

ABSTRACT

The research objectives of this study were the quality development of cultural tourism in north-east Thailand 1) to study cultural tourism capability with regard to the traditional festivals in north-east Thailand, 2) to study tourists' behavior and needs, and 3) to compare tourists' needs in terms of demographic characteristics. A semi-structured interview and a questionnaire were used as instruments. The sample consisted of 17 people from government and private sectors who are responsible for organizing the local festivals. Content analysis was used to analyze the interview data. In addition, questionnaires were distributed to 327 tourists who visited traditional festivals. Descriptive analysis was used with respect to frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses by mean of a t-test, and an F-test.

The results of the study revealed that cultural tourism capability included 3 particular perspectives: 1) The main aspects that interested tourists were: the tourist attractions which had a unique life-style, wisdom, and knowledge from Buddhism and the practices of ancestors from the past to the present. Other modern activities of interest included attractions, and aesthetics including dress, language used for communication, local life-style, and entertainments. 2) Limitations to the development of cultural tourism resulted from: a lack of infrastructures, geographic, and suitable buildings and access to them which limited the future development of cultural tourism. Various organizations have developed and renewed sufficient infrastructures to assist policy management, budget control and personnel. 3) Administrative management: tourist attractions need to be maintained by preserving or improving the environment. It will be necessary to establish an organization which monitors and evaluates the effects of these factors. However, social change has also affected the management of tourist activity through changes of lifestyle, tradition and local culture. Hence, the sharing of knowledge and raising of awareness in relation to tourists, business owners and the community is necessary.

Most of the tourists were females, aged 20-35 years, occupied students, who held a bachelor's degree, and received net monthly incomes of less than 10,000 baht, used private car for travelling, came with friends, paid less than 3,000 baht to stay overnight at their own or friends' accommodation, or hotels, and obtained information from friends or relatives about their vacations.

The tourists stated that there were many needs at high level and considerable needs in cultural tourism as a whole and in all aspects: people, physical evidence, service, cost, place, promotion and process, respectively. Tourists in different age groups, at different levels of education, with different occupations

and incomes expressed different needs with regard to cultural tourism. The tourists with different age groups agreed differently with having needs to service, promotion, cost, place, and process; at different levels of education agreed differently with having needs to promotion, and service; with different occupations agreed differently with having needs to promotion and different income agreed differently with having needs to service, place, promotion and process.