

Development of community souvenir packaging to support tourism in Maha Sarakham Province

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Abstract - This research aimed to enhance production potential and develop community products to achieve an aesthetically pleasing appearance. It focused on developing packaging that effectively protects the products, provides comprehensive and reliable product information, and prepares community products for the market. The study emphasized utilizing local identity to create added value for the products, thereby sustainably strengthening the community economy and responding to the domestic tourism policies of Maha Sarakham Province. The research methodology employed a participatory approach encompassing the upstream, midstream, and downstream phases, along with the application of the quality management cycle. Field surveys of production processes and interviews with target entrepreneurs were conducted to analyze data and establish appropriate product and packaging development guidelines in accordance with the objectives. This involved integrating collaboration among the university, Maha Sarakham Town Municipality, and community enterprise groups, including organizing practical training workshops. The results revealed that the project successfully created standardized packaging prototypes that effectively communicate the local identity for five products. For instance, the dried pounded unripe rice (Khao Mao) from the Pho Si 1 community was upgraded to a vacuum-sealed bag to extend shelf life and facilitate transportation, featuring a label design reflecting the Maha Sarakham clock tower's identity. These outcomes help build a positive image, increase economic value, foster a sense of pride, and serve as a driving force for community enterprises to sustainably develop their products for future commercial distribution.

Keywords: Packaging development, community products, souvenirs, tourism, Maha Sarakham Province

1. Introduction

Maha Sarakham Province has implemented policies to promote domestic tourism, with a strong emphasis on developing community products and enterprises to fully maximize the region's potential. Within the Maha Sarakham Town Municipality, several well-known products from various communities exist, such as Khao Mao (dried pounded unripe rice) from Pho Si 1, Pla Ra Bong (fermented fish chili paste) from Si Sawat 2, Kai Kem Mee Dee (salted eggs) from Pho Si 2, Mee Krob Mae Kee (crispy noodles) from Samakkhi 1, and fabric scrap jewelry from Abhisit 2. These are recognized as high-quality local products ideal for tourists and visitors. However, despite their suitability as souvenirs, these products have faced limitations regarding unappealing packaging and inadequate product protection.

This aligns with community economic development approaches, which indicate that integrating cultural capital and local identity into souvenir packaging design not only reflects cultural value but also significantly elevates economic value and attracts tourists (Weerathaweemas et al., 2020). Therefore, this project aims to promote production potential and design distinctive, protective packaging for community products in the Maha Sarakham Town Municipality, preparing them for the market to generate sustainable income for the communities.

2. Materials and methods

The development of community souvenir packaging followed a systematic process from upstream to downstream, applying the quality management cycle (PDCA) alongside a participatory action plan with local entrepreneurs. The operational steps were as follows:

2.1 Need and goal assessment

The process began by studying the actual needs of target community enterprise entrepreneurs. The primary goal was to develop products that exhibit the identity of the Maha Sarakham Town Municipality and to design packaging suitable for souvenirs.



Figure 1. Project orientation for the participating entrepreneurs.

2.2 Data exploration and integration

Field surveys were conducted to examine production processes and raw materials, and to collect data on pricing, sales, and marketing through interviews with prominent entrepreneurs. The obtained data was then integrated with information from the Social Welfare Division of the Maha Sarakham Town Municipality.



Figure 2. Field surveys.

2.3 Design and development process

The gathered data was analyzed to design packaging prototypes that met practical usage requirements and established new standards for community products.

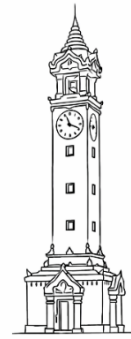
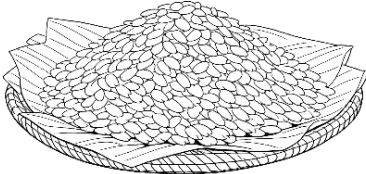
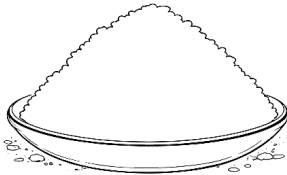


Figure 3. The selected visual identity of Maha Sarakham.

Table 1. Illustrations used on the packaging to promote the product's identity.

Product	Illustrations
<p>1. Khao Mao (dried pounded unripe rice) from Pho Si 1</p> 	 
<p>2. Mee Krob Mae Kee (crispy noodles) from Samakkhi 1</p> 	 

Product	Illustrations
<p>3. Kai Kem Mee Dee (salted eggs) from Pho Si 2</p> 	
<p>4. Pla Ra Bong (fermented fish chili paste) from Si Sawat 2</p> 	
<p>5. Fabric scrap jewelry from Abhisit 2</p> 	

2.4 Result summarization and knowledge transfer

The packaging prototypes were presented to experts. Concurrently, knowledge regarding product and packaging development was transferred to the communities to guide future production and distribution. This aligns with the concept of developing products from community capital to the market, which emphasizes integrating academic design knowledge with the active participation of local producers (Rotkasemsri et al., 2022).



Figure 4. Educational workshops on product and packaging development.



Figure 5. Delivery of packaging prototypes and presentation of final results (1).



Figure 6. Delivery of packaging prototypes and presentation of final results (2).

3. Results

The results of the community souvenir product and packaging development project within the Maha Sarakham Town Municipality demonstrated tangible outcomes in elevating local product standards, aligning with the goals of grassroots economic development and tourism promotion (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2018). The project successfully created practical packaging prototypes for five products: 1) Khao Mao (Pho Si 1 community), 2) Pla Ra Bong (Si Sawat 2 community), 3) Salted Eggs (Pho Si 2 community), 4) Crispy Noodles (Samakkhi 1 community), and 5) Fabric Scrap Jewelry (Abhisit 2 community).

The newly developed packaging formats effectively protect the products and extend their shelf life (e.g., using vacuum bags for Khao Mao) while facilitating easier transportation. Furthermore, the graphic and label designs clearly communicate the identity and image of the Maha Sarakham Town Municipality, effectively attracting consumer interest. Presentations of the new packaging formats to experts and community representatives received excellent feedback. Entrepreneurs gained a better understanding of quality-focused product development, felt increased pride in their products, and expressed readiness to implement the prototypes for actual commercial distribution.



Figure 7. Product and packing of Khao Mao (Pho Si 1 community).



Figure 8. Product and packing of salted eggs (Pho Si 2 community).



Figure 9. Product and packing of crispy noodles (Samakkhi 1 community).



Figure 10. Product and packing of Pla Ra Bong (Si Sawat 2 community).



Figure 11. Product and packing of fabric scrap jewelry (Abhisit 2 community).

4. Discussion

Based on the research findings, several key points can be discussed. Integrating the packaging design process with community participation not only resolves the limitations of previous packaging in terms of aesthetics and durability but also adds value and elevates the product's image as a standardized souvenir. This is consistent with studies indicating that applying design innovation to community products positively influences tourists' purchasing decisions and sustainably creates added value (Pantusart et al., 2023). Furthermore, utilizing cultural capital and local identity as selling points is a crucial strategy for enhancing economic value within the tourism sector (Weerathaweemas et al., 2020).

Secondly, the participatory approach fostered a sense of community among entrepreneurs, making them realize the value of their existing resources. Having the community co-think and co-create from upstream to downstream is a vital factor in increasing the capacity and management potential of robust community enterprises (Pataraachachai et al., 2023). This confirms that unlocking community capital to meet international market demands requires the genuine integration of academic knowledge with the participation of local producers (Rotkasemsri et al., 2022).

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

This research successfully achieved its objective of creating aesthetically pleasing and standardized souvenir packaging prototypes for five communities in the Maha Sarakham Town Municipality. The outcomes generated added economic value and fostered pride among community enterprise groups. The primary success factors were excellent cooperation from the entrepreneurs and support from local government network partners. However, operational challenges included scheduling conflicts among coordinating agencies and the mindset of some entrepreneurs who prioritized short-term profits over long-term standard development.

5.2 Recommendations

Policy and Practical Recommendations: Government agencies or local administrative organizations should provide continuous budget support and monitor community operations to ensure assistance is not merely short-term. Successful entrepreneurial groups should also be promoted as role models to scale outcomes to other communities.

Recommendations for Future Research: Future studies should investigate tourist or consumer satisfaction with the new packaging in actual retail environments. This data can be used to further refine the packaging and develop online marketing channels for the communities.

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