

## MECHANISMS FOR THE ART OF FOOD: TOURISM WITH THAINESS AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER

### PARTICIPATION APPROACH

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### Abstract

This research aims to explore the linkages between agriculture, senses of place and how to create a pairing of food and local performing arts. Senses, stories and sophistication were all integrated into one plate. Thai food not only can increase the value of a destination, but also increase the value of local identity which could be expressed through art of food. A range of experts were consulted to formulate the 3 pillars of Thainess (Nature, Life and Art). This conceptual framework was used as an experimental tool to elicit how the three elements could be conceptualized. Three selected areas (Chiangmai, Samuthsongkram and Baan Rai Gong King) represent different scales of tourism development. The Content-Concept-Design (CCB) framework was used as guiding principles, offering strategies how Thai culture (Thainess) could be embedded into tourism.

**Keywords:** Art of Food, Community-based Tourism, Creative Tourism, Gastronomic Tourism, Gastro-diplomacy, Sustainable Tourism Development.

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## Introduction

Thailand's destination marketing entitled "Discover Thainess" urges the need to explore how "Thainess" could be defined and how the essential elements could be integrated into tourism in Thailand. Although the concept is based on unique Thai cultures, the parameters of what constitutes culture are elusive and complicated. According to Supparerkchaisakul *et al.* (2014), a vocabulary of 'culture' is linguistically rooted from 'cultivate' which is defined as cultivation of goodness, mind and etiquettes, while, in anthropologic aspect, it means conformity of humans' living patterns which can be specified in different geographical areas or communities. Culture includes thoughts, living patterns, traditions and rituals, both formal and informal. In Thai context, culture is defined by one of linguistic and anthropologist scholars, Phraya Anuman Rajadhon, as "... dharma of civilised living within a community, or the same area of living, or a nation. Livelihood and culture of the nation can be known from man-made tangible assets representing the national identity, such as traditions, art and literature, religions, beliefs, morals, education, laws and governance. However, the true culture is intangible and lies beneath. According to a book "Very Thai" written by Cornwell-Smith (2013), to understand Thai culture or Thainess is necessary to dig through its external appearance or expression and understand Thai beliefs, history and traditions, which are respected as high or elite culture. It has been critiqued that Thai social structure may limit innovations which are diversified from its traditions and conformities. Thai popular culture tends to be imported from foreign cultures rather than created from within. Young generations are seeking more contemporary and popular culture which they could relate to in their own modernised ways. All these pose a challenging issue to critically embed the future of Thai, contemporary Thai culture and more importantly all to appreciate the roots of our cultures.

This research was designed to explore the linkages between tourism and Thainess and then expressed this through the art of food. Definitions and some challenging issues of being "Thainess" were contested. Multiple facets of the term were interpreted into Thai food. This study examined in depth about 3 key issues; 1) the art of food which could incorporate agriculture, senses of place and local performing arts 2) an effective institutional arrangement to make the link between Tourism and Thainess realised and 3) the future of thainess through the eyes of young performing artists.

## Literature Review

### *Parameter of Cultural Assets and Thainess*

"Discover of Thainess" is a current Thailand's destination marketing with a collaboration of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports and Tourism Authority of Thailand. However, this marketing campaign has brought extensive critical discussion on its definition and practical components. In-depth discussion on culture and tourism is limited and most researches focus on the utilisation of culture to differentiate tourism products and for its competitive edge. Culture is dynamic; therefore, cultural assets need to be investigated holistically through a period of time, linking past, present and future local ways of living. Cultural values convey a local "sense of place" which can be creatively interpreted and designed to have memorable experiences for the tourists. From an extensive literature reviewed and local consultations, a broad framework was developed to permit all important elements of local Thai cultures to derive. Figure 1 depicts the three pillars, grouped from diverse cultural elements.

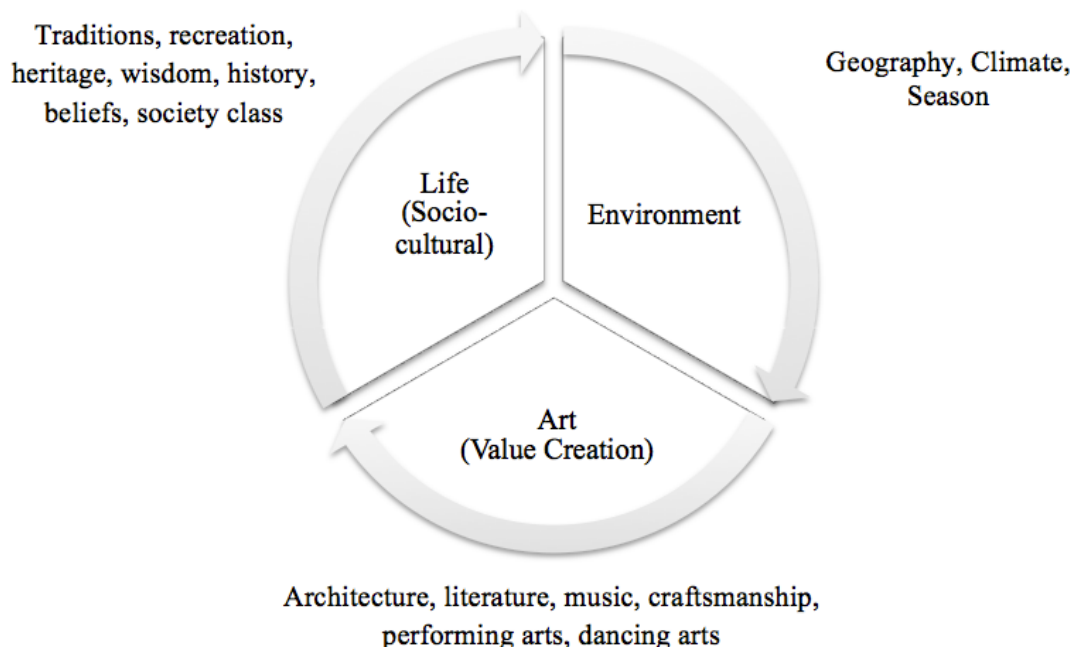


Figure 1: The Three pillars of Culture

## Food Supply Chain

UNWTO (2015) declares mutual commitment to utilise tourism sector to achieve sustainability, including environmental (reduced carbon emission), socio-cultural (destination authenticity) and economic (equitable distribution). Sustainable consumption and its linkages to how to manage food supply chain become one of the focal points. The significances of food security in general have raised attention to value creation through food. Food tourism, therefore, if managed properly, could be a strategic position for destinations. Food and local identity can be paired with the ingredients of landscape, culture and history, and portrays a holistic experience (UNWTO, 2015).

One of the challenging issues to achieve sustainable goals is to manage the complete supply chain and ensure that all stakeholders get involved. Food supply chain is chosen to illustrate the whole end-to-end supply chain, from production, distribution, processing to presentation to the end consumers. In general, mainstream food supply chain is usually dominated by gigantic private corporates where mass production is driven with a focus on profits. However, to achieve sustainable goals, social and environmental impacts should not be disregarded. Cleveland *et al.* (2014) recommend that local agriculturalists should be engaged in the supply chain and connected with other stakeholders by encouraging local procurement. By connecting with tourists, local farmers can be benefitted economically and socially (Nilsson *et al.*, 2010).

Sources of food ingredients usually mean local agricultural community or natural resources which need to be connected with demands. For instance, pollution from distributing food ingredients or products across the world has raised serious environmental concern. Local sourcing, therefore, is recommended in order to reduce carbon emission in tourism industry and mitigate greenhouse effect (Boniface, 2003; Hall *et al.*, 2003; Sonnino & Griggs-Trevarthen, 2013). On the other hand, lacking of consumers' confidence on local ingredients can lead to inaccessible income distribution to local community. Berno (2011) suggests that local economy can be developed by supporting local agricultural business to produce quality products and encouraging tourism practitioners to procure local ingredients. Apart from reducing pollution, local sourcing can support local economy by alleviating economic leakage and enhancing local wellbeing. In addition, Vasileska and Reckoska (2010) support that to develop sustainable food supply chain needs to consider proper political economic measures to ensure equitable income distribution and appropriate pricing in agricultural, food and tourism industries. Besides, Fredicksen (2008) indicates that food traceability system throughout the supply chain can help connecting local farmers, procurers, distributors, producers and vendors.

In this study, food supply chain can be divided into three processes (3P), including purchasing, production and presentation.



**Figure 2: 3P Model of Food Supply Chain**

### *Art of Food and Gastronomic Tourism*

Art of food is defined as the art of aesthetic presentation of food through forms of visual art and delivery of sensuous experience. Food can be viewed as the new art incorporating with a holistic experience, such as tastes and smells, food design and decoration, cooking simulation or performing arts (Sharma, 2015). Food and tourism cannot be separated since food is a fundamental need for survival and can be developed as selling point of tourism destination (Chen, 2013). Generally, dining is one of the major activities which tourists spend one-third of total trip expenditure (Harrington & Ottenbacher, 2010; Chen, 2013). Moreover, there is a high potential to develop food products as a strategy to attract more tourists to a destination because good dining is shown by the research as the most preferred activities by high-spending tourists (Harrington & Ottenbacher, 2010; Miller & Washington, 2014). Besides, food can be promoted as a marketing play or a brand of the destination and expand tourist seasons (Chen, 2013).

Gastronomic tourism is a phenomenon from development of new tourism products and services to accommodate tourists' need of exotic experience in having local food (Herrera *et al.*, 2012; Chen, 2013). Hall *et al.* (2003) indicate that tourists can learn local culture by visiting food-related attractions and activities, such as food production, food festivals, food exhibitions, farmer markets, cooking simulation and food degustation.

Gastronomy has a variety of dimensions that can be valuable experiences for the tourists. Santich (1996) explains that nutrition is one of the most important elements in gastronomy. Healthy nutrition needs to be scientifically examined throughout food preparation process from farm to tables. Apart from

that, food can create unique experience as it can tell stories regarding humans' livings, such as history, beliefs, arts, geography, customs and traditions (Kesimoglu, 2015). Richards (2003) also points out that tourists can learn dining culture while interacting on dining tables. Therefore, to integrate art of food with tourism is to design experience which is a broader sense not only appetising taste but also stories behind (Kesimoglu, 2015).

### *Gastro-diplomacy*

Gastro-diplomacy, presented by International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism (IGCAT), is the genre of cultural diplomacy. As a component of national culture, gastronomy can reveal a society's heritage and values which are able to be a "soft-power" persuasive instrument. Gastro-diplomacy has been proved to be an effective measure to facilitate decision-making process of holidaymakers and attract them to visit the destination (Melluish, 2015). According to IGCAT (2015), gastro-diplomacy can be implemented as a policy of international cultural exchange or communication of culture and local identity through food. In South Korea, Hallyu or Korean Wave is an impressive phenomenon attracting a great number of tourists visiting South Korea. This effect was initiated by gastro-diplomacy policy to promote Kimchi with scientific research and marketing plays. Moreover, Taiwan has adopted gastro-diplomacy by supporting Taiwanese restaurant practitioners in foreign countries, hosting culinary events, setting up Taiwanese Food Foundation and promoting Taiwanese food in the films.

Overall, this research aims to create mechanisms for Tourism with Thainess by using gastronomic tourism as an experimental content. On the other hand, Tourism with Thainess can also mean the form of creative tourism integrating environmental and socio-cultural assets and identities of local community. The outcomes of this research can be used as practical guidelines for tourism product development with value creation. Moreover, this research can be used to follow the path of sustainable tourism development. Specifically, this study aims to answer following research questions; 1) how to engage stakeholders in tourism value creation, 2) how to integrate local environmental and cultural resources into gastronomic tourism, and 3) how to encourage participation and creativity of youths in gastronomic tourism.

## Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to explore and the phenomenon occurring on-site concerning stakeholder engagement, value creation and youth participation. While exploring through the research process, action research was implemented to engage research participants into the research process in order to directly gain a sense of phenomenon and understand cognitive and behavioural matters of the participants.

Purposive sampling was used in order to anticipate the expected data relevant to the conceptual framework of the research. However, considering a variety of tourism stakeholders, research samples were divided into 6 groups; 1) public sector, 2) private sector, 3) civil society, 4) youths with specialisation in arts, 5) local food experts, and 6) prospective tourists.

To present comparative studies of different areas, study areas were selected into 3 different levels of tourism development, including 1) an area of community-based tourism with well-structured collaboration between public and private sectors (Baan Rai Gong King community in Chiangmai province), 2) an area of developing domestic tourism destination (Samuthsongkram province), and 3) an area of developed international tourism destination (Chiangmai City).



Figure 3: The 8-D Working Model

Instead of investigating problems, this study adopted Appreciative Inquiry (AI) method to ask questions in positive and creative ways. 8D Model was used as working model for collecting the data by beginning with 1) defining broad topic of discussion without framing any ideas raised by the participants, 2) discovering advantages/strengths/prides, 3) motivating the participants to dream about what they can do in the future, 4) setting up directions to achieve dreams, 5) destining plans towards potential dreams, 6) celebrating every successful steps for encouragement. Specifically, data collection was divided into 3 steps; 1) Brainstorming in focus group discussions to discuss about forms of community engagement in tourism and experiences on local culture, ways of living and food, 2) Participatory observation to gain a sense of conceptualisation of gastronomic design and cooking simulation, 3) In-depth interview to confirm validity of the results and develop recommendations on value creation of Thai gastronomy into tourism.

The results of the study were analysed by adopting content analysis technique by thematising the results with repeated keywords. Nominal group technique was also implemented to investigate and approve concepts to be practically experimented. Patterns of the results were defined to examine constructs for theorising mechanisms for value creation into Tourism with Thainess.



## Results

### *Stakeholder engagement in three areas of study*

Baan Rai Gong King, located in Chiangmai province, initiated its action on community development by solving problems within the community. The community leaders included all local people as the major stakeholders and set up working groups to tackle specific issues as followings;

#### 1) Savings for Baan Rai Gong King Development

Savings Group was established to solve economic difficulty of the community members by encouraging them to gain more benefits with community savings, such as low-interest loan, conjoint purchase, social welfare, etc.

#### 2) Hometown Conservation

Hometown Conservation Group was established to protect an environment and succeed local culture for young generation.

#### 3) Agricultural and Food Safety

Agricultural and Food Safety Group was established to solve health issue of the community members by encouraging them to do organic farming for own consumption and trading.

#### 4) Herbal Processed Product

Community's Health Service Center was founded to serve the community members to do exercise and promote local herbs as a product for massaging, steaming and hot pressing.

In addition, Baan Rai Gong King has cooperated with external supporting organisations, such as public tourism-related organisations and educational institutes, to gain supportive knowledge and social development.

In Samuthsongkram province, where capitalism has invaded into agricultural, industrial and tourism sectors, local ways of life have significantly changed by the expansion of public transport, resorts and mass tourism. Working and young generations have moved from Samuthsongkram to Bangkok to seek jobs, income and education. The current situation of Samuthsongkram province shows a declining life stage of tourism destination since it is unsustainable.

A coconut orchardist in Samuthsongkram province built up a small group in which people in different sectors who share mutual creative values are selected to work together on the issue of restoring organic coconut orchards. To restore organic coconut orchards in Samuthsongkram province is to revive traditional livelihoods and local wisdom. Moreover, food safety and security are addressed as a goal of group's missions. The group members consist of coconut orchardists, branding and advertising company, product design company, educational institutes and local governmental agencies.

Another area of study is Chiangmai City which is a developed international tourism destination. As one of the economic hubs of Thailand, there is a diversity of stakeholders in different expertises. The stakeholders have their own institutional commitments and strong working establishments. A collaboration on value creation in creative tourism involves those stakeholders who share similar objectives relevant to their institutional commitments. In this case, Chiangmai Conservation Community Network has gathered local communities in Chiangmai City and collaborated with other organisations, including local governmental agencies, educational institutes, tourism-related public organisations, non-profit organisations, media, etc.

### *Prominent local identities in three areas of study*

Being an award-winning health tourism community, Baan Rai Gong King has an interesting story about community development by the leaders acting as the centre in planning and conducting social development activities. The philosophy of sufficiency economy by the King Bhumibol Adulyadej has been adopted to encourage local people to be self-sufficient, support household organic and livestock farming. Local art and culture, including traditional performances, have been carried on by young generation.

To welcome visitors, Baan Rai Gong King provide CBT programme focusing on healthy food. It also promotes low-carbon menus by supporting local sourcing, organic and seasonal food.

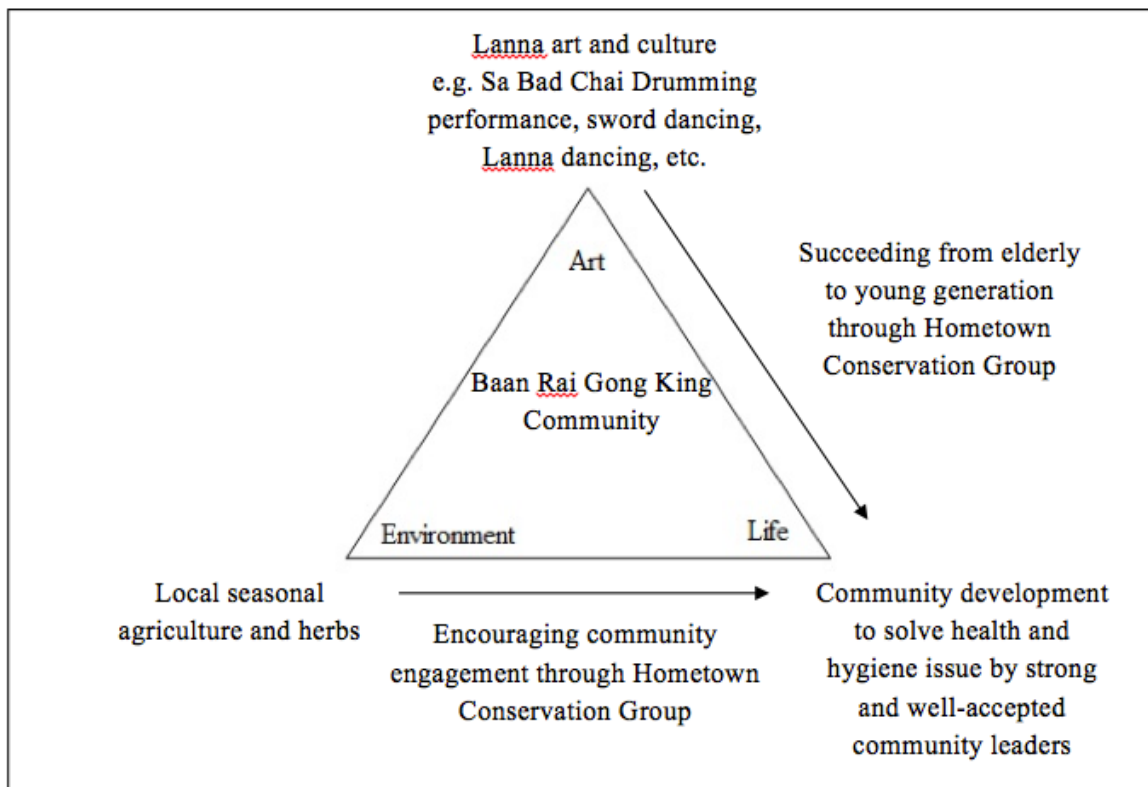


Figure 4: Local identity of Baan Rai Gong King Community

In Samuthprakarn province, locally known as Mae Glong town, orchardists' way of life and abundant natural resources, particularly coconuts, by Mae Glong river are considered as prominent local identities. Even though industrialisation and capitalism have invaded and greatly impacted local food supply chain, the story of a group of coconut orchardists carrying organic coconut plantation forward towards sustainable development and food safety.

Being a well-known local product, coconut sugar is extracted from coconut trees and become one of local souvenirs of Samuthsongkram province. The original process of making coconut sugar was invented by local savants passing through generations. Besides, organic coconut sugar contains nutritious monosaccharide without preservative.

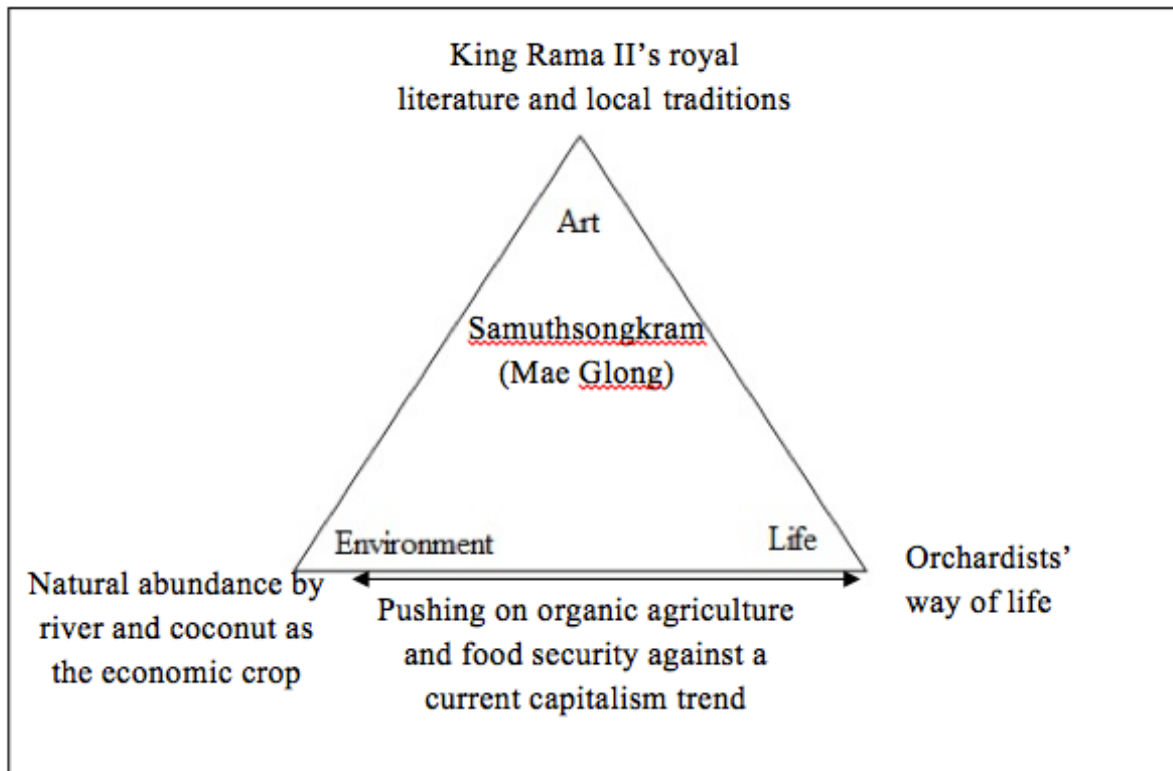


Figure 5: Local identity of Samuthsongkram province

Being the northern economic hub of Thailand, Chiangmai city is Lanna's ancient capital with over 700 years and has a great history important to the nation. Chiangmai used to be the capital city of Lanna Kingdom paralleled with the history of the first Siamese capital – Sukhothai. It was occupied by Burmese kingdom for over 200 years and restored by reviving abandoned town to the capital city. To restore Chiangmai city from the Burmese kingdom was to gather hidden ethnic groups around Lanna Kingdom back to Chiangmai.

Buddhism is considered as another local identity reflecting Chiangmai people's way of life from the past to the present. Buddhism serves as the spiritual centre of local people of all ethnic groups. Local rituals and ceremonies are usually related to Buddhism, such as making merit, offering food to the monks, etc. Also, generosity of Chiangmai people is claimed to be related to Buddha's teachings.

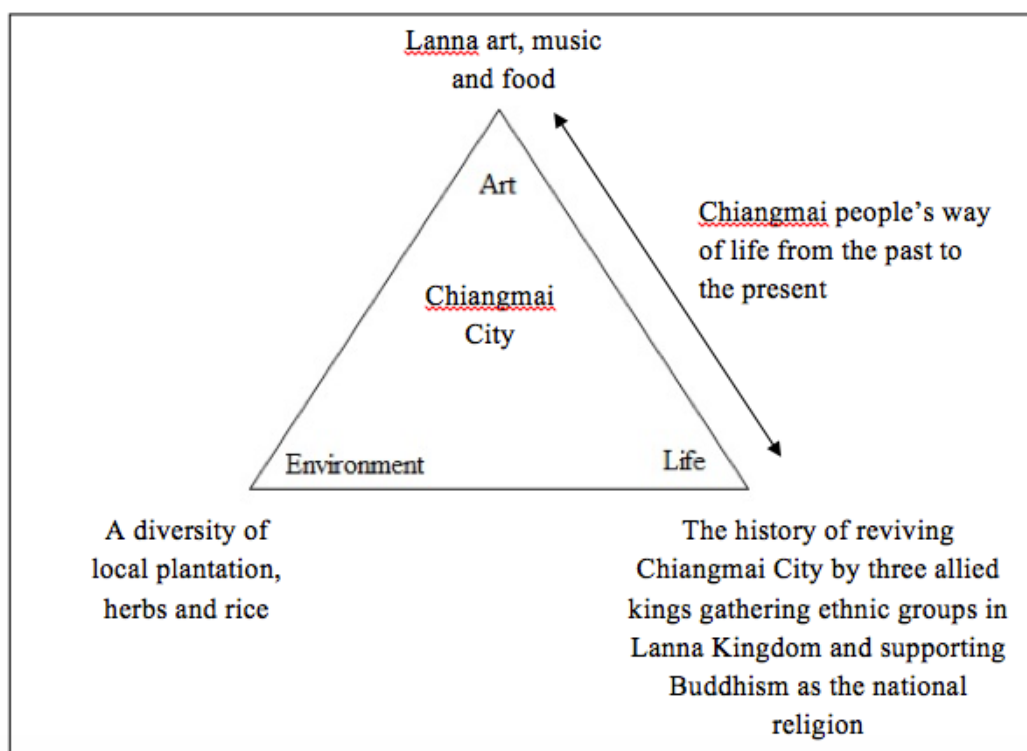


Figure 6: Local identity of Chiangmai City

### *Pairing Gastronomy*

Pairing gastronomy is considered as the experiment for a simulation of value creation for Tourism with Thainess. Local food menus were designed by artisan chefs and stories behind the dishes were interpreted as performing arts by youths. The meal was divided into six courses, comprising of three courses of appetisers, a course of soup, a course of main dish and a course of dessert.

The dishes were designed from the stories of each study area. The appetisers and soup were created from local ingredients of Baan Rai Gong King community by focusing on local sourcing and household organic farming. The main dish was adapted from the local menu representing the meaning of unity and generosity in Chiangmai City. And, the dessert was created from coconut sugar brought from Samuthsongkram province.

Artisan cooking	Transitional Food	Performance
<u>Appetiser</u>		
		
		
		
<u>Soup</u>		



Artisan cooking	Transitional Food	Performance
		
Main Dish		
		
Dessert		
		

## Discussion

### *Civic Engagement on Value Creation*

Working structure mixed with both functional and accelerating is beneficial for creating values on Tourism with Thainess (creative tourism). Functional structure means a working structure with a hierarchy of responsibilities driven by organisational missions, while accelerating structure means a working network incorporating with a diversity of people from different expertises. However, issue-based or objective-based working structure is viewed as the important approach to work with different stakeholders. The characteristics of effective working structure depend on each situational context.

In the context of local community as a tourism destination, the effective working structure requires a leader with inspiring and admirable characteristics. This kind of leader is strongly believed by the community members for his or her knowledge on community development and power in integrating a wide range of local people. It is suggested that the leader in this situational context should concentrate on involving local people in the area and open to external supports, if beneficial.

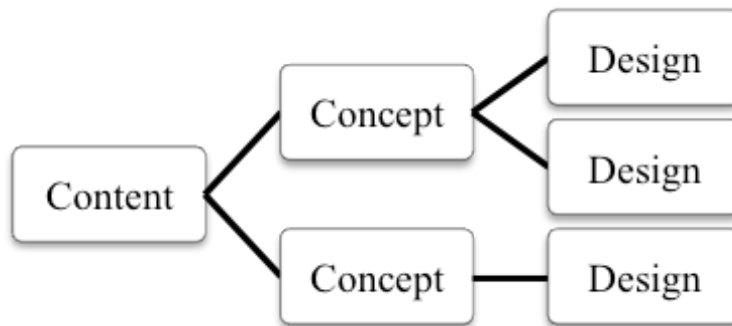
In the context of developing domestic tourism destination, Creative Shared Values (CSVs) serve as the important factor attracting passionate stakeholders to get involved. Due to the fact that this situation usually has an issue of industrialising capitalism, it requires leader who is able to strongly prove that his or her action is effective and worthwhile to follow. The stakeholders with CSVs can be gathered or selected into the working structure in order to work on each expertise.

In the context of developed international tourism destination, large city has usually a wide range of institutions and establishments. Institutional commitments of each stakeholder are fundamental for organisational survivals and achievements. However, to work on objective-based or issue-based projects, the role of convener is essential to coordinate and cooperate with those stakeholders who perform well on aimed objectives and collaborate them in accelerating working structure.

### *Value Creation Process*

During participatory observation, a consistency of value creation process in gastronomic tourism is found in all areas of study. The participants in each area created innovative presentation of local foods by following these three procedures;





### 1) Content

Prominent local identities can be explored by using a conceptual framework (life – environment – art) to define a sense of place. Local tourism stakeholders and external specialists can open up a discussion and brainstorm on local culture and identities. A diversity of expertise can generate productive discussion and verify the contents each other. Local people can gain outside-in perspectives and open to creative ideas, while the external specialist can learn about the areas.

### 2) Concept

To value up the contents, conceptualisation can create and connect sets of stories for further presentation. Contents can be conceptualised by selecting repeated or relative stories from the discussion.

### 3) Design

The concepts of stories can be designed by adding creativity into artistic presentation. Living interpretation can add value on stories and create tangible tourism experiences. Three components of creative design are described; a) stories – amusing and interesting, b) senses – seeing, smelling, hearing, touching and tasting, and c) sophistication – art of presentation.

## *Recommendations*

To drive Tourism with Thainess needs to support local communities by several guidelines as followings;

- 1) Support research on local history and culture and set up local museums portraying ways of life and local culture and praising local heroes and savants
- 2) Train local people to be high quality local guides and interpreters
- 3) Conserve local natural resources and cultural assets
- 4) Create online network for local communities and promote activities in public

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