

## Soft Measures for Cycling Promotion in the Northeast of Thailand

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### บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ในการศึกษาการนำมาตรการอ่อนไปใช้ในงานส่งเสริมการใช้จักรยานในภูมิภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือในเรื่องประเภทของมาตรการและผลลัพธ์ที่เกิดขึ้น เครื่องมือวิจัยที่ใช้ในการวิจัยเป็นเครื่องมือแบบผสม ประกอบด้วยแบบสอบถาม การสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก การสังเกตกิจกรรมและแบบสำรวจ กรณีศึกษาประกอบด้วยเมืองขอนแก่น ภาพสนธิ์อุบลราชธานีและศรีสะเกษ งานวิจัยนี้ได้มีการเก็บข้อมูลระหว่างเดือนสิงหาคมถึงเดือนตุลาคม พ.ศ. 2557 ผลการวิจัยพบว่ามาตรการอ่อนที่นำมาใช้ในพื้นที่ที่สามารถแบ่งออกได้เป็น 6 กลุ่ม ได้แก่ การรณรงค์ การประชาสัมพันธ์ การศึกษา การจูงใจ การมีส่วนร่วมของประชาชน และนโยบายและการวางแผน มาตรการอ่อนถูกนำไปใช้มากที่สุดที่ผู้ใช้จักรยานเดิม มาตรการการศึกษาและการจูงใจถูกนำไปใช้น้อยที่สุด

**คำสำคัญ:** การสัญจรจักรยาน เทศบาล นโยบาย

### Abstract

The research aims to explore the use of soft measures for cycling promotion in the Northeast of Thailand, including types of soft measures and their contributions. The research employed multiple methods, including questionnaires,

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in-depth interviews, activity observations and surveys. Khon Kaen, Kalasin, UbonRatchathani and Srisaket are chosen as case study. Field work had been preceded from August to October 2014. The research found that there were six categories of soft measures used in the areas, including campaigning, public relations, education, incentive, public participation, and policy and planning. Their activities focus more on existing cyclists. The education and the incentive were the least implemented programs.

**Keywords:** Transport, Bicycle, Municipality, Policy

## Introduction

A bicycle was introduced to Thailand since 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was used among aristocrats. The bicycle was broadly known when it was used for military's mobility during the Indo-China War and the Second World War. After the war time, Thailand headed towards car-oriented development. Consequently, city trams were left aside; and cycling declined. In responding to a global oil crisis, the first public cycling promotion was initiated in a collective cycling incident in March 1991. (Thai Cycling Club, 2012). This phenomenon was similar to cities worldwide (Buehler and Pucher, 2012). Since then, several attempts regarding cycling promotion have been realized in Thailand. These attempts cover both hard and soft measures

which are two necessary measures in cycling promotion (Pucher and Buehler, 2008; Lanzendorf and Busch - Geertsema, 2014; Aldred and Jungnickel, 2014).

The hard measure intends to alter physical environments towards safety, convenience and comfort (McClintock, 2002). They include constructions of bikeways, bicycle utilities, and laws and regulations. It has high potential in persuade individuals to ride (Chaowarat, 2014). However, it requires high amount of budget and resources for realization. Moreover, they likely confront to high oppositions, especially from people whose on-street parks were taken away.

While the hard measure focuses obstacle avoidance, the soft

measures concentrate on the positive advantages of cycling. They pay more attentions to cultural attitudes. According to Carstensen and Ebert ( 2012) , cycling culture is a factor influencing share of cycling in different cities. Several studies proofs the soft measure's effectiveness. Programs and practices of soft measure include campaigning, public relations, education and transport management. Unlike the hard measure, the soft measure requires relatively low budget and causes lower oppositions. A necessary component is that effective soft measure requires intensive information of target groups concerning their needs and constraints, and exchanging views between stakeholders. This information helps to tailor the soft measure programs suitable for the specific target group ( McClintock, 2002; Oja and Vuori, 2000). Period of realization is another factor of success. The soft measure needs to be proceeded before and after the infrastructure implementation.

Currently, one main constraint of cycling promotion is a bikeway

provision. The existing streets in the city center are too narrow for additional bicycle lanes without eliminating on-street parks. As a safe bicycle way like a bike lane and a bike path are the most required elements of people ( Chaowarat, 2014) , this situation cause reluctant to public organizations. According to interviews, this difficulty in implementing the hard measure makes local authorities giving up to take cycling seriously as an alternative mode of transport. Therefore, this research intends to investigate in the soft measure. It must be taken more seriously, more strategic and more planned, rather than simply annually events for fulfilling demands of the central government. The soft measure might be an actual solution for cycling promotion in cities of Thailand where cycling infrastructure is right now confronting difficulties.

The research aims to explore the use of soft measures for cycling promotion in the Northeast of Thailand. The paper reveals available types of soft measure, examining its contributions, and providing

suggestions for improvement. The research focuses on two tiers, wide-range and in-depth aspects. The wide range is to look at the variety of forms, comparing to good practices in another countries. For the in-depth aspect, particular projects regarding soft measure are chosen for investigation. The theory of persuasive communication is used for analysis. Strengths and weaknesses of those projects will be revealed, leading to discussion and suggestions.

## Methodology

The research employed multiple methods. For the first step, questionnaires were sent to relevant organizations, including municipalities and local bicycle clubs, in twenty cities in the Northeast. In the second step, four cities were chosen for in-depth study. This employed interviews, questionnaires, activity observations and area surveys. These cities included Khon Kaen, Kalasin, UbonRatchathani and Srisaket. Data had been collected from August to October 2014. It was analyzed by statistic method and content analysis.

## Results

The study reveals that both hard and soft measures are used for cycling promotion in the areas. Hard measures appear in a form of bikeway and utility provision, transport management, and land use control. For soft measure, the projects and programs can be subdivided into six groups, including a policy and planning, campaign, public relations, education, incentive, and public participation. The findings of these soft measure projects are following.

### Policy and Planning

Planning is an important element in cycling promotion (Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing, 2002). It is a guideline for cycling system development, covering both soft and hard measures. For a successful cycling plan, local administrations need to have a clear vision with determined projects, appropriate phasing, responsible organizations and budget allocation. General practices of cycling policy and planning in a successful cycling cities are a cycling plan, a written cycling policy, a budget allocating for cycling,

and cycling database, and research on cycling etc. (Wegman et al, 2014; Short and Caulfield, 2014).

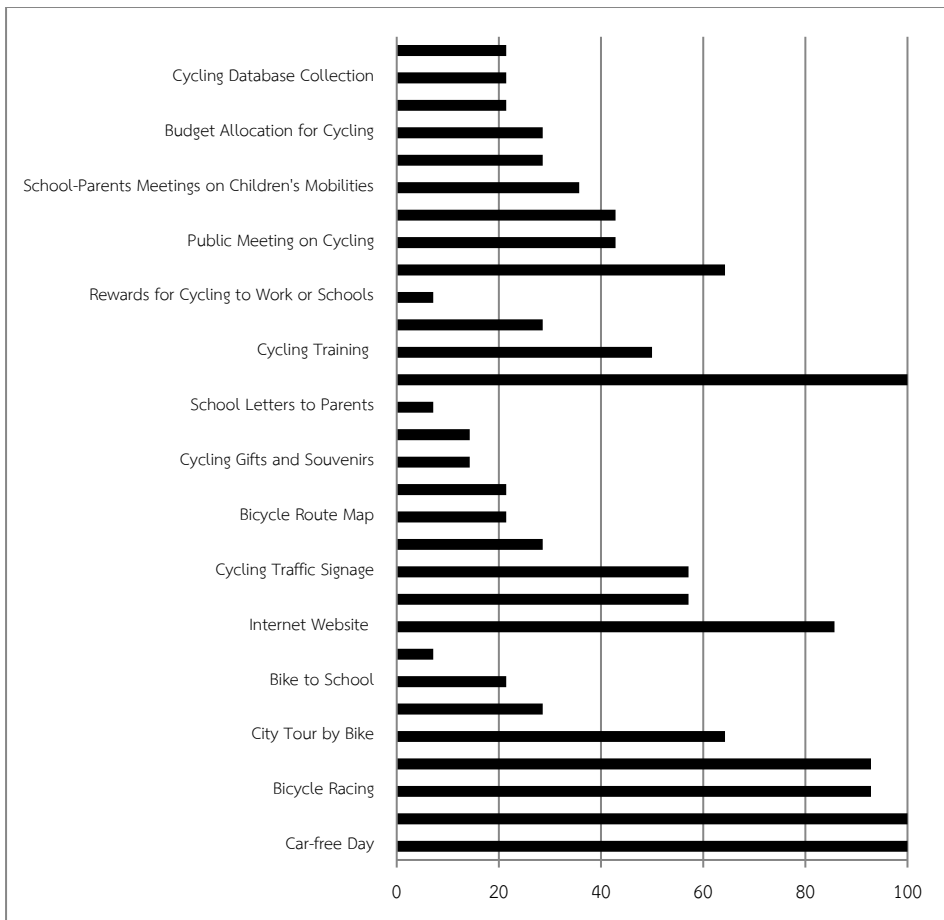
In the Northeast of Thailand, this research reveals that the most available practice regarding cycling policy and planning is allocating budget for cycling (28.57% ); while having a written cycling policy (21.43% ), making a cycling database (21.43% ), and making a cycling plan (21.43% ) are following. This implies that the cycling developments in the areas have been done unsystematically. Complete planning process is neglected in the cycling development. Only typical uncomplicated, short period or low budget projects, like marketing campaign or public relations, can be approved; whereas projects which is complicated, need high budget, long period and plenty resources, like incentive and education, are absent.

### **Public Participation**

Public participation has been widely adapted into urban mobility development, including the cycling. It is supposed to improve public policy formation, reduce conflict and

encourage local action ( Lane, 2005; Vigar, 2006; Douglass, 1998).

This study shows that a public-private partnership in cycling events or project realizations (64.29%) is the most available practice in the areas. The followings are a public meeting on cycling ( 42. 86% ), appointed cycling committees (42.86%), teachers-parents meetings on students' mobility ( 35. 71% ), and participatory cycling data collections (28.57%).



**Figure 1.** Programs and Practices regarding Soft Measure (Percentage)

The public-private partnership in cycling events or project realizations is a collaboration between local administrations, bicycle club and business associations. The events and projects are a Car-free Day, an environmental preservation day or Anti-corruption day, for example. These actual collaborative activities

are still in a low level of public participation. It is still in the level of plan or project realization, instead of participates in a crucial decision making, like setting up visions or allocating budget.

### Campaigns

A cycling promotion campaign is a series of operations intended to achieve a particular purposes regarding bicycle use. General example of cycling promotion campaigns are bike to school, bike to work, bike to local shop, city bike tour, cycling rallies for particular purposes, bike racing, collective riding, and Car-free Day etc.

In the Northeast of Thailand, this study shows that the most practice promotions are a Car-free Day events and a collective riding of particular cycling groups; whereas the following events area bike race (92.86%), a bicycle rally for particular purposes ( 92. 86% ), a bike tour ( 64.29% ), a bike to works program ( 28.57% ), a bike to school program ( 21.43% ), and a bike to local shop program (7.14%).

The Car-free Day is a global-wide event taking place in late November once a year. It aims to persuade people to cycle more for an environmental purpose. In contradiction, the event takes place on Sunday morning when most of the people still stay at home. Therefore, it

gains too less attention from local people on that day. Besides, taking place only once a year makes less recognition to the target group as frequency is one factor to successful persuasion ( Awakul, 1982) . For realization, civil society organization takes a dominate role as an organizer, while governmental organizations are facilitators. Most of participants involving in the event are actual cyclists. They are members of networking cycling group. Therefore, the Car-free Day rarely contributes new bicycle users.

### Public relations

Public relations are the practice of managing the spread of information between an individual or an organization and the public (Gruning, 1984). It aims to inform the public and other stakeholders; and ultimately persuade them to cycle.

In the Northeast of Thailand, the study shows that the most used media for cycling promotion is an internet website ( 85. 71% ). The followings are a logo for local bicycle campaign ( 57.14% ), a cycling traffic signage ( 57.14% ), a cycling exhibition

( 28.57% ), a bicycle route map (21.43%), a cycling instructor's manual (21.43%), a cycling souvenir (14.29%), a local broadcasting channel (14.29%), and a school letter to parents (7.14%).

The internet websites play a significant role in publicizing cycling news, especially a social media like Facebook. They function as a central point of information exchange between group members. The dominant of internet website for group communication implies that the group members are well educated or middle class people. They can afford an access to internet and extra devices like a computer and a smartphone; and they have skills to surf internet, and additional computer programs. Communication messages are varied, for instance cycling tips, bicycles and accessories, events, and detail of group appointment. Because these internet websites are created for the cycling groups whose members are already cyclists and mostly middle class, they make little impact to persuade another group of people for utility ride.

### Education Programs

Education is a form of learning than the knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits. It includes a cycling training, a cycling consulting team, general road safety training, and lessons stated in school curriculum (Cleary, 2002).

The study shows the most use education program available in the Northeast of Thailand is a general road safety training (100%). The following programs are a cycling training (50%) and a cycling consulting team (28.57%).

The general road safety training program aims to equip pupils with knowledge of how to use roads safely. It focuses on motorcycle as it is the most popular means of transport among pupils and is a major cause of accident. Contents of training are significances and appropriate use of helmet, meanings of traffic lights and signage. It is one-day training. This training is a nation-wide program, done by a provincial police department. As the direct output expected are pupils' abilities to use road safely, the cycling promotion gets only byproduct benefit



from this program through enhancement of street users, i. e. motorcyclists, who share streets with bicycle users.

### **Incentive Programs**

Incentive is a kind of motivations that encourages an individual to perform and action. Combining an effective incentive scheme can increase cycling uses (Caulfield and Leahy, 2011).

Among the 14 cities in the Northeast of Thailand, there is only one single program available. It is a reward for riding to work which is a program implemented in a public hospital. This program was initiated by the head of hospital who is currently an outstanding leader in cycling promotion of the area. This implies that the intensive measure is limited since it needs high initiation and collaboration from organization's leaders. Attitudes of these leaders towards cycling must be initially improved. After that innovative and effective incentive schemes can be emerged.

### **Conclusion**

There are various programs and practices regarding the soft measure implemented in the Northeastern cities of Thailand. These forms of soft measure cover all important six different types which available in the successful cycling cities. They are campaigning, public relations, education, incentive, public participation, and policy and planning. For public participation, municipalities highly involve civil society organizations, like local cycling clubs, into the campaigning and public relations. However, they have relatively low involvement in cycling policy making, like a cycling plan or a cycling committee. The actual campaigns and the public relations are ineffective in increasing more bicycle users for utility ride. Their activities focus more on existing cyclists who are members of local cycling groups and mostly ride for recreation. The education and the incentive, which have high potentials in culture alteration, are the least implemented programs in the areas.

An overview of the actual practices of soft measure in the Northeastern cities of Thailand is that the soft measure is not taken seriously as a strategic tool to persuade individual for utility ride. Programs and practices mainly focus on actual bicycle users who ride for recreation. Some effective programs and practices which are available in another successful cycling cities are absent in the areas. And there is no innovative programs emerged.

The situation can be clearly understood when main contributors of the soft measure are concerned. Two main contributors are civil society organizations and public organizations. These organizations have distinctive characteristics, different potentials, and make different contributions in cycling promotion.

The civil society organizations include various local bicycle groups, for instance Bicycle for Health group, Racing Bicycle group, University student group, or Pensioner Bicycle group etc. Currently, they play a leading role in almost every bicycle campaigns, public relations and

education. Although their dominance is so high until it reaches their limited responsibilities and authorities, most of their programs and practices are still general and conventional. Such campaigns are a Car-free Day or bicycle rally for particular purposes. Their objectives mainly focus on announcement. This makes their target groups too broad, instead of specify to a certain group. In contrast, other most implemented campaigns, i.e. collective ride of particular cycling groups and bicycle racing, focus very much on actual cyclists. Therefore, there is lack of campaigns which intend to increase bicycle users in daily life, for instance bike to school, bike to work and bike to local shops. Their contributions do not touch the level of cultural alteration in a short coming period.

The second group is the public organizations, like municipalities, schools, and governmental offices. Concerning the cycling development, they are significant contributors in cycling promotion ( Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing, 2002). They formulate policies and have

authorities towards their students, officials or employees. As public communication has been concerned, the public organizations have high influence towards individual because of their high credibility and power (McCuire, 2001). For evaluation, the research findings show that they make too less contributions in cycling development process. Instead of being a spearhead, they neglect to take a leading role in cycling promotion, and allow civil society organizations take entire responsibilities in the cycling events.

Within local administrations – a directly responsible organization for city's transport – only less than a fourth of cities have a clear written cycling policy, and about 28% having budget allocated for cycling affairs. There is only about a half of cities having a kind of bicycle ways and not more than 36% of cities having a policy to reduce car use in cities. Local cycling clubs participate in every cycling event in the cities, but only about 43% of cities establish a local cycling committee. At the same time, a bike to work program is never realized

within local administrations. For school, there is absent of cycling lessons or any classes teaching about benefits of cycling. All of these activities and programs are crucial because they are effective to persuade people to ride in daily life. They must be initiated and carried on by public organizations, while the current active contributor, i. e. the civil society organizations, has no authority and insufficient resource to realize them. The civil society organizations can take action after the public organizations' initiations or provide them authorities to do. In the circumstance of weak public organizations' leaderships in the cycling promotion, the soft measure programs and practices can only be superficial in terms of persuade individual for utility ride, as appearing in the study areas.

Then the question is raised what need to be improved in order to strengthen the soft measure. First, the perception of relevant organizations towards the soft measure must be changed. It must be taken more seriously as an effective tool to persuade individuals to ride in daily

life, rather than simply for recreation. Like a hard measure, the soft measure must be concerned as a necessary component in cycling promotion. Their programs and practices must contain clear objectives and specified target groups. Activities must be tailored to suit demands. Good examples of programs and practices regarding the soft measure are bike to work, bike to school, bike local shop, school letters to parents, daily announcement speakers within neighborhoods, education programs stated in school curriculum, and cycling incentives etc.

Second, public authorities need to play a leading role in cycling promotion process, instead of simply being a facilitator. Their organization leaders must genuinely realize the significances of cycling; a concrete cycling policy and plan must be produced. Collaborations with another actor must be extended, especially civil society organizations. With the leading of public authorities, programs and practices could be more specified to particular target groups, and getting higher levels of persuasion; the soft measure can do its function

effectively, and ultimately lead to cultural alteration.

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