreneurs to sustain the positives while doing their best not to let the uncontrolled and unforeseeable become a negative impact on the foreign tourists' joy and pleasure. If a proper system is in place then the coordinating efforts will have more meaning with regards towards aiming for the specific objectives and stated goal

(Robbins and Devitt, 2017). As a strategy, this work on promoting cultural tourism also offers a lot of lessons to be learned for developing the capacity and competence towards being competitive. Base on the comparison with a study done by Markwick (2017) this research is in accordance with some difficult issues being involved in trying to satisfy stakeholders, however it's also an opportunity to be creative and innovative with regards to the practice of promoting cultural tourism. In conclusion, to be competitive in promoting cultural tourism this study requires an ongoing thinking and practical process that helps all entrepreneurs and their members involved to search for efficient and effective ways to reinforce the praises of cultural tourism so that promotion doesn't become moribund that could make foreign visitors feel that there's nothing special about making travel arrangements to go there. It's all on the imagination and spark of the entrepreneurs to procure them into the program and get their partners to collaborate with the idea (Estrada, 2018).

Recommendations

This study recommends that Thai entrepreneurs collaborate together with fellow business owners who are involved with hospitality and tourism to find some common ideas on promoting cultural

tourism that adds on to their level of expertise in tourism services. Instead of competing against each other the entrepreneurs can compete together to find the best value on providing tourism satisfaction as well as developing the capacity and competence of one another to utilize their skills and abilities of promoting cultural tourism as a positive unit.

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