

# EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT FOR CREATIVE COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF THAILAND AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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## ABSTRACT

*The objective of this research was to analyze the potential and design the management of quality tourism experiences in the tourist attractions with creative community-based management in the central region. The research results revealed that Community based tourism by the Dvaravati Ancient City U-Thong, Suphanburi Province, and Community based tourism by Ban-Bang-Chao-Cha, Ang Thong Province, had the development of creative community-based tourism potential in the market for quality tourists at the highest level and high level, respectively. There was the analysis on the design of creative quality tourism experience management based on the outstanding and true identity of the community and society emphasizing the participation of the community at the same level which was the highest level. According to the results of data analysis on the design of quality tourism experience management, namely the Community based tourism by the Dvaravati Ancient City U-Thong, Suphanburi Province, the activities were; 1) Creating the meal through the folk tale of Yang Nok Khao: Thao U Thong Ni Ha, 2) Welcoming tourists with unique songs of the central region, 3) Stringing Dvaravati beads as the mask strap and 4) Printing Buddha image in the miraculous gesture. The activities of Community based tourism by Ban-Bang-Chao-Cha, Ang Thong Province, were; 1) Creating the meal on their own through local food in the central region and 2) DIY rubber painting to create the creative community-based tourism experience towards the quality tourist market in the central region in a sustainable way.*

**Keywords:** Experience Management, Creative Community-Based, Quality Tourist Market, Covid-19

## INTRODUCTION

The situation of COVID-19 epidemic spread has resulted in the disruption of tourism around the world (Razzaq, Sharif, Aziz, Irfan & Jermittiparsert, 2020), including Thailand. It causes widespread impacts such as on the tour operators, hotel businesses, restaurant businesses, souvenirs, and entertainment business including community-based tourism. As a result, the service industry business has adapted to learn from what happened in order to transform the way of tourism services in the future after the COVID-19 situation. As Thailand has the potential and readiness of natural tourism resources, way of life and culture distributed in all regions of the country, the management of tourist attractions in different areas to achieve sustainability can create and distribute benefits to stakeholders in the tourism value chain. The impacts which can be concretely shown are such as creating jobs and incomes for people in the area and the emergence of tourism that can truly stimulate the economy from the foundation. This is in line

with the 20-year strategy of Thailand (2017-2036) on the strategic issues for building competitiveness aiming at improving the productivity throughout the value chain. Another important point in development is in terms of tourism innovations that can reduce social inequality being able to elevate the basic economy in a concrete way. It includes the promotion on tourism from the main tourist city to the secondary tourist city in order to distribute the number of quality tourists.

The central region of Thailand can convey traditional way of life that indicates an identity reflecting the roots of Thai people in the past. As a result, tourists prefer to travel in the community to learn about the way of life, culture, traditions, and interesting activities of the community. As mentioned above, community-based tourism has a positive impact on the economy, society, culture and environment within the community. It builds pride in the area and brings local products to the next level for increasing the value of tourism products linked to the Thai way of life. This includes the generation of income and the strengthening on the community leading to the sustainability of community-based tourism in the future. This is correspondent with the research of Müller, Huck & Markova (2020); Zapata, Hall, Lindo & Vanderschaeghe (2011); Cooperation, A.-P.E. (2014); Yu-Chih & Pidpong (2020); stating that tourism is a supplementary tool to strengthen the local economy. The community-based tourism has become a poverty reduction tool that helps local communities in ways such as educational opportunities, environmental conservation, income-generating activities, and participation of local people. It can promote local communities, conserve and preserve cultural resources to maintain sustainability. Therefore, creative community-based tourism is like opening a new perspective on tourism for visitors to see the value and take part in a delightful local experience as well as distributing the income to people in the area.

All of the aforementioned statements illustrate the charm of community-based tourism and the cooperation to improve the quality of life of people in the community. The people in the community are ready to welcome tourists to travel to the area. However, the tourism community still lacks knowledge and understanding of creative community-based tourism experience management to respond the needs of the quality tourist market. This is absolutely necessary in raising the level of community-based tourist attractions to have potential, quality and readiness to support the market for quality tourists effectively. Therefore, the research team has used the tools to design and manage tourism experiences in the community to add value to tourists' experiences and to build confidence for communities and tourists to travel in a safe, sanitary, impressionable and informative tourism experience by the community. It leads to the development of community-based tourism marketing to high-value markets to improve the quality of life of people in the community, develop a basic economy and reduce inequality to achieve the goals according to the National Strategic Plan.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

To analyze the potential and design the management of quality tourism experiences in the tourist attractions with creative community-based management in the central region.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Marketing Mix**

Marketing Mix is a set of regulated tactical marketing tools (product, price, place, and promotion) where companies combine to create the desired response in the target market (Armstrong & Kotler, 2009; Jermisittiparsert, 2019). It is a strategic marketing tool that companies can harness and combine to create the desired response in their target market (Daryanto, 2013). Cannon, Perreault & Dan McCarthy (2008) states that it is a variable that the company must monitor in order to achieve the marketing performance according to the target

group. Lovelock & Wright (2007) also argues that Marketing mix is a marketing tool that controls the business to use together to meet the needs and satisfaction of the target customers as well as stimulating the target customers to have their own products and services referred to the components that are factors in planning, marketing of products or services.

The marketing mix consists of products which are offered at a certain price with certain promotion to tell prospective travelers about these products and how to reach them (Cannon, Perreault & Dan Mccarthy, 2008). The marketing mix consists of what companies can do to convince consumers to buy their products (Armstrong & Kotler, 2009).

The proactive marketing integrates the marketing mix into an integrated marketing program designed to achieve the company’s marketing goals by delivering value to travelers. The marketing mix is like the company’s recommendation for establishing the strong position in its target market (Armstrong & Kotler, 2009). The research team has determined the components of 9P’s tourism marketing mix to study the marketing potential of the prototype areas including 1) Product, 2) Price, 3) Place, 4) Promotion, 5) People, 6) Partnership, 7) Package, 8) Positioning, and 9) Programming.

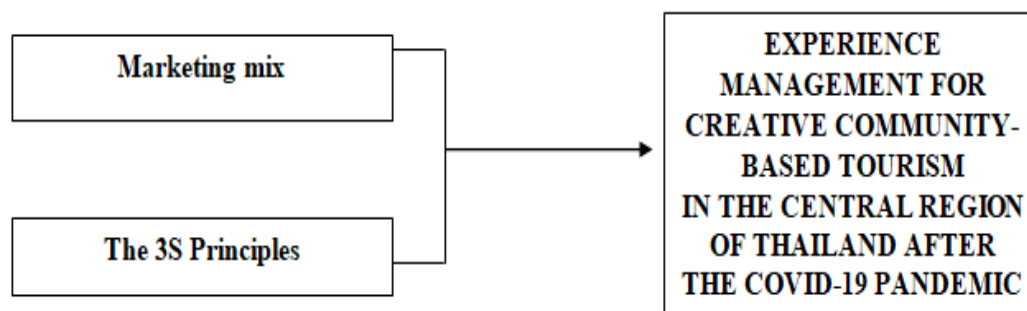
**Tourism Design Process (The 3S Principles)**

Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization) (DASTA) (2018) also stated more about tourism design process (The 3S Principles) as follows:

- 1) Stories: There are stories from local cultural capital that have been searched, arranged, designed and presented in an interesting way.
- 2) Senses: It can be tangible through the 5 senses (Sensory Analysis) namely Seeing, Smelling, Hearing, Touching and Tasting.
- 3) Sophistication: The activities are fluid, distinctive and different stimulating creativity and creating new works as well as continually improving and developing activities.

The tourism design process (The 3S Principles) in terms of stories, senses and sophistication can be used to analyze and design tourism experience management in order to create the creative tourism activity model based on the true identity of the community to meet the needs of quality tourists under the research objectives.

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**



**FIGURE 1  
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

**Population and Sample Group**

The research study divided the sample groups into 4 groups; 1) 2 model communities of DASTA in the central region, namely, Community based tourism by the Dvaravati Ancient City U-Thong, Suphanburi Province, and Community based tourism by Ban-Bang-Chao-Cha, Ang Thong Province, 2) Government agencies, namely the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT),

Ministry of Public Health, and Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA), 3) Private agencies, namely tourism business operators, and 4) Quality tourists.

### **Research Instruments**

The research tools were questionnaire and in-depth interview. The research issues can be divided into 2 issues as follows:

The 1<sup>st</sup> Issue is the analysis on the potential and design of quality tourism experience management in tourist attractions by the community. The analysis is divided into two parts:

The 1<sup>st</sup> Part is the development on the potential of creative community-based tourism management towards the quality tourist market. It is the analysis on the factors of marketing mix divided into 10 issues including 1) Product, 2) Price, 3) Place, 4) Promotion, 5) Partnership, 6) Package, 7) Positioning, 8) Programming, 9) People, and 10) Health and safety standards to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) on the basis of the New Normal.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Part is the community-based tourism development evaluation through the perspective of tourism stakeholders in tourism. The analysis was divided into 6 issues: 1) Community-based tourism management, 2) Economic, social and quality of life management, 3) Conservation and promotion of community cultural heritage, 4) Natural resource management or the environment in a systematic and sustainable manner, 5) Quality of community-based tourism services and 6) Marketing.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Issue is the analysis on the design of creative quality tourism experience management based on the outstanding and true identity of the community and society emphasizing the participation of the community. This is an analysis of the tourism design process (The 3S Principles) which is divided into 3 issues including Stories, Senses and Sophistication.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Issue is the analysis on the potential and design for the management of quality tourism experiences in the tourist attractions by community. The data is analyzed as follows:

The 1<sup>st</sup> Part is the development on the creative community-based tourism potential towards the quality tourist market using descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Part is the community-based tourism development assessment through the perspective of tourism stakeholders. The content analysis is used by analyzing the data with inductive descriptions.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Issue is the analysis on the design for the creative management of quality tourism experiences on the basis of the outstanding and true identity of the community and society by emphasizing the participation of the community. The descriptive statistics are used including mean and standard deviation together with the method of content analysis by analyzing the data with the inductive description.

### **RESEARCH RESULTS**

1. Findings of the analysis on the potential and design for the management of quality tourism experiences in the tourist attractions by community.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Part is the development on the potential of creative community-based tourism towards the quality tourist market. The issues in the study can be analyzed in Table 1 as follows:

Development on the potential of creative community-based tourism towards the quality tourist market	Community based tourism by the Dvaravati Ancient City U-Thong, Suphanburi Province			Community based tourism by Ban-Bang-Chao-Cha, Ang Thong Province		
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level of management	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level of management
1. Product	4.46	0.581	Highest	4.23	0.714	Highest
2. Price	4.12	0.746	High	4.25	0.779	Highest
3. Place	4.45	0.594	Highest	4.12	0.898	High
4. Promotion	4.18	0.679	High	4.02	0.866	High
5. Partnership	4.33	0.612	Highest	3.99	0.825	High
6. Package	4.43	0.565	Highest	3.90	0.784	High
7. Positioning	4.53	0.597	Highest	3.88	0.878	High
8. Programming	4.18	0.506	High	3.63	0.783	High
9. People	4.43	0.557	Highest	3.80	0.729	High
10. Health and safety standards based on the New Normal	4.27	0.542	Highest	3.69	0.882	High
Total	4.34	0.598	Highest	3.95	0.814	High

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Part is the community-based tourism development assessment through the perspective of tourism stakeholders. The issues in the study can be analyzed as follows:

#### **Community based tourism by the Dvaravati Ancient City U-Thong, Suphanburi Province**

It is truly management with the participation of people in the community having community leaders as the core of management. The community has continually preserved and promoted the cultural heritage of the community with love and cherish for the arts and culture. In this regard, the conservation model has been modified and promoted to be in line with the changing society. In addition, the community has promoted the tourism marketing in online media and the public relations of the regional agencies. However, it is still not as effective as it should be because there is no continuous publicity and lack of main responsibility.

#### **Community based tourism by Ban-Bang-Chao-Cha, Ang Thong Province**

There is a clear division of duties for the management of community-based tourism but it may not be as effective as it should be. The economic management, society and good quality of life of people in the community are regarded as good management. The community lives simply and the community cultural heritage is promoted. It is passed on from generation to generation in terms of beliefs, way of life, handicrafts, art and culture. In terms of service quality, there is still a lack of efficiency and guidelines for serving tourists with quality. This is because community leaders and people in the community involved still lack understanding of services to tourists such as tourism activities and community participation in providing services to tourists. In addition, the community tourism marketing is not as effective as it should be because there is no main responsible person and it also lacks effective marketing promotion planning. As a result, the community is not known to many tourists.

2. Results of the analysis on the design for the creative management of quality tourism experiences on the basis of the outstanding and true identity of the community and society by emphasizing the participation of the community. The issues in the study can be analyzed in Table 2 as follows:

Development on the potential of Creative Tourism: The 3S Principles	Community based tourism by the Dvaravati Ancient City U-Thong, Suphanburi Province			Community based tourism by Ban-Bang-Chao-Cha, Ang Thong Province		
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level of management	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level of management
1. Stories Telling	4.59	0.643	Highest	4.39	0.721	Highest
2. Senses	4.46	0.675	Highest	4.18	0.780	High
3. Sophistication	4.38	0.726	Highest	4.15	0.791	High
Total	4.48	0.681	Highest	4.24	0.764	Highest

The ideas for the design process of tourism of Community based tourism by the Dvaravati Ancient City U-Thong, Suphanburi Province, and Community based tourism by Ban-Bang-Chao-Cha, Ang Thong Province, can be described as below.

### **Community based tourism by the Dvaravati Ancient City U-Thong, Suphanburi Province**

The community-based tourism experience design has new creative activities such as 1) Creating the meal through the folk tale of Yang Nok Khao: Thao U Thong Ni Ha which is the Thao U Thong’s recipe to fight COVID-19 as recommended by the Ministry of Health, 2) Welcoming tourists with unique songs to impress and get to know the local stories of U Thong Suphanburi Province, 3) Developing the activity of stringing Dvaravati beads as the mask strap and 4) Developing the activity of printing the Buddha image in the miraculous gesture which is the prototype amulet in the U Thong Museum and Buddhist beliefs as shown in Table 3.

Issues	Resources of the model community	Consistency
Stories	- Dvaravati civilization - folk tale of Yang Nok Khao: Thao U Thong Ni Ha	- The activities are designed on the basis of local cultural capital having the unique local identity.
Senses	- Antiques in Dvaravati era - Central Region Folk Song (Choi)	- The activities are designed for learning from knowledgeable people who have real experience actually participating to generate knowledge, deep understanding, and fun. - The activities are designed clearly using the senses (aesthetics while doing activities) such as shape, taste, smell, sound, touch, and (mind) spirit. - The activities are designed to allow participation and exchange of creative ideas in the activities for working together between the visitors and the hosts or artists.
Sophistication	- Dvaravati beads	- The activities are designed to provide an opportunity to develop the creative potential. Such activities may even be able to inspire creativity both visitors and hosts or artists.

### **Community Based Tourism by Ban-Bang-Chao-Cha, Ang Thong Province**

The community-based tourism experience is designed to have new creative activities;

- 1) Creating the meal on their own through local food in the central region (Cooking Class)
- 2) DIY rubber painting as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
**THE 3S PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM BY BAN-BANG-CHAO-CHA, ANG THONG PROVINCE**

Issues	Resources of the model community	Consistency
Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wicker wisdom</li> <li>- Wisdom of medicine</li> <li>- Legend of Nai Cha</li> <li>- Legacy of a pair of golden rubber trees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The activities are designed on the basis of local cultural capital having the unique local identity.</li> </ul>
Senses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Long drum dance activities</li> <li>- Cooking Class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The activities are designed for learning from knowledgeable people who have real experience actually participating to generate knowledge, deep understanding, and fun.</li> <li>- The activities are designed clearly using the senses (aesthetics while doing activities) such as shape, taste, smell, sound, touch, and (mind) spirit.</li> <li>- The activities are designed to allow participation and exchange of creative ideas in the activities for working together between the visitors and the hosts or artists.</li> <li>- The venues for organizing the activities are designed to suit learning, exchange, and creation of works.</li> </ul>
Sophistication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rubber painting from a pair of golden rubber trees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The activities are designed to provide an opportunity to develop the creative potential. Such activities may even be able to inspire creativity both visitors and hosts or artists.</li> <li>- The activities are designed to be fluid and can stimulate creativity and aesthetics.</li> </ul>

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The researchers applied the concepts of tourism design process (The 3S Principles) and marketing mix as the approaches for analyzing the design of creative community-based tourism experience management in the central region. Tourism management is therefore an important issue for creating valuable tourism experiences for tourists traveling to the community. The focus is on creative tourism models and designing tourism activities that are in line with the identity and context of the community in terms of tourism programs and creative tourism activities to meet the needs of quality tourists (Demand) and owners of the area (Supply). This can deliver impressive experiences to quality tourists and create sustainability of community-based tourism through participation of people in the community in thinking design tourism activities and taking into account the standards of service provision to tourists after the COVID-19 crisis. The results for the design of the creative community-based tourism experience of Community based tourism by the Dvaravati Ancient City U-Thong, Suphanburi Province, and Community based tourism by Ban-Bang-Chao-Cha, Ang Thong Province, could be discussed as follows.

Potential and design of quality tourism experience management in community-based tourism sites of the Community based tourism by the Dvaravati Ancient City U-Thong, Suphanburi Province, and Community based tourism by Ban-Bang-Chao-Cha, Ang Thong Province, is an application of the marketing mix concept of Armstrong & Kotler (2009) to analyze the potential development of creative community-based tourism towards the quality tourist market. In terms of products of creative community attractions, it focuses on cultural traditions that are local identity and attractiveness of local products. It is different from other localities interestingly. If looking at the price of tourism products, Community based tourism by the Dvaravati Ancient City U-Thong, Suphanburi Province and Community based tourism by Ban-Bang-Chao-Cha, Ang Thong Province, the price is set at a reasonable value for the traveler’s experience and suits the needs of quality travelers. This also adds value to the community by distributing (Place) of community attractions at the point where tourists can travel

easily and conveniently. They can contact to travel with the community in many channels. In addition, for the marketing promotion (Promotion), the community always organizes activities to motivate tourists to travel by using various types of media, both online and offline media for use in advertising and publicizing the tourism information of the community to tourists. There is also a promotion to motivate tourists to travel to the community. In terms of cooperation (Partnership) after the COVID-19 crisis, the community has to adapt by building more networks and connecting with tourism operators. This includes the combination to develop cooperation between each other to be more effective. In addition, the community tourism package has the ability to design a variety of travel routes to suit the group of tourists coming to the community that tourists can choose according to their interests and budgets. For positioning, the community has a distinctive cultural image known. In addition, the community has a strong community-based tourism management measured by the Criteria for Community Based Tourism including the ability to manage (Programming). The community has the ability to produce travel programs to be interesting tourism services. With the people in the operation (People), the community has service providers who provide services with a smile, friendliness, and willingness including the provision of community vehicles to have hygiene and safety standards to prevent the spread of the corona virus (COVID-19) on the basis of the New Normal. The community has prepared checkpoints for screening and measuring body temperature of tourists before starting community tourism activities. The hand sanitizer is provided with at least 70% alcohol in the public areas at every point that tourists use including preparing food containers and snacks wrapped in plastic and beverages with lids to avoid contamination. Chinchot & Chantuk (2016) found that creating or maximizing the value of existing resources whether natural or cultural resources can be used to create creative innovations as a form of tourism activities, tourism products or services. In addition, Kuiapai (2009) found that the price of cultural tourism must not be too high because the budget and the cost of living in tourism is important strategy used to attract more tourists. In addition, Kositpipat, Nilseang & Chaimon (2020) found that traveling to the venue conveniently and appropriately makes the participants satisfied with the venue. Marketing promotion influences feelings, beliefs and behaviors, purchases of goods and services (Etzel, Walker & Stanton, 2007). This agrees with Dian Andriany and Intan. Andini (2019) finding that increasing tourist interest is a mix of marketing communications that include advertising, direct marketing, interactive marketing, sale promotion, personal sale, public relations for activities, experiences, and word-of-mouth marketing. Anusonpat (2020) found that when organizations reduce employees and reduce work that are not core competency of the organization, organizations must turn to work with business partners more. Jeenapak (2012) found that most tourists are satisfied with the officers in terms of friendliness, followed by officers who have good personality and dress modestly. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (2020) has set guidelines for compliance with the Amazing Thailand Safety and Health Administration (SHA) project standards for operators to implement the established standards and build confidence in the safety and hygiene of tourists both Thai and foreign tourists.

The design for the creative community-based tourism experiences on the basis of the outstanding and true identity of the community and society by emphasizing the participation of the community, the research team studied the potential of the area and the management of tourism experience towards the quality tourists group of the tourism promotion club by Community based tourism by the Dvaravati Ancient City U-Thong, Suphanburi Province, and Community based tourism by Ban-Bang-Chao-Cha, Ang Thong Province, by applying the concept of tourism design process (The 3S Principles) of Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization) (DASTA) (2018) to design tourism activities of the model community. Most of these activities are designed at the cost of a unique local culture. Both tourist attractions have unique cultural identity that is unique, combined with beliefs that have been passed on from generation to generation and the way of life of the community for a long time (Story telling). This includes 1) Telling folk tales through meals to create menu names and use raw ingredients that have properties to prevent COVID-19, 2) Printing ancient Buddha



image in the Dvaravati period of the Community based tourism by the Dvaravati Ancient City U-Thong, Suphanburi Province, and Community based tourism by Ban-Bang-Chao-Cha, Ang Thong Province 1) Telling the legend of the hero of the community “Nai Cha”, 2) Wisdom of weaving that is famous for the Bang Chao Cha Community. In addition, it also focuses on designing activities to learn from people who have real experience actually participating causing knowledge, deep understanding, and fun using the senses clearly (aesthetics while doing activities) such as shape, taste, smell, sound, touch, and (mind) spirit. This is for gaining deep understanding and enjoyment as well as the opportunity to participate in discussions and interactive exchange of creativity in activities. There is the joint practice between tourists and people in the area (Sense) of the Community based tourism by the Dvaravati Ancient City U-Thong, Suphanburi Province, including 1) Local folk songs of the central region (Choi) and Community based tourism by Ban-Bang-Chao-Cha, Ang Thong Province, including 1) Long drum dance activity which is a play of Thai people in the central region since the past brought up to welcome tourists. 2) For Cooking Class, tourists can cook food using ingredients from the garden or around the houses of the local people. It is an activity that allows tourists and the host to develop the creative potential (Sophistication). Such activities inspire the creation of new things and differentiation activities and uniqueness not like other tourist attractions. This is for the marketing benefits of the Community based tourism by the Dvaravati Ancient City U-Thong, Suphanburi Province in 1) Develop the activities of the Dvaravati bead stringing based on allowing tourists to participate in the beading activity to form the mask strap which responds to the current situation of COVID-19. For Community based tourism by Ban-Bang-Chao-Cha, Ang Thong Province, 1) Creative activity of DIY rubber painting is the creative activity to draw tourists’ attention on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) from waste rubber fruits in the community area to develop into activities that raise awareness among tourists and the community. The activities designed for both communities focus on creating experiences through creative local identities that are different and unique passing on impressions through emotions, stories, and inspiration and emphasizing participation in every process of activities. Kim (2010) found that tourists’ fascination with local cultural identities tended to increase their behavior towards reentry. McClinchey & Carmichael (2010) discovered that the activities, location, emotional satisfaction, memory, knowledge, identity and individual development are important parts of creativity. Hung, Lee & Huang (2014) suggested that unique creative activities make experiences especially memorable. Binkhorst (2007); Hung, Lee & Huang (2014); Pine & Gilmore (1999); Tan, Kung & Luh (2013) suggested that community activities for tourists should be creative experiences in the story to be unique allowing tourists to participate in creating experiences.

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