

Communication in The Era of Media Convergence and Tourism Enhancement in Samut Songkhram Province Based on The Digital Economy

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Abstract

This qualitative research aims to explore the problems and obstacles of communication in the era of media convergence for tourism promotion and the ability to enhance tourism in Samut Songkhram Province based on the digital economy. An in-depth interview was used to collect data from 27 people: Samut Songkhram representatives or community leaders, tourists, and communication and tourism scholars. The data was analyzed by content analysis and interpretation to present a descriptive narrative. The findings revealed that problems and obstacles in communication in the era of media convergence include the need for a more concise communication process in tourism. Many steps in coordinating cause inconvenience and slowness, which is considered a high cost and expenditure for communication in tourism. As for communication, the era of media convergence and the ability to enhance the provincial tourism of Samut Songkhram based on the digital economy, the respondents thought that they should use integrated communication that combines all platform media to foster innovation in development and support the economy from the grass root which creates and distributes income to residents in Samut Songkhram community. They should develop technological skills and creativity to achieve excellence so the community can adapt to the current and future changes. In this regard, the discussion revealed interesting information that communication in the era of media convergence, where content is delivered across multiple platforms simultaneously, can be used as a guideline to elevate Samut Songkhram tourism with the concept of "Digital Economy Creative Tourism," which Samut Songkhram communities must adjust to keep up with changes that occur all the time..

Keywords: *Communication; Media convergence; Digital Economy; Tourism; Samut Songkhram.*

Introduction

Tourism is a significant industry that generates much revenue for Thailand and is directly essential to the economic development of the country and the lives of the people today. However, the tourism situation in Thailand still needs proper and effective management in tourism promotion. The National Tourism Policy Committee (2017) has identified sustainable tourism development guidelines in the 2nd National Tourism Development Plan 2017-2021 that must encourage all sectors to participate in sustainable tourism management and develop creative tourism to add economic value. In the tourism development plan, the emphasis has been placed on developing tourism personnel and supporting the participation of the people in tourism development. In particular, people must be encouraged to participate in tourism management and benefit from tourism. Opportunities must be provided for people and communities to participate in developing goods and services based on local heritage and culture.

Tourism in Thailand still needs to be linked between local, provincial, and national levels, including more public participation and agencies at different levels. Tourism management is, therefore, a path to collaboration by promoting the participation of local communities in the management of tourist attractions, with the government, private sector, communities, and local civil society participating in various actions to promote tourist attractions in their local communities.

Samut Songkhram Province is a land formed by depositing sediment mud at the mouth of the river, forming a high upland and then becoming a large river plain. It is previously named Mae Klong. Samut Songkhram

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Province has coastal and non-coastal areas with different cultures; for example, most coastal areas are fishermen. Therefore, the culture of living will be different; that is, the house will be located in the estuary area to facilitate one's occupation that has to go to the sea or raise marine animals, and the housing style will be raised to cope with the rise and fall of seawater.

Most areas not adjacent to the sea coast are engaged in agriculture. The culture of building houses differs; most are built in their gardens for convenient storage.

This research foresees the importance of the Samut Songkhram Provincial tourism industry, which can be developed for sustainable tourism by considering the community's Sustainability. That is, the next generation can still take advantage of tourism resources. However, the development must consider human resources development in management, production, service, and especially in communication with all relevant parties to promote and develop Samut Songkhram tourism concretely.

Therefore, the researchers, as scholars of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, which has a Samut Songkhram campus to provide qualified education to Samut Songkhram people, aim to examine the problems and obstacles of communication in the era of media convergence and the ability to enhance tourism in Samut Songkhram Province based on the digital economy. This will lead to tourism development in Samut Songkhram Province in the era of media convergence and the COVID-19 epidemic, which will be sustainable and concrete.

Moreover, the research results can be used to benefit the community and the economy of Samut Songkhram Province by obtaining communication development guidelines in the media convergence era, obtaining concrete concepts about the "Samut Songkhram Digital Tourism Economy" developed from the communication development guidelines in the era of media convergence. The study results can be used as a guide for those who are interested in studying the communication development guidelines in the era of media convergence in tourism, as well as being used as information for researching related issues in the future; it can be used as a database for various agencies and organizations, both professional organizations, government agencies, or academic institutions in communication arts and tourism in academic and professional development in this field.

Eventually, for academic benefit, it can also reflect critical communication phenomena for tourism, which leads to the formation of academic concepts in communication to develop beneficial tourism. It will also be most beneficial to the people in the Samut Songkhram tourist attraction community to apply the results to develop tourism and further develop the hometown of the Samut Songkhram people.

Research Objectives

To examine the problems and obstacles of communication in the era of media convergence to promote tourism in Samut Songkhram Province based on the digital economy.

To explore approaches to use communication in the era of media convergence to enhance tourism in Samut Songkhram Province based on the digital economy.

Literature Review

Related concepts and theories used by the researcher to guide this study can be summarized in various matters, especially in the field of news and information; the country can develop well when the people receive information that focuses on the development of life, including career development for people to have enthusiasm for self-development and society. The media should pay attention to information regarding social development, including: 1. Information related to the country's development. The media may present several successful stories to make it more interesting. Continuous story presentation makes the public aware and interested in information such as the BTS SkyTrain route or underground train project, building a park, organizing the election system, and 2. Information related to progress or success, such as information on experimental research, creating innovations for living and society, presentation of successful

people in work, and education. The presentation of such stories motivates people to develop themselves and achieve success.

The objective concept of communication for development proposed by Kittima Surasonthi (2014) indicates the goal that communication requires change in various areas. The concept of Digital Economy proposed by the Electronic Transactions Development Agency (2018) indicates that nature, background, and strategies for economic restructuring towards quality and sustainable growth are fundamental to this study, the concept of digital media proposed by Chutisan Kerdwibulvej (2017), stating about the meaning of digital media including the characteristics and elements of digital media that can be used as the basis of digital publicity such as 1. Support the development of creative businesses according to the enterprise network guidelines that are linked and work together with a clear direction of creative businesses throughout the supply chain by giving importance to the link between the agricultural, industrial, and service sectors. 2. Promote the development of creative cities by developing various environmental factors of an area or city, both in terms of physical infrastructure, human resources, rules and regulations, and management that facilitates development. An enterprise network of creative businesses that creates new products and services that are unique and reflect the identity of the area or city can attract investment from various businesses related to an area or city as well as promote investment in various infrastructures to create an atmosphere and conditions conducive to learning and creative development. 3. Enhance the potential of entrepreneurs and personnel to use creativity to increase the value of all sectors of goods and services; and 4. Develop the financial system to support investment and development of creative industries by providing or facilitating Access to cost-effective funding sources for creative businesses that lack capital.

The Media Convergence Theory proposed by Surapong Sothanasathien (2013) states the principles of media convergence and the characteristics of media convergence as a framework for studying digital public relations in the media convergence era. Moreover, sustainable tourism development (Gale, 2005) focuses on the attraction to meet the needs of tourists and people in the local community. At the same time, it must also preserve and fulfill future generations' needs. Digital media is similar to new media as a result of technological changes from analog or traditional media to digital; it serves to send many messages together, including images, sounds, and text simultaneously, such as through the Internet, Websites, e-books, e-mail and can respond to information more freely. Therefore, "new media" means the Internet, websites, multimedia, computer games, CD-ROMs, and DVDs, and "new media" does not mean television programs, movies, periodicals, books, or traditional publications.

The sustainable tourism development proposed by Gale (2005) focuses on the attraction to meet the needs of tourists and people in the local community. At the same time, it must be conserved and fulfill the needs of people in the future as well. It should be developed by promoting tourism activities to sustain it by having tourists visit regularly. Tourism resources can maintain their attractiveness and unceasingly profitable service business even if there is always a need to improve the service. The impact on the natural, social, and cultural environment must be minimal. All tourism industries must observe the fundamental principles of Sustainability. It needs to be more specific, but specialized tourism, such as mini-tourism, premium tourism, or tourism in the upper market group (elite market), if it also includes mass market tourism. There are also fundamental principles of sustainable tourism that should be emphasized: 1. Conservation and using sustainable, natural, social, and cultural resources are essential and are ways to do business in sustainable conditions. 2. Reducing excessive consumption and reducing waste will avoid long-term damage to the environment and increase the quality of tourism 3. Maintaining and promoting the diversity of nature, society, and culture is essential for long-term tourism and helps expand the base of the tourism industry 4. Integrating tourism development into the national development plan framework, local development, and environmental impact assessment will help expand the potential of tourism in the long run 5. Tourism that supports local economic activities considers cost and environmental value, not only saving but also preventing the environment from being destroyed. 6. The full participation of relevant local communities benefits the population and the environment and enhances the quality of tourism management. 7. Regular consultations between stakeholders and the public must work together in the same direction, including solving problems and reducing conflicts of interest that are different 8. Train staff by introducing concepts and practices in sustainable development to local personnel at all levels. This will

enhance the level of tourism services 9. Responsible tourism marketing that provides complete information will help tourists understand and respect tourist destinations' natural environment, society, and culture. and 10. Effective research and monitoring are needed to help address the problem and maximize the benefits to tourism destinations. Tourists and investors

In addition, the researchers also studied crucial basic information about tourism in Samut Songkhram Province, especially about the use of media to promote and enhance tourism, including related research, such as research on Behavior and Satisfaction of Thai Tourists towards Tourism Logistics Management Case Study: Amphawa Floating Market Samut Songkhram Province (Panasaya Sirarungrojkanok, 2016) and the development of communication, image and brand of Bang Khonthi District Tourist Attractions Samut Songkhram Province based on creative economy and sustainable community participation (Somdech Rungsisawat, 2015).

Research Methodology

This Qualitative research uses an In-depth Interview with a Semi-structured approach. There are four groups of sample samples: 1. A group of people living in Samut Songkhram Province, ten people; 2. A group of leaders or community representatives in Samut Songkhram Province, five people; 3. A group of tourists in Samut Songkhram Province, ten people; and 4. A group of communication and tourism academics, two people, a total of 27 people, using the purposive sampling method for people involved in tourism in Samut Songkhram Province for at least five years and have knowledge and experience in tourism, including those who are convenient and willing to provide research data in order to obtain the most accurate and reliable research results.

In terms of data analysis, interpretation is used to present the research in the form of a descriptive analysis, then the researcher performs Second Thought by checking Triangulation by using the research conclusions to verify the accuracy with the informants, research by other people doing similar things as well as reviewing ideas with several experts.

Research Findings

Part 1 An analysis of information on problems and obstacles of communication in the era of media convergence to enhance tourism in Samut Songkhram Province based on the digital economy

The respondents had the opinion that the problems and obstacles to communication in the era of media convergence to promote tourism in the digital economy of Samut Songkhram Province are that the communication process in tourism needs to be more concise. There are many steps in coordinating with each other, causing a lack of convenience and speed in working, which is the cost and expenditure of communication for tourism that is considered too much, especially the use of various media platforms to communicate with all sectors related to tourism in Samut Songkhram Province requires a budget. It is enough capital to make the communication process both the sender, the source of the message, the content, the medium used to send the message, and the receiver, getting accurate and fast Samut Songkhram travel information simultaneously in all media platforms that can be used, especially online media, social media and should use radio, television and print media to promote tourism with elderly tourists who still use traditional media.

This is followed by the view that there still needs to be more communication about skill development, concepts, and processing processes in product production. There is a need for multiple communications simultaneously in developing tourist attractions to create value-added tourism and new tourism activities. The design and decoration of tourist attractions must be improved to keep up with the ever-changing needs of tourists. The government should use the budget to help promote this part. Moreover, the private sector should invest money in the development of buildings and shops to be modern and stimulate tourist spending. This will directly affect the economic system in that tourist destination.

The sample group also viewed the problems and obstacles of communication in the era of media convergence to promote tourism in the digital economy of Samut Songkhram Province. Many people in the Samut Songkhram community still need an understanding of communication to highlight another outstanding thing of Samut Songkhram Province: cultural tourism. It has not yet been able to bring the various cultural differences, including Thai Buddhists, Thai Muslims, and Burmese, together to “raise the differences. It is a highlight of the culture of Samut Songkhram Province.

Part 2: An analysis of approaches to communication in the era of media convergence to enhance tourism in Samut Songkhram Province based on the digital economy

2.1 The ability to enhance tourism in Samut Songkhram Province based on the digital economy

The respondents think that Samut Songkhram could raise its tourism business to a national level by using media convergence communication that uses the same content and presents it through all platforms (One content, multiple platforms) to persuade and create the image of a "Digital Economy Creative Tourism" by encouraging tourists to use creativity in activities with the Samut Songkhram community as well as encouraging tourists to feel connected and have a deep understanding of tourist attractions Samut Songkhram communities. The community is responsible for organizing various activities. This will continuously generate more income for the Samut Songkhram community.

They were followed by the view that all sectors must work together to develop based on thinking about the digital economy. The government should fully allocate the budget to promote tourism in secondary cities such as Samut Songkhram to become main cities shortly. As for the private sector, they should do business together with the use of media to develop Samut Songkhram trading sites, and the community people in Samut Songkhram should adapt to learn new digital public relations media because the current communication has integrated the use of all media platforms in presenting the same set of tourism content.

In this regard, most of the sample group also viewed that communities in Samut Songkhram Province can elevate Samut Songkhram's tourism to national tourism based on the digital economy by organizing tourism that allows tourists to interact and be able to closely participate in the cultural activities and traditions of the community where tourists will have real experiences and have the opportunity to use their creativity to the fullest. The aim is to provide tourists with understanding, love, and attachment to tourist attractions and communities in those cultural tourist attractions. However, there are central agencies that come to provide information about creative tourism for the business sector, namely Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization) or DASTA; Tourism Authority of Thailand or TAT, and community development through training to educate and take them to study visits in various places for the business sector to apply to suit their business. Creative tourism is a new type of tourism that is built on cultural tourism focusing on preserving local arts and culture. This allows tourists to participate in community-based tourism activities and promotes the production of local products to the market to meet the needs of tourists.

2.2 Guidelines for using communication in the era of media convergence to enhance tourism in Samut Songkhram Province based on the digital economy

The respondents agreed that a communication approach that integrates all media platforms should foster innovation in development and support the economy from the grassroots. It creates and distributes income to people in the Samut Songkhram community. They should develop technological skills and creativity to achieve excellence so that the Samut Songkhram community can adapt to the changes that occur almost all the time, both now and in the future.

They were followed by the view that the study of satisfaction with media convergence communication should be used for Samut Songkhram tourism from a particular target group of tourists to raise the level to a sustainable national level. It has to rely on the good feelings of tourists that make them return. Therefore, this preference or satisfaction must be studied to improve and develop Samut Songkhram tourism regularly.

However, the sample group viewed Communities in Samut Songkhram Province as using communication innovations with community participation to enhance tourism in Samut Songkhram Province based on the digital economy. The villagers in the community may own their businesses or joint ventures with those who love Samut Songkhram Province. Being an innovator in creating creative tourism will benefit investors,

local people, and the environment that may be damaged by tourism. It may also create activities that make tourists feel fun and gain knowledge simultaneously.

Discussion

The researchers brought exciting issues from the findings to discuss the following results.

1. Problems and obstacles of tourism in Samut Songkhram can be solved with innovative communication and community involvement.

From the research findings, the major problem and obstacle in digital economy tourism in Samut Songkhram Province is that the communication process in tourism needs to be more concise. There are many steps in coordinating with each other, causing a lack of convenience and speed in working, which is the cost and expenditure of communication for tourism that is considered too much. This issue can be solved with innovative communications. Community involvement, which is consistent with the research on "Development of Community Participatory Communication Innovation to Promote Sustainable Creative Tourism in Ranong Province" (Prapot et al., 2021), can develop participatory communication innovations to promote sustainable creative tourism in Ranong Province because there is love in the local community by using three critical innovations: 1. Process Innovation which focuses on communication about improving production and operating efficiency able to apply new techniques and methods of work to adapt to production to always be up to date. 2. Positional Innovation, which focuses on communicating about adding value to tourism, changed the position from "a small province with few people to a quality province with many tourists" and 3. Paradigm-oriented innovation that emphasizes communication about the introduction of new products. The tourism has been presented to suit the market needs of tourists. This finding is also in line with the study of Wiroj Srihirun (2022) that the majority of the respondents felt that the overall innovation communication process should change the commonly used communication method to be an "innovative communication for tourism" by transforming all elements of communication and merging media. Moreover, innovations that should be emphasized are product-oriented innovations that should use Vlog media, focusing on content recording stories of community lifestyles, and procedural innovations that should focus on communication that tourists participate in, disseminating impressions of their visits through social media online.

However, the tourism of Samut Songkhram Province can adapt the communication innovation with the participation of the community above. In that case, it should improve the problems and obstacles of communication in the era of media convergence to concretely promote the tourism of Samut Songkhram Province based on the digital economy.

2. To raise the "Digital Economy Creative Tourism" level, the Samut Songkhram community must constantly adapt to changes.

When considering the results of the research, it was found that Samut Songkhram can enhance tourism to a national level by using integrated media communications that use the same content and present it across all platforms to persuade and create an image of "Digital Economy Creative Tourism" by encouraging tourists to use creativity in various activities with the Samut Songkhram community as well as encouraging tourists to feel connected and have a deep understanding of tourist attractions and Samut Songkhram communities. The community is responsible for organizing various activities. This will generate more income for the Samut Songkhram community continuously, and technology skills and creativity should be developed to achieve excellence so that the Samut Songkhram community can adapt to the changes that occur almost all the time, both now and in the future. This is consistent with the study "Management of Community Sources for Tourists to Experience Traditional Ways of Life: A Case Study of Local Communities in Amphawa Floating Market, Samut Songkhram Province (Nichamon et al., 2021) found that the marketing model Sustainability of the floating market is the participation of the people in the community by bringing local valuables to create a tourist attraction in the community according to their daily lives by making a difference to open an evening floating market only on Friday-Sunday. Only This is

to want people in the community to have income and a good economy with social and environmental considerations.

Therefore, it can be seen that the tourism of Samut Songkhram Province can raise the level of tourism to a national level with "Digital Economy Creative Tourism." Changes occur constantly in today's digital world.

Research Implication

Benefits to the Tourism Industry

1. Relevant agencies related to tourism in Samut Songkhram Province,
2. The government, private, and general public sectors can use the research results as a database to develop and promote tourism in Samut Songkhram Province and make it a sustainable national tourist destination.
3. residents can use these research findings as a guideline to introduce and promote sustainable tourism in Samut Songkhram province with digital communication platforms.
4. Based on these findings, tourism providers can create tourism network communication channels to elevate the tourism industry of Samut Songkhram and Thailand to digitalization and cultural richness and draw the attention of the new generation of tourists.
5. Souvenirs and related products, such as online games, can use the content of this finding to design an online game that draws the player's attention to the physical site of Samut Songkhram after playing the online game.
6. . All sectors can apply the results of this study to drive the tourism industry

of Samut Songkhram Province and continuously improve the competitiveness in the digital economy era of tourism in Samut Songkhram Province by expanding the digital communication channels or embedding Samut Songkhram traditional cultures into digital content.

Benefits to Samut Songkhram Province

1. The development of communication in the era of media convergence will encourage people and the community's economy in Samut Songkhram Province to earn more income from tourism, with more tourists visiting.
2. The people of Samut Songkhram Province have a concrete consciousness and behavior of loving their hometown by jointly developing communications in the era of media convergence, which raises the tourism industry level of Samut Songkhram Province based on the digital economy.

Benefits to Academic

1. Achieve the "Samut Songkhram Tourism Digital Economy" concept, which originated from the communication development guidelines in the era of media convergence. This body of knowledge can be applied to teaching and learning in educational institutions, and this finding can also be applied to other provinces.
2. The research results are used as a guideline for those interested in studying communication development guidelines in the era of media convergence in tourism and as information for future research on related topics.

Recommendation

General Recommendation

1. Satisfaction with communication in the era of media convergence to enhance tourism in the digital economy should be studied from specific target groups of tourists to bring improvements and developments regularly.
3. All relevant sectors in Samut Songkhram Province should help each other use communication in the media convergence era to the maximum benefit of tourism, which would encourage more tourists to visit.
4. The authority should provide training skills and knowledge about media integration communication for the Samut Songkhram community, which will be the basis for the digital economy communication process.
5. Samut Songkhram Provincial tourism executives and leaders must work with the community to solve the problem of tourism based on the digital economy and become a unique and different tourist destination. Tourists must come to Samut Songkhram rather than somewhere else.

Recommendation for next research

The following research should find exciting and modern variables or aspects of communication-related to media integration that can enhance tourism in the digital economy.

1. The following research should study other samples on the same issue. For example, studies from senior tourism executives in Samut Songkhram Province and Executives from the Tourism Authority of Thailand may yield even more interesting cognitive perspectives.
2. Communication in the media convergence era should be studied to enhance tourism in the digital economy. Other types of research, such as group discussion methods, survey research, and Ethnic Studies (Ethnography), should result in research with a more diverse and in-depth perspective.

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