

Model to Improve Income and Social Opportunities Through Craft-Based Activities and Creative Tourism in Raman District, Yala Province

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The Asian Conference on the Social Sciences 2026
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

The objectives of this research are to 1. To develop a model for elevating the income and social opportunities of poor households through craft activities and creative tourism associated with the local context and (2) To develop digital media to promote craft-based tourism routes in Raman District, Yala Province. The research employed a qualitative research methodology integrated with Participatory Action Research (PAR) to examine community activities and capabilities. The research was conducted through a participatory process involving local stakeholders. Research instruments comprised participant observation, focus group discussions, and tourism route surveys. Data were analyzed using content analysis, and data reliabilities was verified through triangulation. The research results indicated that the model to enhance income and social opportunities through crafts and creative tourism consists of three main components (1) foundational elements (2) driving mechanisms and (3) operational processes. Regarding the development of digital media to promote craft tourism routes, it was found that linking to craft activities with the local way of life and community resources within the research area could enriching and multifaceted tourism experiences. This ultimately drives the recognition of cultural heritage values and strengthens community pride. In summary, the developed model is highly compatible with the local's context offering substantial potential for scalability to uplift the grassroots economy through craft-based enterprises and creative tourism. Nevertheless, any further scalability of this model must consider differences in local and the continuous engagement of network partners.

Keywords: development model, improve income, social opportunities, craft-based activities, creative tourism

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Introduction

Poverty remains a significant challenge in Thailand, particularly in rural and border areas where many people continue to face limitations in income, access to resources, and opportunities for improving their quality of life. Although the government has continuously implemented policies and measures to alleviate poverty, many vulnerable households still experience economic insecurity, limited opportunities for sustainable income generation, and restricted access to markets and financial resources. These conditions contribute to persistent economic and social inequalities in many parts of the country (Kadem et al., 2025).

Raman District, Yala Province, is one of the areas where poor and vulnerable households are distributed across several communities. Despite economic constraints, the area possesses considerable potential in terms of natural resources, local wisdom, and cultural identity. In particular, local crafts and handicrafts reflect the lifestyles and indigenous knowledge of community members, including thorn-pandan weaving, beadwork, batik production, and other activities associated with local ways of life. These resources can be further developed to create economic value if managed appropriately.

In recent years, the concepts of the creative economy and community development based on cultural capital have gained increasing attention because they provide opportunities to create added value from existing local resources without requiring large-scale investments. Crafts therefore play a role not only as products for sale but also as tools for communicating local identity, stories, and indigenous knowledge to broader audiences. Furthermore, product development that combines contemporary design with market demands can enhance income-generating opportunities and strengthen the economic potential of communities (Junveroad et al., 2024).

In addition, creative tourism has been widely recognized as a form of tourism that enables visitors to learn, participate, and interact directly with host communities through activities that reflect local culture, identity, and ways of life (Duxbury et al., 2021). Linking craft activities with creative tourism can therefore create added value for both products and tourism experiences while simultaneously generating income opportunities and fostering community pride in local cultural identity.

A review of the literature indicates that most studies have focused on community product development, value-added local products, and occupational capacity development. However, studies examining the integration of crafts and creative tourism as a mechanism for enhancing income and social opportunities among poor households, particularly within the context of Southern Thailand's border provinces, remain limited. Therefore, there is a need to investigate development models that can effectively integrate community capital, craft activities, and creative tourism to generate sustainable economic and social outcomes.

Accordingly, this study aims to develop a model for improving income and social opportunities through craft-based activities that are appropriate to the local context and the capacity of poor households, while also developing digital promotional media for craft tourism routes in Raman District, Yala Province. The study seeks to contribute to economic opportunities, community empowerment, and the sustainable development of creative tourism based on local identity.

Research Objectives

1. To develop a model to improve income and social opportunities through craft activities that suits local context and the capacity of poor households.
2. To develop digital promotional media for craft tourism routes in Raman District, Yala Province.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research approach blended with Participatory Action Research (PAR) to investigate and develop approaches for enhancing income and social opportunities between poor households through craft-based activities and creative tourism in Raman District, Yala Province. The study highlighted the participation of stakeholders throughout all stages of the research process.

Study Area, the study was conducted in four sub-districts of Raman District, Yala Province:

1. Wang Phaya Sub-district
2. Asong Sub-district
3. Koto Tuera Sub-district
4. Kota Baru Sub-district

These areas were selected for they contain a high concentration of poor households and possess significant potential in terms of natural resources, local wisdom, and cultural identity that can be developed into craft-based activities and creative tourism experiences.

Target Participants

The primary participants consisted of 250 poor households in Raman District, Yala Province, selected from the provincial poverty database. Additional participants included community leaders, community enterprise groups, government agencies, academics, and other stakeholders involved in community development and tourism development within the study area.

Research Instruments

The research employed the following data collection instruments:

1. Participant Observation
2. Focus Group Discussions
3. In-depth Interviews
4. Tourism Resource and Route Surveys
5. Participatory Workshops

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through the Participatory Action Research process and consisted of the following stages:

1. Investigation of baseline information and community potential
2. Analysis of community capital and tourism resources
3. Development of craft products and community-based activities
4. Design of creative tourism routes

5. Development of digital promotional media for tourism routes
6. Monitoring and evaluation with community participation

Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using Content Analysis. Information was categorized according to research themes and synthesized into key findings. Data credibility was verified through triangulation to ensure consistency and reliability across multiple sources.

Research Findings

Development of a Model for Improving Income and Social Opportunities Through Craft-Based Activities and Creative Tourism

The findings revealed that improving income and social opportunities among poor households in Raman District, Yala Province, cannot be achieved exclusively through product development. Somewhat, it requires the integration of community capital, support mechanisms, and participatory operational processes that systematically connect craft-based activities with creative tourism. By spending time on the ground with the community, hosting open group discussions, and tourism route survey, the research found that our four target sub-districts which includes Wangphaya, R- song, Kototuera and Kotabaru have various natural resources, local wisdom, and cultural identities. These resources provide important potential for the development of craft-based activities and their transformation into creative tourism experiences. The findings were made into a model for improving income and social opportunities through craft-based activities and creative tourism. The model consists of three key components: (1) Core Components (2) Driving Mechanism and (3) Operational Process.

Core Components

The findings show that the core mechanisms of the model comprise human capital, natural capital, local wisdom and cultural identity. These resources serve as the foundation for developing craft products and creative tourism activities. The study area contains a variety of local resources and traditional knowledge, including pandanus weaving, beadwork, batik production, and activities that reflect local way of life. The findings suggest that these resources are valuable not only as products for sale but also as learning activities and tourism experiences that allow visitors to participate directly with local communities. Also, the study found that applying contemporary creative design concepts to local wisdom subsidizes to product value enhancement and increases the attractiveness of tourism activities.

Driving Mechanism

The findings revealed that community enterprises function as the primary driving mechanism of the development process. They play a crucial role in connecting poor households with production activities, product development, marketing opportunities, and tourism-related activities. Poor households, in turn, serve as producers and active participants in the development process. In addition, universities, government agencies, and network partners play important supporting roles by providing knowledge, skills development, product design assistance, and market linkage opportunities.

The study also found that experiential marketing serves as a significant mechanism for enhancing the value of community products and tourism activities. Through workshops, product demonstrations, exhibitions, product sales, and business negotiation events, communities are able to increase public awareness and appreciation of local products and cultural identity.

Operational Process

The findings indicate that the operational process leading to improved income and social opportunities among poor households consists of four stages:

1. Preparation; Assessing community resources, analyzing community capital, and identifying local development potential.
2. Production; Developing products, improving product design, and enhancing product quality.
3. Promotion; Conducting promotional activities, organizing exhibitions, developing digital media, and establishing market linkages.
4. Participation; Encouraging active involvement of community members, network partners, and tourists.

The findings suggest that this operational process enables community members to participate throughout the entire development cycle, resulting in shared learning, capacity building, and a stronger sense of ownership over community development initiatives.

Development of Digital Promotional Media and Craft Tourism Routes

The findings revealed that the development of digital promotional media for craft tourism routes significantly enhanced the communication of local identity and tourism resources within the community. The tourism routes developed through this project integrate craft-based activities with local lifestyles, cultural heritage, and community resources across the four target sub-districts. Visitors are able to participate in hands-on learning activities, engage in practical experiences, and interact directly with local residents.

Based on the tourism resource assessment and participatory planning process, two craft-based creative tourism routes were developed.

Route 1: “The Way of Life and Nature at Wang Phaya: A Half-Day Journey Amidst Pastoral Beauty”

Strategic focus: Integration of experiential learning, local culture, and nature-based tourism. This route focuses on Wangphaya Sub-district and highlights the relationship between natural resources, local wisdom, and cultural identity. Visitors can learn about pandanus cultivation, participate in pandanus weaving workshops, and explore locally inspired craft products. The route also incorporates community lifestyle experiences and opportunities to purchase community-made products, enabling tourists to gain a deeper understanding of local culture and traditional knowledge.

Route 2: A Half-Day Immersion in the Kota Bharu Way of Life

From Local Wisdom to the Culinary Plate Strategic Focus: A multidisciplinary route encompassing bio-based community product development, agro-tourism, and gastronomic

tourism. This route focuses on Kototuera Sub-district and emphasizes batik production and creative cultural experiences. Visitors can participate in batik-making workshops, learn about local motifs and cultural meanings, and interact directly with community artisans. The route promotes cultural learning while creating opportunities for local product sales and community-based tourism development.

The study further found that participation in craft-based activities contributes to the creation of meaningful tourism experiences. Such experiences enable tourists to gain a deeper understanding of local lifestyles, cultural traditions, and indigenous knowledge. At the same time, these activities foster community pride and create tangible opportunities for income distribution among poor households. Overall, the findings demonstrate that integrating craft-based activities with creative tourism can generate economic, social, and cultural value while serving as an effective approach for enhancing income and social opportunities among poor households in Raman District, Yala Province.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that improving income and social opportunities among poor households requires more than the development of community products alone. Instead, it depends on the integration of community capital, stakeholder collaboration, and participatory development processes that connect local craft activities with creative tourism. This finding suggests that crafts can serve not only as economic products but also as valuable tourism resources capable of generating economic, social, and cultural benefits for local communities. The study revealed that local crafts such as pandan thorn weaving, beadwork, and batik production possess significant potential to be transformed into creative tourism experiences. This finding is consistent with the concept of creative tourism, which emphasizes active participation, learning, and interaction between tourists and host communities (Duxbury et al., 2021). Rather than merely purchasing products, tourists increasingly seek authentic experiences that allow them to engage with local culture, traditions, and ways of life. Consequently, craft-based activities can enhance the attractiveness of tourism destinations while simultaneously creating additional income opportunities for local residents.

Another important finding is the role of community enterprises as the primary driving mechanism for local development. Community enterprises functioned as intermediaries that connected poor households with government agencies, universities, and network partners, thereby facilitating product development, capacity building, and market access. This finding supports the study of Wingwon et al. (2022), which highlighted the importance of participatory development and multi-stakeholder collaboration in strengthening community enterprises and promoting sustainable local economic development.

The findings also indicate that local wisdom and cultural identity play a crucial role in increasing the value of both craft products and tourism experiences. This result is consistent with the studies of Junveroad et al. (2024) and Rujichai et al. (2025), which found that incorporating local identity into product development contributes to product differentiation and enhances market competitiveness. However, the present study extends previous findings by demonstrating that the value of local identity is not limited to product development alone. When integrated into tourism experiences, local identity becomes a key element in creating meaningful interactions between tourists and community members. Furthermore, the study found that the benefits generated by the proposed model were not restricted to economic outcomes. Participation in craft-based activities and creative tourism also created social

opportunities, including skills development, social recognition, networking, and increased community pride. This finding suggests that creative tourism can contribute to social empowerment and community development alongside income generation. Such outcomes are particularly important in areas where poor households face limitations in employment opportunities and access to economic resources.

The development of digital promotional media and craft tourism routes also emerged as an important strategy for increasing the visibility of local tourism resources. Digital media enabled communities to communicate their identity, products, and tourism experiences to broader audiences, while craft tourism routes helped connect local resources into integrated visitor experiences. These findings highlight the growing importance of digital technologies in supporting community-based tourism development and expanding market opportunities for local communities. Overall, the findings suggest that integrating craft-based activities with creative tourism provides an effective approach for enhancing income and social opportunities among poor households. The study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on creative tourism by demonstrating how community capital, local wisdom, cultural identity, and participatory development can be combined to support sustainable community development in the context of Southern Thailand. Moreover, the findings indicate that crafts should be viewed not only as community products but also as creative tourism resources that can generate long-term economic, social, and cultural value for local communities.

Conclusion

This study successfully developed a model for improving income and social opportunities through craft-based activities and creative tourism in Raman District, Yala Province. The findings revealed that the proposed model consists of three key components: Core Components, Driving Mechanism, and Operational Process. The integration of human capital, natural capital, local wisdom, and cultural identity with community participation and institutional support contributed to the enhancement of both income-generating opportunities and social empowerment among poor households. The study further demonstrated that local crafts can be transformed from traditional community products into creative tourism resources that provide meaningful learning experiences for tourists while simultaneously creating economic opportunities for local communities. Community enterprises were identified as the central driving force in connecting poor households with government agencies, universities, and network partners, thereby strengthening community capacity and supporting sustainable local development. In addition, the development of digital promotional media and craft tourism routes enhanced the visibility of local tourism resources and facilitated greater access to tourism markets. The integration of craft-based activities with local lifestyles, cultural heritage, and community identity enabled visitors to engage in authentic and participatory tourism experiences while contributing to income distribution and community pride.

The findings also indicate that the benefits derived from the model extend beyond economic outcomes. Participation in craft-based activities and creative tourism contributed to social opportunities, including skills development, networking, social recognition, and increased confidence among community members. These outcomes highlight the potential of creative tourism as a tool for both economic and social development, particularly in communities facing poverty and limited livelihood opportunities. Therefore, this study concludes that the integration of craft-based activities and creative tourism provides an effective approach for enhancing income and social opportunities among poor households. Local crafts should be recognized not only as community products but also as valuable creative tourism resources

capable of generating economic, social, and cultural benefits. The proposed model may serve as a practical framework for community development initiatives and contribute to sustainable tourism development in Southern Thailand and other communities with similar socio-economic contexts.

Suggestions for Further Studies

This study provides an important foundation for understanding how craft-based activities and creative tourism can be utilized to enhance income and social opportunities among poor households at the community level. Therefore, future research should investigate the long-term impacts of the proposed model on household income, quality of life, and social capital among poor households. In addition, further studies should examine tourists' perceptions, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions regarding participation in craft-based tourism activities in order to assess the potential of these activities to create sustainable creative tourism experiences. Moreover, the proposed model should be tested in other communities with different social, cultural, and economic contexts to evaluate its suitability, adaptability, and potential for wider application. Such studies would contribute to a better understanding of the model's effectiveness and its potential to support sustainable community development in diverse settings.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The author declares that ChatGPT (OpenAI) was used solely for language editing, proofreading, translation assistance, and manuscript formatting. The use of AI was limited to improving the readability and presentation of the manuscript. No AI-generated content was used as research data or research findings. The ideas, research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, discussion, and conclusions presented in this manuscript are the original work of the author and were derived from the actual conduct of the research. The author assumes full responsibility for the content of this manuscript.

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