

A Collaborative Model of a Creative Living District: Tourism, Identity, Community Engagement and Benefit Balance in Songwat District

Kawinphat Lertpongmanee^{1*}

¹ Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand

*Corresponding Author: kawinphat.le@ssru.ac.th

Citation: Lertpongmanee, K. (2025). A Collaborative Model of a Creative Living District: Tourism, Identity, Community Engagement and Benefit Balance in Songwat District, *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 10(4), 1552-1561. <https://doi.org/10.64753/jcasc.v10i4.3045>

Published: December 08, 2025

ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop a creative tourism model to promote local economic development in the Songwat area, a historic district in Bangkok undergoing cultural and commercial transformation. Although Songwat has recently emerged as a vibrant creative corridor, research gaps remain in understanding how cultural identity, community participation, and stakeholder collaboration collectively shape its sustainable development. To address these gaps, this study proposes a Collaborative Creative Living District Model that integrates four core dimensions: tourism experience, local identity, community engagement, and balanced benefit distribution. A qualitative research design was employed, utilizing field observation, in-depth interviews, participatory mapping, and document analysis. Participants included residents, cultural practitioners, tourism operators, creative entrepreneurs, community leaders, and visitors. Data were analyzed through thematic coding, pattern matching, and model synthesis. The findings reveal that creative tourism activities, such as craft workshops, heritage storytelling, and cultural walking routes, serve as catalysts for economic revitalization by generating new income opportunities and attracting diverse visitor groups. Local identity, particularly Songwat's Thai-Chinese heritage and architectural character, plays a critical role in enhancing authenticity and reinforcing destination distinctiveness. Community engagement strengthens cultural continuity and fosters co-creation, while collaboration mechanisms among stakeholders enable adaptive management of tourism growth. The proposed model demonstrates that sustainable creative district development requires not only economic gains but also equitable benefit sharing, cultural preservation, and inclusive participation. The study contributes to creative tourism scholarship by offering an integrated framework applicable to other culturally rich urban districts seeking balanced and community-centered development.

Keywords: Creative Living District, Songwat District, Creative Tourism, Community Engagement, Cultural Identity

INTRODUCTION

Creative tourism has emerged globally as a key driver of place-based development, enabling historic districts to revitalize their economy while maintaining their cultural identity (Richards, 2020). Cities across Asia, including Bangkok, Seoul, and Taipei, have adopted creative district models to transform heritage areas into vibrant cultural-economic spaces that integrate local identity with visitor experience (Chang & Teo, 2019). Songwat District, an old commercial neighborhood adjacent to Talad Noi and Chinatown, has recently become a cultural hotspot due to its unique shophouses, heritage warehouses, immigrant histories, and rising creative businesses.

According to OECD (2021), successful creative districts require four foundations: local identity, collaboration, creative experiences, and inclusive economic benefits. These align with the emerging Creative Living District concept, which emphasizes *living heritage*, *community involvement*, and *creative entrepreneurship* (UNESCO, 2019).

However, while Songwat is rapidly developing into a cultural–creative hub, academic studies assessing the collaboration among stakeholders: tourism operators, residents, creative entrepreneurs, and local authorities, remain limited.

Recent studies stress that creative tourism thrives when communities take active roles as co-creators of experiences (Bakas, Duxbury, & Vinagre de Castro, 2019), and when benefit distribution is balanced among stakeholders (Duxbury & Richards, 2021). Therefore, there is a need to develop a model that integrates tourism, identity, community engagement, and benefit balance into a coherent framework for sustainable district development.

A significant gap in Thailand's literature on creative tourism and cultural districts is the absence of an integrated, collaborative model that systematically links tourism development, cultural identity, community engagement, and benefit distribution. While Thailand has increasingly adopted concepts such as Creative Tourism, Creative Economy, and Cultural Districts, most existing approaches remain fragmented and driven primarily by public–private initiatives rather than a holistic co-creation model (TAT, 2023; NESDC, 2022). This mirrors global observations that creative districts in Asia often rely heavily on commercial redevelopment rather than community-led cultural regeneration (Kong & O'Connor, 2019). As such, there is a critical research gap regarding how collaboration among diverse stakeholders, residents, entrepreneurs, cultural actors, local authorities, and tourists can be integrated into a unified Creative Living District framework.

Secondly, research explicitly examining stakeholder collaboration in the Songwat District context remains limited. Although recent transformations in Songwat have drawn significant attention from urban planners and creative economy practitioners, academic studies have primarily focused on physical revitalization, street aesthetics, and the emergence of creative cafés and artisan shops (Pimonsathean, 2021; Bangkok Creative City Network, 2022). Few studies investigate how multi-stakeholder cooperation shapes the district's identity and creative tourism offerings. The lack of empirical research on collaborative processes, such as shared decision-making, joint cultural programming, or co-created visitor experiences, represents a key gap. This aligns with international findings that collaboration is the backbone of successful creative districts, determining their resilience and authenticity (Richards & Duxbury, 2021; Waitt & Gibson, 2020). Without understanding how stakeholders interact and negotiate cultural meanings, it's hard to sustain a living heritage district like Songwat.

Third, there is an increasing need for a district model that promotes sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Creative tourism literature emphasizes that rapid commercial development can lead to displacement, cultural dilution, and unequal distribution of benefits if the local community is not fully integrated into economic gains (UNESCO, 2019; Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2023). Songwat's rise as a creative hotspot raises similar concerns, as boutique businesses and tourism demand continue to expand. Ensuring a balance of benefits where economic gains are shared among residents, heritage business owners, and new creative entrepreneurs is a growing priority. Studies show that creative districts thrive in the long term only when community participation is paired with fair economic distribution and social inclusion (Bakas, Duxbury, & Vinagre de Castro, 2019; OECD, 2021). This reinforces the need for a model that not only highlights creative activities but also embeds mechanisms for community co-creation, cultural preservation, and benefit-sharing.

Addressing these three gaps, the present study proposes A Collaborative Model of a Creative Living District for Songwat District. The model integrates four key dimensions: (1) Tourism Experience, emphasizing participatory and culturally grounded creative activities; (2) Identity Value, focusing on the preservation and interpretation of heritage assets; (3) Community Engagement, ensuring co-creation and ownership by residents; and (4) Benefit Balance, promoting inclusive and equitable economic outcomes. By synthesizing global theoretical frameworks with local empirical insights, the model offers a comprehensive and context-sensitive approach to creative district development. It provides both scholars and practitioners with a structured pathway to strengthen creative place-making, enhance cultural resilience, and advance sustainable creative economies in historic urban districts.

Research Objectives

1. To develop a comprehensive Collaborative Model of a Creative Living District that integrates tourism, identity, community participation, and equitable benefit distribution.
2. To propose practical guidelines for sustainable and inclusive creative district development applicable to Songwat District and other historic urban areas in Thailand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Creative Tourism and Creative Living Districts

Creative tourism has evolved from experience-based tourism toward co-creation, cultural participation, and community empowerment (Richards, 2020). Unlike traditional cultural tourism, creative tourism emphasizes

hands-on activities, knowledge exchange, and active engagement with local cultural practices (Tan, Luh, & Kung, 2021). The concept of a Creative Living District extends this approach by integrating everyday cultural life, community identity, and economic participation into a place-based development model (UNESCO, 2019). Such districts function as “living ecosystems,” where cultural continuity and innovation intersect (Duxbury & Richards, 2021).

Tourism Experience and Creative Activity Design

Tourism experience is central to the development of creative districts. Research shows that immersive experiences: craft workshops, culinary storytelling, heritage walks—enhance visitor satisfaction and create higher economic multipliers (Chang & Teo, 2020). Creative activities serve as mechanisms to transform heritage assets into meaningful cultural experiences, linking tourism to local identity (Salem & Cavalcante, 2022). Effective experience design requires collaboration between residents, businesses, and cultural practitioners (Richards, 2020).

Local Identity and Heritage Value

Local identity is considered a core component of creative district sustainability. Songwat’s heritage warehouses, trading history, and multicultural roots represent symbolic and cultural capital that can be leveraged in creative tourism (Pimonsathean, 2021). Research indicates that destinations with strong identity achieve deeper cultural engagement and greater community support (Kim & Youn, 2022). However, identity must be protected from over-commercialization; otherwise, authenticity and cultural continuity decline (Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2023).

Community Engagement and Co-creation

Creative tourism thrives when residents participate as co-creators rather than passive beneficiaries (Bakas et al., 2019). Community engagement enhances authenticity, strengthens intergenerational knowledge transfer, and supports collective governance (Waitt & Gibson, 2020). Studies show that co-created experiences lead to more equitable benefit distribution and higher satisfaction among both hosts and visitors (OECD, 2021). In urban heritage districts, community engagement is also essential for mitigating displacement pressures from tourism-driven gentrification (Del Barrio & Devesa, 2020).

Collaboration Mechanisms

Collaboration among stakeholders: government, residents, entrepreneurs, NGOs, and tourists, is crucial for managing creative districts (Kong & O’Connor, 2019). Effective collaboration creates shared governance structures, reduces conflict, and aligns development goals (Almeida et al., 2021). In Asian cities, multi-stakeholder collaboration has been shown to promote cultural resilience and adaptive urban regeneration (Chen & Hsu, 2022). Songwat’s emergence as a creative zone reflects similar patterns of bottom-up creative entrepreneurship and top-down facilitation.

Balanced Benefits and Inclusive Growth

Balanced benefit distribution is an emerging priority in creative district research due to risks of gentrification and unequal economic gains (Duxbury & Richards, 2021). Inclusive creative districts ensure that financial benefits, social recognition, and opportunities extend to local communities, heritage businesses, youth groups, and minority populations (OECD, 2021). Benefit balance also contributes to community buy-in, long-term commitment, and sustainable development.

Conceptual Framework Diagram

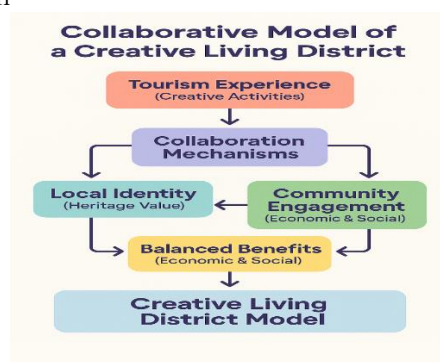


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Component 1: Tourism Experience (Creative Activities)

Creative tourism emphasizes participatory, hands-on experiences where visitors engage directly with local culture. Activities such as craft workshops, heritage storytelling, and food experiences enhance destination value (Richards, 2020).

Component 2: Local Identity (Cultural & Spatial Identity)

Identity shapes visitors' perceptions and supports uniqueness through architecture, history, language, and cultural narratives. Preserving identity strengthens authenticity and creative branding (UNESCO, 2019).

Component 3: Community Engagement

Community involvement ensures that residents act as co-creators, cultural interpreters, and experience providers. High engagement fosters ownership and long-term sustainability (Bakas et al., 2019).

Component 4: Collaboration Mechanisms

Partnerships between businesses, residents, cultural groups, and government agencies create a shared governance system that supports district development (Chang & Teo, 2019).

Component 5: Balanced Benefits

Equitable economic distribution encourages local community support and helps avoid gentrification or displacement (Duxbury & Richards, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods qualitative research design to explore the complex cultural, social, and economic dynamics shaping the development of a Creative Living District in Songwat. The qualitative orientation of the study allowed for a deep, context-sensitive understanding of how tourism experiences, local identity, community engagement, collaboration, and benefit balance interact within a living heritage environment. In line with Creswell and Poth's (2021) recommendations for place-based research, multiple qualitative methods were integrated to capture the multidimensional nature of creative district development.

Field observations were conducted throughout various locations in Songwat District, focusing on spatial patterns, cultural expressions, everyday activities, and interactions between residents, visitors, and creative entrepreneurs. Observations provided insights into how creative activities are situated within the physical environment and how cultural heritage is interpreted through daily practices, walking routes, craft shops, cafés, and emerging creative businesses.

To obtain a more grounded and diverse understanding of stakeholder perspectives, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted using purposive sampling. Participants included approximately ten residents with long-standing ties to the district, eight cultural practitioners and artists active in the area, twelve tourism operators and creative entrepreneurs who shape the district's economic ecosystem, six community leaders and local officials who play regulatory or facilitative roles, and ten visitors or tourists experiencing the district. These interviews explored participants' perceptions of identity, the co-creation of creative tourism activities, forms of collaboration, and concerns related to economic or heritage sustainability. This diversity of respondents ensured representation of multiple viewpoints and allowed the study to capture tensions, opportunities, and shared aspirations across stakeholder groups.

In addition to interviews and observations, photo-elicitation and participatory mapping techniques were used to identify cultural assets, symbolic landmarks, and spatial elements associated with the district's identity. Participants were invited to highlight meaningful locations, heritage buildings, or cultural narratives, generating valuable insights into the district's intangible and tangible cultural capital.

A document and policy analysis complemented the fieldwork by examining urban plans, cultural heritage documents, tourism development reports, and media narratives. These secondary sources helped contextualize recent changes in Songwat and provided a macro-level view of how creative district development has been framed by both public and private sectors.

Data analysis followed a structured, three-stage qualitative process. First, the interview transcripts, field notes, and mapping outputs were coded using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019), enabling the identification of recurring patterns related to creative tourism, identity, and collaboration. Second, these themes were compared with the conceptual framework through pattern matching, thereby ensuring alignment between the empirical findings and the study's theoretical constructs. Third, the findings were synthesized through model building, following Eisenhardt's (2021) approach to theory generation from qualitative data, ultimately leading to the development of the Collaborative Creative Living District Model.

To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the research, multiple forms of triangulation were employed, including method triangulation (observations, interviews, documents), data triangulation (different stakeholder groups), and investigator triangulation, where interpretations were cross-verified. Ethical considerations were strictly followed throughout the research process. All participants provided informed consent, and their anonymity

and confidentiality were protected. Given the study area's cultural sensitivity, particular care was taken to respect local traditions, community norms, and the heritage knowledge shared by participants.

RESULTS

The results of the study reveal a multi-layered and interconnected set of factors that contribute to the emergence of Songwat District as a Creative Living District. Through thematic analysis of interviews, observations, participatory mapping, and document review, five dominant themes emerged, each corresponding to the proposed conceptual framework: (1) Creative Tourism Experiences, (2) Local Identity and Heritage Value, (3) Community Engagement and Co-creation, (4) Collaboration Mechanisms, and (5) Balanced Benefits. Together, these themes illustrate how cultural dynamics, stakeholder relationships, and economic aspirations shape Songwat's creative transformation.

Creative Tourism Experience as a Catalyst for Engagement

The first central theme demonstrates that *creative tourism activities act as a catalyst for visitor engagement and local economic revitalization*. Participants consistently highlighted that experiential activities, such as heritage storytelling, craft-making workshops, cultural walking tours, and food experiences, significantly enhanced Songwat's appeal. Visitors reported that hands-on experiences deepened their understanding of the district's cultural roots, while entrepreneurs noted that creative activities diversify revenue streams beyond traditional retail. Observational data further confirmed that the district's cultural routes, cafés, artisanal studios, and riverside spaces serve as active nodes of creative encounter, drawing both domestic and international visitors. These findings reinforce the idea that meaningful participation, rather than passive consumption, defines Songwat's emerging creative tourism identity.

Local Identity as a Foundation for Place Meaning

A strong sense of local identity emerged as a central element shaping both community pride and visitor interest. Stakeholders frequently referenced the district's historical warehouses, shophouse architecture, Thai–Chinese trading heritage, and intergenerational stories as “core cultural anchors.” Participatory mapping revealed that residents view specific alleys, temples, warehouses, and dockside locations as emotionally and historically significant. These identity markers were consistently interpreted as assets that distinguish Songwat from other creative neighborhoods in Bangkok. Entrepreneurs also emphasized that design elements, signage, and storytelling increasingly incorporate local motifs, demonstrating a conscious effort to preserve authenticity while promoting creativity.

Community Engagement Strengthens Cultural Authenticity

Findings show that *community engagement plays a crucial role in sustaining the district's cultural authenticity*. Long-time residents, youth groups, and heritage business owners participate in storytelling, cultural events, and preservation activities. Many residents expressed pride in contributing to heritage tours or collaborating with creative entrepreneurs. However, some concerns were raised about potential over-commercialization and the risk of losing authentic community rhythms. Despite these challenges, the majority of participants acknowledged heightened community empowerment and increasing involvement in heritage-based decision-making. This reinforces the importance of co-creation as a guiding principle for Songwat's creative development.

Collaboration Mechanisms Enable Shared Governance

Collaboration emerged as a critical mechanism for integrating diverse interests across the district. Interview data highlight the emergence of informal networks connecting café owners, artists, heritage businesses, community groups, and local officials. These collaborative linkages support joint events, cultural markets, walking tours, and creative campaigns. Local authorities expressed willingness to support creative activities through flexible zoning, infrastructure improvement, and heritage conservation initiatives. Nonetheless, the study also identifies gaps in formal coordination, with some stakeholders calling for a more structured district-level governance model. Overall, collaboration in Songwat is characterized by adaptive, bottom-up initiatives that gradually shape shared governance practices.

Balanced Benefits Promote Social Acceptance and Long-term Sustainability

The final theme centers on *the balance of benefits*, which determines community acceptance of the district's transformation. While creative tourism has improved income for several local businesses, stakeholders emphasized the need for equitable distribution of economic opportunities. Residents valued initiatives that generate shared benefits, such as community-led tours, craft markets, and heritage workshops, but expressed concerns about rising

rents and the cost of living. Entrepreneurs also noted the importance of fair partnerships and transparent communication. These findings highlight the importance of maintaining a balance of benefits to prevent displacement and ensure that Songwat remains an inclusive living district.

Emergence of the Collaborative Creative Living District Model

Synthesizing these findings led to the development of the Collaborative Creative Living District Model, which illustrates how tourism experiences, identity values, community engagement, collaboration mechanisms, and balanced benefits collectively contribute to Songwat's transformation. The model highlights circular, interdependent relationships rather than linear progressions, underscoring that sustainable creative development relies on continuous negotiation, co-creation, and community participation. This empirically grounded model aligns with global research on creative districts while offering unique insights specific to the Thai urban-cultural context.



Figure 2: Research Results

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the development of a Creative Living District in Songwat District is shaped by the dynamic interplay of tourism experiences, local identity, community engagement, collaboration mechanisms, and benefit balance. These results contribute to the growing literature on creative tourism, cultural district development, and community-led urban regeneration, particularly within Southeast Asian urban contexts.

Creative Tourism as a Driver of Urban Cultural Revitalization

The study confirms that creative tourism plays a central role in revitalizing historic districts. Songwat's hands-on workshops, storytelling activities, and cultural walking routes support Richards' (2020) argument that creative tourism enhances visitor engagement through participatory experiences. The results further align with Tan, Luh, and Kung (2021), who assert that creative experiences produce deeper cultural immersion than traditional sightseeing. In Songwat, these experiences act not only as tourism products but also as mechanisms for strengthening the district's cultural vibrancy. Entrepreneur interviews and field observations showed that creative activities encourage longer visitor stays, generate additional revenue streams, and stimulate interactions between locals and tourists.

Identity as a Source of Cultural and Economic Value

This study reinforces the importance of local identity as a foundational pillar of creative district development. Songwat's tangible heritage—historic warehouses, shophouse architecture, trading routes—combined with intangible elements such as intergenerational stories and Thai–Chinese cultural practices, provide a strong identity base. This supports Kim and Youn (2022), who argue that destinations with distinctive identity achieve better cultural positioning and stronger visitor loyalty. The findings also align with UNESCO (2019), which highlights that living heritage districts must preserve cultural continuity to maintain authenticity. In Songwat, identity functions not only as branding but also as a shared narrative connecting residents and creative entrepreneurs.

Community Engagement Enables Cultural Continuity and Authenticity

The study revealed substantial evidence that community engagement is crucial for sustaining the district's authenticity. The results resonate with Bakas, Duxbury, and Vinagre de Castro (2019), who emphasize that co-creation enhances cultural integrity and fosters mutual learning between visitors and hosts. Songwat residents' involvement in storytelling, craft workshops, and cultural tours demonstrates a shift from passive participation to active heritage stewardship. At the same time, participants expressed concerns about commercialization and cultural displacement, echoing findings from Duxbury and Jeannotte (2023) on the risks of gentrification in creative districts. This underscores the need for strategies that include communities at every developmental stage.

Collaboration Mechanisms Support Adaptive Governance

The study's findings highlight collaboration as a key enabler of shared governance in creative districts. Informal partnerships among café owners, artists, heritage businesses, and community groups reflect the bottom-up collaborative logic described by Kong and O'Connor (2019). These networks facilitate coordinated events, creative programming, and cultural preservation activities. However, the findings also reveal gaps in formal governance structures. While local authorities offer support, stakeholders desire clearer frameworks for coordination and resource-sharing. This aligns with Almeida et al. (2021), who argue that creative districts require hybrid governance models combining formal institutional support with flexible, community-driven collaboration.

Balanced Benefits as the Foundation for Sustainable Creative Districts

One of the study's most significant findings is the importance of benefit balance in ensuring community support and long-term sustainability. Unequal distribution of economic gains, rising rental prices, and tourism-driven pressures were identified as concerns by local residents. These results are consistent with the OECD (2021) framework emphasizing inclusive growth and equitable participation in creative economies. Community members expressed support for shared-benefit initiatives such as community-led tours, cooperative craft markets, and heritage-based micro-enterprises. This highlights the critical role of benefit-sharing mechanisms to prevent displacement and preserve cultural heritage.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

The study makes several contributions to theory and practice. First, it extends Creative Tourism and Creative District literature by proposing the Collaborative Creative Living District Model, integrating experiential tourism, identity, community engagement, collaboration, and benefit balance. Second, the findings contribute to Place Identity Theory and Community Co-creation Theory by demonstrating how identity and engagement mutually reinforce creative district vitality. Third, the study provides actionable insights for policymakers, suggesting that sustainable creative districts require strong community inclusion, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and transparent benefit-sharing frameworks.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the development of a Creative Living District in Songwat District by examining the interconnected roles of tourism experience, local identity, community engagement, collaboration mechanisms, and the balance of benefits. Through qualitative inquiry, including in-depth interviews, participatory mapping, field observation, and document analysis, the study provides an integrated understanding of how Songwat's cultural, social, and economic transformations unfold within a historically significant urban environment.

The findings demonstrate that creative tourism functions as a catalyst for cultural revitalization, enabling visitors to engage deeply with the district's heritage through participatory experiences. Creative workshops, heritage storytelling, and community-led tours not only enhance visitor satisfaction but also generate alternative livelihood opportunities for residents and entrepreneurs. These results affirm existing scholarship suggesting that creative tourism supports both cultural vitality and economic diversification.

The study also highlights the centrality of local identity in shaping the district's distinctiveness. Songwat's Thai-Chinese heritage, architectural character, and intergenerational narratives serve as cultural anchors that inform both tourism experiences and community pride. The preservation and reinterpretation of identity allow the district to maintain authenticity amid rapid change, reinforcing the importance of place-based cultural value in creative urban development.

Equally significant is the role of community engagement, which emerges as a foundational pillar for sustaining cultural continuity. Residents, heritage business owners, and youth groups actively participate in creative initiatives, becoming co-creators of district experiences. This community-driven participation helps mitigate risks of over-commercialization and reinforces cultural resilience.

The study further identifies collaboration mechanisms as essential for coordinating stakeholder efforts. Informal networks among artists, entrepreneurs, residents, and local authorities contribute to adaptive governance of the district. However, the findings also suggest a need for more structured collaboration frameworks to ensure long-term coherence and equitable growth.

Perhaps most critically, the research reveals that balanced benefit distribution is key to maintaining community support and avoiding the negative impacts of tourism-driven gentrification. While creative tourism has generated economic gains, concerns about rising living costs and uneven access to new opportunities underscore the importance of equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms.

Synthesizing these insights, the study proposes the Collaborative Creative Living District Model, which conceptualizes how the five key components interact to support sustainable development in Songwat. The model emphasizes circular, interdependent relationships rather than linear processes, highlighting the need for continuous negotiation, co-creation, and community participation.

Overall, the study contributes both theoretically and practically to the fields of creative tourism, cultural district development, and community-led urban regeneration. It provides a holistic framework that can inform policy planning, cultural heritage management, and creative economy strategies in other historic districts in Thailand and beyond. By centering identity, collaboration, and community empowerment, the model offers a pathway for fostering sustainable, inclusive, and culturally grounded creative districts.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study highlight the importance of integrating cultural identity, participatory tourism, collaborative governance, and inclusive economic outcomes into the development of Songwat as a Creative Living District. The following policy implications and practical recommendations are proposed for policymakers, local authorities, community groups, and creative entrepreneurs seeking to sustain and enhance the district's creative potential.

Policy Implications

1) *Establish a Multi-Stakeholder Governance Framework*

The study reveals that collaboration is essential yet currently informal and fragmented. Policymakers should establish a Creative District Governance Board composed of representatives from local government, community groups, heritage businesses, tourism operators, and creative entrepreneurs. Such a board can coordinate activities, manage shared resources, and develop long-term strategic plans. This aligns with international best practices in creative district governance (OECD, 2021).

2) *Implement Heritage Conservation and Adaptive Reuse Policies*

Songwat's identity and visitor appeal depend heavily on its historic architecture and cultural landscapes. Urban planners should prioritize heritage zoning, adaptive reuse incentives, and building preservation grants to maintain architectural authenticity while supporting creative business development.

3) *Promote Inclusive Creative Economy Policies*

Given concerns about unequal benefit distribution, policymakers should adopt measures that ensure inclusive growth, such as micro-grants for community-run enterprises, subsidies for heritage-based workshops, and fair rental policies for long-standing residents and shop owners.

4) *Enhance Public Infrastructure to Support Creative Tourism*

Investments in public spaces—sidewalks, signage, lighting, public art areas, riverfront walkways—can strengthen the district's creative ecosystem. Infrastructure improvements should emphasize accessibility, cultural storytelling, and environmentally sustainable design.

Practical Recommendations for Stakeholders

Recommendations for Community Groups

1) Develop Community-Led Cultural Programs

Residents should be supported in organizing cultural tours, craft workshops, and community storytelling events. These activities strengthen identity transmission and generate income for local households.

2) Build Community Capacity through Training

Capacity-building programs in areas such as digital marketing, tourism management, and heritage interpretation can empower residents to co-create tourism experiences and manage creative activities efficiently.

3) Foster Intergenerational Cultural Exchange

Encouraging youth involvement in heritage activities such as photo walks, archival projects, and arts programs supports cultural continuity and engages the next generation in shaping the district's identity.

Recommendations for Creative Entrepreneurs and Businesses

1) Co-create Tourism Experiences with Local Residents

Businesses should collaborate with residents and heritage groups to design creative workshops, food experiences, and cultural routes. Co-creation enhances authenticity and strengthens community trust.

2) Integrate Songwat's Identity into Branding

Product and service design should reflect the district's narrative, architectural motifs, and Thai–Chinese heritage. This strengthens cultural authenticity and differentiates Songwat in the creative tourism market.

3) Adopt Ethical and Inclusive Business Practices

Entrepreneurs must ensure transparent pricing, fair partnerships, and equitable benefit-sharing with local collaborators. This helps maintain long-term social acceptance and aligns with sustainable creative district principles.

The policy implications and recommendations emphasize a holistic, inclusive, and identity-driven approach to creative district development. By strengthening governance, empowering community participation, fostering collaboration, and ensuring balanced benefits, Songwat can evolve into a sustainable Creative Living District that honors its past while supporting future innovation.

REFERENCE LIST

- Almeida, F., Silva, S., & Teixeira, A. A. C. (2021). Collaborative governance in creative cities: Conceptual foundations and research agenda. *Cities*, 108, 102957. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2020.102957>
- Bakas, F. E., Duxbury, N., & Vinagre de Castro, T. (2019). Creative tourism: Catalysing artisan entrepreneur networks in rural Portugal. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 25(4), 731–752. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-03-2018-0177>
- Bangkok Creative City Network. (2022). *Creative district development report: Songwat and Talad Noi*. Bangkok: BCCN.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Chang, T. C., & Teo, P. (2019). Performing heritage, rethinking tourism: New perspectives on cultural districts. *Tourism Geographies*, 21(3), 556–574. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2018.1477823>
- Chang, T. C., & Teo, P. (2020). Experiential urban tourism and creative districts in Asia. *Urban Studies*, 57(9), 1904–1922. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098019883812>
- Chen, C. M., & Hsu, C. L. (2022). Urban regeneration through cultural and creative industries in East Asia. *Cities*, 124, 103602. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2022.103602>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2021). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Del Barrio, M. J., & Devesa, M. (2020). Cultural participation and gentrification in creative cities. *Cities*, 100, 102650. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2020.102650>
- Duxbury, N., & Jeannotte, M. S. (2023). Culture and sustainable development in cities: Cultural policy frameworks. *City, Culture and Society*, 32, 100476. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2022.100476>
- Duxbury, N., & Richards, G. (2021). Towards a research agenda for creative tourism: A global perspective. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, 7(3), 238–248. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JTF-09-2020-0152>
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (2021). What is a theory? Revisiting the foundations of theory building. *Academy of Management Review*, 46(3), 341–347. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2021.0033>
- Kim, J., & Youn, H. (2022). Cultural identity and destination authenticity: Impacts on tourist engagement. *Journal of Travel Research*, 61(3), 684–702. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287521997571>
- Kong, L., & O'Connor, J. (2019). Creative economies and urban regeneration in East and Southeast Asia. *Urban Studies*, 56(3), 552–568. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098018809337>

- Lertpongmanee, K. (2025). Creative tourism model to promote local economy: A case study of Songwad area. *MCU Buddhist Cognitive Review*, 10(2), 350–360.
- NESDC (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council). (2022). *Thailand Creative Economy Strategy*. Bangkok: NESDC.
- OECD. (2021). *The value of culture for local development*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264315615-en>
- Pimonsathean, Y. (2021). *Historic districts and creative place-making in Bangkok: The case of Songwat*. Bangkok: Urban Heritage Center.
- Richards, G. (2020). Designing creative places: The role of creative tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 85, 102922. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.202>