

## **An Adaptation Model for Creative Tourism Businesses: A Case Study of Khao Yai Economic Roads and Foreign Tourists**

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### **Abstract**

The objectives of this study are: 1) to investigate creative tourism activities affecting the adaptation of creative tourism businesses; 2) to study the opinions of foreign tourists towards creative tourism activities and the adaptation of creative tourism businesses; and 3) to propose an adaptation model for creative tourism businesses: a case study along economic roads near Khao Yai National Park, Thailand, involving foreign tourists.

The main approach used in this research study was a quantitative one. Data collected from 390 foreign tourist respondents was analyzed to determine percentages, means, standard deviations, and using multiple regression. Qualitative research was supplemented by interviewing 13 key entrepreneurs who operate creative tourism businesses on economic roads near Khao Yai National Park. The proposed model was reviewed and critiqued by experts during a seminar organized by all parties involved in the project. The interview outcome indicates that the 5 most important factors of tourists' adaptation activities are learning, participation, networking, cooperation, and guidance. The tourists' opinions regarding activities and adaptation of tourism businesses were very favorable. The study reveals that foreign tourists' personal factors and activities that affected the 6 aspects of adapting creative tourism businesses were: 1) sightseeing, 2) contemplating, 3) souvenir purchases, 4) learning, 5) participation, and 6) co-creation. The result was 71.40 percent ( $R^2 = 0.714$ ) of the variation of the adaptation at a statistically significant level of 0.05.

**Keywords:** *Adaptation of tourism businesses, creative tourism businesses, creative tourism*

### **Introduction**

Tourism in Thailand has grown rapidly and been continuously developing for the past 40 years, although this smooth ride has met with occasional obstacles. Due to its prominence, tourism is a vital contributor to national and local economies in Thailand and is considered to be a high development priority, with support from the government. However, the growth of tourism in Thailand faces a sustainability dilemma because of challenges within and outside the country. Today, the nature of tourism tends to be pursuit of an experience rather than just plain sightseeing. Creative tourism therefore offers opportunities for tourists to experience and participate in activities, learning the arts, history, heritage, and special character of a place. Tourism industries should offer innovative ideas and activities from their knowledge and practices to tourists for unique and unforgettable experiences. Tour managers must recognize that creativity among local people can provide new opportunities to fulfill the evolving interests and demands of tourists. These activities can be milking cows, picking grapes for wine making, growing and picking mushrooms on a farm, etc. Businesses will be more profitable, productive, and consequently enhancing companies' value. Tourists will spend more time engaging in their participative activities of interest and interact more with local social and culture life.

It is therefore necessary to study the factors and develop ideas to complement the adaptation of creative tourism businesses that are important to local economies and foreign tourists, and are located along roads leading to the northern entrance of Khao Yai National Park. The authors

designed an appropriate adaptation model for planning and developing tourism businesses for foreign tourists. It is hoped that this research will lay some ground work with useful and pragmatic information to help business entrepreneurs develop and adapt Thai tourism industries in the future.

### Research Objectives

1. To investigate creative tourism activities that affect adaptation of creative tourism businesses
2. To study the opinions of foreign tourists towards creative tourism activities and the adaptation of creative tourism businesses
3. To propose an adaptation model for creative tourism businesses: a case study along Khao Yai economic roads involving foreign tourists

### Research Hypothesis

1. Activities of creative tourism affect the adaptation of creative tourism businesses.

### Research Conceptual Framework

The authors selected 3 variables for this research. The first variable was adapted from the conceptual model of creative tourism by Richards (2011). The second was obtained from review of 40 related articles from the literature and publications. The third was activities with a creative tourism component that was adapted from the study of adaptation of creative tourism components by Pine and Gilmore (1999).

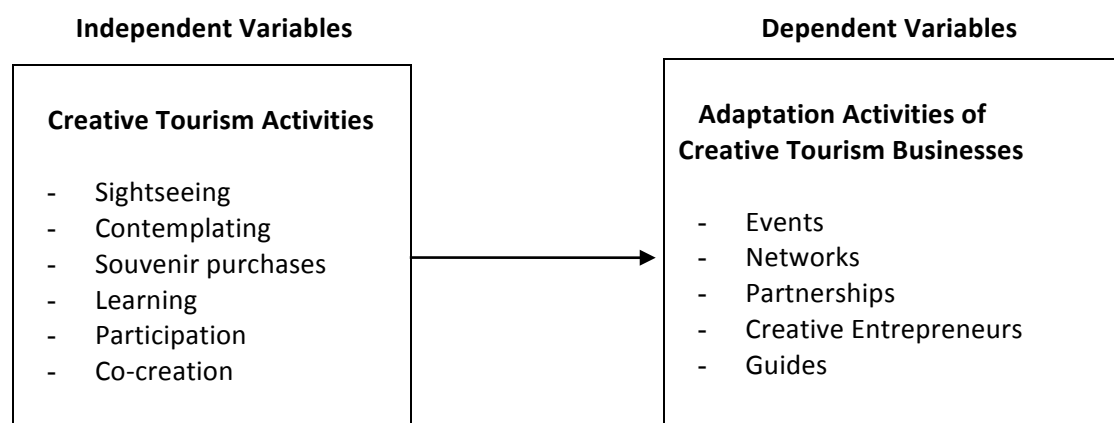


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

### Potential Benefits from This Research

1. Information collected from creative tourism activities may positively affect the adaptation of creative tourism businesses. This will help business entrepreneurs to plan tour activities that better serve foreign tourists in creative tourism.
2. Opinion levels of creative tourism activities collected from foreign tourists will help business entrepreneurs in marketing, planning, and management of creative tourism.
3. This adaptation model of creative business tourism along “Khao Yai Economic Roads for foreign tourists” will help with future planning and development in the tourism industry.

### Related Literature

Richards (2010) has proposed two Basic Modes of Implementing Creative Tourism: using creativity as a tourist activity, and using creativity as backdrop for tourism. Richards suggests that

this new format will transform tourism from long days of travel of ever-worsening quality. Traditional tourism takes travelers to visit and take pictures of interesting and important natural and cultural sites, including beaches, cultural heritage, museums, and monuments. But a new generation of tourists likes to participate in the distinctive features of the areas that they visit. Creative tourism is an initiative that directs attention away from Tangible Cultural Resources to Intangible Cultural Resources. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tourism Development Seminar held from 13 to 16 July 2015, organized by the Creative Academy for Cultural and Historical Tourism, Mahidol University, an article about creative marketing for cultural and historical tourism was presented by Dr. Malinvisa Sakdiyakorn. She asserted that the research conducted by Pine and Gilmore (1999) discovered that creative tourism consists of 5 key factors. These include Sightseeing, Contemplating, Learning, Participating and Co-creation .

The research of Suddan Wisudthiluck and others (2011) discovered that creative tourism encourages visitors to exchange knowledge in order to jointly understand local social, cultural, and environmental values through a profound experience with local residents. An important aspect of creative tourism is that it must include local features and processes in a variety of distinctive cultural and/or natural activities. These activities must lead to cross-cultural knowledge, offering opportunity for experiences with owners of the culture, who help to provide a deeper understanding of them. A factor that leads to the success and sustainability of communities is a sense of the value of cultural and natural heritage, along with a willingness to exchange knowledge with tourists through joint activities. These shared experiences will create bonds between tourists and local residents, along with lasting memories of the “spirit” of tourist locations and a sustainable social, cultural, economic, and natural balance.

The research of Atitayaporn Arunpipattanapong (2011) developed four creative ethnic tourism plans in Nakhon Phanom province, which are: 1) conservation of cultural heritage and local ethnic wisdom; 2) development of the creative tourism body of knowledge; 3) raising the standards of creative ethnic tourism; and 4) cooperation with communities in managing creative tourism initiatives.

The research of Paimanee Kaewsanga and Nisachol Chamnongsri (2012) discovered that nowadays, the behavior of tourists has changed. Tourists want to participate more in tourist activities, and this is coupled with the emerging issues of tourism resource management. Hence, creative tourism proposes that tourists and local communities be enabled to take part in tourism management. Thailand has plenty of tourism resources that can be used to develop creative tourism. Now creative tourism is taking place in many countries around the world. The creative activities consist of traditional cultural goings-on that are part of everyday life. Each tourist activity passes on the local community’s knowledge and experience to tourists through participation in various events, all of which are guided by a professional at all times. Some activities may depend upon experience, combined with tourists’ feelings, such as painting, engraving, and photography, in order to produce creative works.

### **Research Scope**

1. This study covers the area of 3 main roads around Khao Yai National Park: Thanarachata Road (2090), Pansuek-Gudkla (Veterans) Road (1016), and Khao Yai-Wang Nam Khiew Road (2304).
2. Two sample groups were targeted:
  - Group 1: 13 creative tourism business entrepreneurs (data as of February 2015)
  - Group 2: 390 foreign tourists from 13 locations, with 30 tourists per location

### **Methodology**

The authors mainly employed quantitative research methods which were based on an indefinite population, because no data has been collected regarding the number of tourists who visit this area. The sample size was calculated using Cochran formula (W. G. Cochran, 1953) was 384. The authors

added another 6 samples for total of 390 so that each group from 13 locations yielded the same number of 30 samples. Stratified random sampling was applied, and the data collection tool was a questionnaire. A validity test showed an Index of Correspondence (IOC) of 0.62.

The questionnaire was tried out first with 30 creative tourists. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (Kalaya Vanichbancha, 2003) was found to be 0.96, and therefore it was regarded as a reliable tool according to the pre-defined criteria. Statistical analysis was expressed in terms of percentage (%), mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), and standard deviation (S.D.). Multiple regression analysis was conducted using a statistical software program, and supplemented with qualitative in-depth interviews of 13 creative tourism business entrepreneurs along Khao Yai economic roads. The authors specifically selected certain data to build a prototype, which was reviewed and approved with recommendations of business experts during a seminar organized for this purpose.

## Results

### 1. Activities of creative tourism affecting the adaptation of creative tourism businesses.

**Table 1.** Regression Analysis to Predict the Adaptation of Creative Tourism Business Entrepreneurs by Creative Tourism Activities of Foreign Tourists

| Constant/Variable  | b    | SE <sub>b</sub> | $\beta$ | t     | p-value |
|--|------|-----------------|---------|-------|---------|
| Constant   | .446 | .118            |         |       |         |
| Sightseeing  | .069 | .034            | .077    | 2.067 | .039*   |
| Contemplating  | .085 | .031            | .102    | 2.713 | .007*   |
| Souvenir Purchases   | .158 | .027            | .202    | 5.861 | .000*   |
| Learning   | .147 | .028            | .194    | 5.196 | .000*   |
| Participation  | .251 | .035            | .284    | 7.103 | .000*   |
| Co-creation  | .179 | .031            | .221    | 5.751 | .000*   |
| n = 390 ; SE <sub>est</sub> = $\pm$ .266 ; R = .845 ; R <sup>2</sup> = .714 ; F = 159.210 ; p-value = .000 |      |                 |         |       |         |

\* Statistical significance level: 0.05

Notations:

|                |   |                                  |
|----------------|---|----------------------------------|
| b              | = | Regression coefficient           |
| SE             | = | Standard error                   |
| $\beta$        | = | Unknown parameters               |
| t              | = | Student's t distribution         |
| p-value        | = | Attained value of significance   |
| n              | = | Number of samples                |
| R              | = | Sample correlation coefficient   |
| R <sup>2</sup> | = | Multiple correlation coefficient |
| F              | = | Degrees of freedom               |

**Table 1** demonstrates 6 aspects of creative tourism activities affecting creative business entrepreneurs:

1. Sightseeing
2. Contemplating
3. Souvenir Purchases
4. Learning
5. Participation
6. Co-creation

The correlation between adaptation of creative tourism business entrepreneurs and personal factors, together with activities of creative tourism, was 84.50% (R = 0.845). The predictive value of adaptation by creative tourism business entrepreneurs was 71.40% (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.714) of adaptive variability, with a statistically significant level of 0.05, and a standard error of  $\pm$ .266 using the following equation:

$$\hat{Y} = .446 + .069X_1 + .085X_2 + .158X_3 + .147X_4 + .251X_5 + .179X_6$$

Where:  $\hat{Y}$  = Adaptation of Creative Tourism Businesses

$X_1$  = Sightseeing

$X_2$  = Contemplating

$X_3$  = Souvenir Purchases

$X_4$  = Learning

$X_5$  = Participation

$X_6$  = Co-creation

The interview results revealed that the two most important factors of creative tourism activities are (1) Learning and (2) Participation. The 3 most important adaptation aspects for business entrepreneurs of creative tourism activities are (1) Networking, (2) Cooperation, and (3) Guides, which was recently identified.

2. Opinion levels of foreign tourists towards creative tourism activities and adaptation of creative tourism business entrepreneurs are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

**Table 2.** Opinions of Foreign Tourists towards Creative Tourism Activities

| Opinions of Foreign Tourists Towards Creative Tourism Activities |                    | $\bar{x}$   | S.D.        | Satisfaction Level | Order |
|--|--------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|-------|
| 1.   | Sightseeing        | 4.12        | .548        | High               | 1     |
| 2.   | Contemplating      | 3.85        | .592        | High               | 5     |
| 3.   | Souvenir Purchases | 3.87        | .631        | High               | 4     |
| 4.   | Learning           | 3.91        | .652        | High               | 3     |
| 5.   | Participation      | 3.97        | .558        | High               | 2     |
| 6.   | Co-creation        | 3.85        | .607        | High               | 6     |
| <b>Overall</b>   |                    | <b>3.93</b> | <b>.461</b> | <b>High</b>        |       |

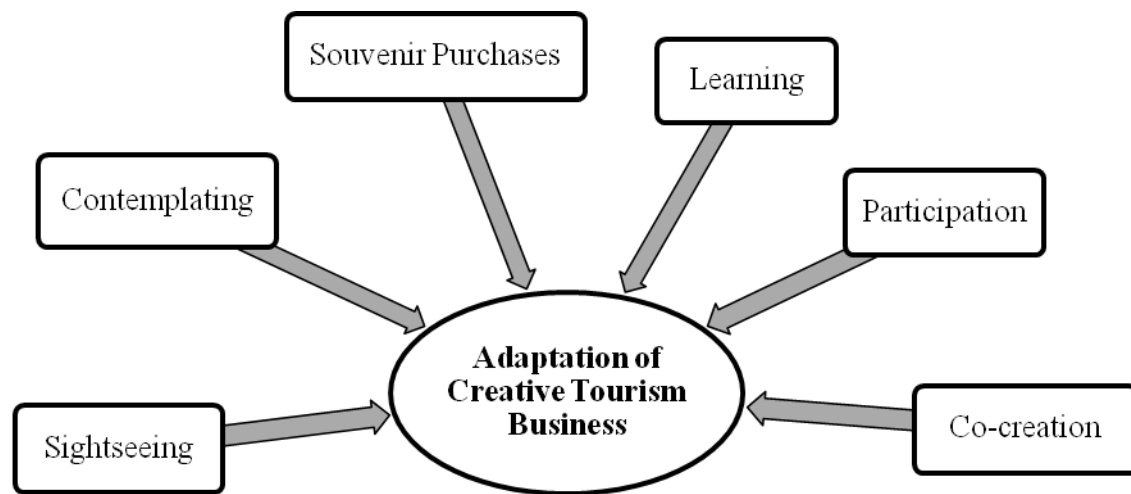
Table 2 demonstrates that the overall satisfaction level of foreign tourists towards creative tourism activities was high)  $\bar{x} = 3.93$ , S.D. = .461 ; the Sightseeing aspect received the highest satisfaction rating)  $\bar{x} = 4.12$ , S.D. = .548 , and the Co-creation aspect received the lowest satisfaction rating)  $\bar{x} = 3.85$ , S.D. = .607.

**Table 3.** Opinions of Foreign Tourists towards Adaptation of Creative Tourism Activities

| Opinions of Foreign Tourists Towards Creative Tourism Adaptation Activities |                        | $\bar{x}$   | S.D.        | Satisfaction Level | Order |
|---|------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|-------|
| 1.  | Events                 | 4.02        | .599        | High               | 1     |
| 2.  | Networks               | 3.86        | .597        | High               | 5     |
| 3.  | Partnerships           | 3.90        | .640        | High               | 4     |
| 4.  | Creative Entrepreneurs | 3.91        | .641        | High               | 3     |
| 5.  | Guides                 | 3.96        | .682        | High               | 2     |
| <b>Overall</b>  |                        | <b>3.93</b> | <b>.494</b> | <b>High</b>        |       |

Table 3 demonstrates that the overall satisfaction level of foreign tourists towards adaptation of creative tourism activities was also high)  $\bar{x} = 3.93$ , S.D. = .494 , Events received highest satisfaction rating)  $\bar{x} = 4.02$ , S.D. = .599 , and Networks received the lowest satisfaction rating)  $\bar{x} = 3.86$ , S.D. = .597.

3. An adaptation model for creative tourism businesses: A case study of Khao Yai economic roads and foreign tourists is shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Diagram Showing Adaptation Model of Creative Tourism Businesses: A Case Study of Khao Yai Economic Roads and Foreign Tourists

Figure 2 demonstrates an adaptation model for creative tourism businesses: a case study of Khao Yai economic roads and foreign tourists consists of the following 6 aspects: (1) Sightseeing, (2) Contemplating, (3) Souvenir Purchases, (4) Learning, (5) Participation, and (6) Co-creation. Participation has the largest effect on adaptability of creative tourism businesses ( $b = 0.25$ ), and Sightseeing has the least effect on their adaptability ( $b = 0.07$ )

## Discussion

Table 1 shows that all creative tourism activities have some influence on the adaptation model of creative tourism businesses in this study along Khao Yai economic roads. This result is consistent with interview research results, which revealed that all creative tourism activities have some influence on the adaptation model of creative tourism businesses, and that the two most important factors for creative tourism activities were (1) Learning, and (2) Participation. The conceptual model of creative tourism from Richards study (2011) asserted that creative tourism emphasizes experiences, and products were five factors including Sightseeing, Contemplating, Souvenir Purchases, Learning, and Participating. This finding is also consistent with the research by Pine and Gilmore (1999), who discovered that the key elements of tourism were five factors, including Sightseeing, Contemplating, Learning, Participating, and Co-creation.

The model produced by this study (Figure 2) shows that Participation has the largest effect on adaptability of creative tourism businesses ( $b = 0.25$ ). This result is consistent with the interview research results, which revealed that one of the most important factors for creative tourism activities is Participation. This result also shows that Sightseeing has the least effect on adaptability of creative tourism businesses ( $b = 0.07$ ) This is consistent with research on cultural tourism by young tourists in Delphi, Greece by Boukas (2008), who stated that culture was one of the most important driving forces in travel. These tourists were more interested in local exhibits in the community than convenient facilities. They were fairly satisfied with beauty and scenery in Delphi, but less interested in human inventions. Evidence indicated that awareness of travel sites positively contributed to tourist satisfaction, while educational issues exhibited a negative contribution. A logical marketing strategy is to fulfill the needs and interests of younger tourists who are becoming

major consumers in cultural tourism that increases their knowledge. Sightseeing becomes the basis for creative tourism because foreign tourists prefer involvement in local cultures which are unique and particular. Tour business operators should preserve distinctive identity features in order to attract foreign tourists, rather than trying to over-adapt via modern tourist innovations.

Foreign tourists' opinions towards creative tourism activities reveal that sightseeing received the highest level of satisfaction (Table 2) which correlates to the research of eco-cultural and health tourism in provinces located in Northern Thailand – Chiangmai, Lampoon, Lampang, and Maehongson (Promburam, 2015). Factors that impacted tourists' experience were location environment and atmosphere, value for money, and activities were of primary importance. This finding is also consistent with research by Patarathammaporn (2008), who discovered that the main reasons tourists visited Chiangmai were scenic sightseeing, followed by tasting Thai food, mountain climbing, and shopping.

Chowdhary and Prakash (2007) investigated the ranking of service quality factors, and they discovered that physical surroundings were a very important consideration. Service-oriented tourism should shift from focusing on individuals to emphasizing the physical environment such as materials, objects, and places. Probably reasons were that the Khao Yai area has gorgeous scenery and clean tourist areas that impress tourists with a variety of participative events with good value for money. Co-creation earned the lowest satisfaction level from foreign tourists; this result was consistent with the research of Tan, Kung, & Luh (2014), who studied the taxonomy of creative tourism. They discovered that creative tourists as co-producers were subjective, experienced different feelings regarding their creative experiences. These creative experiences were generated from internal reflections, and consisted of mindfulness/awareness, needs, initiatives, and also outside interactions with surroundings, people, and activities. This might be because tourists had little opportunity to express their opinions, because business operators did not quite welcome their opinions and advice due to concerns regarding profitability. Tourists also felt that there were few chances to help improve activities or to fully show their abilities.

Foreign tourists' opinions towards adaptation of creative tourism activities reveal that Events received the highest level of satisfaction (Table 3), which correlates to the research on culinary tourism for young adult travelers and its connection to destination management (Redl, 2013). Tourists interested in local food, drinks included with the intention to join the activities. This may be due because society Cultural differences Making the tourists are interested in the events. They like experimental knowledge, and the events are also unique. It also organizes activities to more promote tourism. Networks earned the lowest level of satisfaction from foreign tourists, which correlates to the research on tourism networking by communities through participatory action research in the Central Region – (Naknat et al., 2008). Weakness in tourism management is largely a matter of management and services, and a lack of coordination networks at both the community and provincial levels. This finding is also consistent with the interview results, which revealed that there is still insufficient support from government networks in terms of basic infrastructure, expert advice to business entrepreneurs, transportation, road signs and convenient facilities. Partnerships in some tourist areas were not yet implemented, and businesses became competitive instead of cooperative.

## **Suggestions**

There is still insufficient support from government networks in terms of basic infrastructure, expert advice to business entrepreneurs, transportation, road signs, and convenient facilities. Most business operators have seemed to cooperate well with each other in the past. However, in some cases, businesses have been more competitive than cooperative. Government agencies should take necessary measures to provide assistance and resources to promote a strong cooperation network among business operators and local residents. Formal meetings should be organized to include members from government representatives, business operators, and local residents to develop

strategic marketing, and tourism planning to achieve year-round tourism. Smaller informal meetings or workshops should also be organized to include all involved parties to gather new and innovative ideas, and plan for long-term and sustainable tourism.

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