

Art, Craft and Design as a Soft Power toward Creative Economy in Thailand*



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Abstract

Art, Craft and Design have played as significant roles in creative research for a long period of time. Nowadays, they have the potential to drive the creative economy and continue to create sustainability in future economy and society. In addition, creative research and development of knowledge in Art, Craft and Design are also importance for Thailand's competitiveness in terms of knowledge integration to creative works, from quality research to novel innovation. This research consists of three objectives 1) To analyze the key related issues of creative research results in Art, Craft and Design that to related creative economy, 2) To implement the design concept and research methods of creative research in Art, Craft and Design to drive the creative economy, 3) To introduce an integrative process of creative research in Art, Craft and Design as a cultural soft power tools to enhance economics value based on research knowledge and creativity. This research is based on a qualitative research method. Data were collected from reference documents and related key issues to study methods and process of creative research approach, case studies of doctoral dissertation of Ph.D. Program in Design Arts (International Program), Faculty of Decorative Arts, Silpakorn University. An analysis method was used to analyze both data, which was combined with the concepts of creative economy and Bio-Circular-Green Economy model.

The results showed that;

1) The key issues of creative research outcome in Art, Craft and Design are based on the use of research knowledge, inventions design and innovations to advance the environment, community, society and economy. It contributes to sustainable development goals within the framework of creative economy.

2) The concept and research methods of creative research output comprised environmental art, innovation craft and cultural design. Research output is considered as soft power that will lead to be value-added innovation development in creative economy

3) An integrative process of creative research will support the economy development plan and exchange the importance of creative research in Thailand by introducing the core values of the practice-based research in the role of Art, Craft and Design in improving the environment, community, society and economy. Finally, the results of this research provide a possible direction for developing creative economy from Thailand's 4.0 model which intended

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to align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and conforms with Bio-Circular-Green Economy (BCG) as well as the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP).

Keywords: Art, Craft and Design; Creative Economy; Soft Power

Introduction

In a creative economy scenario, the concept of driving the economy based on the use of knowledge, creativity and the use of intellectual property is linked to culture, technology and innovation. Many countries around the world recognize that using creativity for economic development is important to create and add value to products and services based on cultural production of unique and high-end quality products, following the creative economy. Examples are the United Kingdom, which is a model for the creative economy, and, Italy, where there is a lot of cultural capital. Alternatively, South Korea uses soft cultural marketing strategies through music, movies, food, and travel as well as Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand (Leinphairoj, Thamsatitdej, Techawiboonwong, and Ngamsirichit, 2013). In Thailand, Office of the National Economics and Social Development Council (NESDC, 2009) defines Creative Economy as “The concept of driving the economy based on the use of knowledge, education, creation and the use of intellectual property linked to cultural fundamentals, knowledge, technology and new innovation” to combine cultural capital with creative personal identity as key principles of creating added value to strengthen the economy. In other words, it means leading the research to the creation of artworks, innovation and new design that supports furthering the designs to develop Thailand's economy, society, and culture for sustainable development

Thailand's economic development along the lines of the original industry means it cannot respond to the needs of the industry of globalization. In the meantime, creative-focused industries play a vital role in driving Thailand's economy and social development. This indicates that creative research will be a key factor for the country's economic development. Currently, Thai government have emphasized of promoting the new economy, including Bio-Circular-Green Economy (BCG) to enhance and drive Thailand's development with a creative economy in responding to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), promoting Thai soft power and creative economy for driving the economy (Creative Economy Agency (CEA), 2022). This is complemented by the driving support for the development of the creative economy to keep pace with the global economy according to Thailand's Policy 4.0, Thailand's economic development plan. Therefore, creative research has played an important role in the development of Thailand under the government's creative economy policy. Developing knowledge from creative research, human resource development, researchers, creative designers has been the starting point for the creation of integrated academic knowledge. It can also solve the problems of the country while driving support for the

development of the creative economy and keeping pace with the global economy, according to Thailand Policy 4.0; Thailand's economic development policy vision.

In accordance with the framework of the organization United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2008), creative industries refer to the framework of creation, production and distribution of creativity and intellectual capital as primary inputs. Toward becoming Thailand 4.0, the government has focused on furthering development in the technology and industry sectors. The creative, cultural, and service industries are among five different sectors driving Thailand's development. It can be seen that creative industry is the heart of the creative economy. Therefore, it is evident that the importance of developing the country in policy influences its actual development, it could lead to further new knowledge development for creative research in higher education.

It will point out the criteria for driving Thailand's economy and National Development plan in four contexts as follows: Thailand's direction on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Bio-Circular-Green Economy model (BCG), Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) and creative economy through creative research of Art, Craft, and Design. The research outcome will create a new body of knowledge that is expected to be a guideline for enhancing the environment through eco-friendly, energy-saving, local materials and the community from natural resources, as well as supporting the needs of economy and social development at both national and global levels. This research concentrates on identifying good practice-based research, which is one of the key factors to creative research in higher education. Nevertheless, the results of synthesis through the research methodology in fields of Art, Craft and Design are highly contributory to consider and develop the doctorate student's research as to be engaged in their dissertation as the explicable process of research methodology (Joneurairatana et al., 2017).

The development approach to driving the creative economy is an important source of income in the future of that country. It is necessary to create readiness at the academy level as well as the production of researchers in the field of Art, Craft, Design. At the heart of the creative economy is a cognitively-based creativity that comes from learning, research studies, and conventional wisdom that blends with culture. It is produced as a product and service with technology and innovation to create added value. It is considered that creative research produces the knowledge that will lead to innovation, inventions that play a role in promoting the creative economy, creative industries business development, added value for products creation, new products or inventions in society. Additionally, it will help to sustainably further drive the macroeconomics and economies of the country in the future. This will be under the Bio-Circular-Green Economic (BCG) development framework and the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) for social, economic and environmental development in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Objectives of the Research

1. To analyze the key related issues of research output in Art, Craft and Design that to related creative economy.
2. To implement the concept and research methods of creative research in Art, Craft and Design to drive the creative economy.
3. To introduce an integrative process of creative research in Art, Craft and Design as a cultural soft power tools to enhance economics value based on research knowledge and creativity.

Research Methodology

Research methodology can be divided into three stages as follows:

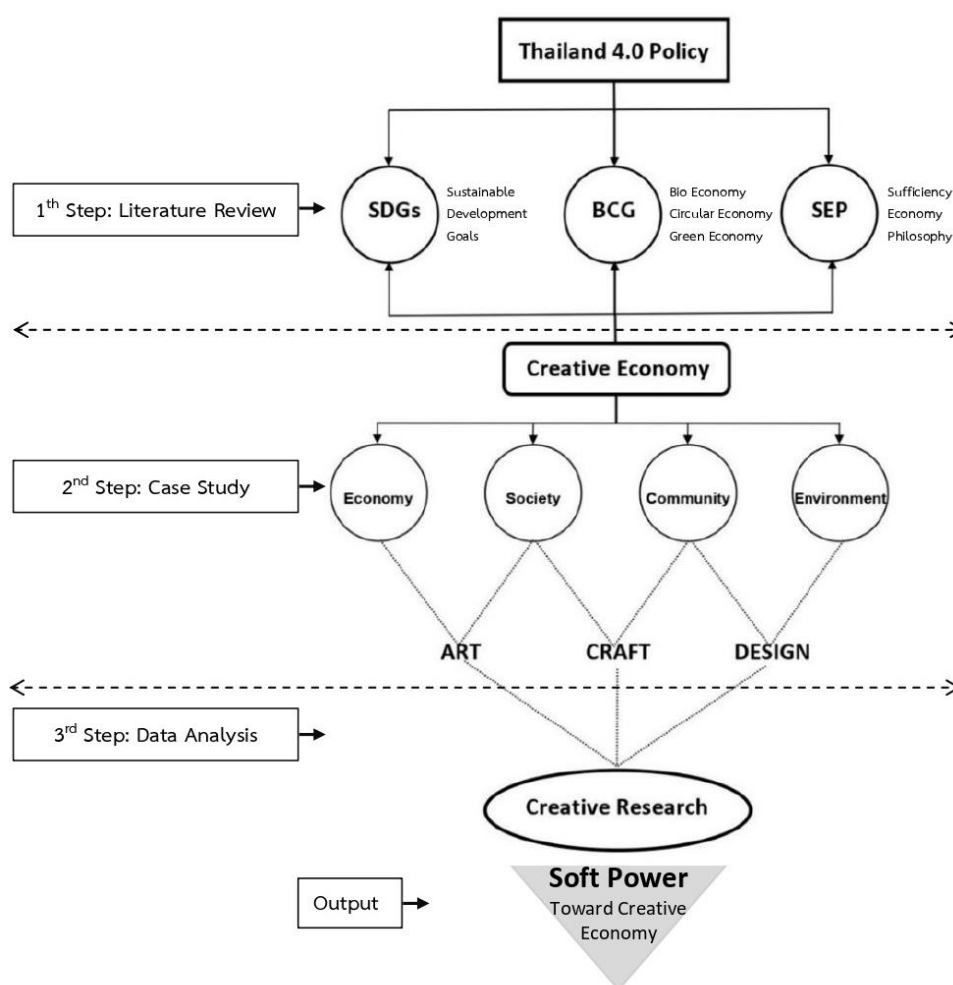


Figure 1: Research Methodology Framework

1st Step: Literature Review

Literature review on specific topics on reviewing the key related issues of creative research output in Art, Craft and Design fields that related to driving the creative economy intended to align with national strategy, Thailand 4.0 Policy. The literature review consisted of

three critical areas, 1) Thailand's direction on Sustainable Development (SDGs), 2) Bio-Circular-Green Economy (BCG), and 3) Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP).

2nd Step: Case Studies

The data are analyzed from three case studies of doctoral dissertation of Doctor of Philosophy Program in Design Arts (International Program), Faculty of Decorative Arts, Silpakorn University. Creative research in the area of Art, Craft and Design disciplines from the case studies will be analyzed through the concept, research methodology and design process. The research results, creative work, and outcome will support to creative economy development that contributes to the economic growth of the country, intended to align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and conforms with Bio-Circular-Green Economy (BCG) and the Sufficiency economy Philosophy (SEP). Creative Research in higher education is a fundamental education which embraces a range of professional fields for researchers and designers of social and culture context for their country, as well as institutions to support research systems and creative knowledge in each country towards sustainable development goals. This research aims to study the design process through the cultural context. Hence, the data collecting, document reviews, and in-depth interviews with Ph.D. graduated students were conducted to a primary stage followed by site visits and observations through analyzing the processes of factors which contribute to the creative process.

3rd Step: Data Analysis

The significant content of creative research roles for country development, an integrative process of creative research as a soft power according to creative economy development. An analysis method was used to analyze both data, combined with the concepts of creative economy and Bio-Circular-Green Economy (BCG), in order to obtain salient points of creative research development guidelines.

Research Results

The 1st objective; From the research results, it was found that the key related issues of creative research results in Art, Craft and Design are based on the use of research knowledge, design and creation of inventions and innovations to progress in the environment, community, society and the economy. From the research results, it was considered that the creative research produces the knowledge that will lead to supporting the creative economy that built on Thailand's 4.0 model, intended to align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and conforms with Bio-Circular-Green Economy (BCG) as well as the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP).

1) Thailand's direction on Sustainable Development (SDGs); According to the evidence in September 2015, the United Nations and more than 196 member countries agreed on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), on "The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" as a framework for the global sustainable development from 2016- 2030

(Bunnag, 2022). In summary, 17 goals in accordance with the U.N. Sustainable Development Guidelines are large global normative frameworks covering both economic, social, and environmental aspects. Thailand has been actively using the concept of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for helping communities, cities and regions as shown in the national development plan such as the 20-year national strategy (2018-2037) and national economic and social development plan. These activities have been aimed towards progressing appropriate national development to move the country in the direction of a sustainable quality of life in order to achieve the sustainable social, economic and environmental development goals. The researchers believe in the importance of sustainable development, and, therefore, this guided the study. The researchers reviewed the sustainable development framework as per the above goals to analyze issues related to research and in accordance with Thailand's social economic development.

2) Bio Circular Green Economy (BCG); The BCG Economy model has been introduced by the research community and promoted by the Thai government as a new economic model for inclusive and sustainable growth. The BCG Economy model capitalizes on the country's strengths in biological diversity, cultural richness, and it employs technology and innovation to transform Thailand into a value-based and innovation-driven economy. The model also conforms with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is intended to align with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), which is also the key principle of Thailand's social and economic development (Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council, n.d.).

The BCG Economy is one of the economic models that Thailand has adopted for the sustainable development of the country. This stage has been described by Maesince (2020) explaining that the BCG Economy model is the development of three essential economics, which will drive Thailand in a concrete way. The BCG Economy model focuses on economic development in three main areas; 1) The Bio Economy, which focuses on making the most of bio-resources, increasing productivity and creating additional value, 2) The Circular Economy, which focuses on resource utilization by using resource-saving and cost effectivity as much as possible, and 3) The Green Economy, which focuses on balanced development in three aspects: economic, social, and environmental. It places importance on developing all three areas simultaneously to drive the competitiveness of domestic people in the country, which covers important industries within the country. At the same time, the environment is taken into account and it moves toward sustainable development. The researchers are of the opinion that if the BCG Economy model approach is adopted in the research process in the field of Art, Craft and Design. This will support the comprehensive research in various dimensions, which support the furthering of the use of natural resources and it can also meet the needs of sustainable environmental development in the future.

3) Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP); It is one of the principles that has been implemented into the National Development Plan and a National Strategy as a model for the sustainable development of Thailand. The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) is based on the traditional Thai way of life which can survive a crisis for the stability and protrusion of development. It consists of three characteristics: 1) Moderation, production, and consumption; 2) Reasonableness: rational decisions considered as the relevant factors by taking into account the expected consequences of such actions; and 3) Self-immunity: considering the impact and supporting unexpected changes. The philosophy of Sufficiency Economy is harmoniously aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Both SEP and SDGs aim to develop and balance the relevant social, economic and environmental aspects. The overlapping part is that SEP also emphasizes the cultural aspect, while in SDG's focus on cultural context plus a part of peace and cooperation for development. The adoption of the Sufficiency Philosophy is to develop a balanced and sustainable development, readily available to embrace change in all aspects of economic, social, environmental, and technological aspects. The researchers considered that the concept of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) can be applied in education and in creative research. It can also be applied as a framework for creative processes, developing artistic and design research.

The 2nd objective; From the research results, it was found that the case studies of doctoral dissertation were shown that the researchers featured creative research in accordance with the sustainable development. The researcher implemented the design concept and research methods of creative research in Art, Craft and Design fields to driving creative economy. There were four key issues identified through the research methodology, these included 1) economy; 2) society; 3) community; and 4) environmental context in creating innovative productivity, valuable artifacts, and creative design. In addition, creative research has an inclusive significance to the philosophical principles of knowledge and the aesthetic beauty through the imagination towards the process of creativity. It is not only responding to the functions of utilities and design. It includes concepts, procedures, research methodologies, and processes from practicing, experimenting regarding the environmental, social, and cultural contexts through the skill and wisdom in creating bodies of new knowledge, creative works or innovations. This section presents examples of creative research from three case studies of the doctoral dissertation in Art, Craft and Design by classification as the themes as follows; Environmental Art, Innovation Craft and Cultural Design.

1) Environmental Art; Research topic on “Leaf Exploration: Visual Element Through Natural Resources, Khao Nam Khang National Park, Thailand” (Thawornwijit, 2019). This research is based on an ecology system to provide awareness of natural resources located in a quiet and peaceful tropical rainforest called Khao Nam Khang national park in the south of Thailand. This research aims to explore the significance of the leaf in each season which has been applied into visual elements by using fundamentals of the L-system and the Fibonacci

theory integrated with motion picture and VR technology to create the effect of leaf damage by the growth of the urban city. The visual elements of leaves represent the fertility of trees and ecology in the forest and also demonstrate a small universe of natural life and beauty. Furthermore, a leaf is a sign that tells us about climate change, seasons, and ecology. This research starts from collecting data of leaf elements such as shape, form, color, and its veins' patterns to decode and develop in visual communication design. The target is to assemble all data collected from the designer to present the concerns and awareness of climate change in the forest as well as offer the benefit of storytelling. The motion picture makes us realize why we should protect and preserve our environment.

2) Innovation Craft; Research topic on “Design Conceptual and Analysis of Tie and Knot Techniques Use in Product, Furniture and Decorative Art” (Aromdee, 2021). Under the concept of the BCG model as a holistic economic model focusing on sustainable development plan, this creative design research has been developed with Thailand's creative economic drive by using domestic materials, and resource management, including the production of environmental and community skills, to produce art and design products in the global market. This provides opportunities, including increasing incomes, and offering stability to local communities in general as a sustainable development based on the principles of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP).

This creative research intended to develop contemporary art and design perception and value from a knot and tie with an appropriate material such as bamboo ligament. The research provided the method and process of using knot and tie to create products starting from decorative items interior furnishings and architecture by dividing it into the four processes of a design thinking model: exploration, inspiration, ideate implementation, and delivery. The research results provided a context of Thai craft and folk arts in a local wisdom of knot and tie in an art aesthetic for creative craft and innovation design; it also demonstrated how to shift from local handicraft to contemporary. The result of research about enriched handicrafts from the local community and preserving the local wisdom in supporting the global market at the same time is illustrated. This research brings three aspects of knowledge: 1) Natural resources, raw materials in the community from bamboo, 2) Human resources from community labor, and 3) Local knowledge from fishermen such as knot and tie techniques into an international context. The knowledge made use of local wisdom in accordance with the principles of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) using bamboo as a natural resource, which can be found in the community, combined with the creativity and innovative design to create a work of art as a lifestyle product that is cost-effective and reduces waste to value and benefit the economy. Natural bamboo combined with local hand making skills techniques offer craft beauty and innovative design from local products to generate income for people in the community for a better quality of life. This creative research advances the community in both the aesthetic way of living and in its design field.

3) Cultural Design; Research topic on “New Value of Local Material: Artistic Expression in Textile Art and Craft” (Charungkiattikul, 2020). This research is a practice- based research. The area of research is located on Northeast Thailand known as “Isan”. It is Thailand’s ancient weaving culture area. Isan handwoven fabric represents Thai local wisdom of the region that exists alongside rural life, Thai tradition, and the cultural heritage of Northeastern communities. It shows that natural fiber materials are used in Thai weaving communities as it is a hub of silk production. The weavers have traditional skills and the ability to use the basic technology with man-made equipment to produce fibers for their weaving such as high-quality silk yarn and eco-friendly handspun cotton. This knowledge and wisdom display the uniqueness of Isan hand-woven fabric with delicate patterns, a variety of natural dyed colors and different techniques. This represents a cultural capital which develops into contemporary textile art and design, which, in turn, generates income for the community and the national economy.

This creative research aims to examine a material in textile art, especially “Eri Silk”, a local material for Thai weaving communities known as “Peaceful Silk”. This contains unique fibrous properties when it is processed without killing the silkworm in Khon Kaen province. It is also an organic fiber that has an environmentally friendly production process. The research aimed to develop a new perspective of textile art and craft through art practice and artistic expression. The research results showed that “Eri Silk” carries aesthetic value and inherent texture through visual aspects by utilizing textile technique and craft skill in the cultural context. The body of knowledge has highlighted the importance of cultural weaving development by using local materials. The knowledge obtained from this research helped identify the material and contributed to sustainable development in communities which conforms with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aligned with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) which is also known as the key principle of Thailand’s social and economic development. Therefore, the result of this research is integration of creativity, aesthetics and philosophy to create new values, and economic, social and national development to thrive on sustainable advancement.

The 3rd objective; From the research results, it was found that an integrative process of creative research in Art, Craft and Design approach considered as an essential component on developing the national economy development band on knowledge and creativity in responding to the sustainable development. This is implemented for driving the development of Thailand’s creative economy; the design research concept needs to include environment; culture and innovation context which based on research knowledge and creativity. The results show that creative research have the potential to enhancing economic value. It could be considered as Thailand’s soft power according to creative economy that related to environment, culture and innovation which based on research knowledge and creativity.

The New Body of Knowledge

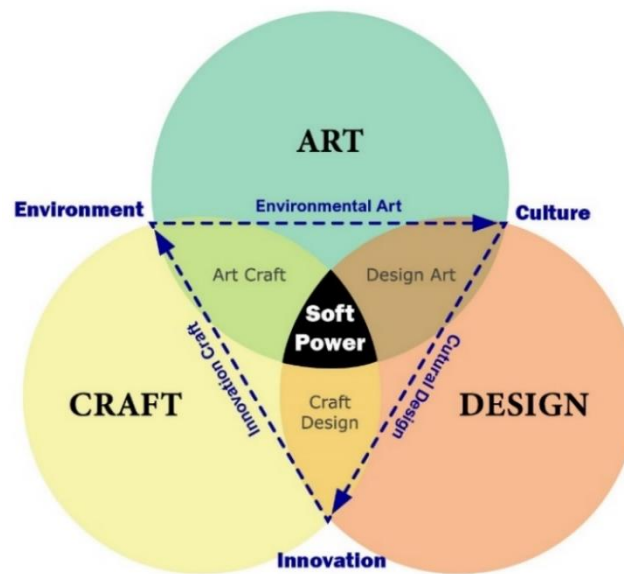


Figure 2: New Knowledge Model

According to the results of the study, creative research in Art, Craft and Design fields is considered frontier research which will lead to knowledge-based economic development.

The new body of knowledge is formulated by this research in the addition of implementation of design research process of creative research design introduced as a soft power for driving the creative economy which shows on the diagram of the new knowledge model. Moreover, it is an integrative process of creative research that will lead to develop the nation based on culture, innovation, environment, research knowledge and creativity. Findings can be used as a resource for policy development in creative economy in Thailand also provide innovation ideas for researchers in other related contexts.

Discussion of Research Results

From the research result of the 1st objective, it was found that Art, Craft and Design research to be the study of integration knowledge through the research methodologies in the characteristic of creative design into the innovations, and new knowledge to progress of the creative economy development. Therefore, the knowledge obtained from creative research can bring a positive impact for driving creative economy, being consistent with the concept of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Bio-Circular-Green Economy (BCG) and the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP). The Art, Craft and Design was knowledge-based research to creating artworks, intellectual property, ideas and imagination which was incorporated into the creative economy model (UNCTAD, 2008).

From the research result of the 2nd objective, it was found that implementation of the design concept and research methods of creative research in Art, Craft and Design fields will drive creative economy as a soft power. This is because the results of creative design and

knowledge was a key factor for driving the creative economy, being consistent with the four significant aspects economy, society, community and environmental context.

From the research result of the 3rd objective, it was found that creative research in Art, Craft and Design has a high potential to thoroughly enhance the creative economy. This is because an integrative process of creative research in Art, Craft and Design according to creative economy as a soft power in developing the Nation based on cultural, research knowledge and creativity, being consistent with the concept of creative economy (Creative Economy Agency (CEA), 2022). The new knowledge model developed can be used in comparative studies of Art, Craft and Design education that are responsive to the needs of national development toward creative economy development.

Conclusion

Along with the growth of the creative economy, the Thai government has emphasized the necessity of promoting Thai soft power and creative economy as one of the essential mechanisms for driving the economy. The key driving force on the soft power process is the utilization of creativity and knowledge from creative research to increase economic value and build on the cultural assets and wisdom to improve both income and quality of life of people.

The knowledge obtained from the creative research plays an important role in offering a new research concept through design process based on practical research in order to support the sustainable development, as well as for driving the national economic and social development plan. The case studies from the creative research in Art, Craft and Design show searching the new knowledge under the creative practices and theoretical study through the process of research methodology, the integration of aesthetics, cultural contexts and creativity for driving Thailand's creative economy. Subsequently, the outcome of creative research is capable of bringing about the development in society, community, economy, and environment aspects. It also conforms with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Bio-Circular-Green Economy (BCG) and they align with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), which is the key principle of Thailand's social and economic development. Finally, the body of knowledge obtained from Art, Craft and Design research can be used as a soft power for driving force of creative economy in Thailand as well as exchange knowledge for exporting culture to maximize the country's worldwide potential.

Suggestions

From the results of the research, the researcher has the suggestions as follows:

1. The suggestions from the research

From the research result of the 1st objective, it was found that there were several aspects identified that key issues were applied to drive creative economy, as summarized

above. Therefore, the first objective is that these aspects should be integrated in to the creative research for developing creative economy that built on Thailand's 4.0 policy.

From the research result of the 2nd objective, it can be recommended there are four areas to implement in the Art, Craft and Design for driving creative economy. Therefore, these key areas as follows economy, society, community, and environment should be applied in the creative research in Art, Craft and Design based on the use of research knowledge.

From the research result of the 3rd objective, it was found that the outcome of Art, Craft and Design considered as soft power will lead toward the creative economy. Therefore, the related institute should apply as follow to integrate process of creative research according to creative economy; this will help raise contribution to the sustainable lifelong learning under creative economy framework in driving Thailand's sustainable development.

2. The suggestions for the future research

The future research should involve the following issues:

2.1 To build the output of creative research to be productivity research as an efficiency tool to support the country's development under the concept of creative economy. It should aim to bring research knowledge combined with innovation and creativity. The benefits of driving the country with knowledge-based research in arts, craft and design will be beneficial for the economy, community, society and the environment.

2.2 To support frontier research in the area of Art, Craft and Design in line with the direction of driving the country according to the Bio-Circular Economy model (BCG) strategy, it will drive research results with knowledge leading to excellence. 3) And apply the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) such as self-reliance, strengthening the community level or society for quality growth of the country. Finally, this will lead to sustainable development in the future in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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