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## **The Best Practice of Creative Tourism Management in Agricultural Communities for Promotion of Holistic Education**

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### **Abstract**

Creative tourism is a creativity-oriented tourism development process derived from the extension of cultural capital, lifestyle, and existing wisdom of various local communities. It is the new tourism management approach allowing tourists to enjoy opportunities for tourism activity participation in which they can exchange knowledge and enjoy direct experiences. This qualitative research used in-depth interviews as a research tool, and the obtained data were analyzed using the content analysis technique. The data were collected from 15 key informants selected by purposive sampling. They were divided into 3 groups of 5 members each: (1) senior tourism experts, entrepreneurs and instructors in public organizations, (2) instructors of holistic education subjects, and (3) entrepreneurs, farmers, and experts in local communities practicing New Theory Agriculture based on Sufficiency Economy. The agricultural communities' best practice was classified under creative tourism management in terms of creating added value for communities and building uniqueness for agricultural communities. Such creative tourism concept has become part of holistic education in Thai schools and universities for multidimensional student development. It focuses on an individual's physical, mental, intellectual, and life-skill developments to become a well-cultivated human being. The best practice of creative tourism in agricultural communities thus serves as an outside classroom learning approach that enables learners to understand society and inspire themselves to extend creativity into their future career. The researcher examined two important areas of the best practice of creative tourism in agricultural communities in promoting holistic education: (1) learners' interaction and knowledge dissemination and transfer for comprehensive understanding; (2) learners' participation in collaborative thinking and taking actions based on the identified purpose. The first area involves skill training and implementation, while the second fosters inspiration, problem-solving task training, and creative thinking development.

**Keywords:** *The best practice of creative tourism management, creative tourism in agricultural communities, creative thinking development, holistic education*

### **1. Introduction**

Creative tourism concept began to appear around the year 2000 (Richards et al., 2018). Later in 2006, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defined "*creative tourism*" as a journey that is committed to true attachment and

*experience resulting from participation in learning the art.* Cultural heritage or the special characteristics of a particular area bring connection to people who live in the area and the creator of that living culture adds values for the community and uniqueness of the place; this is, not an activity that focuses on *community revenue* but is an activity that emphasizes *the value of the community* (Special Area Development Organization for Sustainable Tourism, 2018). Creative tourism is therefore different from *traditional tourism* in that significance of active participation be given to the learning process for innovations and dynamics toward sustainability based on local resources (Richards et al., 2018).

As known, Thailand is an agricultural country in which the majority of people are farmers and earn their living from agricultural products--rice, field crops, horticulture, vegetables, and fruits. Currently, most agricultural communities have their farming operations under the principles of the sufficiency economy philosophy initiated by King Bhumibol. The country's 12<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan guides farmers' work toward participatory development, aiming to transition Thailand from middle-income countries to high-income countries (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2016). The framework of the 20-year National Strategic Plan and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tourism Development Plan (2017-2021) with *sustainable tourism development* emphasize a Thai way of life for its culture and traditions, while supporting local communities for cost-effective agriculture, and well-maintained natural environment for local investment in tourism. In so doing, local communities need to involve their people in creative tourism to add value to their current or new activities, and put their creativity into tourism products and services to attract tourists. The ultimate goal is for people to be self-sufficient in their local communities --with social gains in their well-being as well as economic gains in additional income (Office of the Permanent Secretary for Tourism and Sports, 2017).

## 2. Literature Review

The sufficiency economy concept is now extended by the Thai government to include creative tourism to increase value of current activities and products/ services of agricultural communities (Winidworakijkun, 2014). Schools and universities therefore serve as a foundation to educate students into the trend of creative tourism. The national tourism development authority is to implement the creative tourism plan with new learning centers to work with schools and communities by creating sufficiency economy learning activities in agriculture, tourist activities and attractions for individual communities or community networks. These certainly require effective management from collaboration of all parties concerned (Phutthachon et al., 2013; Chansuri & Siriwong, 2018)

Kaewsanga & Jumnongsorn (2012) noted that tourists' behaviors and preferences for destinations have changed into the participatory mode; that is, tourists wish to learn more about the location of visit with reality or immersed experience. Such a trend has opened up a good opportunity for sustainable agriculture communities with the way of life unique to a

particular culture and tradition that outsiders or tourists wish to experience in the role of observers or temporary residents on that location. In particular, there are three things considered attractive to tourists: the use of raw materials in local communities, the traditional working or crafting methods, and the natural scenery of the location.

Agricultural communities are advised by the creative tourism authority to reflect upon their knowledge and wisdom with unique cultural identity as well as natural resources that can attract outsiders or tourists (Na Songkhla, 2011). Their cultural identity will be a tourist attraction that in turn can utilize agricultural resources for tourism products and services, not simply for occupational purposes. Phongwirithorn (2015) asserted that a sustainable agricultural tourism model should be developed by promoting various forms of agricultural tourism, with unique characteristics of the community.

Creative tourism provides opportunities for tourists and local communities to exchange knowledge and experience, while promoting the role of local stakeholders in sustainable tourism management networks (Department of Tourism, 2018). Teaching and learning in today's schools and universities focus on learning outcomes in preparation of human resources with professional, social and human skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Mahmoudi et al., 2012). It is therefore appropriate for Thai educational institutions to include creative tourism as part of holistic education to prepare local students for a possible career in the country's tourism industry.

In Thailand, university students under the Higher Education Plan (2017-2021) are required to be trained in integrated human and social skills for holistic development of participative/ collaborative life skills and hand-on learning experiences (Johnson, 2010). The holistic approach to learning management is for students to increase their ability to develop themselves in all soft-skill dimensions: emotional maturity, positive psychological constructs, imagination, creativity, social responsibility, followed by sound body and spirit for complete humanity (Patel, 2003). The Office of the Higher Education Commission (2018) specifies three development strategies for holistic education : (1) promoting soft skills integrated with hard skills, (2) creating an ecosystem to support *transformative learning*, and (3) developing students into leaders responsive to change in society with moral knowledge. Holistic education makes possible a realistic approach to learning of social environments along with desirable social behaviors (Duchesneau, 2020). In this regard, students will learn to participate in creative tourism activities arranged by their communities by taking into consideration positive interactions between the hosts and the tourists. It is important for students to become aware in the early stage of their schooling that they can obtain knowledge not only from teaching or assigned media resources, but more importantly from visitors and their experiences from various backgrounds (Wisutthilak et al., 2013).

In this study, the researcher examined the best practice of creative tourism management in agricultural communities outside the school so that students can experience holistic learning to understand their society and be inspired to get involved in creative tourism. This is for them to learn how to develop soft and hard skills in integration.

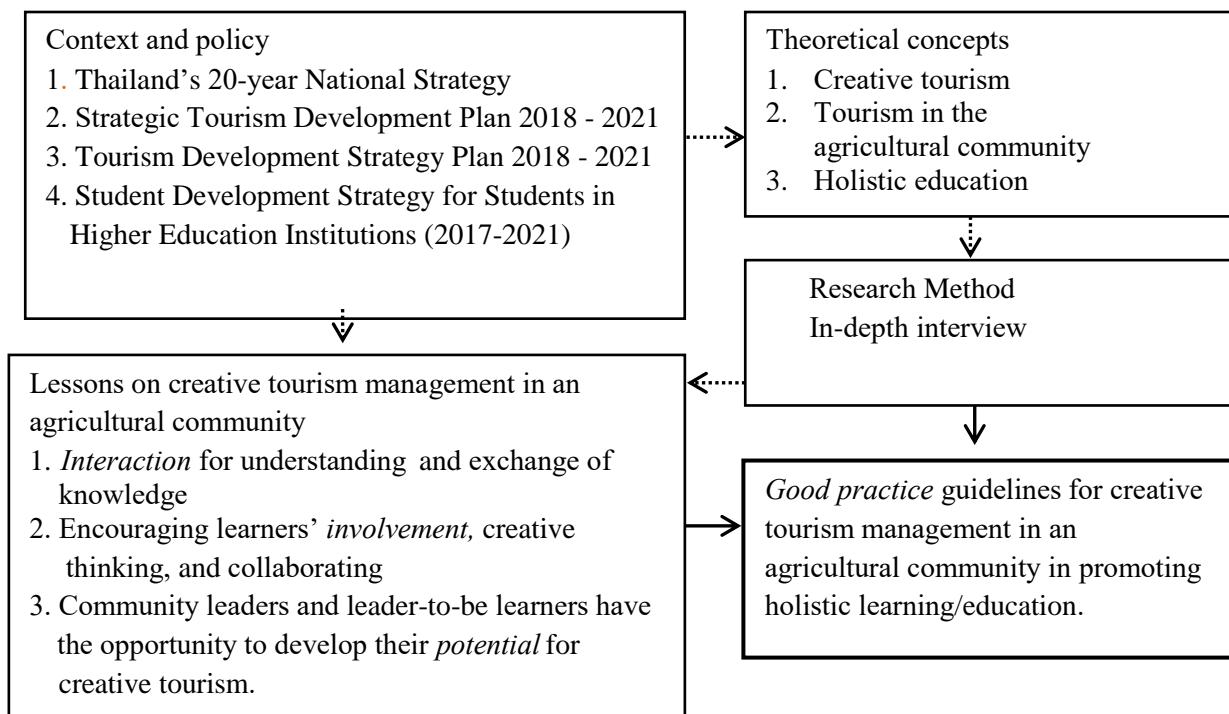
### 3. Research Objectives

The research objective was to examine two important areas of the best practice of creative tourism in agricultural communities in promoting holistic education: (1) learners' interaction and knowledge dissemination and transfer for comprehensive understanding, and (2) learners' participation in collaborative thinking and taking actions based on the identified purpose. The first area involves skill training and implementation, while the second fosters inspiration, problem-solving task training, and creative thinking development.

### 4. Research Framework

The researcher developed a research framework for this study as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Research Conceptual Framework



The researcher studied best practices of creative tourism management in an agricultural community in promoting holistic learning, from the government's plan and policy documents, public organizations, tourism businesses, education institutions, creative tourism operators, followed by reviews of New Agriculture Theory, and effective farming practices by farmers and villagers in agricultural communities. The document study was to ensure that the researcher could have a clear picture of what has been done in order to implement sound and practical holistic education at the higher education level. From the studied documents and earlier research work to create the research framework shown in Figure 1, the researcher found that emphasis

was given to interaction, understanding, knowledge sharing, learners' participation, and co-working between community leaders and learners for the opportunity to develop potential in both parties (Patel, 2003; Johnson, 2010; Mahmoudi et al., 2012; Wisutthilak et al., 2013; Phongwitthithorn, 2015; Pimklad et al., 2017; Chansuri & Siriwong, 2018; Richards et al., 2018; and Duchesneau, 2020).

## 5. Research Method

This research used a qualitative method by gathering data from government and project documents, textbooks, concepts, theories, and related studies. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 15 key informants by purposive sampling. They were divided into 3 groups of 5 members each: (1) senior tourism experts, entrepreneurs and instructors in public organizations, (2) instructors of holistic education subjects, and (3) entrepreneurs, farmers, and experts in local communities practicing New Theory Agriculture based on Sufficiency Economy.

The researcher developed interview questions dealing with two important areas of the best practice of creative tourism in agricultural communities in promoting holistic education: (1) learners' interaction and knowledge dissemination and transfer for comprehensive understanding; (2) learners' participation in collaborative thinking and taking actions based on the identified purpose. The first area involves skill training and implementation, while the second fosters inspiration, problem-solving task training, and creative thinking development.

## 6. Research Findings and Discussion

This section contains two parts on results of documentary analyses and interview results regarding best practices of creative tourism management in agricultural communities in promoting holistic education.

### 6.1. Part 1: Result of Document Analysis

The researcher analyzed government and project documents, textbooks, concepts, theories, and related studies, and reported major points on creative tourism management practices in agricultural communities for discussion.

The term Creative Tourism Management in Agricultural Communities (CTAC) refers to the activities with new creative methods created by villagers and community leaders in relation to the way of life of agricultural communities in particular areas. More prominent and interesting, community activities can be turned into tourist attractions as part of the government policy by the Department of Community Development (2018). The 20-year National Strategic Plan specifies (1) promoting and developing potential career opportunities and employment as foundation for economic development, (2) supporting community enterprises and promoting community tourism link routes in each locality by spatial development through community processes of access, funding and income generation in the community, and (3) reforming the agricultural

production structure of the whole system with the creation and promotion of value-added modern marketing.

As specified in the government's plan, creative tourism management in an agricultural community is therefore a target on *community tourism*. Link of tourism routes in each locality is to create added value by allowing tourists to get involved in the community's innovations and new dynamics toward sustainable tourism based on local resources in agricultural communities (Wisutthilak et al., 2013). This is to create a bond (*engaged*) of the tourists (*guest*) with the community (*host*) for *authentic participation*.

It is vitally important that the form and characteristics of community tourism be consistent with the principles of holistic education, which are required as part in the educational management process at the basic education and higher education levels. It is closely associated with the student-centered approach; and creative tourism management in the agricultural community provides opportunities for learners to experience creative tourism activities and develop their talents in the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social domains.

Such students' hand-on experience in creative tourism according to the principles prescribed by the government policy, in fact, supports the application of a holistic approach to a particular subject in schools and universities by letting students take alternated roles as both the host and the guest. Students then have good learning opportunities in gaining insight into the way of life in the target agricultural community for both practicality and inspiration.

**Figure 2:** The Connection of Learning Outcomes from Creative Tourism in the Agricultural Community with Holistic Education Promotion

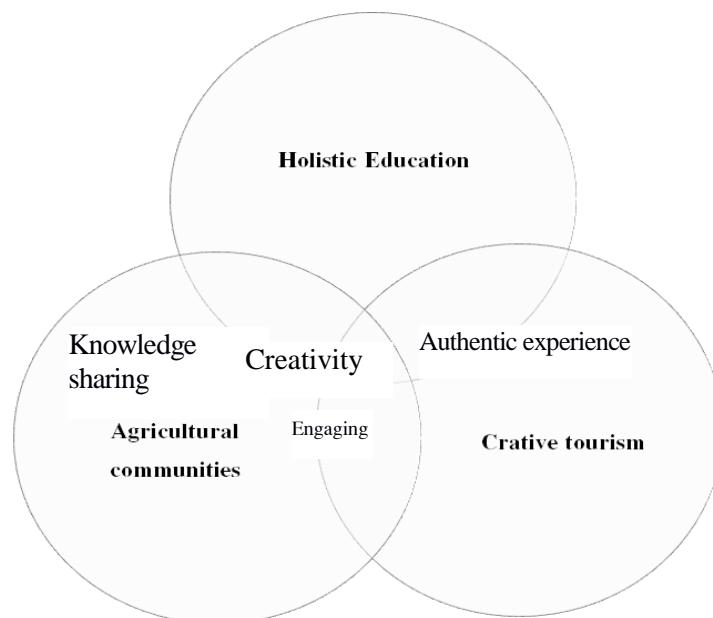


Figure 2 shows the results of concept analysis on the principles of creative tourism in an agricultural community being integrated into a source of learning outside the classroom (Patel, 2003; Johnson, 2010; Songkhla, 2011; Kaewsanga & Jumnongsorn, 2012); Mahmoudi et al., 2012; Phutthachon et al., 2013; Wisutthilak et al., 2013; Phongwirithorn, 2015; Pimklad et al., 2017; Chansuri & Siriwong , 2018; Richards et al., 2018; Duchesneau, 2020). The details of the analysis are tabulated in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Components of Creative Tourism Management in an Agricultural Community for Holistic Education

Reference list items	Creative Tourism Management in an Agricultural Community for Holistic Education											
	Knowledge, skills	Economic	Society lifestyle	Interaction	Value understanding	Exchange	Involved	Create experience	Binding side	Self improvement	Inspiration	Creative thinking
Duchesneau (2020)	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-
Mahmoudi et al. (2012)	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
Johnson (2010)	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
Winidworakitkun (2003)	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Richards et al. (2018)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chansuri & Siriwong (2018)	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-
Pimklad et al. (2017)	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	-
Phongwirithorn (2015)	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
Wisutthilak et al. (2013)	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Phutthachon et al. (2013)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-
Kaewsanga & Jumnongsorn (2012)	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	-
Na Songkhla (2011)	-	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-
Frequency (12 items)	10	5	7	12	9	6	11	9	6	10	6	4

Creative tourism management in an agricultural community covers students' holistic study in three dimensions.

(1) *Interaction.* Students can interact with wise men or coaches or leaders of the agricultural community in various activities. They will be aware of the value and wisdom of that learning source. In accordance with Johnson (2010), the key principles of holistic education relate to the relationships between learners as well as learning from coaches or leaders for sharing local wisdom or knowledge specific to that particular agricultural community.

(2) *Access and Participation.* Learners are encouraged to access by participation; this is, the engagement concept of Phutthachon et al (2013), Wisutthilak et al (2013), and Richards et al. (2018). Students' access to the agricultural community via community tourism is in line with holistic education that emphasizes collaborative thinking and participation in life experiences (Patel, 2003; Johnson, 2010), Mahmoudi et al., 2012; Duchesneau (2020). Students' commitment is not constrained within the scope of responsibility and new standards prescribed by the school/university's curriculum, and is therefore open to learners' initiative and creativity.

(3) *Collaboration between Community Leaders and Learners.* Community leaders and learners have opportunities for adaptation, further development, and improvement. To perceive the value of the agricultural area or the community, learners will see opportunities for adaptation (Wisutthilak et al., 2013; Richards et al., 2018). Shared participation in creating experiences between the community and tourists (or learners) will lead to information exchange for further development and improvement (Johnson, 2010; Duchesneau, 2020). Students can critically examine and define their values, and in turn can discover their potential for local tourism operations and related entrepreneurship.

## 6.2. Part 2: Best Practices of Creative Tourism Management in an Agricultural Community for Holistic Education Promotion

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 15 key informants as reported in Section 5: Research Method. They were five senior tourism experts, entrepreneurs and instructors in public organizations; five instructors of holistic education subjects; and five entrepreneurs, farmers, and experts in local communities practicing New Theory Agriculture based on Sufficiency Economy. The results are reported in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Results of Interviews on the Best Practice of Creative Tourism Management in an Agricultural Community for Holistic Education Promotion

Good practice guidelines for creative tourism management in an agricultural community	Interview results of 15 key informants (by Frequency of Responses)
1. Interaction to create understanding, exchange knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Interaction (Interaction)</li> <li>1.2 Understanding (Reflection)</li> <li>1.2 Exchange knowledge (Knowledge sharing)</li> </ul>	Having community leaders, farmers; farmers act as teachers. Lecturers give students the opportunity to ask questions to gain knowledge within the community (15). Real classrooms from real learning sources lead to discussions to find answers from practical people, create understanding in that knowledge (13). Knowledge is derived from traveling to see the learning base in various communities, such as the exchange of knowledge between the agricultural community, and the learners is the heart of holistic education. Learning the real problems from experienced leaders (12). Hands-on practice through practical activities and learning centers on agricultural communities, such as planting vegetables in the garden, harvesting fresh produce for consumption, seasonal fruits and vegetables; cooking with ingredients from the community lead to the variety of cooking classes available in the community; flower picking and flower arrangement teaching; burning of fruit charcoal (12). Good practice guidelines for field trips in the agricultural community are shared; broadcast from real experience (11).
2. Encouraging learners to access by participation, commitment, sharing, thinking, doing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Access with participation (Participation)</li> <li>2.2 have a commitment to collaborate (Engaging and Emotional)</li> </ul>	Students are able to experience and learn about the ways of life of the community, see real things in various good practices apart from studying in a book or in class (13). Participation with practical training in activities and learning bases, such as processing and product development from agricultural products. Learning to garland with orchids flower arrangements in the area; learning how to raise animals (13). Students experience the ways of community, culture, and value in nature through new practices. Creativity of each community has a network of collaboration to work as a team with various sectors, such as organic gardening, preserving food and cooking according to local wisdom (10). Bonding Impressions and friendship, which develop social and emotional skills in learners (7).
3. Community leaders and learners have the opportunity to develop their potential. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1 Learning exchange (Cognitive and exchange)</li> <li>3.2 Modifications (Adapt and Implementation)</li> <li>3.3 Leadership Development (Innovation and Evaluation)</li> </ul>	Learners develop themselves from the knowledge gained. Learned integrated farming according to the new agricultural theory; processing of organic products (11). Understand and gain knowledge through agricultural tourism activities; under the concept of the sufficiency economy philosophy (6). Self-development of community leaders, villagers in raising the level of agricultural wisdom to be of standard quality and an important source of learning outside the classroom (7). Practice from real things, creating skills; learning process Comparison of guidelines for self-development, determination, creativity to expand to one's own learning (7). Create a network of cooperation between agricultural communities in the area; networks between institutions for further expansion and value to the outside society (5).
4. Outcome of holistic learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.1 Creating experience (Authentic experience)</li> <li>4.2 Creating, sharing, thinking,</li> </ul>	Learning outcomes of students from tourism in the agricultural community from real experience through various activities of agricultural communities (13). Learners receive knowledge and in-depth real experiences from community leaders, farmers and local

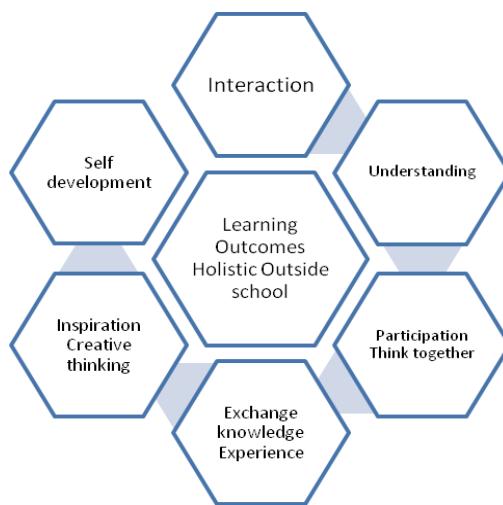
Good practice guidelines for creative tourism management in an agricultural community	Interview results of 15 key informants (by Frequency of Responses)
collaborating (Creativity) 4.3 Inspiration (Inspiration)	wise men (12). Learners enjoy their new perspective and are inspired to live and further develop themselves (10). Seeing good examples to encourage learners to share ideas and do activities; bringing about creativity and inspiration; be effective in various life and social skills (9). The role of learners and their interest in resources and tourism patterns in the agricultural community, stimulate learning about local wisdom (7).

From the interviews, the researcher found that the best practice of creative tourism management in agricultural communities in promoting holistic learning has emphasis on two dimensions:

(1) *Interaction between students and community leaders.* Students have the opportunity to ask questions to gain knowledge within the community. They can query things of their interest instead of being closely guided by the teacher in the classroom. In this regard, they learn from their dialogues with the members and leaders of the community. Then they gain real understanding and reflection on shared knowledge.

(2) *Encouraging learners to access by participating in activities and learning bases.* Students are emotionally engaged in participating in the learning base and guidance of community leaders. It is possible for learners to develop their potential in creative and problem-solving tasks. Improvement through adaptation of what they have seen and experienced can ignite their sense of leadership, inspiration for innovation and systematic evaluation concerned. Dimensions of professional skills and social skills are shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3:** Results of Dimensional Holistic Learning



## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

As stated earlier in the research objectives, the researcher examined two important areas of the best practice of creative tourism in agricultural communities in promoting holistic education. They were: (1) learners' interaction and knowledge dissemination and transfer for comprehensive understanding, and (2) learners' participation in collaborative thinking and taking actions based on the identified purpose. The first area involves skill training and implementation, while the second fosters inspiration, problem-solving task training, and creative thinking development. The results of the study from both documentary analyses and in-depth interviews as reported in Figures 1-3 and Tables 1-3 all point to the significance of *interaction* and *participation* in making good practices.

Creative tourism management by community activities with a focus on learning sources for schools/universities, as well as increasing value added for ecotourism are obviously off-classroom learning. Non-classroom learning resources for educational institutions at all levels support the concept of holistic education. Through community leaders, local philosophers and farmers functioning as *teachers or coaches*, students are transferred with knowledge with authentic experiences for *skill training and implementation*. Good practices of creative tourism management in the agricultural community in promoting holistic learning require (1) understanding of interaction in exchanging and sharing knowledge, (2) encouraging learners to participate in collaborative thinking, getting access to the sources of local knowledge, practice skills, and problem-solving skills, and (3) community leaders managing their community to exemplify to students' potential adaptation and application for good and healthy lifestyle.

Institutional arrangement for creative tourism as part of the holistic education curriculum can ensure learners' *participation* in collaborative thinking and taking actions based on the identified purpose. It is expected that participation can help foster *inspiration, problem-solving task training, and creative thinking development*. Creative tourism communities that support the role of educational institutions in integrating ecotourism activities into the community's local management, should certainly be willing to provide their *learning content and learning resources*. More importantly, the agricultural communities should have the need to make their creativity known to the public, and have strong leadership in coordinating teachers with their community members--farmers, local philosophers, and key villagers--to work collaboratively toward the common goal on creative tourism and holistic education.

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- Khlong Mahasawat Agricultural Tourism District, Phutthamonthon District, Nakhon Pathom Province
- Ban Bang Phlap Community Learning Center Bangkhonthi, Samut Songkhram Province
- Don Ae Don Kha Agriculture Village, Bang Phae District, Ratchaburi Province
- OTOP Agricultural Tourism Village Kaset Sombun District, Chaiyaphum Province
- Integrated Agricultural Tourism Community Enterprise Group Tha Mai District, Chanthaburi Province
- Phlisa Farm, New Theory Agriculture Learning Center, Organic Farm, Hua Hin District, Prachuap Khiri Khan
- Baan Suan Kla Tawan Resort, integrated agricultural garden without chemicals, health food, Phatthana Nikhom District, Lop Buri Province.

## 9. The Author

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