

***Communication Strategies for Conveying the Cultural Wisdom of Krajoood Wicker
Product Weaving at Ban Huayleuk in Surat Thani Province***

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to study communication strategies for conveying the cultural wisdom of Krajoood (*Lepironia articalata*, a kind of sedge) wicker product weaving at Ban Huayleuk in Surat Thani Province, in terms of 1) patterns of communications; 2) communication strategies; and 3) approaches for developing communications. This was a qualitative research done by participatory observation and in-depth interviews with 19 key informants. All were chosen through purposive sampling. Data collection tools were an observation form and an interview form. Data were analyzed through descriptive analysis. The results showed communication to pass down cultural wisdom had the following characteristics: 1) patterns: (a) the development worker was the ideological leader; (b) there was an emphasis on participation of group members; (c) new media were used to communicate about Krajoood weaving activities; (d) a youth network was built up; (e) a network was created with outside organizations; 2) strategies: (a) an emphasis on two-way communication through media; (b) using diverse media to present the unique qualities of the products; (c) using media that created good impressions, attraction, a feeling of closeness and a feeling of community; 3) approaches for developing campaign strategies: (a) creating interest so people want to continue learning more about the craft; (b) building strong networks of supporters; (c) learning to use modern media that meet people's needs; and (d) following up and evaluating every step of the communications.

Keywords: Communication strategies, Ban Huayleuk in Suratthani group in Suratthani Province

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Introduction

Thai society has been flooded by Western culture, so traditional local intellect has dropped in importance. Not only does this local intellect express Thai-ness and form an important part of the Thai identity, it is also an indicator of social prosperity and human development. Local intellect is a delicate thing. Any nation that has a society that is secure and peaceful with no major unrest and with freedom will be able to create, develop and accumulate unique cultural intellect that reflects that society's prosperity.

Local intellect is part of the body of knowledge that comes from the accumulation of experience of knowledgeable people in a community, and experience that has been passed down from ancestors and from various institutions. Such intellect is influenced by the environment and religion and is based on the culture of the locality. Intellect is something that has been around for a long time. It is practiced by the people in the community. In the early stages of education, education was a matter of community culture and people in the villages were self-reliant for education. Later on, education expanded and village savants arose. Local intellect was a topic of interest and it was revived and spread more. When humans live together in groups they learn from each other and adapt and create a culture that is appropriate for the natural environment of their surroundings and that will help sustain life. The learning process, experiences, world view, beliefs, and rituals that make up a people's way of life and that are continuously collected, transmitted and adjusted become the local intellect of that place. Intellect comes from a process of transmission and passing down of the original knowledge of a locality, which is also selected, developed and refined to create skills and expertise that can help solve problems and develop the way of life to be appropriate for the age. That process leads to local intellect or new knowledge that can be further adapted and transmitted in a never-ending cycle.

The cultural handicraft wisdom of Krajoed (*Lepironia articalata*, a kind of sedge) wicker product weaving at Ban Huayleuk in Surat Thani Province is a local intellect that has been passed down from generation to generation. A group of local ladies was established to try to find a part-time vocation for extra income earning. The people who knew Krajoed weaving had developed methods to make different kinds of mats and other products such as hats, handbags, coasters, placemats, folders, suitcases, seats and others. You can see krajoed weaving is a valuable handicraft that is meaningful and reflects the way of life of people over the generations. It tells about the history, economic status, society and culture of community groups. Now new products have been developed that can be exported to the Americas and Europe. People in the community have been encouraged to participate in this intellectual heritage more. The Ta Saton krajoed weaving group has cooperated with the network for cooperation to revive this handicraft. They see that the krajoed weavers of Ban Huayleuk are keepers of a valuable handicraft art. There have been efforts to promote the passing down of this cultural intellect. The villagers of Ban Huayleuk have been passing down the art from generation to generation because it is an inheritance from their ancestors. Now schools in Ta Saton Sub-district other areas nearby in Ban Na Deum District added krajoed weaving as part of their school curricula. Members from the Ban Huayleuk weaving group go in to teach at the schools. This led to the researchers' interest in studying how this cultural intellect is passed down in this village as a model of the revival of a local intellectual heritage.

Research objectives

1. To study patterns of communications used for conveying the cultural wisdom of Krajoed wicker product weaving at Ban Huayleuk in Surat Thani Province;
2. To study communication strategies used for conveying the cultural wisdom of Krajoed wicker product weaving at Ban Huayleuk in Surat Thani Province; and
3. To study approaches for developing strategies to campaign for communications to convey the cultural wisdom of Krajoed wicker product weaving at Ban Huayleuk in Surat Thani Province.

Research methodology

This was a qualitative research done by participatory observation and in-depth interviews with 19 key informants, consisting of one development worker, 3 local intellect teachers, 5 local youth, 5 academics and 5 members of the wicker weaving network. All were chosen through purposive sampling because they were involved with the passing down of the local cultural intellect of krajoed wicker weaving in Ban Huayleuk, Surat Thani Province. Data collection tools were an observation form and an interview form. Data were analyzed through descriptive analysis.

Expected benefits

1. More will be contributed to the body of knowledge about passing down cultural intellect, especially the process of planning appropriate communications that truly meet the needs of the local people. This will contribute to developing the quality of citizens.
2. More will be learned about appropriate patterns and strategies for groups of handicraft makers to develop their craft and business so they may advance in their careers and can teach other people in their communities.
3. The findings will help promote the development of a learning culture among communities where there are local product or handicraft manufacturing groups, and this will help lead to the development of a learning society and society at large
4. Academics such as teachers and students who are interested in studying strategies used to pass down cultural intellect and related topics can benefit from the knowledge and experiences of this research for greater understanding, and this empirical knowledge will raise the quality of research and development, adding to the development of students, teachers and educational institutions.
5. Educational institutions will have better relations with handicraft producers and local communities and can expand networks with agencies that promote cultural products and individuals with cultural experience so they can learn together and give the students more learning opportunities

Results

Patterns of communications used for conveying the cultural wisdom of Krajoood wicker product weaving at Ban Huayleuk in Surat Thani Province:

1. The development worker was the ideological leader, equivalent to the team leader of a development group. The development worker played an important role driving the operations of the Ban Huayleuk krajoood wicker weaving group, providing consultation, planning, fund raising, searching out markets, coordinating with external agencies, and coordinating to send group members to teach weaving at other places. The weaving instructors had a role producing woven products, reviving old methods, repeating patterns, and inventing new products. The youth group played a role assisting the teachers.

2. Communication activities emphasized group participation. There were two parts to coordinating cooperation: 1) coordinating among group members who were a wide range of ages; and 2) coordinating among members of the network, consisting of members of the Ban Huayleuk krajoood weaving group, the development group, who acted as leader, the group of weaving instructors, the youth group, academics, and external organizations.

3. New media were used as a channel to broadcast krajoood wicker weaving activities, consisting of an Internet website at www.kajood.com for people who were interested about krajoood weaving but couldn't come to the place in person, and a facebook page for people to learn basic information about the group and see the map of its location.

4. A youth network was built up from youth in the village. Some were students who were trained as "little tour guides" at Ban Bratuprik School and some who assisted in the activities of the krajoood wicker weaving group. These latter were mostly the children and grandchildren of the wicker weaving instructors who had been exposed to the craft their whole lives and developed a love for it. They assisted the development worker in communicating with people inside and outside the group. They also assisted in teaching weaving. The youth could help introduce and explain about the group to tourists or people who came on study visits. They explained the equipment, raw materials, weaving methods, and types of products. They could explain and demonstrate to attract the attention of the audience.

5. A network was built with outside groups, such as organizations that supported the work of the weaving group in some way, such as the Ta Saton Sub-district Administrative Organization, Ban Bratuprik School, Kirirat Witiyakom School, Ban Huayleuk Network, and the press. These organizations supported the work of the Ban Huayleuk krajoood wicker weaving group by providing locations for operations and activities, providing funding, providing travel expenses, helping disseminate knowledge about krajoood wicker weaving, producing media, and developing learning materials appropriate for the locality.

Communication strategies used for conveying the cultural wisdom of Krajoood wicker product weaving at Ban Huayleuk in Surat Thani Province:

1. For use of media, the emphasis was on two-way communications. This helped create understanding and all sides listened to each other's opinions. The development workers and group members were encouraged to participate in communications. Use of personal media gave the group members more incentive to work. Two-way communications helped change people's attitudes and behavior efficiently.
2. Diverse kinds of media were used to send messages about the unique character of the woven products. Different media were tools used to transmit messages to all different target audiences, to build understanding and awareness, and to capture people's attention. The main thrust of the communications was to educate people about the unique nature of the handicraft and the products.
3. The choice of media attracted attention, created a good impression, and created a sense of closeness, friendliness, and brotherliness. The main type of media used to accomplish this was personal media. For teaching about weaving and for presenting the products, the personal media used both local dialect and standard Thai language.

Approaches for developing strategies to campaign for communications to convey the cultural wisdom of Krajoood wicker product weaving at Ban Huayleuk in Surat Thani Province:

1. To create interest in the audience receiving the communications, the people producing the media must continuously study about the handicraft products. To make sure the media and messages are efficient and meet the needs of the target audience, the media producer must have a good understanding of the handicraft and present information about its strong points in a clever way.
2. A strong network of supporters should be created. The Ban Huayleuk krajoood wicker weaving group was successful in passing down the local intellect in large part because it was supported by a strong network of outside organizations that joined to help produce media and organize activities to make new generations feel proud of their heritage so they would help preserve it and pass it down.
3. It is necessary to use modern media that meet the needs of the target audience. It is necessary to keep up with the trends and understand the preferences of people in each target group. Communications technology changes quickly and has made the world borderless. The krajoood wicker weaving group of Ban Huayleuk uses mostly new media to pass down the handicraft to reach target groups both in Thailand and worldwide.
4. It is important to evaluate every step of communication so that communications can be regularly improved and developed to be more efficient. Every weak point is analyzed so that communication can be improved.

Discussion

The krajood wicker weaving group of Huay Leuk used various media in their strategy to pass down the local intellect of krajood wicker weaving for greater efficiency and to suit different circumstances. They used personal media (members of the group) to present diverse opinions and diverse ways of working and solving problems. This is consistent with the work of Kwancheewa Sangluang (2009), who said that diverse communications encourage participation and change to a certain degree or in a certain way in the one with whom you are communicating. The communication could change awareness, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior of a person, group or society. This is also consistent with the concept of participatory development that emphasizes participation of all stakeholders from the beginning stages of policy and planning through implementation and evaluation. The Ban Huayleuk krajood weaving group had a development worker who acted as team leader, driving the production and marketing work, consulting and developing the capacities of the members, designing activities to pass down the handicraft intellect, coordinating with outside agencies and also working at instructing to pass down the krajood wicker weaving knowledge. This is consistent with the work of Nontaya Hongrat (2007), who wrote that messages or content are created to learn and research, to forge or strengthen relations, to help someone, to persuade someone, or for entertainment. The objective of communication is to inform a target audience of whatever they want to know. How the message receiver feels about the message might not make them react in the way the message sender intended. When considering choice of media, one should consider the method of use, the access of the target group, ways of application to get the desired results, and suitability for the environment and culture.

Regarding strategies used by the group under study, their main media strategy was to use activities in the village and at outside locations to pass down the handicraft intellect. For greatest efficiency, they chose activities that were appropriate for different target groups, taking into consideration convenience of access and thoroughness of reach. This is consistent with the thinking of Witiyatorn Torgaew (2006) who wrote that analysis of the best media depends on convenience of access and ability of the media to reach the target audience at their place of residence as well as effectiveness of the media, or in other words its usefulness in grabbing interest, creating understanding, persuading and creating a lasting memorable impression.

Activities for passing down the handicraft intellect were primarily aimed at youth in the community and secondarily at some outside interested individuals or groups. They were creative activities using locally available materials. When the group was invited to teach somewhere outside the community, they usually took the form of exhibitions, demonstrations and lessons, depending on the aim of the group that gave the invitation. This is consistent with the work of Nontaya Hongrat (2007), who wrote that to set a media use strategy one must analyze which media to use with which presentation method, when the goal of communication would be achieved, the suitability for the target audience, and the appropriate message to be transmitted, language or wording and culture of the intended audience. Then the message receivers can use the communication for benefit rather than rejecting or ignoring it.

Recommendations: Practical recommendations

1. The components and strategies for passing down the cultural handicraft intellect of krajood wicker weaving at Ban Huay Leuk in Surat Thani Province can be summed up and explained in the PLAY Model. The PLAY model can serve as a guideline to adapt to promote the preservation and passing down of other local intellect in similar contexts.
2. Our research showed that the parents and guardians of youth in the community did not place as much importance as they should on learning krajood wicker weaving, and supporting agencies in the community did not have support policies that were clear and concrete enough. A study should be done of the process of creating community participation in the passing down of the cultural handicraft intellect of krajood wicker weaving.

Recommendations for future research

1. Future research should delve into the efficiency of communications used to pass down the cultural intellect of krajood weaving in different contexts, and similar studies should be done of the passing down of other kinds of local intellect in other communities.

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