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Guidelines for Promoting Cultural Tourism: A Case of Thai Buffalo Conservation Village, Si Prachan District, Suphan Buri Province

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Abstract

In the current trend of cultural tourism, this case study was on Thai Buffalo Conservation Village, Si Prachan District, Suphan Buri Province. This research aimed to: (1) investigate the current promotion of cultural tourism on Thai Buffalo Conservation Village, and (2) examine the economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits from the current promotion of cultural tourism on Thai Buffalo Conservation Village. Qualitative data were obtained from interviewing 21 voluntary participants as key informants--shop owners, officials, villagers, and tourists. Qualitative data were analyzed using triangulation tools. The research found that (1) the promotion of cultural tourism in the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village area is at a moderate level due to insufficient financial support for advertising and public relations, resulting in a lack of awareness among tourists. (2) The economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits from the promotion of cultural tourism in the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village support the economy in generating income for entrepreneurs or workers on the tourist site with cultural uniqueness. In the aspect of *society and culture*, the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village attracts tourists with activities that provide knowledge about the way of life of Thai farmers. In the environmental aspect, buffaloes help reduce agricultural production costs in plowing fields instead of machinery, and using buffalo dung as organic fertilizer. It is evident from the obtained findings that the merits of natural resources can empower cultural tourism and sustain tourists' interest in the long run.

Keywords: *Cultural tourism, Thai buffalo conservation village, cultural promotion, tourism guidelines*

1. Introduction

Tourism in contemporary Thai society has become a new way of life for people seeking pleasant recreation and relaxation. Tourism has evolved into diverse forms to better meet the unique needs and purposes of tourists. A new form of tourism that has gained acclaim and support in Thailand is tourism in support of local lifestyles and the tourist's goals. This form of tourism is known as "cultural tourism." Among cultural tourism sites in Thailand, Suphan Buri Province stands out for its history and culture, offering a wide variety of tourism options. Suphan Buri offers diverse attractions,

including historical, cultural, creative, and other natural attractions. The province is popular among locals and those from nearby provinces (Promoting Tourism in Thailand, 2020). As part of the Central Region, Suphan Buri has a rich history of rice cultivation, formerly known as "City of Dvaravati Sri Suphanbhum," with ancient sites, royal monasteries, the National Museum, Thai farmers and buffaloes. Local culture includes visits to buffalo villages and demonstrations of local life, showcasing the traditional life of rural Thai farmers. In addition, these tourist attractions are easily accessible and within short distances from Bangkok. This has led to the development of accommodations, hotels, and homestays, generating income and employment for the community (Therawat et al., 2023).

Cultural tourism at the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village in Si Prachan District, in Suphan Buri shows farmers using buffaloes as vehicles and plowing tools. The current use of machinery over buffaloes are apparent for convenience and speed. Recognizing the significant decline in buffalo numbers, the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village initiated and established a Thai Buffalo Conservation Center, showcasing the community's traditional lifestyle and farmers' simple farming methods with buffaloes. The center also houses a community market to generate income for the community. The center has been able to attract tourists since its opening (Danprasert, 2017).

Given the above background and significance, the research team was interested in investigating the current promotion of cultural tourism at the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village as well as its economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits. The investigation was meant to assess the existing conditions of this cultural tourism site so that appropriate actions can be taken into the suitable direction. This will also contribute to sustainable tourism development and its benefits for the community concerned.

2. Research Objectives

There were two research objectives:

- (1) To investigate the current promotion of cultural tourism on Thai Buffalo Conservation Village, and
- (2) To examine the economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits from the current promotion of cultural tourism on Thai Buffalo Conservation Village.

3. Scope of Research

(1) Population: Thai tourists, participating villagers and officials of the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village involved in promoting cultural tourism within the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village area.

(2) Content: Guidelines for promoting and evaluating social, environmental, and economic benefits, including activities that generate income in the area of the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village, Si Prachan District, Suphan Buri Province. The focus was on evaluating tourist attractions and benefits that create economic value.

(3) Area: The area under study was the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village, Si Prachan District, Suphan Buri Province.

(4) Time: The total period of this research was 10 months, starting from June 2024 to March 2025.

4. Cultural Tourism

Trend of Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is a growing and increasingly popular form of tourism worldwide. Cultural heritage has been passed down from the past to the present, along with changing social and economic trends. Due to rapid social and economic changes in Thailand, most people are increasingly concerned with the potential in traditional culture. Therefore, the government has intervened with various policies to preserve and conserve culture-related traditions. Particularly, the Fine Arts Department has developed historical sites into historical parks—conserving traditional ways of life and emphasizing rice planting and harvesting methods (Sukkorn , 2019).

Definition of Cultural Tourism

The definition of cultural tourism is broad, but the accepted definition is as follows:

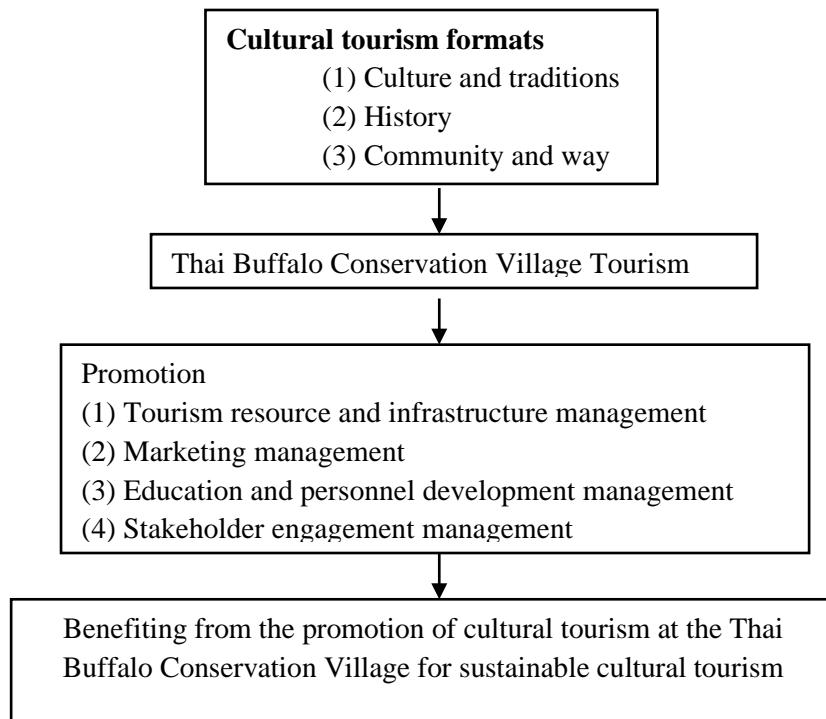
Phongtharathik et al. (2021) stated that cultural tourism is the movement of people to engage in cultural attractions available in a place, bringing new experiences to those with cultural needs.

Sukkorn (2019) defined cultural tourism as the visit of individuals to a local community, where the host community has a history, art, science, way of life or heritage that serves as an incentive for visitors.

In this case study, cultural tourism in the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village provides experiences and the way of life of the people in the community for tourists to learn about the culture and traditions of local farmers in the community, such as rice planting, the use of buffaloes to plow the fields, the Thai buffalo breed, preserved rice-farming ceremonies, and folklores for heritage preservation.

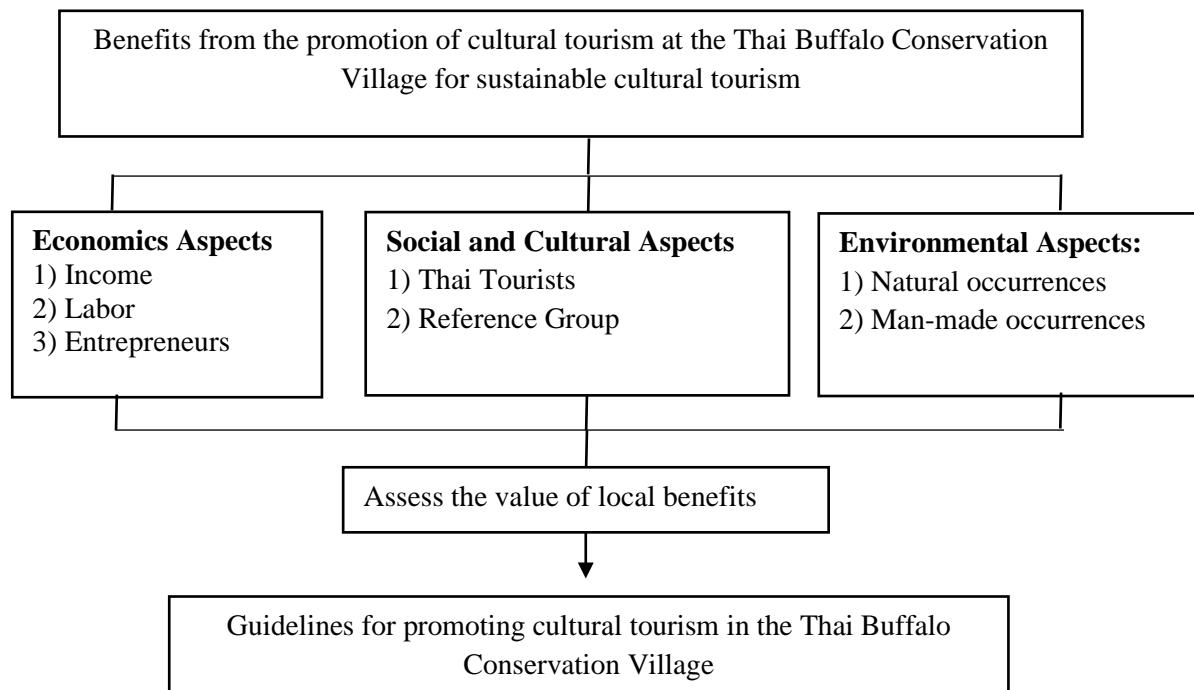
5. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



6. Research Process

Figure 2: Research Process



7. Research Methodology

Qualitative research methods were used, including in-depth interviews with a set of four questions for semi-structured interviews. These questions were open-ended.

In-depth interviews are structured interviews conducted with 21 voluntary participants who understand or live in the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village. They were 5 shop owners, 5 officials, 5 villagers, and 6 tourists. The interviews focused on exploring in-depth opinions and personal feelings toward cultural tourism at the conservation site. The obtained information was expected to promote benefits to the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village under study. The interview form consists of the following questions:

- (1) How did you get to participate in [developing] the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village?
- (2) Have you participated in the activities organized by the community in developing the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village? If so, how?
- (3) What plans do you have for developing the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village?
- (4) What are your [suggested] guidelines for developing the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village to maximize benefits?

Data triangulation in this qualitative research was to check the power to confirm the reliability and validity of the obtained data for the following purposes:

- (1) To verify whether the data obtained by the researchers is correct or not, and examine three sources: time, place and person.
- (2) To check how differently researchers might observe particular sets of data and to ensure accuracy in data analysis and interpretation.
- (3) To examine consistency in the concept of cultural tourism promotion and benefits as perceived by the participants.

8. Data Collection

Data collection in this case study was by in-depth interviews as follows:

Step 1. The researchers selected voluntary participants for in-depth interviews by primarily considering those who live in the area of the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village and are involved in receiving benefits from the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village.

Step 2: The interviews were conducted in a location where the participants felt comfortable and relaxed, as in the resting area in the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village.

Step 3: The researchers used a set of planned questions for the interview, and were flexible in modifying the questions for the interviewees to obtain in-depth and diverse data.

Step 4: Data from the interviews were recorded with permission from the interviewees and transcribed for use in content analysis.

The researchers maintained confidentiality in the participants' personal information. The data collection period lasted 10 months from June 2024 to March 2025.

9. Data Analysis

The researchers used triangulation to examine and analyze the data obtained from the in-depth interviews to ensure accuracy and completeness as responsive to the research objectives. The obtained data were categorized into the content types as the current promotion of cultural tourism in the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village area, followed by the economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits from the current promotion of cultural tourism at the conservation site.

10. Research Results

This section reports obtained results based on the two research objectives. The content analysis of categorized interview data generated eleven dimensions: (i) Management, (ii) Marketing (iii) Access, (iv) Benefits, (v) Keywords reflecting local lifestyle and beliefs, (vi) Education and Personnel Development, (vii) Involvement, and Participation, (viii) Environment, (ix) Guidelines, (x) Evaluation of the Value of Benefits and Community Participation, and (xi) Sustainability.

Management

The Thai Buffalo Conservation Village's cultural tourism promotion approach encompasses four management areas: (i) tourism resource and infrastructure management, (ii) marketing management, (iii) education and personnel development management, and (iv) stakeholder participation management. However, the most deficient aspect is the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village's marketing management. As a private company, the village is unable to conduct substantial marketing due to excessive taxes and advertising costs. Most marketing comes from word-of-mouth from tourists and through public relations on its Facebook fan page .

Marketing

The Thai Buffalo Conservation Village requires modern and online marketing. Since the village is privately owned and operated by PP Transport, public relations and marketing channels are limited due to high marketing costs. Instead, the focus is on visiting tourists or those who promote the village via social media, such as YouTubers and TikTokers. The Thai Buffalo Conservation Village itself has established a Facebook page to promote and market the conservation village. The content of the marketing campaign is based on the village's core product or buffaloes as a key selling point to attract tourists seeking the cultural experience. In addition, the village has collaborated with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Suphan Buri Office to promote activities and tourist attractions.

Access

Since its establishment in 2002, the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village has remained rather unknown and lacked easy access. Transportation and amenities were limited. Currently, income generation has contributed to community development and accessibility, including the use of tap water and groundwater. Residents have also gained access to communications, resulting in stable mobile phone signals from multiple providers. Furthermore, transportation and safety facilities have been improved, particularly the installation of additional light poles to increase visibility. Furthermore,

convenience stores and community markets are available in support of tourists and local residents.

Benefits

Benefits lie in economic, social and cultural, and environmental aspects. All three aspects are complete and operational. Since the establishment of the conservation village, there has been simultaneous development in the economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. This has led to sustainable tourism for both tourists and the local community.

The researchers considered the results consistent with the previous study on the development of innovative tourism communities in the Ban Nong Kratuk Nuea, Nong Nom Wua Subdistrict, Lat Yao District, Nakhon Sawan Province (Daoruang, 2021). This qualitative research also found the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village operationally consistent with the 7Ps marketing mix strategy.

Keywords Reflecting Local Lifestyle and Beliefs

Table 1 reveals that the cultural tourism model of the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village incorporates the local lifestyle and beliefs to create experiences for tourists. Examples include buffalo performances and the worship of the buffalo god, which is believed to bring prosperity. It should be noted that cultural transmission is a challenge for international tourists, particularly the lack of local guides or instructors who can communicate with tourists in English or other foreign languages. However, an organized tour can arrange for such activities as making Thai desserts and planting rice.

Table 1: Keywords Extracted from Interview Content Analysis

Category	Keywords	Details
Cultural tourism formats	Cultural traditions	- Do not buy, kill, or sell any buffalo in the village.
	History	- Plowing the field - Buffalo King
	Community and way of life	- Living life
Structure	Electricity Tap water Telephone Internet	- Add more electric poles - Groundwater - The signal is normal. - True, DTAC, AIS
Marketing	Distribution chancels	- Facebook page
Providing education and human resource development	Lecturer	- Local guide
Participation	Key informants Tourist Officer Entrepreneur Villagers	- Bring buffalo to organize activities - Participate in activities - Take care of every buffalo. - Take care of the restaurant - Not participating

Category	Keywords	Details
Benefits	Economy Aspect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - income - Labor - Entrepreneurs Society and Culture Aspect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thai tourists - Reference group Environment Aspect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Things that happen naturally - Man-made things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased income - Employment is created - Local villagers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased number of tourists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Natural materials processed into products - Transportation routes
Assess the value of benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think together Join the fun Co-create Join the benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participate in giving opinions on development. - Participate in organized activities - Jointly develop plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development guidelines
Promotion guides	7 Ps Product Price Promotion Place Physical evidence People Process	Product <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Products from the community Price <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Admission fee Place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thai Buffalo Conservation Village Physical evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Showcasing a smiling buffalo and a buffalo raising its leg. People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local people have income. Promotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Admission fee is 30 baht, including one free set of grass. Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote through online channels - Buffalo souvenirs People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local people have income. Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote through online channels - Buffalo souvenirs
Sustainable tourism	Coexistence with the local community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using natural materials to add value to their uniqueness

Education and Personnel Development

In providing education and developing personnel, the village still lacks local resources and English-speaking guides to take tourists to various tourist attractions. There has also been a lack of foreign-language guides to impart knowledge on the conservation of Thai buffaloes. Some tourists need to get basic information by themselves. However, on the conservation site, knowledgeable buffalo caretakers are ready to provide information on buffalo care, and give further explanations.

Involvement and Participation

The highlight of this place is that the buffaloes are cared for by the private sector. Caretakers bring buffaloes to perform various shows and activities. Fundraising has taken place onsite, but the community has had little involvement in the operations. Local villagers have been allowed to sell their products or provide services to increase their income. It should be noted that there has not yet been a clear-cut development plan regarding participation or involvement from the local community. On the point of community involvement, some participants under study expressed their concern and would like to see such involvement in the promotion development plan for the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village. Some participants suggested joint creation of relationships between the community and external tourism agencies, or environmental organizations for a stable support. It can lead to new products and service developments in the community, such as soap from buffalo milk, fertilizer from buffalo dung, and organization of lifestyle demonstrations or handicraft learning activities for tourists.

Environment

Environmentally, buffaloes are important animals that help reduce agricultural costs. For example, using buffaloes to plow fields instead of machinery reduces oil consumption and allows buffalo dung to be used as organic fertilizer, which lowers agricultural production costs. Natural materials can be used to make products that attract tourists' interest.

Guidelines

Guidelines for current cultural tourism in the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village can follow the 7Ps (Marketing Mix) principle to meet the needs of tourists and entrepreneurs (Strategy and Development Information Group, 2021). The marketing mix consists of (i) Product: Products from the community and villagers in the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village, particularly buffalo-shaped pen holders made from natural materials as souvenirs. (ii) Price: Admission fee for Thais: 20 baht for children and 30 baht for adults. Admission fee for shows: 10 baht for Thais: 20 baht for children and 70 baht for adults. Admission fee for foreigners: 70 baht for children and 150 baht for adults. Admission fee for shows: 100 baht for foreigners. (iii) Promotion: When purchasing an admission ticket, each person will receive a free bundle of grass to feed the buffaloes inside. (iv) Place: The Thai Buffalo Conservation Village. (v) Physical Evidence: A show on Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays, featuring smiling buffaloes and leg-lifting buffaloes. (vi) People: The income generated by local villagers and employment opportunities within the village. Volunteers are hired to work in the village. (vii) Process: The creation of promotional media through online channels. Both photos and videos are

used to attract tourists to witness the uniqueness of natural materials transformed into souvenirs.

Evaluation of the Value of Benefits and Community Participation

The participants' evaluation of the value of benefits and community participation in promoting the conservation site suggest ways to develop the village, including buffalo displays, tourism promotion, and income management. These offered opinions reveal a variety of development opportunities. The benefits of improving quality of life and increased income will lead to educational opportunities, more public utilities, and village funding—all creating pride among community members.

Sustainability

Sustainable tourism at the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village requires coexistence between the community and private companies. This includes providing jobs, generating income for local residents, and fostering local employment. Space is available for rent for businesses, including souvenir shops, photo booths, costume rentals, restaurants, and accommodations--further fueling the community's economic growth in the long run.

11. Discussion and Conclusion of Major Findings

Based on Research Objective 1 on the current promotion of cultural tourism in the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village area, the researchers found that the *management* of tourist resources (Aneksuk, 2020) and infrastructure, marketing, education and personnel development (Sukiam & Likitsarun, 2021), and stakeholder participation are consistent with the study by Sukkorn (2019), who emphasized cultural tourism as a growing and increasingly popular form of tourism. Cultural heritage has been passed down from the past to the present, leading to periods of crisis in development. However, current social and economic trends are changing due to rapid changes in Thai society and the economy that affect traditional cultures (Thawornwisit & Wongmontha, 2021). In this regard, the government has intervened in the creation of various policies to help maintain and preserve society and culture (Nimphanich & Yenyuek, 2020; Strategy and Development Information Group, 2021; Del Soldato, 2024).

According to Research Objective 2, the current promotion of cultural tourism in the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village area is based on economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits. Economically, the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village generates income for entrepreneurs and workers who maintain the area, allowing tourists to visit and observe Thai buffaloes. This unique identity also attracts visitors, generating income for local villagers (Samarak et al., 2022). Socially and culturally, the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village is a cultural tourism destination, attracting both Thai and international tourists with activities that provide knowledge about buffalo raising and the way of life of Thai farmers, showcasing local culture (Santajitto et al., 2023). Environmentally, buffaloes are important animals that help reduce agricultural costs. For example, using buffaloes to plow fields instead of machinery with oil consumption, and buffalo dung as organic fertilizer, further reducing agricultural production costs. Evidently, natural materials can be used to process products to create tourist attractions (Cabral, 2023). This aligns with the study by Danprasert's (2017) in that tourism creates businesses to meet tourist needs and foster friendly relationships with visitors.

Furthermore, creativity contributes to social development; and creativity, with cultural and environmental restoration can embody the value of arts and culture, preserving Thailand's unique identity (Puangphet & Supasakdamrong, 2022; Chanthima et al., 2022). This fosters the creation of new products and services within society and communities (Nanta, 2020). This also allows people to earn income from work and make productive use of their free time (Daoruang, 2021). Each tourist attraction has its own unique identity, particularly the "Khao Kwan" ceremony, which promotes local wisdom and encourages visitor travel, creating a positive impression and encouraging word of mouth, further enhancing the identity of community and Thai rural lifestyles.

12. Suggestions and Future Research

Suggestions

Based on the obtained findings, the researchers would like to suggest the following:

- (i) Entrepreneurs need to use digital technology comprehensively for public relations so that potential tourists can access cultural tourism information quickly.
- (ii) The government should provide training programs for local tour guides for efficiency in communication as well as competencies in imparting accurate local knowledge and local wisdom to tourists for high quality in touring support and services.
- (iii) The community in the Thai Buffalo Conservation Village area should be encouraged for participation in the site promotion development, restoration, and overall conservation to strengthen the community in moving toward sustainable tourism.

Future Research

As for future research, the scope of population should be broadened for better comparison of results and relationships among variables under study. There should be a study of soft power strategies generated by cultural tourism, which disseminates culture with its new creations for wider acceptance in tourist' attitudes toward new products and services provided by the host. This can help the community of cultural tourism to move sustainability forward as its ultimate goal.

13. The Authors

Atchara Chanlin, Chutikan Petthong, Pattarawadee Punyasan, Sirikanya Kaewsriprasert, and Khewika Sukiam are academic staff members at the Faculty of Hospitality Industry, Kasetsart University, Kampangsean Campus, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. They share research interest in the areas of cultural tourism, human resource management, and current issues in marketing management and innovation.

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