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Guidelines for Integrating Sustainable Creative Tourism toward Collaboration of ASEAN Economic Community:
A Case Study of Southern Coastal Subcorridor from Thailand to Kingdom of Cambodia and Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Paiboon Archarungroj
Lecturer and Deputy Director of MBA program
Srinakharinwirot University
Thailand

Supada Sirikudta
Associate Professor

Dr.Varintra Sirisuthikul

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Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos
President
Athens Institute for Education and Research

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Paiboon Archarungroj
Lecturer and Deputy Director of MBA program
Srinakharinwirot University
Thailand

Supada Sirikudta
Associate Professor

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Abstract

This paper seeks to find the guidelines for integrating sustainable creative tourisms towards collaboration of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) along the Southern Coastal Sub-corridor from Thailand to Cambodia and Vietnam.

It was found that the tourists visited this route to experience different cultures and customs, different lifestyles and the originality of the destinations. No luxury is expected, but a comfortable accommodation must be available to attract various types of tourists. In many places, tourism infrastructures need to be improved. Successful implementation of sustainable creative tourism along the route lies on the strength of its authenticity, and the travel programs suitable for the tourists may be divided into 3 creative programs, (1) Cultural and historical tourism (2) Eco tourism and (3) Volunteer Tourism. The activities designed for each programs should be based on the elements of authenticity and integrate the activities related to the factors affecting their intention to travel to that specific route and destination. It is suggested that for ASEAN tourists, the program should contain sustainable creative activities factor, creative industries factor, cultural tourism resources factor and unique and diversified local culture factor; while for non-ASEAN tourists, the programs should incorporate human interaction factor, cultural travel and tourism factor, authenticity factor and hospitality and local tourism infrastructure factor.

Keywords : Sustainable tourism, creative tourism, AEC, R10, authenticity

Contact Information of Corresponding author:

INTRODUCTION

Creative tourism is the tourism that offers a visitor a creative pursuit in term of arts, cultural heritage, history, crafts and cookery workshops, with opportunity to communicate with local people at the tourist destinations. Thus creative tourism could provide unique experiences for the tourists, provide visitors with the opportunity to learn a new skill, provide a sense of achievement and to create a unique souvenir, for example, a painting, local languages, crafted objects or local cuisine. The unique experiences and involvement in the local cultural activities will give tourists a lasting emotional attachment to the destination which is not offered by traditional tourism, and will encourage them to recommend and also revisit the destination. In general, creative tourism must be able to connect tourists with the unique characteristics of the destinations, which could be educational, emotional, social, participative interaction, local customs and culture and should make the tourists feel that they are a part of the community. Therefore, to attract more tourists without sacrificing sustainability, tourism entrepreneurs must put some tourism creativeness into their businesses, while local authorities at the tourist destinations must find and provide sustainable creative activities that will attract and retain tourists.

The concepts of creative tourism are also in line with the vision by ASEAN National Tourism Organizations which stated that "By 2015, ASEAN will provide an increasing number of visitors to the region with authentic and diverse products, enhanced connectivity, a safe and secure environment, increased quality of services, while at the same time ensuring an increased quality of life and opportunities for residents through responsible and sustainable tourism development by working effectively with a wide range of stakeholders." With the integration of ASEAN into ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) which will come into effect in 2015, the AEC will have an aggregate population of 580 million, more than that in the European Union itself. The AEC also covers the liberalization and facilitation of capital movement, labor movement, the harmonization of customs regulations, standards for goods, and economic policies among ASEAN countries. Therefore, the realization of the AEC will increase ASEAN's appeal in many aspects, including those of tourism in the region.

The target of the study in this research is southern coastal subcorridor from Thailand to Kingdom of Cambodia and Socialist Republic of Vietnam, known as R10 route by the authorities of the three countries. It is the land route connecting *Trad* province of Thailand to the border of the Kingdom of Cambodia through *Koh Kong*, leading further along the coastline to *Sre Ambel*, *Kampot* and *Kep* of Cambodia, and then linking with the border of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam through *Ha Tien*, and go further through *Rach Gia*, ending at *Camau* at the southern part of Vietnam. The aim of the research is to suggest the guidelines for integrating sustainable creative tourism activities in collaboration with stockholders from the ASEAN Economic Community. The guidelines are based on the integration from the results of both qualitative and

quantitative analysis, in attempt to locate demand and supply factors effecting tourism along the route.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

To suggest the guidelines for integrating sustainable creative tourisms towards collaboration of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) along the Southern Coastal Sub-corridor from Thailand to Cambodia and Vietnam (R10 route), using both quantitative data and qualitative information.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

1. Sustainable tourism is tourism development that minimize damage on the environment and local cultural heritage of the location it takes place, while at the same time, provide long-term economic opportunities for local people. The local communities must be able to enjoy the economic benefits tourism brought about (Holden, 2001). Another key aspect of sustainable tourism is that local environment or culture must not be traded off for increased tourism (McKercher, 1993; Hassan, 2000). The aim of sustainable tourism is thus to ensure that tourism development brings a positive experience for all stakeholders, including local people, tourism companies and the tourists themselves.

2. Creative tourism. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stated that the definition of creative tourism is "tourism related to community development for a sustainable way of life. The activities provided had to be harmonious and connected to history, culture, and way of life in terms of learning and experience. Tourists gain experience and knowledge from the real life of the communities they visit". Additionally, UNESCO also defined the meaning of creative tourism in terms of organizing activities of learning from direct experiences such as participating in green activities and interacting with local people. The goal is that tourists are not just passive visitors, but they become an active member of the community. Creative tourism can be more than just spending time relaxing, or merely sightseeing visiting museums, natural attractions and historical sites.

Richards & Raymond (2000) defined creative tourism as the opportunities for tourists to get involved in local activities, in learning various educational experiences, while at the same time, creative tourism could retain some characteristics of a leisure travel.

Olson & Stanislav (2010), on the other hand, defined creative tourism as authentic cultural tourism based on visiting and exploring to gain new experience and learning new skills, for example visiting museum, learning a new language, attending a cooking class.

3. Creative industries is the design and offerings of creative tourism activities in which tourists can gain experience and knowledge from the real

life of the communities they visit, for example making handicrafts, learning local dance and involvement in eco-tourism or volunteer tourism activities

    4. Hospitality refers to friendliness of the local people, and positive attitudes towards tourists. It includes the willingness to help and provide information to tourists when needed.

    5. Local tourism infrastructure is the infrastructure related to fulfilling the needs of traveler when they have arrived at the tourist destination. Tourism infrastructure may be considered one of the environments of the travel destination itself, and has significant impact on travel experiences of the tourists. (Mo, Howard, & Havit, 1993). A travel destination which lacks sufficient tourism infrastructure will adversely affect the experience of travelers. It is also an important factor in predicting quality and perceived value of a destination (Murphy, Pitchard & Smith, 2000). Tourism infrastructures include quality of accommodation, availability and quality of public utilities, such as water and electricity, availability of travel information, such as road signs, boards, maps, sufficient public transportation and also quality of restaurants in the area.

    6. Cultural tourism resources are whatever the destination possessed which could be conncted with cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. For example, values, cultures, lifestyles and handicrafts which reflect the uniqueness and authenticity of local community. Cultural tourism resources include also architectures, arts and crafts, folk tales, stage performance and local cuisines (King, 2008). Other researchers (Cohen, 1988; Murphy et al., 2000) suggested that heritage and culture resources consisted of history, customs, architectures, cuisines, arts, music, handicrafts which are the foundation of travel motives for may tourists.

    7. Authentic Tourism is a complex term and there are different meanings of authenticity. MacCannell (1973) introduced the concept of authenticity into sociological studies of tourist motivations and experiences. He argued that authenticity exists whenever people have significant control over their lives and play an active role in determining what changes occur in their society. Since then, the subject has become an agenda for tourism study. However, while the concept of authenticity in that meaning has been widely used, its limitations have been increasingly exposed. Stephen (1990) questioned its usefulness and validity because many tourist motivations or experiences cannot be explained in terms of the conventional concept of authenticity. Phenomena such as visiting friends and relatives, beach holidays, ocean cruising, nature tourism, visiting Disneyland, personal hobbies such as shopping, fishing or sports, have nothing to do with authenticity in MacCannell's definition of authenticity. On the other hand, Wang (1999) has suggested three types of authenticity in tourism as a wider way of understanding and interpreting the various meanings associated with authenticity in the tourism attraction: (1) Objective authenticity, (2) Constructive authenticity and (3) Existential Authenticity. According to Wang (1999), objective authenticity refers to the tourist experience gained by the recognition of toured object as being original and authentic. It is applied in

situations when the origin of an artifact needs to be established, for example, items in a museum. Constructive authenticity refers to the authenticity projected onto toured objects by tourists, in terms of images, expectations, preferences and beliefs, for example art and crafts. As opposed to the two former types of authenticity which are object-related, existential authenticity refers to a state of being that is to be activated by tourist activities. It is activity-related authenticity and does not relate to the authenticity of toured objects, for example as in eco-tourism and volunteer tourism.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research integrates the results of both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis was done based on questionnaires for 451 tourists, which were translated into English, Thai, Cambodian and Vietnamese. The results were analyzed using factor analysis to group the demand and supply indicators into influential factors. Regression analysis was then run to find which factors affected the intention to travel along each of the 4 routes, with separated analysis for ASEAN and non-ASEAN travelers. As for qualitative analysis, in-depth interview method was employed. A total of 18 stakeholders and 12 tourists were interviewed using structured interview form to gain insights to the sustainable creative tourisms of the area. The 18 stakeholder consisted of members from public sectors, private sectors and local communities of the three countries, while the tourist group consisted of 6 tourists from ASEAN countries and another 6 tourists from non-ASEAN countries. The results of the interviews were then analyzed using content analysis. The combined results of both quantitative and qualitative analysis are then used to suggest the guidelines for integrating sustainable creative tourisms along the southern coastal subcorridor from Thailand to Cambodia and Vietnam

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

1. Quantitative analysis

From the questionnaires for tourists, the demand and supply indicators were grouped into influential factors using factor analysis. The demand factors are those activities or attributes that tourists want a destination to possess in order to attract them to that destination, which are grouped into cultural travel and tourism factor, sustainable creative activities factor, human interaction factor, and authenticity factor. The supply factors are ability of the travel destination to conform to the needs of tourists, which are grouped into hospitality and local tourism infrastructure factor, cultural tourism resources factor, unique and diversified local culture factor and creative industries factor. Those factors were then analyzed using regression analysis to find which factors affected the intention of the tourists to travel along the R10 routes, which are summarized in Table 1 to Table 4.

From the tables, it can be seen that for ASEAN tourists, the factors affecting the intention to travel along Route 1 (Thailand and Cambodia and Vietnam) are sustainable creative activities factor, cultural tourism resources factor and creative industries factor. For Route 2 (Cambodia and Vietnam), the affecting factors are sustainable creative activities factor, cultural tourism resources factor, unique and diversified local culture factor and creative industries factor. For Route 3 (Thailand and Vietnam), the factors are sustainable creative activities factor, human interaction factor and creative industries factor. Whereas for Route 4 (Thailand and Cambodia), none of the factors effects their intention to travel along the route.

As for non-ASEAN tourists, who are mostly Europeans, the factors affecting the intention to travel along Route 1 are cultural travel and tourism factor, human interaction factor and hospitality and local tourism infrastructure factor. For Route 2, the factors are human interaction factor, cultural travel and tourism factor and hospitality and local tourism infrastructure factor. For Route 3, the factors are cultural travel and tourism factor human interaction factor, authenticity factor and hospitality and local tourism infrastructure factor. For Route 4, the only factor affecting their intention to travel is authenticity factor.

2. Qualitative analysis

Content analysis was done based on the interviews with 18 members from public sectors, private sectors and local communities of the three countries, and 12 tourists traveling along the R10 routes which are summarized below.

2.1 Hospitality and Local tourism infrastructure: Local people at the tourist destinations are friendly to tourists and welcome them with warm hospitality. However, in many places, the tourism infrastructures are not up to expectations. The roads along the routes have not been completed in many areas, which make traveling along the routes difficult and time-consuming. While air travel might be possible in a few major destinations along the routes, most of the other destinations are not accessible by air. There are also not sufficient accommodation types to suit the needs of various types of tourists in many destinations, especially those of flash-backpackers and non-backpackers who need a little luxury in travel. In addition, there are language barriers as many locals do not speak English which hinder communication with tourists.

2.2 Cultural tourism resources: The originality of the local communities is well preserved. Tourists can enjoy the authenticity of the local cultures and customs, their unique lifestyles, traditional buildings, local costumes, legends, history and temples. However, the cultures and customs and the lifestyles of Thai, Cambodian and Vietnamese along the route are partially similar in some places. For example, similar fishing villages, temples, dances and music, festivals and legends can be found in multiple areas of the route.

2.3 Unique and Diversified local culture: The strengths of the route are diversified local cultures and customs, races, religions and lifestyles of the people from three countries, with the ingredients of authenticity in various destinations which are found attractive to many tourists, especially to

Westerners. However, there are similarities in some destinations, which make the uniqueness of each destination unclear.

2.4 Creative tourism industries: There are various creative tourism activities for the tourists to explore, especially in the area of culture and history tourism, ecotourism and volunteer tourism. For examples, tourists could experience the originality of local lifestyles through homestay, study the history of the tourist destinations, learn the traditional culture of the local people, cook local cuisine from local ingredients, make their own traditional art and craft souvenirs, helping in environmental conservation, learning about eco-system of the local natural resources, and involving in volunteer activities with local communities. The opportunities for the activity-related authenticity provide sense of involvement and a taste of local living experience for the tourists.

2.5 Roles of public sectors in promoting tourism: Public sectors from the three countries have been actively involving in the marketing and public-relation activities to promote tourism in the area using various media. Cares have also been taken in ensuring the safety of the tourists, in developing new green travel destinations, in protecting the environment, in easing border crossing formality and visa application, and in building more tourist facilities and infrastructure.

2.6 Collaboration among public sectors, private sectors and local communities in promoting creative tourism: There are collaboration efforts between public sectors and private sectors in organizing familiarization trips and exploring new travel destinations. Local communities are also involved in environment protection with the assistance from public sectors. All sectors are actively and collaboratively promoting local cultural activities and green destinations to ensure sustainability and authenticity of the destinations. However, the lack of funding hinders such activities in some areas and some of the local entrepreneurs still lack the knowledge of sustainable tourism.

CONCLUSION

From the research, it can be concluded that there are not many grand highlights in terms of tourist destinations along the route. Most of the tourists that travel along R10 routes come to these places to experience different cultures and customs, different lifestyles and the originality of the destinations. They are not expecting too much luxury, but a comfortable accommodation must be available to attract various types of tourists. In many places, tourism infrastructures need to be improved. Therefore, successful implementation of sustainable creative tourism along the routes lies on the strength of its authenticity. The travel programs suitable for the routes may therefore be divided into three creative programs, all based on the elements of authenticity: (1) Cultural and historical tourism (2) Eco tourism, and (3) Volunteer Tourism. The creative activities designed for each of the above mentioned programs must be based on authenticity and the programs should integrate the activities

that are found to affect tourist intention to travel to that specific route and destination. It is suggested that for ASEAN tourists, the program should contain sustainable creative activities factor, creative industries factor, cultural tourism resources factor and unique and diversified local culture factor; while for non-ASEAN tourists, the programs should incorporate human interaction factor, cultural travel and tourism factor, authenticity factor and hospitality and local tourism infrastructure factor. The guidelines are summarized in Table 5.

Table 1. ASEAN tourists: Demand factors affecting intention to travel

Demand factors	Intention to travel to:							
	Route 1		Route 2		Route 3		Route 4	
	Std.β	t	Std.β	t	Std.β	t	Std.β	t
DF1	.133	1.321	.098	.909	.181	1.669	.152	1.134
DF2	.434	5.104**	.431	.4755**	.317	3.465**	-.059	-.537
DF3	-.118	-1.165	-050	-.466	-.119	1.095	.018	.131
DF4	.121	1.280	-.089	-.883	.053	.521	-.030	-.252
F	16.024**		9.090**		8.154**		.536	
R^2	27.0%		17.4%		15.9%		1.6%	
Adj. R^2	25.3%		15.5%		13.9%		-0.14%	

** p<0.01

Table 2. ASEAN tourists: Supply factors affecting intention to travel

Supply factors	Intention to travel to:							
	Route 1		Route 2		Route 3		Route 4	
	Std.β	t	Std.β	t	Std.β	t	Std.β	t
SF1	.139	1.230	.136	1.167	.109	.917	.037	.268
SF2	.206	1.848**	.293	2.554*	.196	1.676	.242	1.826
SF3	-.173	-1.671	-.228	-2.133*	-.118	-1.088	-.170	-1.520
SF4	.330	3.480**	.214	2.169*	.224	2.256*	-.043	-.413
F	12.295**		9.241		7.250		1.722	
R^2	22.1%		17.6%		14.4%		5.1%	
Adj. R^2	20.3%		15.7%		12.4%		2.1%	

** p<0.01
Note:
DF1=Cultural travel and tourism factor; DF2= Sustainable creative activities factor;
DF3=Human interaction factor; DF4= Authenticity factor
SF1=Hospitality and local tourism infrastructure factor; SF2=Cultural tourism resources factor;
SF3=Unique and diversified local culture factor; SF4=Creative industries factor
Route 1=Thailand and Cambodia and Vietnam; Route 2= Cambodia and Vietnam;
Route 3=Thailand and Vietnam; Route 4=Thailand and Cambodia

Table 3. Non- ASEAN tourists: Demand factors affecting intention to travel

Demand Factors	Intention to travel to:							
	Route 1		Route 2		Route 3		Route 4	
	Std.β	t	Std.β	t	Std.β	t	Std.β	t
DF1	.186	2.706**	.231	3.366**	.235	3.367**	-.133	-1853
DF2	-.042	-.575	-.009	-.118	-.014	-.185	.038	.498
DF3	.284	3.881**	.216	2.937**	.178	2.386*	-.061	-.801
DF4	-.092	1.313	-.088	-1.243	-.180	-2.509*	.226	3.082**
F	9.224**		8.904**		6.620**		3.124**	
R²	12.1%		11.7%		9.0%		4.5%	
Adj. R²	10.8%		10.4%		7.6%		3.0%	

** $p < 0.01$

Table 4. Non-ASEAN tourists: Supply factors affecting intention to travel

Supply factors	Intention to travel to:							
	Route 1		Route 2		Route 3		Route 4	
	Std.β	t	Std.β	t	Std.β	t	Std.β	t
SF1	.417	5.905**	.408	5.740**	.365	5.481**	-.180	-2.319*
SF2	.017	.225	.004	-.239	.056	.441	-.044	-.530
SF3	.067	.962	.017	.048	-.043	-.820	.142	1.856
SF4	-.035	-.517	.089	1.125	.066	.767	.050	.679
F	16.528**		18.744**		16.560**		2.039	
R²	19.8%		21.9%		19.9%		3.0%	
Adj. R²	18.6%		20.8%		18.7%		1.5%	

** $p < 0.01$

Note:

DF1=Cultural travel and tourism factor; DF2= Sustainable creative activities factor;
DF3=Human interaction factor; DF4= Authenticity factor
SF1=Hospitality and local tourism infrastructure factor; SF2=Cultural tourism resources factor;
SF3=Unique and diversified local culture factor; SF4=Creative industries factor
Route 1=Thailand and Cambodia and Vietnam; Route 2= Cambodia and Vietnam;
Route 3=Thailand and Vietnam; Route 4=Thailand and Cambodia

Table 5. Summary of influential factors to be integrated into travel programs

Demand factor	Supply factor
Route 1: Thailand and Cambodia and Vietnam	
- sustainable creative activities factor (ASEAN) - cultural travel and tourism factor (non-ASEAN) - human interaction factor (non-ASEAN)	- cultural tourism resources factor (ASEAN) - creative industries factor (ASEAN) - hospitality and local tourism infrastructure factor (non-ASEAN)
Route 2: Cambodia and Vietnam	
- sustainable creative activities factor (ASEAN) - human interaction factor (non-ASEAN) - cultural travel and tourism factor (non-ASEAN)	- cultural tourism resources factor (ASEAN) - unique and diversified local culture factor (ASEAN) - creative industries factor (ASEAN) - hospitality and local tourism infrastructure factor (non-ASEAN)
Route 3: Thailand and Vietnam	
- sustainable creative activities factor (ASEAN) - cultural travel and tourism factor (non-ASEAN) - human interaction factor (non-ASEAN) - authenticity factor (non-ASEAN)	- creative industries factor (ASEAN) - hospitality and local tourism infrastructure factor (non-ASEAN)
Route 4: Thailand and Cambodia	
- authenticity factor (non-ASEAN)	(none)

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