

Reimagining Borderland Tourism: Cultural Heritage, Community Participation, and Governance in Sangkhlaburi, Thailand

Noppadol Dharawanij^{1*}, Angkana Yaiyong²

¹ College of Tourism and Hospitality Industry, Rangsit University, THAILAND; Email: 5290180@rsu.ac.th, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3678-9838>

² Faculty of Humanities, Kasetsart University, THAILAND; Email: a.Yaiyong@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/009-0007-3966-7610>

*Corresponding Author: 5290180@rsu.ac.th

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ABSTRACT

Tourism in border areas has vast opportunities and challenges because they have ethnic diversity, cultural interaction, and geopolitical proximity. Thailand's Sangkhlaburi District, such as Mon, Karen, and Burmese communities preserve different interrelated cultural traditions. One of the main disadvantage of Sangkhlaburi tourism growth is they have less infrastructure, disjointed governance, and restricted marketing collaboration. This study examines the cultural heritage tourism and stakeholder cooperation in Sangkhlaburi, which mainly focuses on post-pandemic recovery within the frameworks. The qualitative approach gathered data through depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis from 23 key informants spanning government, community, and private sectors. These results states that Sangkhlaburi's main tourism asset depend on rich cultural and religious identity. However, it has less fragmented institutional coordination and inadequate infrastructure development. This research suggests that theoretical frameworks has participatory governance, sustainable tourism, and destination image development. This research examines by defining the cultural rooted tourism model and a collaborative planning approach which enhances the visitor satisfaction by preventing the area's socio-cultural integrity.

Keywords: Borderland Tourism, Cultural Heritage, Community Participation, Governance, Sustainable Tourism, Sangkhlaburi, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is widely known as the important factor in regional progress, cultural interaction and socio-economic change (UNWTO, 2023). To maintain global tourism, Southeast Asia and Thailand stands out one of the important destinations that integrates the natural, cultural and historical resources. Kanchanaburi holds an important place for its historical landmarks such as Bridge over the River Kwai, World War II memorials, and unique natural landscapes. Whereas, Sangkhlaburi has specific border area marked by a coexistence of multiple ethnic groups, cultural diversity, and a variety of religions. In 2016, Kanchanaburi Province had 737,890 Thai and 42,433 foreign visitors, which grew to 831,169 (a 12.64% increase) and 46,433 (a 9.41% increase) respectively in 2017 (Department of Tourism, 2017). Even with this increasing trend, the distribution of tourism across the province is still uneven, as Sangkhlaburi attracts relatively fewer tourists. The district's attraction is found in its cultural and spiritual sites, particularly Wat Wang Wiwekaram, linked to the esteemed Mon monk Luangpho Uttama, and the Mon Bridge (Saphan Mon), which acts as both a tangible and symbolic connection between Thai and Mon populations. (Kanchanaburi Province, 2017) discussed that, Three Pagodas Pass is one of the significant pathways that link

between the Thailand and Myanmar and also it signifies the ancient Burmese invasions in Ayutthaya. Additionally (King & Parnwell, 2011) states that Sanghlaburi has different set of peoples such as Mon, Karen, Thai, and Burmese. Each of the group has unique traditions, foods, arts. These factors reveals that Sanghlaburi has one of the unique cultures and shares the Thailand's soft power which means sharing culture and connections within countries. Nevertheless, Sanghlaburi has distinct kinds of resources but, it has less research on tourist behavior, social and cultural factors impact the visitor's participations, and the organizational collaboration systems that work together to plan tourism policies. COVID-19 made a drastic change in Thailand's tourism industry and domestic travellers which also increase the digital technologies, and more health-conscious travel practices. With the tourism industry evolving into the Next Normal, key focuses on sustainability, inclusivity, and community resilience have emerged (McKinsey & Company, 2021). In this context, borderland locations such as Sanghlaburi need tourism frameworks that are sensitive to the context and driven by the community, responding to global changes while maintaining local uniqueness. This research seeks to investigate how government bodies, local populations, and private sectors perceive and execute tourism growth in Sanghlaburi within these changing frameworks. This study investigates the district's cultural heritage and ethnic diversity through participatory governance and strategic route planning.

Research Objectives

1. To analyse the strategies and methods utilized by the government bodies to create more tourism routes, manage tourism events, and developing tourism in Sanghlaburi District, Kanchanaburi Province.
2. To explore the perspectives and approaches of service-related businesses and community leaders constrained in tourism development under the New Normal and Next Normal contexts.
3. To investigate cultural based tourism routes and activity frameworks to develop the visitor's experiences by supporting sustainable development in Sanghlaburi.

This research explained three different ways of literature. Firstly, it discussed about the theoretical tourism and cultural hybridity of Thailand's ethnic diversity. Secondly, the government examination in tourism industry after the post pandemic. Lastly, it integrates cultural heritage, community engagement, and institutional cooperation for sustainable border tourism.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Borderland Tourism and Cultural Hybridity

Geographical closeness, cultural integrity, and historical changes are impacted by Borderland tourism. Timothy et al., 2001 states that border regions are called as "zones of contact" because it integrates the cultural exchanges and mixed identities. The Sanghlaburi location has both ethnic tourism and heritage tourism based on shared cultural narratives. Researchers explained that border areas are in-between places not fully part of one country or another. Were people entirely share and shape cultures and identities (van Houtum & Strüver, 2002). The transitional nature enables tourism in between places, also helps to understand the tourism in different cultures, also create challenges regarding authenticity, representation, and control (Cohen, 2004). Mon, Karen, and Burmese communities are located in Sanghlaburi which reflects the cultural commodification or the marginalization of ethnic diversity (Hall, 1997).

Cultural Heritage and Destination Identity

This study explains that cultural heritage tourism to examine the visitors to have both tangible and intangible heritage factors (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). In Sanghlaburi, the factors such as religious sites, traditional crafts, festivals, and oral traditions reveal the district identity as a specific tourist destination. Ashworth and Tunbridge's (1990) discussed that heritage process is not comes from the past, it actively created, integrated, and presented visitors personal connection. This interpretative approach corresponds with Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) multidimensional model of destination image, which differentiates between functional aspects (such as physical infrastructure and accessibility) and psychological aspects (including emotional connection and authenticity). In Sanghlaburi, connecting landmarks such as Mon Bridge, Wat Wang Wiwekaram, and Three Pagodas Pass with local activities give visitors a complete "sense of the place". This image combines both physical attractions and cultural experiences. Nevertheless, García-Hernández, de la Calle-Vaquero, and Yubero (2017) states that while developing heritage tourism, it is important to involve local people to manage, preserve the cultural heritage for being passive subjects of outside interpretation.

Participatory Governance and Community-Based Tourism

Participatory governance is one of the important factors for sustainable tourism planning. (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Jamal & Getz, 1995). Stakeholders play a major role in decision making, knowledge sharing, and fair benefit distribution. (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009) states that Community-based tourism (CBT) will act as beneficiaries, co-creators and managers in tourism events. In Thailand, organizations such as Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA) develop community-based tourism. Similarly, CBT aims to preserve and manage the environment sustainability (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017). Jamal and Getz's (1995) discussed that collaborative planning framework, which points out tourism development as a process of negotiation which involves various interests, values, and power dynamics. In Sangkhlaburi, this negotiation is important because of the presence of diverse ethnic communities, government bodies, and private entities. Therefore, effective governance necessitates institutional coordination, capacity-building efforts, and trust-enhancing strategies that align the goals of stakeholders towards common objectives.

Tourism in the New and Next Normal

COVID-19 has drastically changed the global tourism, which shifts the mass tourism from resilient, sustainable, and focused on unique experiences (Gössling et al., 2020). The New Normal places have the importance of hygiene measures, local travel and digital technologies, whereas the Next normal places reveal sustainability, inclusiveness, and the integrates the well-being into travel experiences (McKinsey & Company, 2021; UNWTO, 2022). Thailand has established the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy Model, which emphasise the economic recovery and cultural sustainability (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2022). The concept of borderland destinations presents opportunity to decentralize tourist flows and improve community resilience. By incorporating the digital implementations, eco-cultural initiatives and traditional engagement into route development, Sangkhlaburi preserves the distinctive cultural heritage. This framework integrates study's analytical framework, positioning local empirical data within broader discussions of sustainable border tourism and participatory governance.

METHODOLOGY

This research used a qualitative and interpretive method to analyse the key stakeholders in Sangkhlaburi District which conceptualize, negotiate, and implement tourism development in New normal and Next normal. (Schwandt, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) states that interpretivist approach was used to define the meanings that peoples create, focus on emic viewpoints and interpretations of tourism environment.

Research Design

The qualitative design highlights the significance of context and process over generalizations. Tourism, as a socio-cultural phenomenon, personal experiences, identity disputes, and altering power relations. This study highlights interactions among community members, officials, and entrepreneurs. Flick et al., 2018 discussed that semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis are aims at data triangulation which creates the credibility and depth of interpretation. This study emphasised a qualitative methodology that mainly focuses on the meaningful experiences, social realities of tourism stakeholders in the Sangkhlaburi District. Qualitative methods play a major role in diverse cultural settings such as in values, perceptions, and relationships (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This research investigates the government bodies, private businesses, and community groups to carry out tourism development during the changing conditions of the New Normal and Next Normal. While using an interpretative approach, the researchers intergates the participants personal experienes to the social and cultural factors by shaping tourism development.

Research Site

The study took place in Sangkhlaburi District, Kanchanaburi Province, which is adjacent to the Thai–Myanmar border. The areas such as Mon, Karen, Burmese, and Thai cultures makes an ideal place to explore how borderland tourism integates the cultural heritage and governance. Participants are selected individually who are active in tourism development and decision-making such as : 1) Five community leaders from the Mon, Karen, and Burmese ethnicities, 2) One director and five staff members from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Headquarters in Bangkok, 3) One leader and five staff members from the TAT Kanchanaburi Office, and 4) One director and five staff members from the Kanchanaburi Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports. The varied backgrounds of the participants provided a comprehensive perspective on governance, planning, and local experiences. Sangkhlaburi District lies roughly 300 kilometers northwest of Bangkok and shares a border with Myanmar, forming part of Kanchanaburi Province. The district is home to several ethnic groups, mainly Mon, Karen,

Burmese, and Thai, whose harmonious existence has fostered a culturally diverse atmosphere. Notable attractions include Wat Wang Wiwekaram, Mon Bridge, and Three Pagodas Pass, along with various natural locations like Kratongcheng Waterfall and Kreng Kravia Waterfall. This borderland environment, characterized by both diversity and marginalization, makes Sangkhlaburi an exemplary case study for exploring the interactions of cultural heritage tourism, community involvement, and cross-border governance.

Participants and Sampling

Participants were selected individually for active tourism development. This study has around 23 key informants such as Mon, Karen, Burmese leaders, along with officers from Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Kanchanaburi Officers of TAT and the Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports in Kanchanaburi. This structure ensured triangulation among 3 main groups of stakeholder's government, private sector, and community for the tourism development. 1) Data were gathered from January to June 2024 using a Semi-Structured Interviews in Thailand, for developing tourism routes, cultural enhancement, local involvements and institutional cooperation: these interviews are transcribed, translated and recorded into English for following analysis. 2) Observation of Participants: The researchers investigate key tourist sites such as Wat Wang Wiwekaram, the Mon Bridge, Kratongcheng Waterfall, and local businesses to observe interactions, rituals and spatial patterns. It also captures the stakeholders behaviour, along with the local community engagement and tourist places. 3) Document Review: All the government initiatives, practices and community records are analysed to examine the connection between tourism narratives and local practices.

Data Collection

Data were collected from February to May 2024 by 3 main techniques: 1) The first one is semi-structured interviews which has broad topics on marketing, local engagement, strategic planning and cultural identity which was held on Thai participants with timing around 60 and 90 minutes and all these recordings are transcribed into English. 2) Non-Participant Observation: The researcher noticed tourism places such as Wat Wang Wiwekaram, Mon Bridge, Ban Mon Village, and Three Pagodas Pass. These records mainly focused on tourist behaviors, local interactions, infrastructure quality, and the organization of events which provide contextual richness and supports data triangulation. 3) Analysis of the document: Developmental plans, policies, reports and promotional materials from the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Kanchanaburi Provincial Administration, and local community groups are analyzed to observe the gaps between policy practices and practical implementations. (Braun & Clarke, 2006), states that data analysis was considered using different types thematic analysis such as data, coding, themes and report writing. Key themes such as cultural and religious identity, government collaboration, infrastructure accessibility, marketing and sustainability and resilience during COVID-19. The researcher has constant idea to identify similarities and differences between stakeholder perspectives, which reflects journaling and briefing interpretive approach (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework, which included: 1) Becoming acquainted with the data through thorough reading and note-taking. 2) Creating preliminary codes based on identified patterns. 3) Organizing codes into possible themes. 4) Assessing themes in relation to the data set. 5) Refining and naming the key themes. 6) Writing the final analytical narrative. Five main themes were identified: 1) Cultural and religious identity as a foundation for tourism. 2) Challenges in institutional collaboration and governance. 3) Limitations relating to infrastructure and access. 4) Discrepancies in marketing and destination image. 5) Potential for sustainable and community-oriented tourism in the New and Next Normal. Ethical approval was secured from the Kasetsart University Research Ethics Committee. Participants were made aware of the study's objectives, provided written consent, and assured of their anonymity. All identifying information was removed from transcripts. Data confidentiality was upheld in line with academic ethical guidelines.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To establish credibility, dependability, and confirmability, the researcher utilized methodological triangulation by contrasting interview results with observational and documentary data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking was performed through follow-up conversations with selected participants to confirm the interpretations. Reflexive journaling helped reduce researcher bias. Ethical approval was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Kasetsart University. Participants were informed about the study's goals, confidentiality protocols, and their right to withdraw at any point. Informed consent was obtained, and pseudonyms were applied in all reports.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Overview

An examination of the data uncovered five interconnected thematic areas influencing the development of tourism in Sangkhlaburi: (1) the significance of cultural and religious identity as a core attraction for tourism, (2) challenges related to institutional collaboration and governance, (3) limitations regarding infrastructure and accessibility, (4) deficiencies in marketing and the portrayal of the destination, and (5) prospects for sustainable, community-driven tourism. These results highlight the relationship between cultural authenticity, stakeholder governance, and adaptive approaches amidst global shifts in tourism.

Table 1: Profile of Key Informants (n = 23)

Category	Affiliation / Group	Number of Participants	Role in Tourism Development
Government Officials	Tourism Authority of Thailand (Headquarters and Kanchanaburi Office)	12	Policy planning, promotion, destination management
Provincial Officials	Kanchanaburi Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports	6	Local coordination, event organization, infrastructure oversight
Community Leaders	Mon, Karen, and Burmese ethnic groups	5	Cultural preservation, community participation, tourism route design

Table 2: Thematic Summary of Interview Findings

Theme	Key Issues Identified	Representative Stakeholder Perspective
1. Cultural and Religious Identity	Cultural diversity as tourism asset; fear of cultural commodification	“Our traditions attract visitors, but we must not lose their spiritual meaning.” – Mon leader
2. Governance and Collaboration	Top-down planning; weak coordination among agencies	“Meetings happen, but locals have little say in decisions.” – Karen representative
3. Infrastructure Constraints	Poor road conditions; inadequate signage	“Accessibility to some attractions is limited, especially for foreign tourists.” – TAT officer
4. Marketing and Image	Overemphasis on Mon Bridge; limited digital marketing	“Visitors know only one site; our district has much more.” – Local entrepreneur
5. Sustainable Tourism Opportunities	Interest in community-based tourism and eco-tours	“We can use our cultural wisdom to welcome visitors sustainably.” – Community elder

Cultural and Religious Identity as Core Tourism Assets

The district’s cultural identity says that Wat Wang Wiwekaram and the Mon Bridge are known for its “spiritual anchors” which reveals the district’s tangible and intangible cultural identity. Butler’s 1980 states that TALC model, has its early-stage destinations which reveals the uniqueness, and though cultural commodification. Cohen et al., 2004 discussed that high- commercialization are triggered by Mon and Karen customs by compromising their authenticity. Similarly, it develops the district’s borderland hybridity.

Sangkhlaburi has cultural identity with distinct borders which provides tourists with a rich, multisensory experience of diversity and blending. Similar observations are made in cross- border tourism around Southeast Asia (Teo, 2018; Hitchcock & King, 2021).

Institutional Collaboration and Governance Challenges

The development of tourism in Sangkhlaburi faces challenges due to a lack of coordinated efforts among various institutions. While there are existing provincial and national plans, their execution is often fragmented. Authorities viewed that bureaucratic hierarchies overlap responsibilities between Tourism Authority of Thailand, Department of Local Administration, and the Community Development Department. Inskeep’s (1991) integrated Tourism model point out stakeholder’s sustainability, however community leaders only took small roles in decision making which reflects tokenism, were they consult with leaders but without real sharing of power

(Arnstein, 1969). The lack of participatory governance with collaborative planning ideals was discussed by Jamal and Getz (1995) and Bramwell and Lane (2011). Additionally, less human resource development has strong implementation due to limited digital marketing skills, multilingual communication, and sustainable tourism practices. Sharpley and Roberts (2004) states that building capacity is one the key aspect for developing rural destinations which changes from reliance to self-sufficiency.

Infrastructure and Accessibility Constraints

Visitors hesitate to visit tourist places because of limited infrastructure, poor road connectivity, unclear signage, and less transport options (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988) SERVQUAL model examined the shortcomings with key factors such as reliability, tangibility and assurance. Lefebvre 1991 states that visitors experience are influenced by both tangible and intangible approaches, with less accessibility, restricting tourist and cultural identity and reinforcing spatial inequality (Lefebvre, 1991). Local stakeholders highlight that infrastructure improvements need to be culturally active, by preventing environmental damage and disruption of sacred sites. Hall's 2011 states that the concept of sustainable infrastructure explains the importance of merging ecological, cultural, and community factors.

Marketing and Destination Image Gaps

Sangkhlaburi's identity is separated currently; Meanwhile Mon Bridge is developed widely, other attractions such as craft villages, waterfalls, and traditional festivals are frequently neglected. Echtner and Ritchie's et al., 1993 states that by using their framework the regions lacks both the elements such as fundamental and psychological. Gartner 1993 discussed that image destinations rely on between organic images and induced images. The official promotional concept are often highlights the Sangkhlaburi's scenic beauty and neglecting its cultural diversity, authentic branding, though digital transformation promotes a valuable opportunity. (Sigala, 2020; McKinsey & Company, 2021) states that by utilizing the user-friendly content, influencer collaborations and interactive digital setups to enhance visibility, aligning with post-pandemic trends in experiential and digital tourism.

Opportunities for Sustainable and Community-Based Tourism

Even with structural challenges, stakeholders explained about the sustainable community-based tourism in Sangkhlaburi, emphasizing the significance of local engagement, cultural preservation, and cultural resilience for long term success. Gössling, Scott, and Hall's (2020) discussed that post-COVID move towards sustainability, inclusivity, and deeper experiential tourism by intergrating the Mon craftsmanship, Karen weaving, and Buddhist practices. Community based tourism reflects TOWS Matric by utilizing cultural strengths to capitalize on infrastructure weaknesses and mass tourism threats around markets (Weihrich, 1982).

Cultural and Religious Identity as the Foundation of Tourism Appeal

Participants discovered that cultural and religious tourism is one of the main concepts for Sangkhlaburi's identity, with Mon Bridge and Wat Wang Wiwekaram are recognising as "spiritual anchors" that symbolize cultural unity and tradition. These places attract visitors for their beauty, heritage, religious and cultural events. Local narratives reveals that tourism is key aspect for preserving crafts, rituals, and architecture. Moreover, cultural community warned increasing popularity with could result in cultural commodification. Cohen et al., 1988 discussed that tourism risks for cultural distortion and increases economy and recognition. According to Butler's (1980) TALC model, Sangkhlaburi is transforming the exploration into involvement, strategic planning, accommodating growth.

Table 3: Summary of Stakeholder-Recommended Strategies

Strategic Area	Recommended Actions	Expected Outcomes
Institutional Collaboration	Establish joint planning committees among TAT, local authorities, and ethnic leaders	Improved coordination and inclusivity in tourism planning
Capacity Building	Training in digital marketing, hospitality, and foreign languages	Enhanced local competitiveness and service quality
Sustainable Infrastructure	Eco-friendly transport, multilingual signage, and cultural site conservation	Increased accessibility without harming heritage sites
Marketing and Branding	Digital storytelling and integrated destination identity	Stronger, authentic image of Sangkhlaburi as a borderland cultural hub
Community-Based Tourism	Support for cooperative tourism ventures	Equitable distribution of benefits and cultural resilience

Institutional Collaboration and Governance Challenges

Representatives from the TAT and the Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports acknowledged that there are strategic development plans in place for Kanchanaburi; however, they pointed out ongoing issues with coordination between agencies. Independent approach among departments results in separated policies and limited resources. Community members raised a top-down technique to excludes local engagement. Inskeep's (1991) models reveals that lack of consultation, transparency leads to diminished ownership for emphasizing the inter-agency cooperation and participatory planning for sustainable tourism. Bramwell and Lane (2011) highlights that collaborative governance related to joint decision-making and trust, is key aspect for sustainability. Sangkhlaburi, fragmented governance decreases the tourism efficiency and limits the district's ability to respond effectively to post-pandemic effects. Stakeholders suggested that local tourism with government, private sector, and community representatives ensures the inclusive planning.

Infrastructure and Accessibility Constraints

Infrastructure issues were a recurring theme mentioned by all stakeholder groups. Sangkhla Buri's mountainous landscape and remote location create logistical difficulties, with inadequate public transport and poor road conditions restricting tourist mobility. Signage is often insufficient, and when available, it usually only appears in Thai, which poses challenges for international visitors. Although the number of accommodation options has grown, many homestays and guesthouses do not adhere to standardized service quality or hygiene protocols—both of which are crucial in the New Normal era. Respondents attributed these gaps to a lack of training and financial assistance for smaller operators. This corresponds with the SERVQUAL model proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), which identifies reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy as essential components of service quality. In Sangkhla Buri, weaknesses in reliability (such as inconsistent transport services) and tangibility (like subpar facilities) adversely impact visitor satisfaction and the likelihood of repeat visits (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Marketing and Destination Image Gaps

The limited marketing was one of main difficulties of Sangkhlaburi. Participants emphasised that digital marketing strategy in Sangkhlaburi tourism places can increase rich cultural identity. This insight aligns with Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) perspective on destination image, which includes cognitive, affective, and distinctive elements. To establish a strong brand identity, it is essential to combine tangible aspects (scenery, amenities) with emotional connections (hospitality, spirituality). The lack of such integration undermines the district's competitive positioning. According to Gartner's (1993) framework for destination image creation, both organic images (formed through personal experiences) and induced images (influenced by marketing) need to work in tandem to establish a consistent perception. Sangkhlaburi's inconsistent narrative hampers its visibility in both domestic and international markets.

Opportunities for Sustainable and Community-Based Tourism

Community-based tourism and Sustainable tourism was highlighted by the stakeholders due to Sangkhlaburi's ethnic heritage, crafts, and spiritual practices. A "Cultural Heritage Route links the key sites and events. Wehrich's et al., 1982 states that TOWS model points out that digital technologies such as QR codes, online platforms will enhance the market reach among visitors.

Integrative Discussion

This study discussed that Sangkhlaburi's tourism offers rich cultural assets whereas they have such difficulties in infrastructure and institution. Jamal and Getz (1995) discussed that Sangkhlaburi's success is relied on cultural preservation, community engagement, and effective governance, which highlights the stakeholder negotiation by managing difficult tourism practices. Strengthening local communities especially those from ethnic minority backgrounds becomes both a moral obligation and a strategic requirement for enduring success. (Gössling et al., 2020; McKinsey & Company, 2021) discussed that Sangkhlaburi emphasized the post-pandemic tourism transformation, which shows that border regions are transformed mass tourism to inclusive and experimental model with the next normal.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research investigates that Sangkhlaburi's cultural tourism, reveals rich religious identity, and its development was restricted by fragmented institutions and lack of marketing and infrastructure. To develop sustainable tourism in New normal and next normal Sangkhlaburi's tourism council engage government, private

and community efforts to make decision making, developing infrastructures, creating new digital technologies to connect with peoples and encourages local entrepreneur by improving craftsman production and events. “Cultural heritage routes” was developed to connect temples, villages and natural resources which educated the visitors about conservation. It concludes that Sangkhlaburi has both advantages and disadvantages in borderland tourism, were sustainable development practices needs both cultural preservation and local engagement. This study shows that tourism is based on the cultural identity, government practices and initiatives. This research shows that borderland tourism reveals the cultural integration and symbolic geography that influences the tourism in a dynamic cultural space.

SUGGESTIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Policy and Practice

1. Institutionalize participatory governance: Establish multi-stakeholder groups that include community leaders, TAT officials, and private business owners to collaboratively create tourism policies.
2. Invest in human resource development: Training opportunities in digital skills, foreign languages, and sustainable tourism management are vital for boosting local competitiveness.
3. Strengthen destination branding: Formulate comprehensive digital marketing strategies that showcase ethnic diversity, religious heritage, and genuine experiences.
4. Improve infrastructure in a sustainable manner: Execute eco-sensitive developments guided by environmental impact assessments and standards for cultural heritage preservation.
5. Promote community-based enterprises: Support cooperative tourism initiatives and heritage interpretation programs to ensure equitable distribution of benefits.

Theoretical and Future Research

Directions Future research should:

6. Utilize longitudinal studies to examine how cultural tourism changes amidst ongoing globalization and post-pandemic shifts.
7. Conduct comparative analyses between borderland areas (e.g., Mae Sot, Chiang Khong) to enhance knowledge of transboundary tourism governance.
8. Incorporate spatial analysis (GIS) to visualize accessibility, infrastructure, and community tourism networks.
9. Investigate visitor viewpoints through ethnographic or phenomenological approaches to enrich the stakeholder-focused perspective.
10. Further develop theoretical frameworks that connect borderland hybridity, cultural resilience, and tourism governance, thus contributing to global academic discussions on postcolonial and intercultural tourism.

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