The Development of a Structural Equation Model of the Communication Factors in Promoting the Participation in Accepting the Potential for Tourism in the Area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River

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Abstract

This research was a quantitative research. It aimed to: 1) to develop and validate the structural equation model of the communication factors in promoting the participation in accepting the potential for tourism in the area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River, and 2) to study the causal direct effects and indirect effects among variables in this model. The representative sample consisted of 423 villagers in Nakhon Phanom province and Khammouane community, The Laos People’s Democratic Republic, who were students and workers. The research was conducted by using questionnaires, and the Structural Equation Model technique was used in statistical analysis.

The result revealed that 1) the structural equation model of the communication factors in promoting the participation in accepting the potential for tourism in the area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River with empirical data when all path coefficients were statistically significant. The model’s fit indices were accepted; 1.1 Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = .916 (> 0.09), 1.2 Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .979 (> 0.09), 1.3 Normed Fit Index (NFI) = .969 (> 0.09), 1.4 Non-normed Fit Index (NNFI) = .969 (> 0.90), and 1.5 Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) = .040 (< 0.05), and 2) communication factors had a direct effect on satisfaction. Besides, it had an indirect effect on participation and accepting the potential for tourism.

Keywords: communication factors, satisfaction, participation, the potential for tourism

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Introduction

This research studied the area of Mekong River along Nakhon Phanom province and Khammouan community being a part of two researches: the study of the social and cultural tourism management in Sakon Nakhon, Nakhon Phanom, Mukdahan towards Asian Economic Community (AEC) and the study of potential tourism of Mekong River Thai-Laos: a case study of the route from Chiang Khan to Kong Jieam. Their research fund supported by The Thailand Research Organizations Network and Thailand Research Fund in 2012-2013 which objected for developing the tourist potential in Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, and adding values of tourism in the Northeastern of Thailand (Janmouen, 2014; Srikrachang, 2012).

The Mekong River is the center of tourism in this area. The remarkable features are historic stories of cultural and traditional lifestyle between the Thai, Laos, and Vietnamese people living along the beautiful Mekong riversides. These tourist attractions and the wonderful tourist destinations are suitable for tourists interested in 1) the history of Indochina and the stories of the famous leaders of Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam 2) the architecture and the stories of the Buddhism and Christian, and 3) the livelihood and lifestyle of the people along the Mekong Riversides.

As a result of countries in Southeast Asia being the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), all member countries are alert to develop in various dimensions including education, social, culture, political economy and religion. The members will be able to combine with AEC to making the country into modernity and flourish, which lead to people’s physical and psychological changes. Especially, people live in the border areas, which are connected to the neighboring countries that need to communicate and exchange information with each other. The communication is important for building partnerships between the public in local and international levels.

The development of transport infrastructure is prominently reflected in a concrete preparation to establish good relations between countries such as the Thai-Laos friendship bridges which benefit the neighboring countries in terms of economy, trade, investment, tourism, cultural exchange, transportation and logistics. The bridges do not only link the two countries in the physical space but also link the mind and promote ties between the people of Thailand and Laos, which are the symbols of friendship and cooperation between the countries. Nowadays, there are six Thai-Laos friendship bridges and each bridge link between many important provinces in both Thailand and Laos. One of these bridges is the 3rd Thai-Laos Friendship Bridge, which link Nakhon Phanom province, Thailand and Khammouane community, Laos PDR, that are the major of Asian Economy Highway-linking Route of four countries, including Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and China. Furthermore, Nakhon Phanom province, and Khammouane community will be the advantage of infrastructure area that can develop and manage tourism across the border countries.

Nakhon Phanom province is an eastern border contact with Laos along the total length of 174 kilometers and has five immigration checkpoints, which are one permanent and four temporarily permitted. Nakhon Phanom has the vision of the province “Livable city gateway to ASEAN and China”, which corresponds with the strategic development of northeastern provinces. According to Nakhon Phanom has advantages of the location with the 3rd Thai-Laos friendship bridge, it is the gateway to ASEAN and China that enhance the tourism in Indochina countries. Also the presentation of tourism activities and festival in the region disseminate to other countries.
On the other hand, Thakhek, Khammouane community, Laos is the natural attractions of beautiful and fertile such as two sanctuaries, Phuhinpan on the west and Nakai-Namten on the east. The architecture in the city is mix of French and Vietnamese style. Thakhek is far from Vientiane to the south around 350 kilometers. The attractions, which well known to both Thai and Laos people, are “Prathat Sri Khotabong” called “That Sri Khot” in Laos. The 3rd Thai-Laos Friendship Bridge is also the new tourist path and transportation from the northeastern of Thailand to the southern of Laos and also the northern of Vietnam, Guangxi and Nanning of China.

The researchers visualized the potential route that will increase the transportation and tourism in particular, which were designed to support upcoming ASEAN official. Thailand and Laos will be able to enhance the infrastructure, which result to transfer in difference dimension such as language, culture, and belief. Consequently, the Development of a structural Equation Model of the Communication Factors in Promoting the Participation in Accepting the Potential for Tourism in the Area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River is very important to prepare the public leading to investment opportunities in the field of tourism to cover all the potential exists for the highest benefit.

Research Objectives

1. To develop and validate the structural equation model of the communication factors in promoting the participation in accepting the potential for tourism in the area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River.

2. To study the causal direct effect and indirect effect among variables in this model.

Hypothesis

The structural equation model of the communication factors in promoting the participation in accepting the potential for tourism in the area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River, which researchers developed and validated, complied with empirical data.

Scope of Research

The Development in a Structural Equation Model of the Communication for Promoting the Participation in Accepting the Potential for Tourism in the Area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River is a quantitative research using the survey methodology by one-shot explanation and closed-ended questionnaires to collecting data from the sample population, which is approximately 400 respondents that divided into three groups:

1. Community Leaders: Ten government officials playing an important role to plan the current tourism policies in Nakhon Phanom province, Thailand, and Thakhek city in Khammouane community, Laos PDR.

2. Entrepreneurs: Ten business owners, including hotel/resort and tourist guides, residing in Nakhon Phanom province, Thailand, and Thakhek city in Khammouane community, Laos PDR.

3. Community: 380 people residing in Nakhon Phanom province, Thailand, and Thakhek city in Khammouane community, Laos PDR.

Operational Definitions

1. **Structural equation model** means model of causal variables based on theories and research supports. Then, leads to a statistical test that the developed model is consistent with the empirical data. In this study, the researchers developed a structural equation model of communication to promote tourism potential of the Mekong River Thailand-Laos, then
perform a statistical test that the developed model is consistent with the empirical data. To study the direct effects and indirect effects of the variables in the model.

2. Communication factors means communication channels and features of the sender. The communication channel is composed of five channels: 1) mass communication, 2) interpersonal, 3) specialized media, 4) media activities, and 5) the Internet. For the characteristics of the sender that the content broadcast on the attraction of the Nakhon Phanom province, Thailand and Khammouane community, Laos, has four aspects: 1) capabilities and skills to convey the content of sites, 2) good knowledge on tourist attractions, 3) positive attitude towards tourism and people in the community, and 4) taking into account the social context and culture of the area.

3. Satisfaction means the satisfaction of the people living in the Mekong River, Nakhon Phanom province, Thailand and Khammouane community, Laos, with the informants in four aspects: 1) have the ability and skills to convey the tourist content, 2) have knowledge of the issues attractions, 3) have a positive attitude towards tourism and people in the community, and 4) consider to the social and cultural life of the area. In addition, satisfaction included people’s satisfaction about communication channels as follows: 1) mass communication, 2) interpersonal, 3) specialized media, 4) media activities, and 5) the Internet. They are used as the informants’ communication tools to convey the contents of sites to be able to meet the demand and expectations of the people of the area.

4. The level of participation means the participation of the people living in the Mekong River, Nakhon Phanom province, Thailand and Khammouane community, Laos. They are divided into four levels: 1) to participate in the audience through various communication channels that received from the informants, 2) to participate in the co-production which involved in the media design or production of public communication in tourism, 3) to participate in the planning and policy which contribute to the plan and policy of communications of people in the tourism to the outside world, and 4) to participate in the evaluation which engage the public in the evaluation of projects related to tourism in the area that ever done in the past.

5. Potential means that the public has confidence in the tourism potential of the Mekong River, Nakhon Phanom province, Thailand and Khammouane community, and Laos. The tourism potential is divided into two aspects: 1) the tourist attractions include the ability of attraction, ease of travel safety, the participation of public and private sector and etc., and 2) the community include the language, culture and so on.

Expected Benefits

1. Make a structural equation model of communication to promote participation in the tourism potential of the Mekong River, Nakhon Phanom province, Thailand and Khammouane community, and Laos PDR.

2. Community leaders have the information derived from the developed structural equation model to guide the strategy to develop the communication ability for participation in the development of tourism in the Mekong River, Nakhon Phanom province, Thailand and Khammouane community, and Laos PDR.

3. This research is used as data in communication to develop the tourism potential in the Mekong River area to the Thailand Research Fund (TRF).
Concepts and Literatures Review

1. Concept of the Sender’s characteristics and Media exposure

The characteristics of the sender can be analysed in terms of 4 factors: 1) Communication skills: the ability to convey information to the receiver effectively, 2) Attitudes: the receiver’s sentiment toward himself, message, and the sender, 3) Knowledge levels: the sender’s knowledge about the message and the communication process, and 4) Socio-culture systems: the importance of the sender’s cultural contexts and social systems (Berlo, 1963; Kaewthep, 2009; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Schramm, 1973; Sothanasathien, 1990). Not only the sender but also the receiver must possess these qualities to achieve an effective communication. Likewise, the factors which influence the receiver’s exposure to media include need, attitude and values, goal, capability, and utility. Besides, local leaders’ communication factors had the effects on the gratification of the receiver, when consistent with the audience’s needs, the communication factors will affect the use of and gratification with any news received by the audience (Hunt & Ruben, 1993, as cited in Sawassuk, 1998; Satavetin, 2003).

2. Concept of Uses and Gratifications

A person requires media exposure to respond to 5 needs: 1) to know about the situations by following and observing the movements from the media in order to stay up to date, 2) to help make decisions about daily life, 3) to participate in events in society, 4) to reinforce, to add up or support the said decisions, and 5) to entertain and relax (McCombs & Becker, 1979). Media exposure provides data to a person and allows them to have information to discuss with friends or family. Furthermore, the audience in need of the tourism information would choose to receive the information that suited their own needs and this led to high levels of satisfaction (Wenner, 1982; Srikacha, 2001).

All this, each individual in the community chose one process of media exposure over another because they had a different selection process. The sender is an organization or an individual in a mass media organization, such as newspapers, radio stations, television stations, which decodes, interprets the news and codes information to mass audience. Types of channel/media have an impact on the level of access and participation of the community. For example, specialized media are more open to the community’s involvement than the mass media. Consequently, the media will create new activities and more channels to provide more access to the people in the community. As a receiver, the community will select the media and whether they will be pleased or not will depend on the background of the audience, especially the direct experience on the media itself (Buranadechachai, n.d.; Kaewthep, Gunpai, & Sthapitanonda (2000); Schramm, 1973; Sothanasathien, 1990).

3. Concept of Participation levels

The participation levels can be classified into 3 types: 1) Audience participation: to receive information through the channel that the sender has selected, 2) Sender participation: to take part in the 3 main stages: pre-production, production and post-production, and 3) Policy maker: to plan policy on all types of the media existing in the community, such as mass media, specialized media, activity media, and personal media, and draw a link between the media types to achieve maximum efficiency. In addition, most successful participatory communication is interpersonal communication and communication through folk media (Chin, 2001; Kaewthep, 2009; Kaewthep, Nilpueng, & Chanachad, 2013).

Likewise, the satisfaction of getting the news of the community and the level of participation of the attractions of the community led to the recognition of the potential in the
tourism and that if the community leaders can satisfy the public by allowing them to join in the planning and evaluating the tourism project, they will accept it and collaborate. In addition, the accomplishment of the development of the local tourist attractions lied mostly in the locals’ participations and roles. The potential for the participation of the community consists of two indicators: 1) the community's revenue from the sale productivity in the community or involvement in activities that are part of the tourism, and 2) the agency, community leaders or representative institutions involved in the planning of tourism by founding a club or creating a project to conserve the tourist spots (Ponboonjareanchai, 2010; Utarasakul, 2007; Witoonset, 2008).

4. Concept of Tourism potential

There are 2 types of tourism potential: 1) the potential of tourism: which was based on (1) the area component: to attract visitors with the unique natural resources or historical sites associated with the local ecology and culture. Landscape features and convenient access to attractions, such as the distance from the centre of the path-season tour in the area were also considered as important factors. (2) The management component: to ensure the security in tourism in the area and its vicinity and to provide facilities, such as roads, electricity and water, and to control tourist access to the site not to exceed the abilities to fully control the travel business in the area. And (3) the activity component and the process: to consider a variety of eco-tourism activities in the area, to create awareness and to disseminate environmental information. 2) the potential of the community participation: to review in which aspects of the tourism the local organizations get involved, if the locals are satisfied with the tourist information received from the community leaders, and in which aspects the locals would like to improve their tourist attractions. Moreover, the potential of the tourist attraction relies on the involvement of communities in tourism activities. It is necessary that individuals and communities engage in thinking, making decisions, taking action, being responsible for any subjects that may affect them, and distribute income or benefit to the community. Besides, the involvement of the community in the management of tourism arises from the brainstorming of the leaders and the people. It can be categorized into five steps: (1) problem finding, (2) the priority of the problem, (3) analysis of the cause of the problem, (4) planning and troubleshooting, and (5) conclusion for Tourism Management (Department of Tourism, 2008; Hanyuth, 2008; Klinpleedee, 1998; Poonpipat, 2002). In addition, the characteristics of the development process and effective communication which were used by the team to explain the communication to promote the community’s participation in tourism (Janjaroen, 2004; Valaisathien et al., 2005).

Summarize results from the literatures review indicated that the researcher could synthesize and confirm that the communication factors of local leaders were an effective device to apply in order to achieve the potential in tourism in Mekong Thailand-Laos border. The factors of local leaders are to be applied to achieve the tourism potential Mekong Thailand-Lao People in Nakhon Phanom and Khammouane, Laos, since they have a direct effect, indirect effect and total effect on the tourism potential of the Mekong River Thailand-Lao People in Nakhon Phanom and Khammouane, Laos. Moreover, the researchers would develop and validate the structural equation model of the communication factors in promoting the participation in accepting the potential for tourism in the area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River, and also study the causal direct effect and indirect effect among variables in this model as below in figure 1.
**Figure 1:** The structural equation model of the communication factors in promoting the participation in accepting the potential for tourism in the area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River Conceptual Framework.

**Research Methodology**

1. Sample size and representative samples

The type of research was quantitative research, conducted by employing a survey method and close-ended questionnaire to solicit information. The 423 samples were civil servants, state enterprise officers, entrepreneurs, tourism industry workers, wageworkers, students, and villagers. The samples were collected from 2 areas which located at the Basin of Mekong River; therefore, there were 323 samples who resided in Nakhon Phanom province, Thailand, and 100 samples from Thakhek city, Khammouane province, The Laos People’s Democratic Republic.

Researchers used criteria of Yamane (1973) to specify sampling reliability at 95% confidence and sampling error at 5%. Therefore, according to this criteria, the researchers weren’t able to collect data less than 400 samples. However, in this research, we decided to collect from 423 samples.

**Table 1:** Indices to examine the congruence between the structural equation model and empirical data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indices name</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Goodness of Fit Index: GFI</td>
<td>&gt; 0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Comparative Fit Index: CFI</td>
<td>&gt; 0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Standardized Root Mean Square Residual: RMR</td>
<td>&lt; 0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Normed Fit Index: NFI</td>
<td>&lt; 0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Non-Normed Fit Index: NNFI</td>
<td>&gt; 0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Chi-Square</td>
<td>&lt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Chi-square/df</td>
<td>&lt; 3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation: RMSEA</td>
<td>&lt; 0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Kaiwan, Y. (2013: 228) and Ngadgratok, S. (2014: 7)
2. Inferential statistics

The structural equation model of the communication factors in promoting the participation in accepting the potential for tourism in the area of the Thai-Laos Mekong river used structural equation model statistical analysis technique to examine the congruence between the structural equation model and empirical data by estimating parameter in model by means of maximum likelihood estimates and used Indices to examine the congruence between the structural equation model and empirical data total 8 indices (Kaiwan, 2013; Ngadgratok, 2014).

However, the structural equation model would complied with empirical data and the model fit indices were accepted on condition that there were 3 indices had to pass the criteria. (Ngadgratok, 2014). The details are as follows:

**Table 2**: Short titles and long titles of variables in the structural equation model of the communication factors in promoting the participation in accepting the potential for tourism in the area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short titles</th>
<th>long titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. SENDER</td>
<td>The community leader’s communication factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SATISFACTION</td>
<td>The locals’ satisfaction when they received leader’s information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>The level of participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. POTENTIAL</td>
<td>The locals’ accepted the community’s potential</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results**

This research was quantitative research. It aimed to 1) to develop and validate the structural equation model of the communication factors in promoting the participation in accepting the potential for tourism in the area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River, and 2) to study the causal direct effect and indirect effect among variables in this model. The representative sample consisted of 423 villagers in Nakhon Phanom province, Thailand and Khammouane community, The Laos People’s Democratic Republic, who were students and workers. The research was conducted by using questionnaire and Structural Equation Model technique was used in statistical analysis.

**1.1 Descriptive statistics**

The 423 samples in the study were civil servants, state enterprise officers, entrepreneurs, tourism industry workers, wageworkers, students, and villagers, who resided in Nakhon Phanom province, Thailand and Khammouane community, The Laos People’s Democratic Republic.

There were both male 204 (48.2%) samples and female 219 (51.8%) samples. The most age of respondents were 21-30 years old (37.4%) and also graduated in bachelor’s degree (35.5%). They worked as an employee as the most (26.7%) and obtained income per month around below 10,000 Thai baht (40.4%). Moreover, most of them also worked in education and agriculture state sector as the most at 21.3%.

The community leader’s communication factors were most respondents received tourist information through their leader in mass media e.g. cable TV interview, local newspaper, and local radio (Mean = 3.66).
The locals’ attitudes to the community leader’s qualifications were most respondents strongly agreed that the community leader’s had information about tourism location well (3.63).

The locals’ satisfaction when they received leader’s information from local media e.g. cable TV interview and local newspaper (Mean = 3.57).

In the level of participation, the local villagers, as receivers, received the tourism information as the most (Mean = 3.41).

The locals’ accepted the community’s potential as it was capable of arranging various activities for tourists as the most (Mean = 3.62).

**Figure 2:** The structural equation model of the communication factors in promoting the participation in accepting the potential for tourism in the area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River
Chi-Square = 362.67, Chi-square/df = 4.591, p = 0.000, df = 79  
GFI = 0.916, CFI = 0.979, NFI = 0.974, NNFI = 0.969, CN = 130.322  
RMR = 0.040, RMSEA = 0.092

Figure 3: The output of the structural equation model of the communication factors in promoting the participation in accepting the potential for tourism in the area of the Thai-Laos Mekong from LISREL

1.2 Inferential statistics

The result revealed that: 1) the structural equation model of the communication factors in promoting the participation in accepting the potential for tourism in the area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River complied with empirical data while the model’s fit indices were accepted, as a result of there are more than 3 indices (5 indices) passed the criteria from 8 indices: (1) Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = .916 (> 0.09), (2) Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .979 (> 0.09), (3) Normed Fit Index (NFI) = .969 (> 0.09), (4) Non-normed Fit Index (NNFI) = .969 (> 0.90), and (5) Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) = .040 (< 0.07) (Ngadgratok, 2014)

When examined path coefficients of exogenous and endogenous variables in structural equation model found that all correlations of variables had a level of significance. The community leader’s communication factors (SENDER) had a direct effect on The locals’ satisfactions when they received leader’s information (SATISFACTION) (0.916), The locals’ satisfactions when they received leader’s information (SATISFACTION) had a direct effect on the level of participation (PARTICIPATION) (0.826), and also had a direct effect on the locals’ accepted the community’s potential (POTENTIAL) (0.479), The level of participation (PARTICIPATION) had a direct effect on The locals accepted the community’s potential (POTENTIAL) (0.269). The details are as follows:
Table 3: Causal correlation of variables in structural equation model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Causal correlation</th>
<th>Path coefficients</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>C.R. (t-value)</th>
<th>Summarized results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>SENDER → SATISFACTION</td>
<td>0.916</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>15.411**</td>
<td>Positively correlated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>SATISFACTION → PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>16.426**</td>
<td>Positively correlated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>SATISFACTION → POTENTIAL</td>
<td>0.479</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>5.761**</td>
<td>Positively correlated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>PARTICIPATION → POTENTIAL</td>
<td>0.269</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>3.492**</td>
<td>Positively correlated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P-value = 0.01

Table 4: Direct, Indirect, and Total effect among variables in the structural equation model of the communication factors in promoting the participation in accepting the potential for tourism in the area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Independent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SENDER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATISFACTION</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>0.916**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IE</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>0.916**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IE</td>
<td>0.756**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>0.756**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POTENTIAL</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IE</td>
<td>0.642**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>0.642**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P-value = 0.01

Remarks: DE = Direct effect
IE = Indirect effect
TE = Total effect

1.2.1 Direct effect

1) The community leader’s communication factors had a positive direct effect on the locals’ satisfactions when they received leader’s information at 0.01 level of significance and effect value was 0.916
2) The locals’ satisfactions when they received leader’s information had a positive direct effect on the level of participation at 0.01 level of significance and effect value was 0.826

3) The locals’ satisfactions when they received leader’s information had a positive direct effect on the locals’ accepted the community’s potential at 0.01 level of significance and effect value was 0.479

4) The level of participation had a positive direct effect on The locals’ accepted the community’s potential at 0.01 level of significance and effect value was 0.269

1.2.2 Indirect effect

1) The community leader’s communication factors had a positive indirect effect on the level of participation at 0.01 level of significance and effect value was 0.756

2) The community leader’s communication factors had a positive indirect effect on the locals’ accepted the community’s potential at 0.01 level of significance and effect value was 0.642

3) The locals’ satisfaction when they received leader’s information had a positive indirect effect on the locals’ accepted the community’s potential at 0.01 level of significance and effect value was 0.222

1.2.3 Total effect

1) The community leader’s communication factors had a positive total effect on the locals’ satisfactions when they received leader’s information at 0.01 level of significance and effect value was 0.916

2) The community leader’s communication factors had a positive total effect on the locals’ accepted the community’s potential at 0.01 level of significance and effect value was 0.756

3) The community leader’s communication factors had a positive total effect on the locals’ accepted the community’s potential at 0.01 level of significance and effect value was 0.642

4) The locals’ satisfactions when they received leader’s information had a positive total effect on the level of participation at 0.01 level of significance and effect value was 0.826

5) The locals’ satisfactions when they received leader’s information had a positive total effect on the locals’ accepted the community’s potential at 0.01 level of significance and effect value was 0.701

6) The level of participation had a positive total effect on The locals’ accepted the community’s potential at 0.01 level of significance and effect value was 0.269

Conclusion and Acknowledgement

The findings of the research were discussed on the basis of the structural equation model of communication factors in promoting the participation in accepting the potential for tourism in the area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River and on the basis of both direct and indirect effects, and the influences of various parameters in the said model. They are detailed in the sections below.

Structural equation model of communication factors in promoting participation in accepting the potential for tourism in the area of the Thai-Laos Mekong River and direct
effect. Indirect effect and the influence of various parameters to encourage participation in
the tourism potential of the Mekong Thailand-Laos.

The structural equation model was developed and validated in accordance with the
findings of Hunt & Ruben (1993, as cited in Satavetin, 2003) and Sawassuk (1998) which
suggested that local leaders’ communication factors had an effect on the gratification of the
receiver. When consistent with the audience’s needs, the communication factors will affect
the use of and gratification with any news received by the audience. This corresponded to the
study by Wenner (1982) and Srikacha (2001) who found that the audience in need of the
tourist information would choose to receive the information that suited their own needs and
this led to high levels of satisfaction.

Furthermore, the community’s gratification with the sender, communication skills are
essential in order to achieve correct interpretation and true understanding: using the right
words with correct pronunciation in the verbal communication and the right body language
and gestures in the nonverbal communication (Berlo, 1963; Kaewthep, 2009; Katz, Blumler,

Articulate senders and receivers will make communication for tourism in the
community successful. Good attitudes between the sender and the receiver will lead to
effective communication and mutual acceptance. If the sender and the receiver possess the
same level of knowledge of the community’s attractions, the communication tends to be
successful. Socio-cultural Systems of the community is the primary factor which determines
the behaviour of people in the community. With different traditions and cultures, Thai and
Laos people are highly satisfied when their community tourism is underlined.

Apart from the sender, the gratification with the communication channel as a tool to
convey tourism information also plays an important role. If the channel can give the public
quick and easy access to the required information, though with varying degrees of each
individual’s exposure to the media, the communication will be more effective and lead to the
participation of the public Buranadechachai (n.d.), Kaewthep, Gunpai, & Sthapitanonda
(2000), Schramm (1973), and Sothanasathien (1990) found that each individual in the
community chose one process of media exposure over another because they had a different
selection process. The sender is an organization or an individual in a mass media
organization, such as newspapers, radio stations, television stations, which decodes, interprets
the news and codes information to mass audience. Types of channel/media have an impact on
the level of access and participation of the community. For example, specialized media are
more open to the community’s involvement than the mass media. Consequently, the media
will create new activities and more channels to provide more access to the people in the
community. As a receiver, the community will select the media and whether they will be
pleased or not will depend on the background of the audience, especially the direct
experience on the media itself.

The research findings of Janjaroen (2004) and Valaisathien et al. (2005) mentioned
the characteristics of the development process and effective communication which were used
by the team to explain the communication to promote the community’s participation in
tourism. People in the community were involved in the development process from the first
until the end of the project, including problem finding, planning, making decisions, local
resource mobilization, management, monitoring, and evaluation. The benefits arising from
the project reflects the gratification of the community with the project which can be put to use
and beneficial to the development of their area attractions while maintaining its lifestyle and
culture. The benefits and satisfaction of the community, economically and socially, will
encourage its existence as members of society and its participation. People in the community
will develop knowledge along with folk wisdom. The unaffected decision-making involved people in each stage of the process. It required opinion, knowledge, competence, labour and resources in order to plan the strategies, set the targets and work plan, implement the management process and share resources.

Synthesis from past research of scholars in Thailand and International were Berlo (1963), Chin (2001), Kaewthep (2009), Kaewthep et al. (2000), Kaewthep, Nilpueng, and Chanetchad (2013), McQuail (2000), McQuail, Blumler, & Brown (1972, as cited in Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974), Satavetin (2010), Singhal (2001, as cited in Sthapitanonda, 2006), and Sothanasathien (2010) found that people living in area of the Mekong River Meuang District, Thailand and Khammouane, Laos, showed their gratification with official community leaders - the governor of Nakhon Phanom and Khammouane, Laos, and with the unofficial ones, in (1) the ability and skills to convey the content of article, (2) the extent of knowledge of the attractions, (3) the positive attitude towards tourism and people in the community and (4) the regards for social and cultural development of the community. People in both communities were satisfied with the communication channels, including: (1) mass communication, (2) interpersonal, (3) media, (4) media activities and (5) the Internet. The community leaders use these channels to discuss the content of their tourist sites which could meet the demand and expectations of the people.

The level of community participation in communication for tourism could be divided into 3 levels: (1) Audience/Receivers/Users: to receive news, such as the selected issues and the presentation from the sender via communication channels, (2) Sender/Producer/Co-producer/Performance: to participate in the pre-production of selected issues, i.e. design, and aspects to be presented, in the stage of production, and in the post-production process, such as video editing, and transmitting the content in various locations, and (3) Policy maker/planner: to formulate the plan and policy for all types of communications available in the community by interconnecting them to maximize the media use. What’s more, Kaewthep (2009) emphasized that the level of participation in the community as a mediator of the processes could be reflected in various activities, including the level of participation in community radio stations. The personnel at the station participated in 3 levels: (1) as the audience, (2) as the producer/presenter, and (3) as management. The study of Hanyuth (2008) found that the involvement of the community in the management of tourism arises from the brainstorming of the leaders and the people. It can be categorized into five steps: (1) problem finding, (2) the priority of the problem, (3) analysis of the cause of the problem, (4) planning and troubleshooting and (5) conclusion for Tourism Management.

The recognition of the development of the Mekong Tourism Thailand-Laos was studied with the 2 observe variables: 1) the potential of tourism, which was based on (1) the area component: to attract visitors with the unique natural resources or historical sites associated with the local ecology and culture. Landscape features and convenient access to attractions, such as the distance from the centre of the path-season tour in the area were also considered as important factors, (2) The management component: to ensure the security in tourism in the area and its vicinity and to provide facilities, such as roads, electricity and water, and to control tourist access to the site not to exceed the abilities to fully control the travel business in the area, and (3) the activity component and the process: to consider a variety of eco-tourism activities in the area, to create awareness and to disseminate environmental information. And 2) the potential of the community participation: to see in which aspects of the tourism the local organizations get involved, if the locals are satisfied with the tourist information received from the community leaders, and in which aspects the locals would like to improve their tourist attractions. Moreover, the potential of the tourist attraction relies on the involvement of communities in tourism activities. It is necessary that
individuals and communities engage in thinking, making decisions, taking action, being responsible for any subjects that may affect them, and distributing income or benefits to the community (Department of Tourism, 2008; Hanyuth, 2008; Klinpleedee, 1998; Poonpipat, 2002).

In addition, the structural equation model that the researchers developed and checked in accordance with quantitative research theory was consistent with the findings by Ponboonjareanchai (2010), Utarasakul (2007), and Witoonset (2008) which stated that the satisfaction of getting the news of the community and the level of participation of the attractions of the community led to the recognition of the potential in the tourism and that if the community leaders can satisfy the public by allowing them to join in the planning and evaluating the tourism project, they will accept it and collaborate. In addition, the accomplishment of the development of the local tourist attractions lied mostly in the locals’ participation and role. The potential for the participation of the community consists of two indicators: (1) the community's revenue from the sale productivity in the community or involvement in activities that are part of the tourism, and (2) the agency, community leaders or representative institutions involved in the planning of tourism by founding a club or creating a project to conserve the tourist spots.

Summarize results indicated that the studies of past scholars, both nationally and internationally, confirmed that according to empirical evidence, the communication factors of local leaders were an effective device to apply in order to achieve the potential in tourism in Mekong Thailand-Laos border. The factors of local leaders are to be applied to achieve the tourism potential Mekong Thailand-Lao People in Nakhon Phanom province, Thailand and Khammouane province, The Laos People’s Democratic Republic, since they have a direct effect, indirect effect and total effect on the tourism potential of the Mekong River Thailand-Lao People in Nakhon Phanom province, Thailand and Khammouane province, The Laos People’s Democratic Republic.

Suggestions

According to the research, there are 2 suggestions to be considered: the research use, and the recommendation for future research.

1. The results of the research are to be applied in communication in order to promote participation in the tourism potential of the Mekong Thailand-Laos.

1.1 The communication to promote participation in the tourism potential of the Mekong Thailand-Laos should focus on improving the skills of community leaders as the sender in 5 areas: (1) the right channel to the right audience, (2) the communication skills, (3) the attitudes towards themselves, messages and receivers by themselves, (4) the level of knowledge, and (5) status in socio-culture systems.

1.2 The results suggested that the receivers, as part of communications to promote participation in the tourism potential of the Mekong Thailand-Laos should be encouraged to improve their ability to receive information and to be an active audience to help bolster the next step of participation.

1.3 The important variable which has a direct impact on the tourism potential Mekong Thailand-Laos is the gratification of getting the news of the community and the level of participation in the communication should be adapted as guidelines for further strategy planning and communication activities. The results found that the personal media is the channel which influences audiences a great deal. Therefore, the participation is not only to adjust the attitude and behavior of the audience, but also to enhance the communication
factor to achieve gratification, leading to the recognition of the potential in the Mekong Tourism Thailand-Laos.

1.4 The relevant authorities should assist in disseminating knowledge regarding the potential of tourism to achieve the participation of the locals.

2. Recommendation for future research

2.1 Researchers can use this study as the guideline to develop and test the consistence of structural equation model of communication to promote participation in the tourism of other areas in order to broaden knowledge of the communication for more participation in the tourism.

2.2 Other communication factors which can affect the community should be studied as they may encourage participation in the tourism potential of the Mekong Thailand-Laos differently.

2.3 Different sample groups, other than the community leaders, such as government officials or school should be take into consideration.

2.4 Research in true experiment or quasi experiment should be conducted to measure the performance of experimental research as it can be used to help confirm the effectiveness of the means of communication.

2.5 Further interesting studies should be based on the effectiveness of the communication tools to promote participation in the tourism potential and sustainable development.

References


