

CHAPTER 1

Introduction



Background and significance of the problem

From the perspective of the world economy, tourism is the fastest growing industry. It occupies 1 out of 16 of the total workforce in the world. Almost every country prioritizes tourism as its important industry (Mowlana & Smith, 1993, quoted in Haq & Jackson, 2007). According to World Tour Organization, in 2006, the number of tourists who traveled around the world was 800 million, with a 5 percent growth from the previous year. The number was expected to triple in 2020. The incomes from tourism are essential to the development of countries, especially the developing ones. These incomes help to promoting small and middle-sized tourist businesses, increase jobs and decrease the severity of poverty. Tourism in Asia tends to focus on developing tourist resources, the so-called 3s, (Sun – Sea - Sand). Nevertheless, today many countries have cultivated the awareness of the importance of environment and the need to protect it. There are many factors which have an effect on tourism, for examples, problems of the instability of the world economy, the decrease of the world population due to late marriage (the increasing age of married couples) and the trend of married people to have few children because of the economic reason, and the increase of unmarried persons, transgender people and nuclear families. In the meantime, the number of senior citizens is significantly increasing on a yearly basis, because of the advancement of medical treatments which help reduce the mortality rate. Attitudes towards travelling and tastes of people in the

world have been changed greatly and continually by the process of globalization, technological advancement, transportation and communication which make it possible for people from the world to reach one another through the internet. The emergence of postmodernism brings with it a tourist concept called New Age Tourism, which values “religion” and ‘spirit’. This leads to new styles of tourism. Spiritual tourism is one of them and it has become increasingly popular among tourists. In fact, this kind of tourism has been developed for a long time, but there is still confusion between spiritual tourism, religious tourism and New Age tourism. The rapid growth of the spiritual tourism reveals its potential in the market and in generating the incomes. World Tourism Organization (WTO) also recognizes the potentials and importance in developing the spiritual tourism into an alternative tourism. Hence, it arranged the first international conference on the spiritual tourism and the sustainable development in Ninh Binh, Vietnam. The conference strongly believes that a study on this subject will help to develop the spiritual tourism in Thailand. This can be a way to increase the number of tourists who will come to Thailand to experience this new tourism (The United Nation of World Tourism Organization, 2013).

At the present, the weak world economy creates problems in the ASEAN, national, provincial and local communities, especially the health problem as a result of stress which depresses people. (UNWTO, 2013) Many large organizations attempt to solve this problem by arranging activities, such as, meditation, yoga and music therapies, for the staff. These activities relate to the spiritual tourism. Saluang is a community which has a potential to develop this style of tourism. The nature around it is still in a perfect condition and the location is not too far away from the city center.

Moreover, the community is full of dharma retreats. Many communities in this Sub-district have outstanding identities, which can be developed for the market and connected them into a unique tourist area. Although this Sub-district has a good potential to be a tourist area, tourism in here is yet to be developed. Now to make the Sub-district attractive for tourists is to find its different and unique characteristics. People in the Sub-district also want to create the most effective way to create incomes from the local resources. The spiritual market is a way to promote the tourism in Saluang Sub-district and make it a new attraction in Chiangmai for tourists who interest in the spiritual tourism.

Chiangmai is a province which is important for Thailand's tourism. Tourism is an essential means to distribute incomes to local people and create a strong economy in the province. In the past, Chiangmai was the centre of the governance of people in the upper north, known as Lanna. It had unique spoken and writing languages, traditions, culture and life style. It is more than 720 years since Chiangmai was founded but the city manages to retain its arts, culture, life style and traditions from the past. Its location is a high terrain which is rich of natural resources, such as, mountains, rivers which are important for the country and forests which are still in a good condition. The city not only has a beautiful view but its infrastructure has also been continually developed. As a result, the city has an effective transportation, restaurants, accommodations, facilities and modern technology which contribute to the fact that Chaing Mai is the most outstanding tourist city in the upper north of Thailand. The city's strength is its services and tourist resources, such as, the variety of the attractions, pleasing climate and views. The city also offers various kinds of tourist activities, Thai and international restaurants, convenient stores, supermalls and

markets. The accommodations in the city are able to offer their services to a large number of visitors. There are hotels, resorts, guesthouses and home stays that meet visitors with different expectations. Tourists can travel around by planes, cars and trains. The city is also connected to neighboring countries. When being in the city, the visitor can go around by buses, or rent a car, motorcycle or bicycle to travel by oneself. Local products and Lanna handicrafts in this city are well-known and popular among Thai and international people. Many of Chiangmai's tourist attractions are internationally famous (Chiangmai Province Executive Committee, 2015).

These facts demonstrate the good potentials of internationally recognized tourism and services in the city. Chiangmai offers various kinds of tourist resources, including its unique archaeological sites, arts, culture and beautiful natural attractions. These contribute to the city's international fame. In 2015, *Travel & Leisure*, an American magazine, ranked it the second-best tourist city in the world. It was also on the top ten list of the best cities ranked by a magazine called *Lonely Planet*. Moreover, in 2011, Euromonitor International ranked Chiangmai a top 100 cities destination. It is one of the four Thai cities in the list. The other three are Bangkok, Pattaya and Phuket. In 2013, according to *Travel & Leisure*, internet users voted Chiangmai to be the 10th best tourist city in the world. Furthermore, a website named Trip Advisor's daodao.com which collected the data about the travel of Chinese tourists found out that, for Chinese tourists, Chiangmai was ranked the top 12 foreign tourist cities (Chiangmai Province Executive Committee, 2015). The responsible office recognizes the necessity to collect the statistics about the number of tourists every quarter. Figure 1 shows the number of tourists who visited Chiangmai between 2012 and 2015. Therefore, it has been found that the number of tourists tends to

increase every year when it is in normal condition. Therefore, it has shown that Chiang Mai is very popular among tourists.

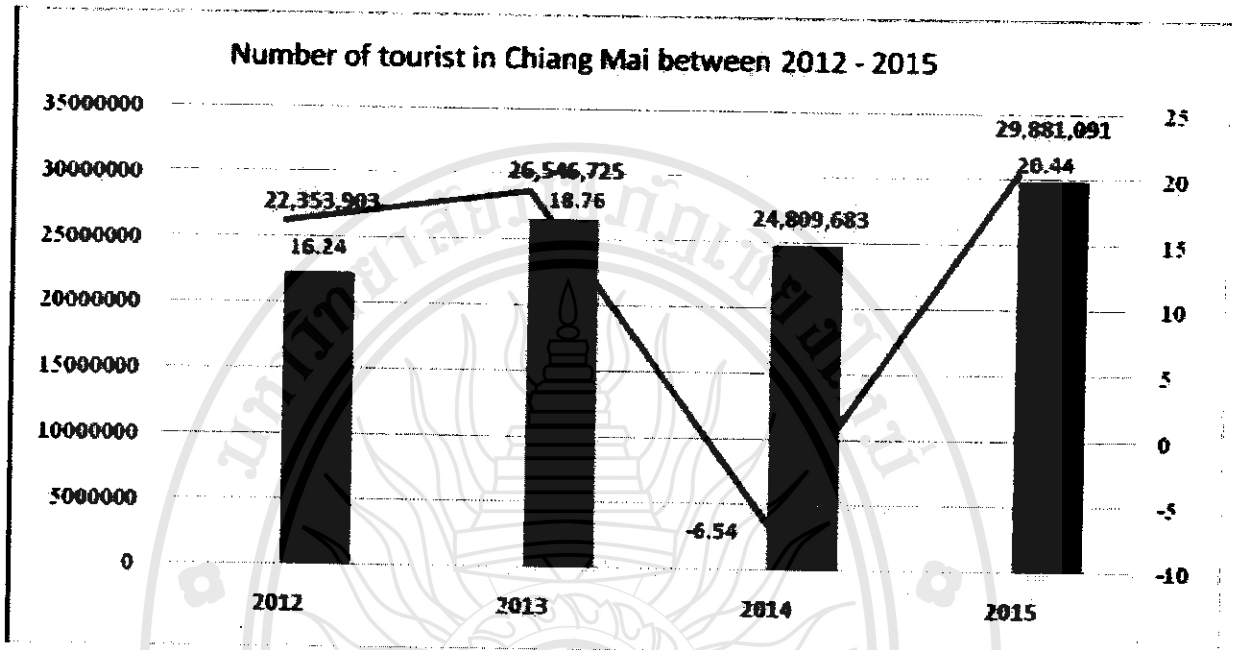


Figure 1.1 Number of Tourists in Chiangmai between 2012 and 2015

Source: Chiangmai Provincial Statistical Office (2015)

Chiangmai Administrative Organization had changed its tourism strategies to focus on 3 aspects of tourism: 1) cultural attractions as the city is long well-known for the beauty of its culture and traditions, 2) natural attractions in the city and its environment which are exceptionally beautiful, and 3) health attractions. Now the provincial administration is promoting a tourism which shows the tourist how to use natural energies in therapy to have better physical and mental health (Chiangmai Provincial Statistical Office, 2016).

Saluang Sub-district is a community which has resources that can be used to develop spiritual tourism, due to the geography which is mainly mountains. The location is about 40 kilometres away from the city centre which is in a reasonable

distance. The population in the community consists of people from many tribes, for example, native people, Tailue people who often live in piedmont plateaus, and Karen, Hmong, Lahu and Lua people in hills. It is possible to develop various tourist programs in this community. Saluang community is divided into 8 villages (moo). The majority of population in Moo 1 (Baan Na Huk) is natives. Many of them are farmers and agriculturalists who are expert in organic farming. People in Moo 2 (Baan Saluang Nai) are natives and Tailues who are farmers. They are well-known for doing mixed farming and the first incinerator created by a local community in Thailand. As a result, every month a number of Sub-district Administrative Organizations make a field trip to observe how people in the area organize their community. The dharma retreat is a place where local young people dress in white clothes, listen to Buddhist teachings in a Buddhist day. The community is committed to make itself a model for the moral village. In Moo 3 (Baan Saluang Nok), the majority of the population is natives who are farmers and agriculturalists. They grow vegetables and raise animals. A part of the population in Moo 4 (Baan Kad Haw) is Karen and Lahu people who do farming and collect forest products. A temple and a dharma retreat are located in this village. In Moo 5 (Baan Mueang Ka), the majority of the population is Lua people who are the natives in this area. The local history of their tribe was connected to the history of Chiangmai during the time of Lanna Kingdom. Today the villagers are farmers and agriculturalists. They grow vegetables and raise animals. A temple and a dharma retreat are located in this village. In Moo 6 (Baan Phra Bart Si Roy), the majority of the population is natives. They are farmers and agriculturalists. They also grow vegetables and collect forest products. Phra Buddhbart Si Roy is the oldest in Thailand. This community has a dharma retreat. In Moo 7 (Baan Huay Som Suk), the

population comes from many ethnics, including natives, Hmongs and Karens. They are farmers and agriculturalists. They also grow vegetables and collect forest products. A dharma retreat in this community is well-known. Tabsai waterfall and rice terraces can be found in this area. In Moo 8 (Baan Mae Ka Piang – Baan Huay Tao Ru), Karen and Hmong people live together to do farming, grow vegetable, raise animals and collect forest products. A church is also located in this village (Saluang Sub-district Administrative Organization, 2015).

Saluang community is full of natural tourist attractions. There are also any interesting cultural attractions in the area, for example, ancient temples, Buddha footprints and local ancient civilization. There are many attractions in Saluang which can be a part of spiritual tourism. According to a legend, Phra Buddhbart Si Roy was the site of the footprints of Kusantha, Konakomna, Kassapa and Kotama, 4 past lives of Buddha. This is a famous worship place where Buddhists come to pay respect to Buddha. During March of every year there is a bathing ritual. To bless the worshipers with an auspicious future, every year the court grants them the royal water. During this time, a large number of people come to the temple.

Local performances, local music, boxing and clothes charity are a part of the activities during this time. Moreover, many dharma retreats are located in the area, including Wat Baan Huay Som Suk, Wat Maha Panyo, Wat Phrabart Si Roy, Wat Prakat Tham, and the dharma retreat called Te Sa Rang Si Wa Ra La Pho Pun Ya Ka Mo, and Baan Mae Ka Piang Saluang where hill tribe people still follow the native life style of their predecessors. There are many natural attractions, such as, a waterfall from Mae Ka Piang Lai brook. Baan Mae Ka Piang has potentials to produce top-quality OTOPs and create ecotourism. Sai Mok waterfall is a natural attraction which

the provincial administrative organization is promoting to be an important attraction in the community.

Saluang has many significant local traditions and rituals, such as, the bathing ritual of Khun Luang Wilangkha, the bathing ritual of Phrabart Si Roy, the bathing ritual of Wat Phrathat Sidthi Song Thum, the bathing ritual of Wat Phrathat Doi Saluang, the bathing ritual of Wat Phrathat Tamjai, the ritual to pay respect to ancestral spirits, Ho Chao Nai ritual, New Rice ritual, Songkarn festivals, Yi Peng, Harvest ritual, Tan Kuay Salak, organic rice ritual, cattle ritual, Hmong New Year, hill tribe traditions, youth meeting day, Easter and Christmas. These rituals engage with the spirituality of local people. The activities reflect the interests of the community in diversity of culture, traditions, languages, tribes and religions. If these bodies of knowledge in the area are integrated, it is possible to develop an interesting model for the spiritual tourist marketing.

The spiritual tourism is an activity which is likely to continue growing. According to UNWTO (2013) the spiritual tourism presents itself in many ways, including spiritual beliefs and culture. The interaction that the tourist experiences leads to a deep spiritual sublime and the growth of spirit. There is also an exchange of culture and negotiation happening in the spiritual tourism, which needs understanding, patient and mutual respect. This is fundamental to create a sustainable development, which uses natural and cultural resources respectfully. The development of spiritual tourism can employ people, reduce poverty and the relocation of local population, create an effective way to distribute products, and encourage the pride in the community and the tourist attractions. The most important thing to create a sustainable development is to preserve the local traditions, spiritual fulfilment and

cultural heritages. Tourists should be responsible and respect the culture of the community. They also need to understand and take care of the spirit of the religious and cultural values in the context of tourism. It is advisable to increase the competitiveness of the community through spiritual tourism.

It is a policy of National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) to support researches on history, through the 2016 budget. The scope of the research on tourism in the Northern Lanna includes Chiangmai, Chiang Rai, Lampang, Lamphun and Phayao. The objective is to create researches which help create the value of cultural resources. There is a promotion on human spiritual marketing, cultural tourist products which promote tourism, the development in tourist areas to enlarge them and create a sustainable tourism, and creating tourism which focuses on local identity and culture (National Research Council of Thailand, 2015). It is planned to follow the spiritual marketing (marketing 3.0), which focuses on cultural tourist products and uses an effective technology to encourage people to travel and create tourist activities which value local and cultural identity.

This research aims to reflect a way to manage the spiritual tourism in Saluang which is able to help the community develop its marketing strategies and generate incomes and develop the economy in a sustainable fashion which harmonizes with the identity of the community. Moreover, it is also necessary to study factors which have an effect on the development of the spiritual marketing. Spiritual tourism values the beliefs, culture and traditions and aims to protect natural resources of the community. It believes that this idea can respond to the expectation of tourists and maintain nature, culture, traditions and old belief of the community.

Research objectives

1. To study community contexts and potential for spiritual marketing of Saluang Sub-district.
2. To study factors affecting the development of spiritual marketing in Saluang Sub-district.
3. To suggest guidelines for the development of spiritual marketing to promote tourism in Saluang Sub-district.

Expected outcomes

1. Understand the community contexts and the spiritual marketing potential in Saluang Sub-district.
2. Understand factors affecting the spiritual marketing development in Saluang Sub-district.
3. Have guidelines of spiritual marketing development to promote tourism in Saluang Sub-district.

Research Scope

1. Scope of research field

8 villages and attractions in Saluang Sub-district, Mae Rim, Chiangmai

2. Scope of population

1) Representatives from 8 villages in Saluang and concerned civil

officers. The total number of the sample groups is 40.

2) 400 Thai and foreign tourists who are not local people.

3. Scope of contents

The contents of this study composed of community context, community potential, factors affecting the spiritual marketing in Saluang, and guideline of spiritual marketing development.

4. Scope of research time

The research was conducted from 2015 – 2017.

Initial agreement

This research is conducted to create guidelines to develop and promote spiritual marketing in Saluang Sub-district. The research hopes that after finishing the conduction, the research will be given to Sub-district Administrative Organization, so that the research can be used as a guideline to stimulate the economic in the future.

Definitions of terms

Tourist marketing means a philosophy which tries to respond to the tourist's desire by researching, anticipating and selecting tourist products, which the market needs. The goal is to maximize profits for an organization (Coltman, 1989), and able to offer services to the tourist as planned. It is also about the process of planning and creating an idea about production, price, marketing and promoting tourism. The purpose is to create an exchange which can fulfil the goal and satisfy the tourist or user.

Saluang community means native, Karen, Hmong, Lahu, and Lua people in 8 villages who live in Saluang Sub-district, Mae Rim, Chiangmai, and live in this area for more than one year.

Spiritual tourism is a trip to another place, which is not the familiar place for the tourist to experience, learn, examine, and ponder on the truth and the goal of life. The tourist feels committed and is willing to learn. He or she values and respects local traditions and culture, and is not limited by one's religion.

Spiritual marketing is the process of planning, developing and operating to respond to the desire of the customer according to his or her expectation, beliefs, willingness, faith and the goals of life. It aims to fulfil the objective of the organization.

