

ROI-KAEN-SAN-SIN DESTINATION BRANDING. THE CHALLENGE OF RESPONSIBLE TOURISM IN THAILAND FOR THE AEC

Donruetai Kovathanakul, Ph.D.¹

Abstract

Roi-Kaen-San-Sin is a pseudonym of the cultural prosperity destination areas of Roi-et, Khon Kaen, Mahasarakam, and Kalasin Provinces in Thailand. This cluster is situated on Mittraparp Road, the highway and gateway to Route No.9, which links to Laos and Vietnam. Destination Branding is one of the things the Tourism Authority of Thailand would like to upgrade in each of the provinces. The author selected Sinsai, oral traditions, unique forms of architecture, literature, and various performances for use in branding in order to accentuate and brand these tourism destinations in Laos-Thailand as valuable heritages, both tangibly and intangibly. The challenge was in how to show the cultural diversity of the former Lan Xang Kingdom by means of responsible tourism in line with the objectives of the ASEAN Economic Community. What is the best way to systemize and integrate the cultural and intangible splendor of these locations? This paper will develop the initiative case study concept of responsible cultural heritage destination branding.

Keywords: Roi-Kaen-San-Sin, AEC, cultural heritage, destination, branding

JEL Classification: M31, Q56

This cluster consists of Roi-et, Khon Kaen, Mahasarakam, and Kalasin. They are situated on Mittraparp Road, the highway and gateway of Route No.9 (starting from Mukdahan, Thailand continuing to Savannakhet, Laos, and ending in Quang Tri Province, Vietnam; shown in figure 1), which links to Laos and Vietnam. The website *www.logisticnews.net* (2007) suggests that Route No.9, which links Thailand, Lao PDR. and Vietnam, including logistics in the Indochina market, would be a benefit to tourism.

¹ Donruetai Kovathanakul, Ph.D. is a lecturer in the Tourism Department, *Faculty of Management Science, Khon Kaen University*, Muang District, Khon Kaen, Thailand 40002, email: kdonru@kku.ac.th

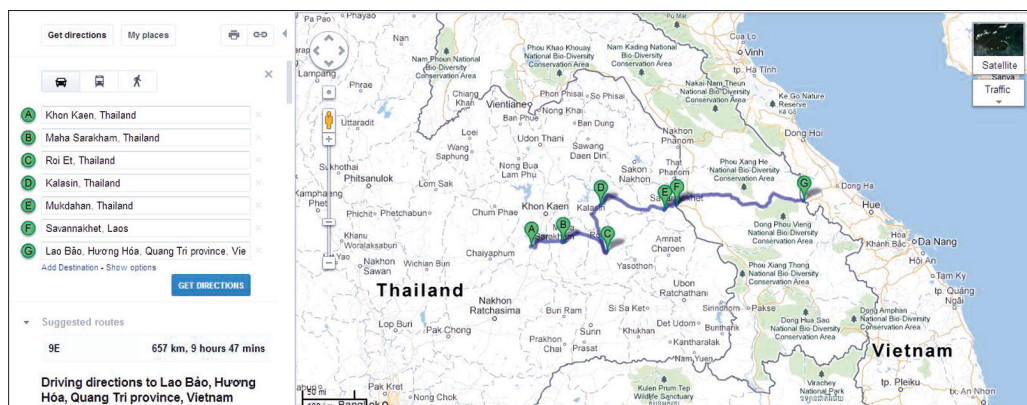


Figure 1: Map showing places linked to Khon Kaen by Route No. 9

Thailand Destination Branding

To accomplish Destination Branding in Thailand some of the components necessary are: the need for a consistent strategy backed with long term investment, the power of innovation, the determination of and focus on a core essence, and the importance of customer service orientation. Challenges to Destination Branding efforts must also be considered. Emphasis is placed on service orientation as it occurs in three different contexts: the international and “controlled” level, the local and “controlled” level, and the independent and “uncontrolled” level. This third area is where real, spontaneous interactions occur between independent service providers or common citizens and tourists. This richness is a challenging area of exploration and potential impact. (McFarland, 2006)

Thailand tourism authorities need to up the country’s brand image on the international marketplace of global brand specialist. (TravelBlackboard, 2011) In the marketing communication campaign named “Amazing Thailand”; Thailand appears as a very suitable destination choice in our case, because it offers a broad variety of interests to visitors from cultural and historical to fun and entertainment venues, while it has repeatedly attracted media attention in numerous areas such as Buddhism festivals. (Sangsue, n.d.) *Destination Branding is one of the things the Tourism Authority of Thailand would like to upgrade in each of the mentioned provinces.* The branding of the north-eastern region is proposed as “The Land of Knowledge and Cultural Richness.

Sinsai, the reflection of Thai-Laos cultural heritage

Sinsai is part of the oral traditions and Buddhist literature that narrate the hero named Sinsai, who has gratefulness, love, and morality. (BanchaKiet, 2011) The

story is a part of Chadok (Buddhist literature), oral tradition and the literature of Laos and Thailand's north-eastern region, the former Lan Xang Kingdom.

The hero and terms are still in existence in illustrated form in the external folk mural paintings of architecture in many of Thailand's north-eastern Buddhist temples such as Sanuanwareepattanaram Temple (figure 2), Chaisri Temple (figure 3), et al.



Figure 2: External Mural Painting of Sanuanwareepattanaram Temple, Khon Kaen (feng_shui, 2000)



Figure 3: Mural Painting of Chaisri Temple, Khon Kaen (dailynews, 2013)



*Figure 4: Sinsai on Isan Architecture splendor
(TourismAuthorityofThailand, 2013)*

The performances of Sinsai, Northeastern (Isan) traditional dancing (figure 4). The use of illustrations and branding is to accentuate and brand these tourism destinations in Laos-Thailand as valuable heritages, both tangibly and intangibly. The challenge was in how to show the cultural diversity of the former Lan Xang Kingdom by means of responsible tourism in line with the objectives of the ASEAN Economic Community.



Figure 5: Sinsai, Northeastern (Isan) traditional dancing band (Chula, 2013)

What is the best way to systemize and integrate the cultural and intangible splendor of these locations?

The researcher developed the database systemization from www.unesco.org (UNESCO, n.d.), Asian Development Bank (AsianDevelopmentBank, n.d.), and (AsiaPacificDatabaseonIntangibleCulturalHeritage, n.d.) as shown in the list below.

1. Tangible Heritage

1.1. AEC Cultural Heritage

1.1.1. Monuments

1.1.2. Groups of Buildings

1.1.3. Sites

1.1.3.1. Archeological Sites

1.1.3.1.1. Pre-historic Sites

1.1.3.1.2. Historic Sites

1.1.3.1.3. Engineering and Industrial Sites

1.1.3.1.4. River Sites

1.1.3.2. Built Structures

1.1.3.2.1. Architecture

1.1.3.2.2. Town Planning

1.1.3.3. Cultural Landscape

1.1.3.3.1. Cultural Landscape

1.1.3.3.2. Historic Parks and Gardens

1.1.3.3.3. Trade Route Monuments and Remains

2. Intangible Heritage

2.1. AEC Cultural Heritage

2.1.1. Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle for the intangible cultural heritage

2.1.2. Performing Arts

2.1.3. Social practices, rituals and festive events

2.1.4. Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe

2.1.5. Traditional craftsmanship

3. Museums

3.1. Tangible Heritage

3.2. Intangible Heritage

3.3. Mixed Heritage

3.4. Contemporary Heritage

3.5. Digital Heritage

4. Related Cultural Heritage Laws

The collection of the Sinsai architecture database, especially, should be assembled by address history, adaptive history, cultural or foreign influence, age, flooring, color, material, and decoration (eg. doors, windows or façade, etc.). The collector should

accumulate the occupations by studying the history, process, material, and appliances. (UNESCOBangkok, 2008) (UNESCOBangkok, 2004) (UNESCO, 2006)

The concept of responsible cultural heritage tourism in AEC destination branding

The development of the database systemization is integrated into the destination branding.

Branding Strategy

1. STP

2. Branding

Type of destination branding based on the database systemization topics above.

- Product brand
- Service brand
- Place brand
- Thematic brand
- Geographic brand
- Events brand

a. Brand Structure

The elements of destination branding consist of:

- Brand Identity
 - Brand Value Proposition
 - Brand Communication
 - Brand image
 - Brand perception
 - Brand equity
- Brand integrity
- Brand idea
- Brand awareness
- Brand recognition
- Brand loyalty
- Brand quality
- Brand feeling
- Brand experience
- Brand personality
- Brand positioning

b. Link Brand to Marketing Mix

c. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

IMC Tools:

- Advertising

- Public Relations
- Direct Marketing
- Point of Purchasing (P.O.P.)
- Personal Selling
- Sales Promotion
- Events
- Sponsorship
- Online Marketing
 - Social media
 - Viral marketing

(Adapted from: (Mongkolchan, 2013), (Charoenwongsak, 2013), (Wongmontha, n.d.), (Prayoonrattana, n.d.), (Consulting, 2012), (Saguanpiyapan, 2011), (Organization, 2009), (Centre, n.d.), (Nergis Aziz, 2011))

From the concept of responsible cultural heritage tourism in AEC destination branding above, the researcher would like to clarify for the Thailand Central Northeastern Provinces Tourism Branding Based on the ASEAN Economic Community as shown below:

Branding Strategy

1. STP

- Niche tourists: Foreign (Ministry of Tourism and Sports Thailand, 2012), internet searching, cultural heritage tourists.

2. Branding “Sinsai, the Wonder”

a. Brand Structure

The elements of destination branding consist of:

- Brand Identity
 - Sinsai can connect to the cultural heritage; based on the architecture, paintings, literature, and performances.
- Brand Positioning
 - The Cultural Destination: The Land of Knowledge and Cultural Richness. (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2013)
- Brand Value Proposition
 - Brand Promise
 - Brand Feeling / Attitude
 - Brand Experience
- Brand Identity
 - Logo - Sinsai
 - Hearing - Songs
 - Touching – Destination Ambiance

- Brand Personality
 - All ages of cultural heritage tourists; the World Tourism Organization (WTO) estimates that cultural tourism accounts for 37% of all tourist trips. Cultural tourists are also thought to spend more, stay longer, travel more frequently, and participate in more activities than other tourists. (Isaac, 2008) The demographic profile of the cultural heritage travel segment today is younger, wealthier, more educated and more technologically savvy. (CulturalHeritageTourism.org, 2003)



Figure 6: Poster of Amazing Isan Fair 2013 (www.hisoparty.com, 2013)

b. Link Brand to Marketing Mix

- Product

Type of destination branding

The concept for this case has to be able to integrate the product brand, service brand, place brand, thematic brand, geographic brand, and events brand, together by linking the temples, architectures, literature, and performances, as mentioned in the topic of Sinsai, the reflection of Thai-Laos cultural heritage.

- Prize
- Place

- Promotion
 - People
 - Process
 - Physical Evidence
 - Brand Communication
 - Brand Image
 - Brand Perception
 - Brand Equity
- c. **Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)**
- IMC Tools
- Advertising
 - Public Relations – Tourism Authority of Thailand (2013) organized “Amazing Isan Fair”, at Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre”.
 - Point of Purchasing (P.O.P.), and Sales Promotion – Destination
 - Direct Marketing, and Personal Selling – create a Thailand Cultural Elite Card. As a government-backed program, Thailand Elite can offer privileges on an unprecedented scale. As you are now recognized as a friend of the country, you are also treated as such. From the visa privilege to our government concierge services, we look forward to welcoming you with our unique Thai warmth and hospitality. Adapted from (Elite, 2013)
 - Events – tourism fair, department stores, and street markets.
 - Sponsorship – private companies
 - Online Marketing: Social media



Figure 7: <http://www.facebook.com/TAT.KhonkaenOffice>
(Tourism Authority of Thailand Khonkaen, 2013)

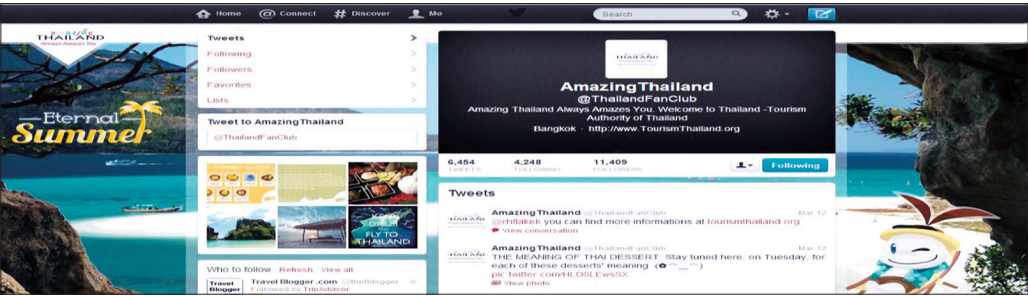


Figure 8: Twitter of Tourism Authority of Thailand (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2013)

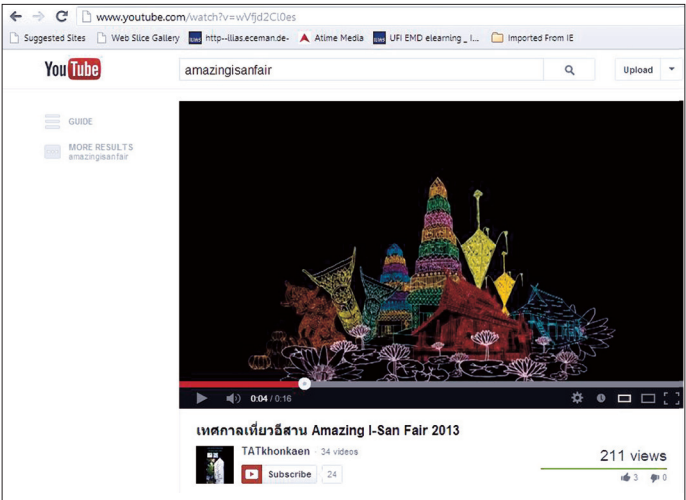


Figure 9: Viral marketing – YouTube Amazing I-San Fair 2013 (TATkhonkaen, 2013)

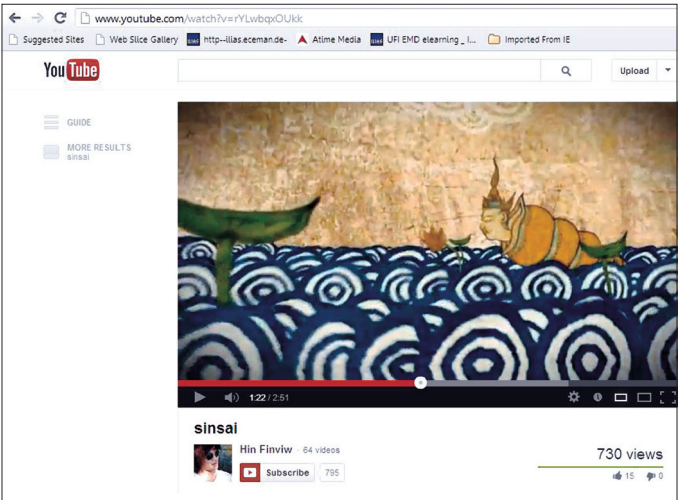


Figure 10: Sinsai on YouTube (Finviw, 2011)



Figure 11: Museum AR (MuseumAR, 2013)

- **Brand Integrity and Idea**
The brand “Sinsai, The Wonder” is guaranteed to give an authentic cultural experience.
- **Brand Awareness**
It must have a certain artistic level to increase tourism. Increasing brand awareness has made tremendous contributions by providing a strong guiding role in the niche of tourism psychology. This has been done by expanding the scope with a wider circulation, longer promotion times, and by providing literary works corresponding to the tourist destinations and events.
- **Brand Recognition**
The brand can be used in conjunction with social media for tourism promotion. For example, the broadcasts of social media such as videos on YouTube. There visitors can see unique experiences such as Sinsai Story. These are the actions the researcher is taking to increase Roi-Kaen-San-Sin’s tourism brand recognition and international ranking. Adapted from (GovernmentofCanada, 2013)
- **Brand Loyalty and Brand Quality**
First, the concept of Consumer Experience Tourism is defined. Second, the underlying interest in this type of tourism activity is reviewed. Travelers who engage in cultural tourism activities can visit (CulturalHeritageTourism.org, 2003) the following:

- art galleries, theatres and museums
- historic sites, communities or landmarks
- cultural events, festivals and fairs
- ethnic communities and neighbourhoods
- architectural and archaeological treasures

Third, the target consumers for such tourism destinations are examined. Finally, existing Consumer Experience Tourism efforts of authentic culture-related marketers are profiled. Adapted from (Journal, 2004)

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