

Developing a Community-Based Marketing Communication Model to Promote Creative Tourism in Chiang Mai

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Abstract

This study examined the development of a participatory marketing communication model to enhance creative tourism grounded in cultural wisdom in Ban Thung Sieo community, San Pa Tong District, Chiang Mai Province. The research aimed to (1) assess the community's potential in terms of social capital and existing marketing communication channels, (2) engage the community through participatory action research in developing marketing communication competencies and co-producing promotional media, and (3) develop strategic guidelines for marketing communication reflecting the community's Lanna cultural identity and supporting sustainable creative tourism growth. A qualitative participatory action research design was employed. Twenty-four key informants comprising community leaders, cultural custodians, local entrepreneurs, and tourism volunteers were selected through purposive sampling. Data was collected during 2024-2025 from in-depth interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussions, then analyzed through qualitative content analysis and triangulation.

The findings revealed that while Ban Thung Sieo possesses strong cultural capital rooted in Tai Khoen identity, all existing promotional channels were outdated, spatially inaccurate, and devoid of interactive digital engagement. Across co-design workshops, three practical competencies were developed among community members alongside two tangible outputs including informational infographics and an online digital flipbook. Three strategic guidelines were established addressing digital storytelling, physical infrastructure readiness, and multi-stakeholder governance partnerships. This study contributes a replicable, community-centered participatory marketing communication model offering both practical and theoretical value for sustainable creative tourism development in Chiang Mai and upper northern Thailand.

Keywords: Community-based; Marketing communication; Creative tourism

Introduction

Tourism is one of the most economically significant sectors in Thailand, contributing approximately 11-12 percent of the country's GDP prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and employing an estimated 8.4 million people nationwide (Statista Research Department, 2025). Thailand's 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027) targets no less than three trillion baht in annual tourism revenue and a top 30 global ranking in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), reflecting the government's continued reliance on tourism as a driver of inclusive economic growth. Within this national framework, the Third National Tourism Development Plan (2023-2027) specifically identifies cultural tourists and ecotourism travelers as the country's highest-potential visitor segments. This places strategic emphasis on upper northern Thailand, where the distinctive Lanna civilization provides a compelling foundation for creative tourism development (Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017).

Creative tourism, as defined by UNESCO (2006), represents an evolution beyond conventional cultural tourism. Rather than passive observation, it invites travelers to engage actively in authentic local learning experiences including encompassing crafts, performing arts, culinary traditions, and folk practices. Consequently, it aims to build deeply personalized connections with living cultures. This participatory dimension makes creative tourism particularly suited to communities where cultural wisdom is the primary asset. Communities are a place that accumulated local knowledge, traditional practices, and ethnic identity can be converted into meaningful and differentiated visitor experiences (Richards, 2011; Wisutthilak, 2013). Chiang Mai, recognized for its image of becoming a globally livable "City of Life and Prosperity," has prioritized community-based cultural tourism as a core development policy (Somnuxpong, 2025). Moreover, it has been acknowledged internationally as a creative city precisely because of its rich ethnic diversity and Lanna heritage (Suriyankietkaew et al., 2025). Yet a persistent and critical gap exists between communities' cultural potential and their capacity to reach target audiences effectively (Krongyut et al., 2021).

In today's tourism landscape, destination awareness and visitor decision-making are overwhelmingly shaped by digital media. Digital media consists of social media platforms, peer-generated content, and online destination narratives which now function as primary sources of travel information, influencing how tourists identify, evaluate, and ultimately trust a destination (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Leung et al., 2013). Post-COVID-19 recovery research further demonstrates that destinations unable to maintain timely, consistent, and engaging digital communication face compounded disadvantages including eroded public awareness, weakened destination image, and diminished competitiveness (Sigala, 2020). Despite these realities, many culturally significant communities in northern Thailand remain severely underdeveloped in terms of marketing communication capacity. While the communities lack the skills, tools, and organizational readiness needed to independently produce, manage, and sustain promotional content (Krongyut et al., 2021). This disconnect reveals a structural problem where strong cultural capital alone is insufficient if communities cannot communicate their experiential value to prospective visitors (Forero et al., 2025).

Ban Thung Siew community, located in San Pa Tong District, Chiang Mai Province, exemplifies this gap acutely. The community carries a rich Tai Khoen ethnic identity expressed

through traditional lifestyle practices, distinctive local cuisine, ancient temple arts, and handmade crafts. All these identify as the assets recognized by Chiang Mai Province through awards designating it as both a model moral community and a cultural community market. These achievements signal genuine social capital and a strong foundation for creative tourism. However, the community's existing marketing communication channels are outdated, infrequently updated, and generate minimal audience engagement. For instance, printed brochures, informational signage, community's Facebook page, and community's YouTube channel. There is no interactive digital strategy in place, tourism maps reference attractions are no longer active, and promotional materials are not distributed at key tourism access points across the province. The lingering disruptions of COVID-19 and flooding in 2024 have further reduced visitor numbers and community visibility. Critically, no prior research has examined how a community-level participatory communication intervention can rebuild this visibility and develop sustainable marketing communication capacity grounded in local cultural identity.

This study therefore addresses three interconnected research questions. First, "how can Ban Thung Siao's social capital and existing communication channels be assessed as a foundation for tourism promotion?". Second, "how can participatory action research build community communication competencies and co-produce practical promotional media?". And finally, "what strategic guidelines for marketing communication can effectively translate the community's Lanna cultural wisdom into creative tourism value?". Accordingly, the research objectives are (1) to assess the community's potential in terms of social capital and existing marketing communication channels; (2) to engage the community through participatory action research in developing marketing communication competencies and co-producing promotional media; and (3) to develop strategic guidelines for marketing communication that reflect the community's Lanna cultural identity and support the sustainable growth of its creative tourism sector. The findings contribute to both a practical, replicable communication model for promotion-underserved communities and a theoretical extension of participatory marketing communication design in the creative tourism context.

Research objectives

1. To assess the potential and readiness of Ban Thung Siao community in terms of social capital and existing marketing communication channels.
2. To engage the community through participatory action research in developing marketing communication competencies and co-producing promotional media.
3. To develop strategic guidelines for marketing communication reflecting the community's Lanna cultural identity and supporting sustainable creative tourism growth.

Literature review

1. Community-based tourism, cultural wisdom, and cultural capital

Community-based tourism (CBT) seeks to produce economic and social advantages for local inhabitants while preserving local identity and cultural heritage. Cultural wisdom includes local knowledge, customs, and traditions and these serve as a fundamental tourism resource that can be converted into significant learning activities and products. The conversion of cultural wisdom into tourism value imposes meticulous monitoring of authenticity and

representation, with community involvement in experience design and identity communication.

From a developmental standpoint, CBT marketing is progressively acknowledged as the ways to enhance the visibility of community experiences and facilitate market access together with the governance and long-term sustainability (Forero et al., 2025). This is especially pertinent in smaller areas where tourist management frequently relies on volunteer networks and informal leadership frameworks. In northern Thailand, prior work also highlights challenges in enabling ethnic or culturally unique communities to manage cultural tourism promotion effectively and build workable models that can be applied across communities (Krongyut et al., 2021). Consequently, the capacity dimension (e.g. skills, tools, and organizational preparedness) is essential. To this, communities possessing substantial cultural capital may nonetheless underachieve as destinations if they lack communication proficiency, modern media, and engagement mechanisms.

2. Marketing communication in tourism

Marketing communication encompasses the strategic activities designed to generate awareness, foster comprehension, promote acceptance, and sustain relationships between a brand or organization and its audiences, thereby facilitating purchasing decisions and cultivating long-term loyalty (Thongsuk, 2024; Kotler & Keller, 2021). In tourism, marketing communication transcends promotional messaging; it is a strategic process that harmonizes destination identity, audience targeting, message formulation, and channel integration to attain behavioral outcomes (Kotler & Keller, 2021; Keller, 2016). Modern viewpoints highlight that marketing communication operates as an interactive relationship-management process, necessitating firms to create cohesive brand narratives for various stakeholder groups and to regularly assess audience reactions (Grewal et al., 2025). This corresponds with the notion of an integrated marketing communications mix, wherein advertising, public relations, direct marketing, sales promotion, and personal selling collaborate to create a coherent destination identity and foster trust (Keller, 2016).

In tourism, effective marketing communication increasingly relies on the ability to manage digital touchpoints and sustain engagement with tourists throughout the decision-making process. Studies indicate that social media has emerged as a significant informational component in trip preparation, prominently included in travel-related search outcomes and altering how travelers identify, evaluate, and authenticate places (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Furthermore, research in tourism and hospitality designates social media as a mega trend impacting tourists' decision-making and tourism operations, requiring communication strategies to emphasize engagement, user-generated content, and responsiveness (Leung et al., 2013). Post-COVID tourism studies underscore the necessity for destinations and communities to modify communication methods in response to altered risk perceptions, increased digital reliance, and changing demands for reliable and prompt information (Sigala, 2020). Consequently, contemporary marketing communication in tourism must be structured as an engagement system that integrates persuasive content with interactive, current, and accessible digital platforms.

3. Digital communication, destination branding, and post-COVID adaptation

Digital media has emerged as a critical arena for destination branding and competitiveness. Travelers increasingly assess destinations via online content, peer interactions, and social media narratives, which influence their perceived destination image and trust (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Leung et al., 2013). Systematic assessments demonstrate that social media is integral to destination branding in virtual society. This forces destinations to construct and oversee brand significance through digital engagement and coherent identity narratives (Tran & Rudolf, 2022). Post-COVID tourism studies emphasize that recovery and resilience hinge on how destinations convey modifications, safety measures, accessibility, and experiential value in light of new expectations (Sigala, 2020).

In creative tourism destinations, digital communication must convey information while also articulating cultural identity through engaging narratives by emphasizing on opportunities for tourists to engage, learn, and co-create. Digital formats, such as infographics, video stories, and interactive e-brochures/flipbooks, can enhance clarity, lower production expenses, and broaden outreach. These digital tools are important particularly for areas with constrained finances and limited offline distribution capabilities. Simultaneously, digital communication necessitates promptness and ongoing updates. Failure to do so may result in outdated or partial information, causing uncertainty, adverse word-of-mouth, and diminished destination credibility.

4. Creative tourism and experience value

Creative tourism is regarded as an advancement of cultural tourism that highlights travelers' active engagement in local cultural education encapsulating crafts, arts, culinary traditions, or folk performances to build individualized experiences (Richards, 2011). The United Nations organization (UNESCO) defines creative tourism as travel that promotes genuine experiences by participating in local history and distinctive characteristics, while fostering links with local individuals who cultivate living culture. Creative tourism thereby transitions the value of tourism from passive observation to active participation. Consequently, enhancing local identity, promoting cultural sustainability, and generating economic value through unique experiences (Wisutthilak, 2013; Richards, 2019).

Recent research in creative tourism reinforces the notion of the experiential quality of tourists, through creative engagement which creates the favorable behavioral intentions of recommendations and revisit intentions. Empirical research illustrates the connections between creative visitor experiences and intentions via psychological mechanisms such as engagement and recall (Sharma et al., 2024). These results indicate that the advancement of creative tourism cannot depend exclusively on cultural resources, rather the implementation of communication techniques that render experiential value apparent, comprehensible, and appealing to prospective tourists.

5. Research gap

The literature together indicates three key points as shown in Figure 1 the research gap. Marketing communication in tourism is becoming an interactive, integrative, and digitally mediated process that influences destination image and tourist behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2021; Keller, 2016; Leung et al., 2013; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Secondly, creative tourism relies on the value of participation experiences grounded in local cultural expertise, which must be articulated through impactful narrative and experience-centric communication (Richards,

2019; Wisutthilak, 2013; Richards, 2011). Third, in community-based contexts, strong cultural capital alone is insufficient if communities lack communication readiness, updated media content, and practical digital tools that support sustained promotion and engagement (Forero et al., 2025; Tran & Rudolf, 2022; Krongyut et al., 2021; Sigala, 2020).

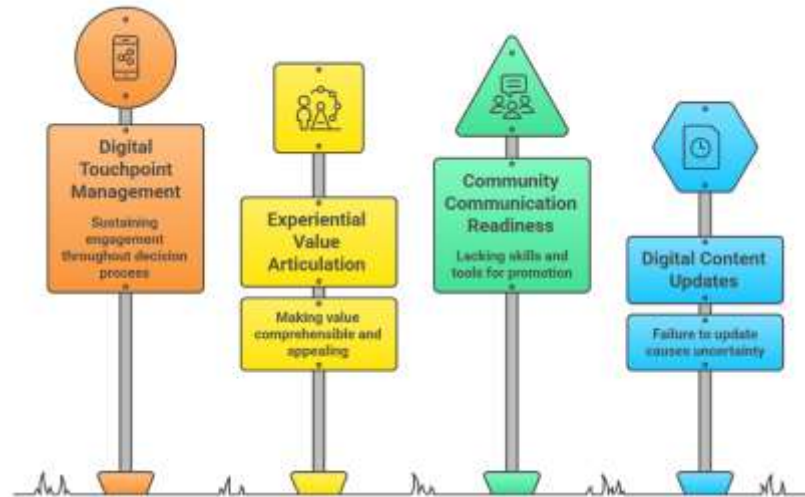


Fig. 1 Research gap

Source: Authors generated with ai Napkin (2026)

The research gap identified in this study centers on four interconnected challenges in tourism marketing communication. First, digital touchpoint management highlights the difficulty of sustaining visitor engagement across the entire decision-making journey, from awareness through to actual visitation. Second, experiential value articulation points to the gap in communities' ability to translate their unique cultural experiences into compelling, comprehensible, and appealing promotional messages for target audiences. Third, and most critically for Ban Thung Sieo, community communication readiness reveals a significant deficiency in the community's skills, tools, and capacity to independently produce and manage promotional content. Finally, digital content updates underscore how the failure to maintain current and consistent digital content across platforms creates uncertainty among potential visitors and erodes public awareness over time. Looking at these together, these four challenges reflect a broader gap in existing research and practice regarding how culturally rich but promotion-underserved communities can build sustainable marketing communication systems. While previous studies have addressed tourism promotion at the policy and destination level, limited attention has been given to community-level communication capacity-building, particularly in the post-COVID-19 recovery context. This study therefore seeks to address these gaps by engaging Ban Thung Sieo community through a participatory process to develop practical and culturally appropriate marketing communication strategies.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework shows in Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between three interconnected core concepts namely, creative tourism, cultural wisdom, and marketing

communication in Ban Thung Sieo community. Creative tourism, defined as learning and creating unique activities at a destination, is realized through two dimensions: authentic experiences rooted in local identity, cultural heritage, and traditions, and active participation through community events, volunteering, and engagement with local governance. These tourism experiences are grounded in the community's cultural wisdom reflecting the accumulated knowledge, skills, practices, and beliefs passed down through generations, which manifests in both tangible forms and intangible forms. Bringing together, these cultural assets are translated into marketable tourism products and services, including tourist workshops, cultural performances, themed tours, and local cuisine experiences. To reach target audiences effectively, the framework emphasizes a multi-channel marketing communication approach encompassing social media, websites, community events, and local partnerships. The overarching logic of the framework positions cultural wisdom as the foundational resource that shapes authentic creative tourism experiences, which are then strategically packaged and communicated to visitors through appropriate promotional channels. This integrated approach highlights the community's central role as both the producer and guardian of cultural content, ensuring that tourism development remains grounded in local identity while contributing to the sustainable economic growth of Ban Thung Sieo.



Fig. 2 Conceptual framework for sustainable tourism
Source: Authors generated with ai Notebooklm (2026)

Research methodology

1. Research design

This study employed a qualitative research methodology situated within a participatory action research (PAR) framework. This approach was selected because the community itself is an active agent in diagnosing communication gaps and co-producing solutions. This approach aligns with the research objectives, which move from assessment through capacity-building to strategy development where each stage requires progressively deeper community involvement (Vivona & Wolfgram, 2021). The PAR framework therefore serves a dual function; firstly, it

generates academically rigorous findings and secondly it is simultaneously producing practical, community-owned communication outputs that have immediate applied value. This methodological choice is consistent with established standards for qualitative research trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Tracy, 2010).

2. Research site

The study was conducted at Ban Thung Sieo community, San Pa Tong District, Chiang Mai Province, Thailand. This site was purposively selected on the basis of three criteria: (1) the community possesses a documented and distinctive cultural identity rooted in Tai Khoen heritage, providing a substantive foundation for creative tourism analysis, (2) the community has cultural richness confirming with the formal provincial recognition and awards as a model moral community and a cultural community market, and (3) the community demonstrates measurable deficiencies in contemporary marketing communication, making it an analytically appropriate and practically significant case for the study's objectives. The combination of cultural strength and communication weakness makes Ban Thung Sieo a theoretically purposeful site.

3. Participants and selection strategy (Key informants)

This study employed purposive sampling to identify key informants capable of providing information-rich accounts relevant to community tourism, cultural knowledge, and marketing communication practice. Four categories of informants were recruited, as follows. Community leaders and municipal officials were selected for their institutional knowledge of community governance, tourism policy, and resource allocation decisions. Cultural leaders and knowledge custodians including temple abbots, village elders, and traditional craft practitioners were included because they are the primary holders and transmitters of Tai Khoen cultural wisdom, which forms the content basis of the community's tourism identity. Community-based tourism operators and local entrepreneurs were recruited for their practical understanding of visitor behavior, commercial promotion, and market access challenges. Community volunteers engaged in tourism promotion and visitor services were included to capture ground-level perspectives on day-to-day communication practices and visitor interactions.

Selection criteria applied uniformly across all categories were: (1) a minimum of ten years of residency in Ban Thung Sieo, or demonstrated ongoing engagement in community tourism activities equivalent to that duration, (2) proven and verifiable expertise in at least one domain relevant to the study such as community culture, tourism operations, or marketing communication, (3) willingness to participate in multiple rounds of data collection, including interviews, observation sessions, and participatory workshops, and (4) capacity to engage in reflective discussion about existing promotional practices and future communication needs. A total of 24 key informants were recruited across the four categories. Data saturation was used as the criterion for confirming the sufficiency of the sample size. The researchers have stopped collecting data at the point where no substantively new themes and information emerged across successive interviews and focus group discussions.

4. Data collection procedure

Data was collected through three complementary qualitative methods, selected to enable triangulation across sources, settings, and interaction modes. Firstly, participant observation

was conducted at tourism-relevant community environments, including the Kad Kom Kong Tiew market, Watsrinawaratt, cultural performance venues, and handicraft production spaces. An observation protocol guided systematic documentation of physical infrastructure, visitor-community interactions, existing signage and promotional materials, and communication practices in place. Field notes were recorded immediately following each observation session to preserve contextual detail.

Secondly, in-depth interviews were conducted individually with each key informant using a semi-structured interview guide developed from the research objectives. The guide covered four thematic areas consisting of (1) the informant's understanding and assessment of current tourism promotion practices, (2) perceived strengths and weaknesses of existing communication channels, (3) identification of cultural assets considered most significant for tourism communication, and (4) views on appropriate strategies and platforms for reaching different visitor demographics. Interviews were conducted in Thai, lasted between 45 and 90 minutes each, and were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent.

Finally, focus group discussions were organized in three rounds corresponding to the iterative PAR cycle. The first round (diagnostic phase) explored shared perceptions of current communication failures and priority tourism assets. The second round (co-design phase) involved participatory workshops in which community members worked alongside researchers to draft communication content, evaluate prototype infographic designs, and review the structure of the digital flipbook. The third round (validation phase) assessed the practical relevance, cultural accuracy, and intelligibility of the finalized communication outputs before handover to the community. Each focus group comprised six to eight participants drawn from mixed informant categories to encourage cross-perspective dialogue and was facilitated using structured discussion guides with open-ended prompts.

5. Data analysis

Data was analyzed through systematic qualitative content analysis following a six-step procedure. First, all audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, and field notes were compiled into a unified dataset. Second, transcripts were read iteratively in full to develop familiarity with the data before any coding began. Third, initial open coding was applied to identify significant meaning units such as phrases, sentences, or passages that directly addressed the research objectives. Fourth, related codes were grouped into categories through axial coding, examining relationships between emerging concepts. Fifth, overarching themes were synthesized from categories across all data collection sources to produce an integrated thematic structure. Sixth, findings were interpreted in relation to the research objectives and the conceptual framework, ensuring alignment between empirical evidence and theoretical grounding.

The trustworthiness strategies were applied to enhance analytical rigor. Triangulation was achieved by cross-verifying findings across the three data collection methods and multiple informant categories. Member checking was conducted by returning preliminary findings to key informants for verification of accuracy and interpretation. Peer debriefing involved regular discussion of emerging themes and analytical decisions with a colleague external to the research team. Audit trails were maintained by documenting all analytical decisions, coding revisions, and interpretive steps in a research journal, enabling the analytical process to be

independently reviewed. All participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained prior to each data collection activity, and confidentiality of informant identities was maintained throughout the research period.

6. The role of participatory action research in shaping outcomes

It is important to articulate explicitly how the PAR approach shaped not only the process but the nature of the research outcomes. In this study, the participatory design means that community members moved from informants to co-investigators where they identified communication problems, contributed cultural content knowledge, evaluated prototype solutions, and validated final outputs against their own lived understanding of community identity. This involvement ensured that the infographics, digital flipbook, and strategic guidelines produced were not externally imposed recommendations but community-endorsed tools with built-in cultural legitimacy. As a result, the contribution of this study provides a set of usable communication assets that the community can manage independently.

Research ethics

This research has been considered as an exemption review and conducted in accordance with international ethical principles as well as national laws and regulations. The certificate of approval number is IRBCMRU 2024/295.22.06.

Research results

The findings are presented in three parts corresponding to the three research objectives. Each part integrates descriptive evidence from interviews, observations, and focus groups with analytical interpretation framed around the study's four key themes including cultural wisdom, marketing communication, creative tourism, and community participation.

Part 1 reflects objective 1 in assessing the community's potential in terms of social capital and existing marketing communication channels. For community potential, cultural wisdom and social capital act as a foundation for creative tourism.

1. Cultural wisdom as a primary tourism resource

Ban Thung Siao's most significant asset is its living Tai Khoen cultural heritage which functions as the experiential core of its creative tourism potential. This cultural wisdom manifests across three interconnected dimensions. First, tangible heritage includes the community's distinctive temple murals at Watsrinawaratt, traditional Tai Khoen architecture, handmade crafts such as fabric bags and Tai Khoen dolls, and a unique local cuisine repertoire that cannot be replicated elsewhere. Second, intangible heritage encompasses the accumulated knowledge practices of community elders such as traditional dyeing techniques, weaving patterns, and ritual performances are actively preserved through intergenerational transmission. Third, living cultural practices are sustained through community events, volunteer-guided temple tours led by the resident abbot, and hands-on visitor activities including traditional dress experiences and local cooking sessions. These assets directly correspond to the definitional requirements of creative tourism where they are participatory, rooted in local identity, and capable of generating individualized visitor experiences (Richards, 2011; UNESCO, 2006). Critically, however, several cultural assets remain commercially underdeveloped. Tai Khoen dolls, for instance, represent a highly distinctive cultural product but are neither prominently

displayed nor actively marketed at tourist access points within the community. This gap between cultural richness and commercial visibility is the central tension that the study's marketing communication intervention sought to address.

The community's social capital further strengthens its creative tourism foundation. Recognition as both a model moral community and a cultural community market by Chiang Mai Province mirrors the presence of trust networks, shared governance norms, and collective identity. To this, all of them are preconditions for sustainable community-based tourism management (Forero et al., 2025). Community leaders, the temple abbot, and cultural knowledge holders perform as voluntary cultural ambassadors, providing a human infrastructure for visitor engagement that no amount of digital promotion alone can replicate.

2. Marketing communication readiness

While the community's cultural capital is substantial, its marketing communication readiness is significantly underdeveloped. An exploration of all existing promotional channels revealed four critical structural deficiencies that collectively suppress the community's tourism visibility. These include obsolete information, spatial inaccuracy, distribution gaps, and absence of interactive engagement.

First, obsolete information: the community's Facebook page is the only active digital presence but contained no information on current opening hours, directions, or visitor expectations for the Kad Kom Kong Tiew market. Posts were infrequent and lacked engagement-oriented content such as event announcements, behind-the-scenes cultural content, or visitor recommendations. This directly undermines destination credibility in an environment where tourists cross-reference multiple online sources before committing to a visit (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

Second, spatial inaccuracy: the community's printed tourism map is the primary source for independent visitors and continue to feature several attractions that are no longer operational, including Huan Saen Kantha, Kad Tai, and Truck Coffee. No updated map had been produced for a while. Observation confirmed that tourists attempting to follow the designated route encountered confusion, dead ends, and incomplete experiences. This finding is analytically significant where inaccurate physical communication tools actively damage the visitor experience and reduce return visit intention, without noticing the community's cultural assets is worth coming.

Third, distribution gaps: printed brochures were not distributed at key access points such place as hotels, travel agencies, shopping centers, or tourism offices across Chiang Mai Province. Subsequently, potential visitors had no passive discovery pathway to the community. The community was effectively invisible to tourists who had not already been referred through personal networks.

Finally, absence of interactive engagement. There is no mechanism existed for community members to respond to tourist inquiries online, share user-generated content, or build an ongoing digital relationship that contemporary destination branding requires (Tran & Rudolf, 2022). Moreover, the community's YouTube channel had not been updated and the digital media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram had not been established. In digital era, these platforms are highly necessary for reaching younger and experience-oriented traveler segments.

Taken together, these deficiencies demonstrate that Ban Thung Siew's marketing communication system remained hindered within a pre-digital model. This approach may have been adequate during a period when brochures and word-of-mouth dominated tourism promotion. However, it has become critically insufficient in the post-COVID environment, where digital touchpoint management determines destination competitiveness (Sigala, 2020). Figure 3 summarizes the core finding of research objective 1 that Ban Thung Siew is caught between a strong cultural foundation and a pre-digital communication system. The community's assets are real and distinctive, but they remain commercially invisible because the marketing infrastructure has not evolved to match the post-COVID digital environment where tourists rely on multiple online touchpoints before visiting (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Sigala, 2020). This gap, especially between cultural richness and communicative reach, is precisely what the study's subsequent intervention sought to address.



Fig.3 Core finding from research objective 1

Source: Authors generated with ai Notebooklm (2026)

Part 2 reflects objective 2 in engaging the community through participatory action research in developing marketing communication competencies and co-producing promotional media. The key theme is the community communication competencies and co-produced promotional media.

1. Community participation as a capacity-building mechanism

The participatory action research process produced two distinct and equally important outcomes which are tangible communication outputs and enhanced human capacity. In the diagnostic phase, focus group discussions discovered that community members possessed strong intuitive awareness of their cultural distinctiveness but lacked a structured framework for translating that distinctiveness into promotional language. Participants were able to

articulate Tai Khoen identity with considerable depth and authenticity. However, they lacked confidence in communicating this cultural identity to audiences who were unfamiliar with northern Thai ethnic cultures.

This finding carries significant implications for the development of creative tourism. The core value proposition of creative tourism lies not merely in presenting attractions for passive observation, but in effectively communicating opportunities for experiential engagement, including what visitors are expected to do, learn, and emotionally experience (Richards, 2019). In this context, the disparity between community members' cultural knowledge and their ability to strategically communicate that knowledge to external audiences emerged as a critical capacity gap requiring targeted development.

Through co-design workshops conducted in the action phase, community members and researchers collaboratively developed communication content by mapping cultural assets to specific visitor experience narratives. This process produced three practical competency gains among participating community members. First, participants developed the ability to frame cultural activities (e.g. cooking, weaving, temple visits) as structured experiential learning opportunities rather than informal village encounters. Second, community leaders and volunteers acquired foundational skills in digital content planning, including understanding the distinction between informational posts and engagement-oriented content. Third, community members developed an appreciation of audience segmentation: recognizing that domestic day-trippers, educational group tourists, and international cultural travelers require different communication emphases and channel strategies.

2. Word-of-Mouth as an existing communication asset

Analysis of the interview data identified word-of-mouth communication as the most effective existing channel through which Ban Thung Sieo had historically attracted visitors. Informants consistently indicated that tourist arrivals were predominantly referral-driven, relying heavily on personal recommendations shared by previous visitors with friends, family members, and colleagues. This finding aligns with established evidence that word-of-mouth generates higher destination trust than formal promotional content because it is perceived as experientially authentic and socially endorsed (Ngoma & Ntale, 2019).

However, the analytical significance of this finding lies not merely in the effectiveness of word-of-mouth communication, but in the community's lack of a strategic approach to amplifying and sustaining its influence. In digital era, word-of-mouth operates primarily through social media sharing, online reviews, and peer-generated content (Leung et al., 2013). In the absence of mechanisms encouraging visitors to share their experiences online such as location check-ins, photography at distinctive landmarks, or direct interaction with community-managed social media platforms, the community's most valuable communication asset remained limited to private interpersonal exchanges rather than being transformed into scalable digital visibility and influence. This insight directly shaped the digital content strategy developed in the co-design workshops.

Figure 4 reflects an important analytical contribution is its portrayal of the PAR process as genuinely transformative rather than merely instructional. It shows not simply about producing promotional materials, but it was about building the human capacity within the community to sustain communication competencies independently. The "before" state reflects

the research finding that community members possessed strong intuitive cultural knowledge but a critical capacity gap in communicating that knowledge strategically to external audiences. This research treats word-of-mouth as an existing asset to amplify strategically. The “after” state maps directly onto the transformations produced by the co-produced promotional media and competency-building workshops. Hence, the before-and-after structure, connected by the competency-building ribbon, visually encodes the research’s argument that co-production through participatory action research produces both tangible outputs (promotional media) and intangible outcomes (empowered community communicators) - which together constitute the foundation for long-term creative tourism sustainability.



Fig. 4 Core finding from research objective 2
Source: Authors generated with ai Notebooklm (2026)

Part 3 reflects objective 3 in developing strategic guidelines for marketing communication reflecting the community’s Lanna cultural identity and supporting sustainable creative tourism growth.

1. Digital content development focusing on transforming information into experiential narratives

The primary strategic guideline emerging from the participatory analysis is the need to shift Ban Thung Siao’s digital communication from information delivery to experience-based storytelling. Instead of presenting factual descriptions of attractions, the community’s online platforms should communicate the experience of participating in Tai Khoen cultural life through videos, photo narratives, and visitor testimonials that reflect the sensory and emotional dimensions of creative tourism. In practice, this strategy was operationalized through two co-

produced digital outputs. The first was a series of informational infographics designed for Facebook and potential Instagram use, developed collaboratively with community input on content and validated against community cultural standards before finalization. Each infographic presents a specific cultural asset, such as a food tradition, handicraft activity, or temple story, in a concise and visually engaging format that emphasizes experiential value. The infographics address the content currency problem identified in Part 1 by providing ready-to-publish materials that community administrators can deploy on a scheduled basis without requiring advanced design skills.

The second was an online digital flipbook functioning as a comprehensive community tourism guide. The flipbook replaces the outdated printed brochure with a digital format that can be easily updated, distributed through online channels, shared via social media, and accessed by international visitors. In doing so, it addresses both the distribution limitations and the spatial inaccuracy issues identified in the communication audit. Analytically, the significance of the flipbook extends beyond its function as a communication tool. It also demonstrated to community members that professional promotional media can be developed at relatively low cost using accessible digital platforms. This helped reduce the perception that effective modern marketing requires substantial financial investment.

The broader content strategy recommended across digital platforms follows Thailand's national Soft Power framework. The strategy uses the 5Fs, including Food, Film, Fashion, Fighting, and Festival, as key themes for digital storytelling. This alignment helps ensure that Ban Thung Siao's local content strategy remains consistent with national tourism branding. It also increases the potential for the community's content to be promoted through provincial and national government tourism channels.

2. Infrastructure and accessibility communication

A second strategic guideline highlights the relationship between physical tourism infrastructure and the effectiveness of marketing communication. The findings revealed that several communication problems were not solely digital issues, but were closely connected to physical conditions within the destination. These included inactive attractions that still appeared on the tourism map, the lack of directional signage at key entry points, and the disruption of the Kad Kom Kong Tiew market caused by flooding. Together, these infrastructure limitations made it difficult to provide accurate and reliable tourism communication until the underlying physical issues were addressed.

The findings suggest that marketing communication and physical infrastructure development should be treated as closely interconnected rather than separate stages of tourism development. The community cannot effectively promote experiential tourism activities when attractions are inaccessible, inactive, or difficult to locate. Therefore, a strategy is recommended from the researchers. Physical restoration and updated wayfinding signage should be prioritized before relaunching digital promotion. This approach helps ensure that the actual visitor experience aligns with the experience presented through marketing communication. The finding also extends existing community-based tourism literature by showing that communication readiness is not only related to digital skills and online communication, but also depends on adequate physical infrastructure (Forero et al., 2025).

3. Multi-stakeholder partnership as a sustainability mechanism

The third strategic guideline addresses the sustainability of the marketing communication system beyond the research engagement period. A consistent finding across all informant groups was that current promotional activities depended heavily on a small number of volunteers whose availability was uncertain and whose capacity was limited. This reliance created structural vulnerability, as promotional efforts often stopped entirely when these key individuals were unavailable. The recommended strategy is to establish partnerships with local administrative organizations, provincial tourism agencies, and private sector stakeholders, including nearby tourism destinations such as Kao Mai Lanna Resort. These partnerships can help share promotional responsibilities and provide broader support and resources for tourism development. Within this framework, the public sector provides financial support and institutional continuity, while the private sector contributes event management and cross-promotional opportunities. At the same time, the community maintains control over cultural content and the representation of local identity. This shared approach shifts marketing communication from a volunteer-based activity to a more structured governance function, thereby strengthening its long-term sustainability (Suriyankietkaew et al., 2025).



Fig. 5 A Strategic Roadmap for Ban Thung Siew Creative Tourism

Source: Authors generated with ai Notebooklm (2026)

Figure 5 visually synthesizes the three strategic guidelines that emerged from the participatory analysis, organized into two overarching pillars: Experiential Digital Storytelling and Structural & Collaborative Foundations. These pillars represent a comprehensive, actionable framework for sustainable creative tourism communication. The first strategic guideline is shifting digital communication from information delivery to experience-based storytelling. The crossed-out book icon representing factual descriptions and the replacement with sensory & emotional cultural experiences directly reflects the research finding that Ban Thung Siew's online platforms must move away from static attraction listings toward videos,

photo narratives, and visitor testimonials that communicate the emotional and sensory dimensions of participating in Tai Khoen cultural life, consistent with Richard's (2019) creative tourism framework. The bottom section of the left pillar is analytically significant, as it connects the community's local content strategy to Thailand's national "5Fs" Soft Power Framework. The infographic explicitly illustrates three of the five themes as they apply to Ban Thung Sieo including Food, Fashion, and Festival. This alignment carries strategic importance beyond aesthetics. As the research noted, anchoring local content within the national Soft Power framework increases the potential for Ban Thung Sieo's content to be promoted through provincial and national government tourism channels without additional cost.

The right pillar presents structural and collaborative foundations where infrastructure readiness and multi-stakeholder partnership together ensure the communication system is not only effective but structurally sustainable. The research's critical finding is that marketing communication and physical infrastructure are inseparable. The sequential imagery of before digital promotion → restore physical sites and signage directly reflects the recommended strategy. Physical restoration and updated wayfinding signage must be prioritized before relaunching digital promotion, so that the actual visitor experience aligns with what is communicated online. The structural vulnerability identified across all informant groups that promotional activities depended on a small number of volunteers whose availability was uncertain. The visual contrast between vulnerable volunteer-based efforts and a structured multi-stakeholder governance model captures the shift the research recommended from an informal, fragile system to a structured, institutionally supported governance function for marketing communication.

Finally, the triple-helix partnership acts as one of the most analytically powerful. It visually encodes the recommended multi-stakeholder partnership model across three interlocking roles comprising of public sector, private sector, and communities. The helix metaphor is particularly appropriate just as DNA strands are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, the three partners in this model each contribute distinct functions that, together, create a resilient and self-sustaining system. This reflects the research's conclusion (Suriyankietkaew et al., 2025) that shifting from volunteer dependency to shared governance is the critical mechanism for long-term marketing communication sustainability.

Table 1 Summary of key findings across key themes

Key themes	Primary finding	Analytical implication
Cultural wisdom	Rich Tai Khoen heritage across tangible, intangible, and living dimensions	Strong experiential foundation for creative tourism; underutilized commercially
Marketing communication	All existing channels outdated, inaccurate, or inactive; digital strategy absent	Cultural capital cannot convert to tourism value without strategic communication
Creative tourism	Community activities meet UNESCO participation criteria but are not communicated as such	Reframing existing activities as creative tourism experiences is a low-cost, high-impact strategy

Community participation	PAR process built three measurable competencies; word-of-mouth identified as existing asset	Participatory co-design produces both usable outputs and lasting human capacity
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Digital media outputs



Fig. 6 Information infographic

Source: Authors generated with Canva (2025)



Fig. 7 Information infographic
Source: Authors generated with Canva (2026)



Fig. 8 Digital leaflet of Ban Thung SiaoSource: Authors generated with NotebookLM from pictures taken by the authors (2026)



Fig. 9 Digital leaflet of Tai Khoen

Source: Authors generated with NotebookLM from pictures taken by the authors (2026)



Fig. 10 Creative tourism model

Source: Authors generated with ai Notebooklm (2026)

The “Heritage and Harmony: The Ban Thung Siao Tourism Framework” presents an integrated conceptual model that synthesizes the study’s three research objectives into a unified pathway for sustainable creative tourism development. At its foundation lies cultural wisdom as the resource (the generational knowledge, skills, and beliefs that constitute the community's tangible and intangible heritage) which feeds into authentic creative tourism through active

participation and living local traditions, and is further translated into Marketable Tourism products such as workshops, themed tours, performances, and local cuisine experiences. This internal cultural capital is then channeled through the critical pivot of from heritage to market, representing the strategic communication transformation the study sought to enable, connecting the community's identity to external audiences via multi-channel communication across social media, websites, community events, and institutional partnerships. The outcomes are twofold and mutually reinforcing which are sustainable economic growth and the community as guardian. The sustainable the economic growth balances local identity with effective commercial promotion. While locals retain agency as both producers and protectors of all cultural content and experiences. Taken together, this framework demonstrates that Ban Thung Siao's path toward creative tourism sustainability is neither purely commercial nor purely preservationist, but rather a harmonized continuum in which cultural identity is the irreplaceable foundation, participatory engagement is the mechanism, strategic communication is the bridge, and community-controlled growth is the destination. To this, offering a replicable model for other culturally rich but communication-constrained communities navigating the post-COVID tourism landscape.

Discussions

This study set out to examine how a community rich in cultural heritage but limited in promotional capacity could develop a sustainable marketing communication system to support creative tourism growth. This section focuses on four analytically significant points where the Ban Thung Siao case most meaningfully advances, challenges, or specifies existing theoretical positions.

1. Cultural capital without communication infrastructure cannot generate tourism value. The most theoretically consequential finding of this study is the failure of cultural capital to convert into destination visibility due to the absence of strategic marketing communication. This finding both confirms and meaningfully extends prior scholarship. Richards (2011) and UNESCO (2006) established that creative tourism requires authentic, participatory local experiences grounded in living cultural practice. These conditions of Ban Thung Siao satisfies through its Tai Khoen heritage, hands-on visitor activities, and community-embedded knowledge custodians. Hitherto despite meeting these foundational criteria, the community experienced declining visitor numbers and severely eroded public awareness.

This outcome supports Krongyut et al.'s (2021) argument that culturally distinctive communities in northern Thailand frequently possess the substance for tourism development but lack the communicative infrastructure to leverage it. However, the present study extends previous research by identifying where the conversion failure occurs. The problem is not the quality of the cultural experience itself, but the lack of a strategic system that makes the experience visible, credible, and accessible to potential visitors in digital information environments. This reframes the main challenge of community-based creative tourism development from experience design to experience communication. It also suggests that future

policy and research should give equal importance to both dimensions instead of focusing mainly on cultural product development while giving less attention to promotional capacity building.

2. Digital communication failure generates active reputational damage, not merely passive invisibility. The communication assessment conducted in this study revealed not simply an absence of effective digital promotion, but an active pattern of communication failure. For instance, outdated content, inaccurate tourism maps, and promotional materials referencing attractions that had ceased to operate. This finding extends Sigala's (2020) post-COVID analysis in an important direction. Sigala recognized that digital communication responsiveness is critical for destination recovery following crisis disruption. Ban Thung Sieo case demonstrates that communication failure creates not only reduced awareness but also negative impacts. Incorrect information shared through existing channels caused visitor confusion, reduced intention to revisit, and created the risk of negative word-of-mouth, which may further damage the destination's reputation through social networks.

This finding supports the work of Xiang and Gretzel (2010), which showed that online information environments act as indicators of destination trustworthiness. Tourists often evaluate a destination's credibility through the quality, accuracy, and consistency of its digital information before making a physical visit. The present study extends this idea to the community level. In small tourism communities, a single outdated Facebook page or inaccurate printed map can strongly affect destination reputation because few alternative information sources are available to correct the misinformation. The practical implication is that resource-constrained communities should prioritize communication accuracy rather than communication volume. Maintaining one reliable and regularly updated communication channel is more effective than managing several neglected channels, because inaccurate information can weaken the trust that cultural assets are intended to create.

3. Participatory co-design produces cultural legitimacy that external communication cannot. An important finding of this study is that the participatory action research process produced not only effective communication materials but also culturally legitimate content that externally developed promotional materials could not easily achieve. Community members participated in creating infographic content, validating the representation of Tai Khoen identity in the digital flipbook, and shaping the narratives of visitor experiences. As a result, the communication materials reflected a level of authenticity that was recognizable to both local community members and potential visitors because the content was created from within the culture rather than produced by outsiders.

This finding engages directly with Tran and Rudolf's (2022) systematic review concluding that destination brand meaning is increasingly co-created through ongoing digital engagement rather than controlled through institutional promotion. The Ban Thung Sieo case supports this idea at the community level. However, the co-creation process in this study was not mainly based on visitor participation through digital platforms. It was a production-side phenomenon in which community members assumed authorial control over their own cultural representation. This distinction is theoretically important because it views the community not as a passive target of tourism promotion, but as the rightful owner and storyteller of its own identity. When communicated effectively, this role itself becomes a valuable tourism asset.

This finding supports the work of Forero et al. (2025), which identified community ownership of communication processes as an emerging priority in the community-based tourism marketing literature. The present study also provides empirical evidence of how such ownership can be implemented through participatory action research.

4. Word-of-mouth as a non-strategic promotional mechanism in digital tourism environments. The identification of word-of-mouth recommendation as the community's historically dominant yet largely unmanaged communication channel deserves particular analytical attention. Ngoma and Ntale (2019) found that word-of-mouth plays an important role in building trust in marketing relationships because recommendations come from personal social networks. The Ban Thung Siew case supports this finding in the tourism context, as most visitors arrived through referrals, indicating that the quality of the tourism experience was strong enough to encourage genuine visitor recommendations.

The analytically significant question is why this advocacy had not translated into sustained visitor growth. The answer lies in the structural gap between private and digital word-of-mouth. As Leung et al. (2013) demonstrated, in contemporary tourism environments word-of-mouth operates primarily through social media sharing, peer reviews, and publicly visible endorsements. These are the mechanisms that transform private recommendation into scalable influence. Visitors to Ban Thung Siew often recommended the community within their personal networks, but there was little supporting infrastructure to extend these recommendations into digital visibility. The community lacked shareable location tags, recognizable photo landmarks, and prompts encouraging visitors to share their experiences online. This finding suggests that for communities with strong tourism experiences but limited digital presence, the most cost-effective and culturally appropriate communication strategy is not to create awareness from the beginning, but to digitalize existing visitor advocacy. This can be achieved by creating conditions that encourage satisfied visitors to voluntarily share and promote their positive experiences through digital platforms. This represents a theoretically underexplored strategy in community-based tourism communication literature and offers a productive direction for future research.

Conclusion

Ban Thung Siew's living Tai Khoen heritage satisfies the foundational requirements of creative tourism, yet cultural richness alone proved insufficient to generate tourism visibility. The study's central finding is that marketing communication functions as a structural precondition, not a supplementary activity. Hence, it converts cultural wisdom into destination competitiveness and three findings substantiate this argument. The community's existing communication channels were outdated, spatially inaccurate, and entirely pre-digital, creating a systematic barrier between its cultural assets and potential visitors. Participatory action research addressed this by co-producing culturally grounded promotional tools and building lasting digital communication competencies among community members. This extends impact beyond the research period. Strategic guidelines further established that experiential storytelling, physical infrastructure readiness, and formalized multi-stakeholder governance must work together as an integrated system, not as isolated interventions.

The practical significance of these findings in Ban Thung Sieo community is that they do not lack cultural value, but they lack the communicative infrastructure to make that value visible and accessible. This study offers an evidence-based, replicable model showing how participatory action research can simultaneously produce legitimate promotional outputs and strengthen community capacity. For policymakers and tourism practitioners advancing Thailand's national creative tourism agenda, the findings demonstrate that sustainable tourism development requires investing in communication systems with the same priority given to cultural preservation itself.

Practical implications

Three implications follow for clearly identified audiences. For *community administrators*, marketing communication should be treated as a core operational function, not an activity dependent on external research support. Maintaining accurate, consistent digital content from the outset requires far less effort than rebuilding destination credibility after communication failures occur.

For *provincial tourism agencies*, integrating participatory co-design into funding frameworks produces more sustainable outcomes than externally produced promotional materials. Skills in experiential storytelling, digital content planning, and audience segmentation remain within the community long after the intervention ends - unlike materials that communities cannot independently maintain or update.

For *communities across upper northern Thailand* facing similar challenges, the digital flipbook and infographic model developed in this study offer a low-cost, replicable communication approach requiring no advanced technical skills. The critical success factor, however, is not the technology. However, it is the participatory process that ensures materials authentically reflect community identity and are recognized as legitimate by local members themselves.

Research contributions

This study generates two interconnected contributions that extend beyond Ban Thung Sieo to inform broader understanding of community-based creative tourism development. First, theoretically, the study establishes that cultural wisdom and creative tourism outcomes are connected through marketing communication capacity. While cultural wisdom provides the authentic, participatory foundation that defines a destination's identity and value, this study demonstrates that it does not independently produce tourism outcomes. Cultural wisdom influences destination awareness, visitor trust, and behavioral intentions. The behavioral intention includes visiting, revisiting, and recommending and all these occur only when communicated through accessible, credible, and consistently maintained channels across both digital platforms and physical visitor environments (Kotler & Keller, 2021; Grewal et al., 2025). Marketing communication is therefore not supplementary but a structural precondition for converting cultural capital into tourism value. This extends Richards (2011, 2019) by specifying the communicative mechanism through which creative tourism experiences reach prospective visitors, particularly in smaller, resource-constrained community settings.

Secondly and practically, the study demonstrates that participatory action research is an effective methodology for building marketing communication capacity in culturally distinctive communities. The co-design process produced functional, cost-effective outputs that carry high cultural legitimacy because they were authored and validated by community members rather than imposed externally. Simultaneously, the process generated lasting competencies in experiential narrative framing, digital content planning, and audience segmentation. This combination of tangible outputs and human capacity development offers a replicable model for communities across northern Thailand that share comparable challenges. These challenges are on preserving strong cultural identities, operating within restricted budgets, and navigating underdeveloped digital infrastructures in the post-pandemic recovery period.

Limitations of the study

Several limitations are acknowledged to ensure accurate interpretation and appropriate application of the findings. First, the study was conducted within a single community selected for its distinctive Tai Khoen cultural identity and measurable communication deficiencies. While this enabled deep contextual understanding consistent with qualitative PAR design, it restricts generalizability. The specific combination of cultural assets, social capital, and communication challenges observed in Ban Thung Sieo may not transfer directly to other communities without contextual adaptation. The participatory model developed here should therefore be treated as a replicable framework requiring site-specific calibration rather than a universal prescription.

Second, the qualitative design prioritized depth over measurable outcomes. The impact of the co-produced infographics and digital flipbook on visitor numbers, digital engagement metrics, or community income was not assessed within the research timeframe. The claimed benefits of these tools, while analytically supported by the literature, require empirical validation through future quantitative or mixed-methods investigation.

Third, data collection occurred between 2024 and 2025, capturing community conditions at a specific point shaped by post-COVID recovery and 2024 flooding disruptions. These contextual factors may have influenced informant responses in ways that do not reflect the community's typical operational state. Longitudinal research would provide a more complete picture of the model's long-term sustainability.

Fourth, tourist perspectives were not incorporated into the study, as the research focused on community-side communication capacity. The co-produced outputs have been validated for cultural accuracy and community legitimacy but have not yet been tested for their effectiveness in influencing tourist decision-making, destination image, or visit intention among target audiences.

Finally, the long-term sustainability of the competency gains produced through the co-design workshops remains uncertain. If the multi-stakeholder governance partnerships recommended in the strategic guidelines are not successfully formalized, the structural volunteer dependency identified throughout the research may reassert itself over time.

Future research directions

The findings and limitations of this study identify several productive directions for future research that would strengthen the theoretical foundation of community-based creative tourism communication and enhance the practical applicability of the participatory marketing communication model developed. First, the participatory marketing communication model should be tested across multiple community settings with varying cultural identities, resource levels, and tourism development stages. Comparative multi-site research, particularly across Chiang Mai's creative tourism network including Karen, Akha, or Yuan communities. This comparison would clarify which model components are universally applicable and which require contextual adaptation.

Second, quantitative and mixed-methods studies measuring the actual impact of community-produced digital tools on visitor behavior are needed. Pre- and post-intervention measurement of digital engagement, visitor arrivals, length of stay, and community income would empirically validate what this qualitative study could only analytically support. Moreover, it would enable cost-benefit comparisons between participatory and conventionally commissioned promotional production.

Third, longitudinal research is needed to assess whether competency gains in digital content planning and experiential storytelling are sustained without external facilitation, whether multi-stakeholder governance partnerships are durably formalized, and whether the shift away from volunteer dependency represents lasting structural change or a temporary improvement.

Fourth, future studies should incorporate tourist perspectives. The co-produced outputs in this study were validated for cultural accuracy but not tested for effectiveness in influencing visitor decision-making, destination image formation, or visit intention. This may be conducted through surveys comparing community-produced and professionally produced materials could address.

Fifth, the digitalization of word-of-mouth as a low-cost, high-impact strategy for resource-constrained communities warrants dedicated investigation. This study identified it as the community's most effective existing communication asset, but the specific mechanisms that convert private visitor recommendation into scalable digital influence remain theoretically underspecified. Social network analysis, digital ethnography, and user-generated content analysis would advance this emerging area.

Finally, the relationship between national Soft Power policy frameworks and community-level creative tourism communication deserves systematic examination. While Thailand's 5Fs framework was adopted in this research as an organizing structure, the extent to which national branding either supports or constrains authentic local ethnic cultural expression in community tourism promotion remains an open and theoretically significant question.

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