

Developing Creative Tourism in Southeast Asia: A Case Study of Phuket Old Town Thailand

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Abstract : It is now well understood that cultural tourism in its many forms can be an important dimension of the visitor industry in many cities. However, the role of creative tourism, as the evolution of cultural tourism, in urban areas is less well understood certainly within the Southeast Asian context. This article is exploratory in nature and seeks to better understand the role of creative tourism in urban planning and development through an extensive literature search, rounds of Delphi questionnaires, key informant interviews and applying the results of that research in a case study in Phuket Old Town in Thailand. The literature search together with the Delphi questionnaires and key informant interviews helped to develop a conceptual framework of key success factors in creative tourism and urban planning. The case study identified that creative tourism has been successful because of the participation of key stakeholders including the local community and public and private organizations; incorporates a range of planning and infrastructure projects; and ensures that the host community and visitors participate in learning together as well as exchanging ideas and knowledge.

Keywords: Cultural tourism, creative tourism, planning, Phuket Old Town.

Introduction

While creative tourism has been of interest in many parts of the world for almost two decades, it is not well understood within the Southeast Asian region amongst key stakeholders. The literature identifies that linking creative tourism to city planning and development provides many advantages for a city, but in Southeast Asia, creative tourism as part of current practice is not included in most development plans. Generally, city policymakers and planners and tourism stakeholders do not appear to appreciate the benefits or advantages of implementing the concept of creative tourism as part of a planning and development process (Wattanacharoensil & Schuckert, 2014). In order to better understand the intersection between creative tourism and urban planning a range of research techniques were employed together with the development of a case study of Old Town Phuket district. Old Town Phuket was chosen as the case study given its compact size, significant development activity and a group of stakeholders willing to participate in data-gathering and analysis.

This article is based in part on the results of a research activity carried out by the authors as part of a larger research activity. It is important to note however that the analysis in the article has been expanded given new information and additional perspectives.

Research Methodology

Integrated Literature Review

As with any research project an extensive literature review that looked at city development, cultural tourism, the evolution of cultural tourism into creative tourism, and factors that contributed to successful creative tourism was carried out.

The Delphi Method

Three rounds of the Delphi technique were conducted with twenty-four participants to better understand the creative tourism and urban planning relationship. The first round was carried out to collect primary data from expert participants. The second round was conducted to clarify the opinions expressed in the first round and to seek consensus. The third round was undertaken to define more specific opinions and to help develop a consensus. The participants were tourism educational experts, city planners and those working at management levels in the tourism public and private sectors.

The procedure for selecting the experts in this study was taken from Delbecq et al. (1975), who provided guidelines for soliciting qualified experts for a nominal group technique study to ensure the identification of relevant experts and give them the opportunity to participate. The experts in each panel had direct or indirect experience in creative tourism, and at least half had worked in Phuket tourism. The knowledge resource nomination worksheet (KRNW) is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Knowledge Resource Nomination Worksheet (KRNW)

| Knowledge Resource Nomination Worksheet (KRNW) | | |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| Disciplines or Skills | Number of Panelists | Organizations |
| 1. Academic | 6 | 1. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) |
| 2. City Planner | 5 | 2. Ministry of Sports and Tourism, Thailand |
| 3. Government Sector | 6 | 3. Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) |
| 4. Private Tourism Sector | 7 | 4. Phuket Tourism Association (PTA) |
| | | 5. Leading Universities in Southeast Asia |
| | | 6. Non-Governmental City Planning Organizations |
| | | 7. International Tour Operators |
| Total | 24 | |

Source: The authors

Key Informant Interviews

Interviews with key informants were used both at the beginning of the research and after the Delphi. Given resource constraints key informant interviews were used as indicated by Veal (2006), interviews generate large amounts of information from relatively small numbers of people. The preliminary interviews

were conducted to obtain general information on creative tourism and city development. After the Delphi method, in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted in order to clarify any unclear points from the Delphi method. Seventeen key informants were purposely chosen for in-depth interviews, including respondents at the national, provincial and community levels. The respondents were representatives of the key stakeholder groups, which were provincial and local government, non-governmental organizations and the local community.

Results of the Integrated Literature Review

The results of the literature review yielded several findings that have been integrated into four topic areas: (i) the evolution of cultural tourism into creative tourism; (ii) the role of stakeholders in the development of a creative tourism destination; (iii) the city as a creative tourism destination; and (iv) the identification of the challenges facing a city wishing to become a creative tourism destination.

From Cultural Tourism to Creative Tourism

The literature clearly identified that there were major concerns expressed about the lack of involvement and participation between local communities and visitors in traditional cultural tourism. This lack of engagement and the fact that many destinations, who offered the same mass cultural tourism products, could be at a disadvantage given changes in consumer behaviour and tastes. Creative tourism emerged as an alternative to traditional cultural products and experiences providing a different form of tourism which embraced a broadly defined culture with higher involvement of tourists in its production. The tourists and their creativities were highlighted as creative tourism providers. (Richard, 2010, 2013).

Greg Richards and Crispin Raymond (2000) define creative tourism as “tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences, which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are taken”. In the 21st century, creative tourism is highlighted in a range of publications (Richards and Wilson, 2006, 2007; Wurzburger et al., 2008; Richards, 2011a; Richards and Marques, 2012; Richards and Russo, 2014), conferences, seminars, lectures, training courses and presentations in many parts of the world (creativetourismnetwork.org). According to an OECD report (2014), creative tourism is not only a new kind of tourism, but a demonstration of innovation and an expansion of tourism experiences that go beyond traditional cultural tourism.

The concept of creative tourism is now seen as an important element of planning for tourism not only because of changes in consumer demand, but also because it has a good fit with a range of contemporary policy agendas. In the same way, creative tourism is seen as playing a role as a development alternative. Creative tourism serves the needs of tourism destinations to offer something new and different to the consumer to avoid market decline. Secondly, it attracts small

creative enterprises as well as creative individuals to live, play and work in the destination. The policy makers also use creative development strategies as a tool to improve the social and economic aspects of tourism (Richards and Marques, 2012).

Stakeholders in the Development of a Creative Tourism Destination

Freeman (1984, p.46), defines a stakeholder as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives”. The UNWTO (2010) identifies stakeholders in tourism destinations as tourism professionals, public authorities, the press and other media.

For the purposes of this article, and following Swarbrooke (2001), stakeholders include governments at both the national and local levels, creative tourists, host communities, creative tourism businesses and city planners. It is worth noting that all stakeholders are important to the success of creative tourism destination development, but some groups are more important than others in achieving the ultimate outcome of a development process (Vincent, 1990). For instance, governments must issue policies and closely monitor the impacts and outcomes of their policies toward creative tourism at a national level. Hosts direct their concern to the local level, including communities, local economics, and the social and environmental impacts of the implementation of creative tourism. Tourism businesses are focused on tourism products and marketing communication as well as monitoring the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of their clients, while tourists usually focus on the quality of the tourism product and tourism experiences available to them. (Hardy and Beeton, 2001). Urban planners among many other groups need to be concerned with the number of tourist arrivals in a city and the exploitation of public amenities created for local residents.

Urban Areas as Creative Tourism Destinations

Urban areas function as places of concentration, with a variety of activities of social, cultural and economic attributes. Cities are centers of national culture, art, music, literature, architecture, and urban design that create attractions for tourists, causing the rise of urban areas as places for tourism as well as places for local people to pursue their everyday lives (Karski, 1990; Page and Hall, 2003; UNWTO, 2012). As a consequence, urban tourists and local people engage with each other, both intentionally and unintentionally. Often, they engage, learn and participate in similar activities or events making it difficult at times to differentiate between visitors and residents.

Tourism can bring about change in the culture of urban areas, attract young workers and increase cultural amenities (Spirou, 2011). In developing a creative tourism city, the literature indicates that there are several impacts to be considered. As stated by Spirou (2011), the implications associated with the rise of the creative tourism city include potential negative social and economic impacts, the diversion of valuable resources and difficulties in sustaining a city that strives to meet the needs of both visitors and residents.

Challenges to the Creative Tourism City

The research identified that there are challenges to creative tourism development. Peck (2005) develops a critique of the popularized concepts of the “creative class” and “creative cities”. Kratke (2010) challenges Richard Florida’s “creative class” theory with empirical research done in Germany which shows that creative professionals, which Kratke calls the “dealer class, do not have a significant or positive impact on the success of city areas in developing sustainable economic structures”. There is also evidence of a conflict between academics and policymakers in the adoption and implementation of the creative city concept. As cited by Boren and Young (2013), “the adoption of the creativity concept in city policy is frequently criticized for being welded to economic imperatives”.

The increasing attention on culture and creativity, especially from an economic perspective, can be seen as an abuse of the term creativity itself. Richards and Wilson (2006) draw attention to the risk of “serial reproduction”, in which every urban area is looking for uniqueness and distinctiveness as a unique selling proposition, while employing similar strategies and implementation patterns. If the concept of a creative tourism destination is not managed properly, it could follow the same path as mass tourism, where every place brings similar experiences to the market.

The Results of the Delphi Process

The Delphi process yielded significant and practical insights into creative tourism especially within the Southeast Asian context. The discussion of the results in this article are meant to identify important areas of discussion and exploration in the Delphi process which will be further discussed in a future article. The Delphi technique was utilized to gain opinions from professionals in the region using the approach discussed earlier in this article.

The Role of Tourism in City Development in the Southeast Asian Regional Context

The participants confirmed that tourism plays both an important positive as well as negative role in urban development. The group of panellists involved in the tourism sector mostly viewed tourism as having a positive impact on city development (79%). However, only 20% of the city planners saw the impacts of tourism on the development of the city as positive, 40% saw the impact as neutral, and another 40% believed that tourism had a negative impact on city development. The negative impacts included the permanent migration of blue-collar workers, obliteration of local culture, and over-carrying capacity that damages the city’s environment.

Interestingly, when discussing the role of tourism in city development, the economic aspects were always the first priority for the Delphi panellists (100%). Even though half the respondents (50%) to the Delphi survey mentioned that tourism development must include economic, social and environmental aspects,

only 42% specifically discussed the social aspects, and only 17% mentioned the environmental aspects, with no examples given.

The Concept of a Creative Tourism City

A definition of a creative tourism city in an ASEAN context was presented to the Delphi panellists in order to get a consensus among them. Presenting a definition of a creative tourism city raised several key issues from the panellists, including: the lack of understanding of the terminology of creative tourism; the prioritization of issues between residents and tourists; the role of the creative class; and the importance of cultural exchange and co-creation in the success of a creative tourism city. The Delphi process allowed the development of a somewhat revised definition of a creative tourism city.

“A creative tourism city is a city with a unique identity where tourists and local people in the city engage, learn and participate in the same activities or events together, both intentionally and unintentionally, in their everyday lives. The creative tourism city offers creative spaces and cultural amenities for everyday living. The rise of the creative tourism city helps change the culture of cities, attracting a creative class, increasing cultural amenities, making the city grow sustainably in ways that preserve and enable continuous improvement of the city’s cultural and creative substance, and causing positive impacts on the economic, social and environmental facets of the city.”

A Creative Tourism City Should Focus on City Residents First and Put Tourists as a Second Priority.

The local community can be seen as the driving force of the success of a creative city. These local people create the processes and present their products to the tourists, which means they are able to tell a story about their city. This process is real, authentic and impossible to mimic. The authenticity cannot be staged. It is important to ensure that the investment in a city is beneficial to the city’s local residents so that they can live in the city and not desire to move out to settle in other areas.

A Creative Tourism City Must Include All People in Creative Fields, Not Only Artists.

The findings show that just highlighting artists is too narrow a group to drive a successful creative tourism city. It is important to broaden the term to other key stakeholders, creative people in all fields, as addressed by one Delphi panellist:

“... Is it necessary for artists to be singled out? There are other forms of creativity. What about creative solutions to city making? Is a young software engineer with an innovative start up welcome in the creative tourism city? Or is she excluded because she isn’t an

artist? I wouldn't think so. So you need to broaden the definition to include all forms of creativity, including in the way the city is managed".

Cultural Exchange and Co-Creation are Crucial for the Success of a Creative Tourism City.

The Delphi process yielded significant results around this finding. As mentioned by a Delphi panellist, co-creation enables the creative tourism city to grow sustainably in ways that preserve and enable continuous improvement of its cultural and creative substances. Also, co-creation between tourists and local people leads to unity and cultural exchange. It gives new generations an insight into their own cultural heritage and encourages them to maintain their heritage.

Although cultural exchange and co-creation are crucial for a successful creative tourism city, it is important to ensure that cultural exchange does not lead to cultural changes or gentrification, where the rise in tourism intentionally or unintentionally forces local residents to move from a gentrified area to seek lower cost housing outside the city. The benefits of creative tourism for the development of a city can become distorted and misdirected, as emphasized by a Delphi panellist:

"... whenever a gentrification has occurred, it will cause damage to a city. Local people and their norms are creative tourism resources that attract tourists to visit a city. Once tourism is developed and the local people have no ability to manage their own city properly, tourism can force to local residents to move out. Once former residents move out and the newcomers move in, it will bring about gentrification that may destroy creative tourism resources".

Seven Key Success Factors

The discussion around the key success factors was central to the creation of a conceptual framework. The most mentioned factors by the Delphi panellists were stakeholder management, and a city's cultural amenities. The second most mentioned factors were: policy and planning by national and local authorities, city management and operations by local authorities and NGOs, and the city's fundamental infrastructure. The third most mentioned factor was financial support from government and private funds and the least mentioned was marketing and branding of the city, mentioned by 20.0% of the panellists. The placement of marketing and branding in the list of priorities is surprising.

Apart from the seven key factors, there were other ideas and suggestions mentioned by the panellists for the successful development and planning of a creative tourism destination of a city in the Southeast Asian region including that the city retains its former residents; there is investment in local talent and it provides opportunities for local people to create products and services for local

people, not tourists; requires regulations that are systematically and fairly enforced, including use of zoning, building-codes, and capital gains taxation.

The Results of the Integrated Literature Review

The literature review and analysis allowed the development of an initial framework to be applied to the case study situation. The framework is presented in Figure 1 and outlines the seven key success factors to developing a creative tourism city.

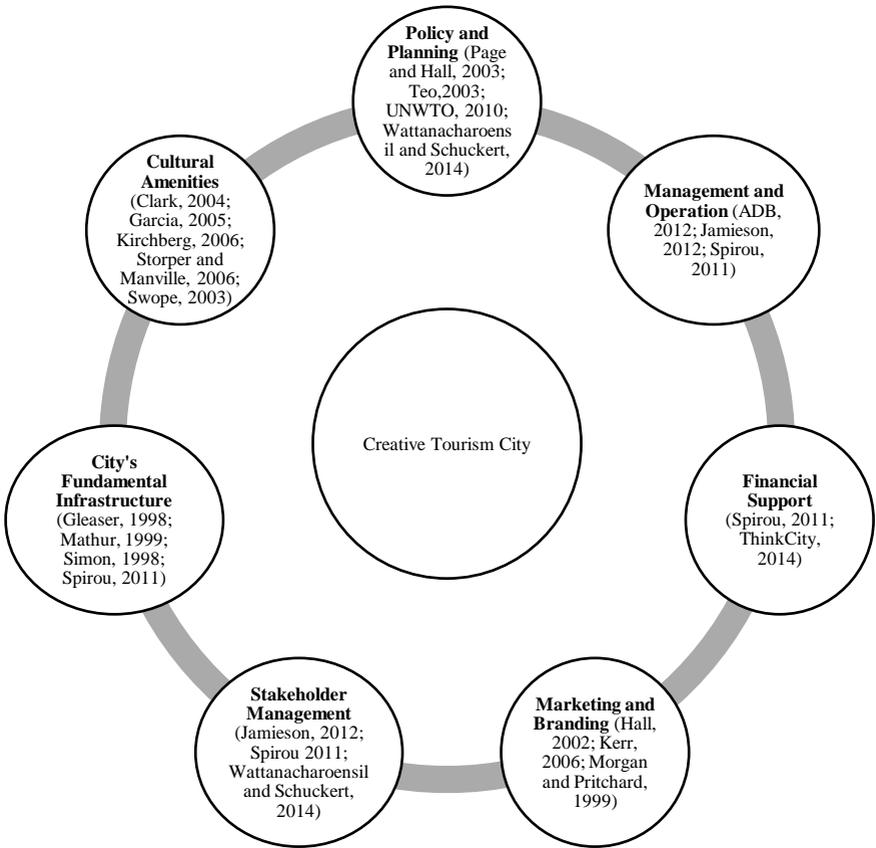


Figure 1: The Seven KSFs for Developing a Creative Tourism City

Source: Authors

The Case Study

About Phuket

Phuket is the largest island in Thailand, with an area of 540 square kilometres, about the same size as Singapore. As of 2019, Phuket had 416,582 registered residents, of which 79,308 live in the Phuket City Municipality area (Phuket National Statistical Office, 2020). The major income of the Province is generated from the tourism sector, with more than thirteen million visitors coming to Phuket each year. The tourism sector generates an annual income for Phuket Province of more than four hundred trillion baht (approximately US\$12 billion) (TAT Intelligence Centre, 2017). Tourism plays a vital role in every part of Phuket Province. Phuket's economy is highly dependent on the tourism industry. A study by Phuket City Municipal Office identified that in 2014 the hospitality industry accounted for 36% of the total gross domestic product (GDP) of the Province. If one incorporates tourism related transportation activities Phuket's economy is 62% directly driven by tourism.

The number of visitors to Phuket has been increasing year on year. The 2019 report from Phuket City Municipal Office specified that the number of visitors to Phuket Province increased fourfold from 2009 to 2015, consisting of 28% Thai visitors and 72% foreigners. In 2017, the income from the tourism sector of Phuket was 423,012.85 million baht (approximately US\$423 million) based on 20 million visitors (TAT Intelligence Centre, 2017). The income had increased by 12% from the previous year which is an astounding figure.

Although tourism is the major source of income, there is a question of how to retain the benefits of tourism while sustaining natural resources and local cultures that may fade away because of its growth.

Under the current government of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-o-cha, Phuket was one of the three cities to be included in Thailand's creative cities project, together with Chiangmai and Sukhothai (National News Bureau of Thailand, 22 October 2014). The project was presented at the 6th Asia-Europe Culture Ministers' Meeting (ASEM CMM6) in Rotterdam on 17-23 October 2014. The policy stressed the use of innovation in adding value to Thai culture and wisdom through various initiatives.

Old Town Phuket

The historic Sino-Portuguese zone in Old Town Phuket is a place with many cultural tourism resources. Thalang, Dibuk, Krabi, Phang Nga, Yaowaraj and Rassada roads, along with Soi Rommanee are the main areas in Old Town Phuket where Sino-Portuguese buildings are well preserved. These structures include shops, houses, mansions and government buildings. These areas are rich in cultural resources that could be developed in order to serve creative tourism; for example, home stay services provided by the owners of Sino-Portuguese buildings, cooking classes conducted by local people and local batik painting (Panitcharenrkit, 2013).

Old Town Phuket has the advantage of possessing Sino-Portuguese architecture and an outstanding mixture of Eastern and Western cultures that reflect the unique local lifestyle, food, language etc. One of the authors has observed both local and tourist behaviours in Old Town Phuket since 2011 and noticed the changes in tourism facilities and activities in the area. In order to understand the potential of this city thoroughly, the researcher met with community leaders, local residents, local tour operators and vendors to get a perspective on the level of community engagement with the planning and development of creative tourism products in Old Town Phuket. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and Phuket City Municipal Office were sources of information that provided primary and secondary data relating to the research site.

It is encouraging that creative tourism practices are continuously being developed in the area of Old Town Phuket, with the collaboration between Phuket Municipal Office, community leaders, and the local community. It is undeniable that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on Old Town Phuket district.

The Role of Tourism in the City Development of Old Town Phuket

In 1992, the Phuket City Municipal Office initiated a project to revitalize the Old Town district of Phuket, which was chosen as a pilot environmental project. This project was sponsored by Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit of Germany, an educational institution, along with the Department of Local Administration and the Ministry of the Interior, Thailand. At the time of writing, the Phuket City Municipal Office has continued to support city development projects in order to maintain a good quality of life for the local people as well as attract tourists into the city. Projects have included the improvement of walkways and roads, burying electrical wires, increasing road lighting, establishing a flood prevention system, creating waste and garbage management systems, promoting special tourism events, and supporting the weekend market. These projects are all part of Phuket's city development plan to improve the quality of life for local inhabitants as well as for the sustainability of tourism.

To emphasize the role of tourism in the development of Old Town Phuket, there has been an ongoing project, Revitalizing Old Town Phuket's Economy by Networking Power, supported by the Phuket City Municipal Office. Although the fundamentals of this project focus on the improvement of Old Town Phuket's economy, positive outcomes for the social and environmental aspects are seen as indirect but important benefits.

The project was initiated in 1980 by a group of local people interested in the history of the Old Town with the objective of preserving architecture and historical buildings. The local initiative was successful and in 1992 the project was included in the Phuket Province environmental operational plan to develop and preserve the architecture of the Old Town commercial area. In 1998, the Phuket City Municipal Office, together with local people and educational institutions, hosted an event illustrating local life in the past. The objective was to revive the Old Town Phuket

area using tourism as a tool for development. The event was successful, and based on that success it has been held every year until the present.

With the proof of the success of the Old Town event, the next step in community empowerment was to strengthen the tourism sector for the benefit of city development. The Old Town community was officially established in 2009, with the purpose of gathering the local community together to revitalize their hometown and form a tourism network. With cooperation between the community and many public and private organizations, several projects to revitalize the Old Town and develop tourism in the area were accomplished. These projects included repainting old buildings on a historical alley, constructing an underground cable system in 2010, renovating the Peranakan Museum in 2014, and repairing the pavements and roads in 2017.

Today, the plan to strengthen the local economy with tourism in the Old Town continues based on the concepts of creativity and innovation. In terms of creativity, the philosophy is to grow the economy based on the fundamental local identity. Within this philosophy, several tourism experiences have been introduced for visitors including the rehabilitation of Sino-Portuguese buildings, highlighting local gastronomy, the Baba-Yaya local dress up event, establishing a tourist information center, encouraging street art, supporting weekend markets, assisting the Peranakan Museum, and working with the local tourism community of Old Town Phuket. The objective this activity is to (i) create a city with a good quality of life for local people; (ii) objective of this to enhance the environment of the city; and (iii) strengthen the local economy through creative tourism development to ensure that local people can meet the needs of their families.

Data from the Phuket Municipal Office highlights that from 2013 to 2017, the number of registered accommodation and restaurants in Phuket Old Town significantly increased. Registered accommodation increased from 3 to 25 places, or 8-fold, and the number of restaurants more than doubled from 21 to 56 in four years. The number of visitors to the Old Town also increased year on year. The activities and events in the city drew significant numbers of tourists and revenue. For example, the weekend markets attracted 6,441 visitors per day on average, which brought revenue of 4.8 million baht (approximately US\$140,000) per day into the city. The events exhibiting local life in the past, hosted once a year, attracted 12,608 visitors per day and brought revenue of 7.7 million baht (approximately US\$240,000) per day into the city. These revenues were not only allocated to local people who participated in the events, but were retained by the city to fund other city development projects in the future.

This increased activity has had a major impact on the economy of the Old Town. In addition, the benefits for the area include increased social cohesion among the local citizens and an improved local environment. Based on interviews it was clear that the residents were proud that the various initiatives had attracted the young generation to return and settle in their hometown. They have opened restaurants and coffee shops helping to strengthen Phuket's local identity. They reconceptualize local dishes to appeal to visitors with sophisticated palate. They

have brought back the local style of dresses and tell the story of their ancestors to the visitors. One interviewee stated “*What we are doing now is creating a living museum. We were able to protect our culture, our soul, and our pride because of tourism*”.

In Old Town Phuket, creative tourism has been successful because of the participation of key stakeholders including the local community and public and private organizations. The city has intentionally and unintentionally implemented the concept of creative tourism that allows the host community and visitors to participate in learning together as well as exchanging ideas and knowledge.

The Level of Understanding of Creative Tourism by Stakeholders in Old Town Phuket

One of the interesting findings from the case study is that there are varying levels of understanding of what creative tourism is amongst the many stakeholders in the case study area.

At the local authority level, the concept of creative tourism appears to be well understood, but it is not seen as a key driver of city development. Instead, community-based tourism and cultural tourism were highlighted as more effective strategies. The Phuket Municipal Office promotes several cultural events in the Old Town district such as vegetarian events, lunar events, Loy Krathong celebrations and rituals, and many religious events, while the Ministry of Tourism and Sport Phuket Office promotes community-based tourism and drives the project “one community one tourism product” for Phuket Province. However, the concept of creative tourism is not passed on to stakeholders at the operational level for their thorough understanding or implementation.

Based on interviews and the results of the Delphi questionnaire only the representative from Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) was found to have a good understanding of the creative tourism concept.

From the interviews with the representatives of the local community and local businesses, it was found that the concept of creative tourism was relatively new to the people of Old Town Phuket. Most had never heard of the concept, while the few who had heard of it did not have a thorough understanding of the concept.

Current Practice of Creative Tourism in Old Town Phuket

With the strong bond of the Old Town community, creative tourism is seen as part of community-based tourism in this district, and the local community has unintentionally adopted creative tourism into the practice of local tourism activities.

It is useful to look at specific examples of creative tourism based on the involvement of local people and visitors. In the Old Town tourism community, visitors can admire Chino-Portuguese architecture and see an exhibition of local life at the 92 Coff & Burgh coffee shop. They can walk into the house and talk to the owner about the exhibition and their ancestors’ way of life. On Thalang Road,

many house owners open their doors to visitors and earn income by offering afternoon tea or local sweets and drinks to visitors. House owners present their food and explain its story to the visitors. There are shops that offer traditional dress for rent. Visitors can dress in Baba-Yaya or Phuket traditional outfits while they explore the city. At a higher level of involvement, the Old Town community initiated a local chef project, training local housewives to demonstrate local dishes and give cooking classes to visitors who want to learn to cook local food. Another house owner recently restored her empty house to be a guesthouse with a gallery that exhibits her ancestors' way of life. Thus, Old Town Phuket becomes a living museum for visitors interested in Phuket's history, Chino-Portuguese architecture, local culture, local ways of life or local food. The mayor of Phuket City in 2018 stated that:

“The Old Town Phuket is a living museum. We are exhibiting our identity and our pride. Our local people in the Old Town are able to present their stories to visitors. We have a history that is older than 100 years, and now our fourth and fifth generations are presenting their history to the world. And this is our pride” (Mayor of Phuket Municipality, 2018).

The implementation of creative tourism has the potential of bringing Phuket city up to the next competitive level of the tourism industry, as well as raising the quality of life for the local community. For instance, Phuket gastronomy has changed from ordinary local dishes to fusion food utilizing creative presentation techniques. Local cuisine has now become well-known and visitors from around the world visit Old Town Phuket because of its gastronomy. The number of foreign visitors to Old Town Phuket increased by 629% from 2011 to 2017. Old, almost forgotten recipes are now taught in community colleges and universities and served in local restaurants. Many old buildings along the historical roads that had been closed for many years are now renovated and reopened as tourist accommodation.

Case Study Findings

The case study yielded a number of results both for overall policy as well as for the further development of Phuket Old Town. The findings included:

Many initiatives of creative tourism in the Old Town Phuket are based on the initiative and creativity of the local community. At least in the case of Old Town it illustrates the efficacy of a bottom-up tourism management approach for a creative tourism destination in a city. According to Theerapappisit (2012), the concept of a bottom-up policy approach to tourism reflects the principle of local communities setting their own goals and making decisions about their resources and future, including heritage preservation, the development of buildings, parks, open spaces and landscapes, and other conservation and development activities. Bottom-up approaches that adopt stakeholders' participation can be considered as a key dimension for the successful management of sustainable tourism (Richards

and Hall, 2000; Fontaine, 2005). Jamhawi and Hajahjah (2016) also highlight that a participatory and bottom-up approach can significantly enhance the sustainable management of cultural tourism.

Getz and Timur (2005) have expressed the view that tourism is an industry that is typically conservative, and slow to change or innovate. Most innovation comes at the local level from new networks and collaborations, or from entrepreneurs. As a result, a bottom-up approach to tourism development can lead to tourism innovation, the development of globally competitive clusters, a focus on special interest segments and experiences, and co-creation of tourism experiences. Getz (2011) suggests a bottom-up approach to tourism development, at three levels, local, regional and national.

Dedicated people who want to make positive changes in their communities are crucial for the success of a creative tourism destination. In Old Town Phuket, the local community has a high commitment to the development of their area despite the fact that there is little direction from the central government.

It is important that local people are able to tell their stories. This means creating authentic stories, which are meaningful for visitors. In the case of Old Town Phuket, many local residents who understand their roots and value their history are proud to present their stories to visitors in the form of living museums, galleries, coffee shops, tea houses, dress and local food. However, it is important to note that, currently, there are only a few local people with a thorough understanding of their ancestral story and who are able to tell it to visitors. To deal with this deficiency there is a need for a capacity building initiative to increase awareness of local heritage and learn how to tell their story.

Part of the capacity building exercise is to ensure that local people, as well as officials, are well-versed in interpretive concepts and techniques. It is important to ensure that both tangible and intangible local identities are interpreted through the appropriate tools. The community is already doing this through food, ways of life but they require further assistance to bring this up to higher levels of storytelling.

With increased tourism activity it has become evident that managing visitor capacity is now of paramount importance. For example, pavements and roads are narrow and therefore it is impossible to facilitate large groups of tourists without disturbing the local population. In order to deal with the limited physical limits of the area's carrying capacity limits will have to be developed and enforced. Other measures could include tour bus parking areas, smoking zones for visitors, tourist capacity limitations and visiting time limitations. It is recognized that these are ambitious directions to be pursued and that managing over-tourism has difficulties in its implementation.

There is already concern that the success achieved to date may lead to gentrification. This is a topic unto itself but clearly there is a need for both government regulation and local control to ensure that local people are able to stay

in the area and deliver an authentic experience while enjoying an increased quality of life.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are a number of gaps in the knowledge of planning and developing creative tourism destinations in Southeast Asian cities which would benefit from further research. Recommendations include:

Future research could examine other potential creative tourism destinations located in diverse geographical areas of Thailand, such as Chaingmai or Khon Kaen, or other cities in the Southeast Asian region identified by the research respondents, such as Penang, Malacca, Singapore, Hoi An or Vigan City. In these urban areas the seven key success factors could be used to compare the types of development and the success of creative tourism.

Along with assessing the role of the seven factors of success in various urban areas research could concentrate on indicators that could measure the achievement of the implementation of the seven key success factors. These indicators could be derived from the community, and used for the establishment of short term, medium term and long-term measurements of the planning and development process.

Once several cities have been assessed an integrated approach to planning and development of creative tourism cities in the Southeast Asian region should be proposed for the mutual benefit of the cities in the region. It is recognized that this is an ambitious objective.

Conclusion

This project investigated the role of creative tourism in Southeast Asian cities with a particular focus on Old Town Phuket as a study site. The research was carried out before the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic that has severely impacted the Phuket economy. There can be no doubt that the new normal where interactions will be limited at least in the short term will significantly impact the creative economy and creative tourism. Creative tourism by its very nature involves social interaction and cultural exchange activities between tourists and the host community. If social distancing practices and other regulations continue to be enforced an important area of inquiry will be to assess the effects of COVID-19 on creative tourism. The challenge will be to provide visitors with an interactive and authentic experience without necessarily having the kind of intense physical interactions of the past.

The authors look forward to further sharing the results of their work and would be interested in working cooperatively in applying the approach used in this case study and other destinations.

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