



(Research Report)

Development of Youth Tourism Networks among
The Greater Mekong Sub-regional Countries

by
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(A Research Report)

Developments of Youth Tourism Networks among the Greater Mekong Sub-regional Countries

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Executive Summaries

Thailand is one of six members of the Greater Mekong Sub-region countries (GMS). Loei is a province in the northeastern part of Thailand, in the border of Thailand and Lao PDR. The people in Loei of Thailand, Luang Prabang and Vientiane of Lao PDR share the same mother tongue (language of speaking), historical background, customs and culture. There is only one university in Loei, Rajabhat University. It is one of the universities for rural development. Its vision is to **be a leading university of learning organization and integrating local and international disciplines for rural and regional development**. There are more than 50 courses of studies available at the university, in the level of bachelor, master, and doctoral degree. The Ph.D course in **Regional Development Strategies** is to produce the experts in GMS Development Strategies. In term of the geographical area compared with other universities in Thailand, Loei Rajabhat is the only one which is closest to Mekong River and neighboring border, Lao PRD. As a university with the mission of local and regional development, Loei Rajabhat University has tried to seek for academic cooperation with universities in neighboring countries. Loei Rajabhat University, Luang Prabang Teacher Training College and National University of Laos had signed MOUs of educational cooperation in 2004, and since then a lot of exchanged, collaborative and assistant projects in training, higher educational allowance, and tourism have been implemented. Apart from universities in Lao PDR, Loei Rajabhat University also has official agreements with universities in China, Vietnam, Cambodia and plan to have one with university in Myanmar in the near future.

The aims of this research program are to prepare knowledge, skills, and comprehensive approaches essential for development of youth tourism networks among universities in GMS countries. The procedures are to have experts, lecturers, officials, graduate students, people from travel and tourism sector, tourism stake holders and others from any related sectors integrate their work experiences or classroom lessons, use various research techniques, and apply knowledge management processes to study current situation of youth tourism and impacts caused by cross-border activities to select right problems for research. The research applied various techniques of data gathering and analysis: documentary surveys, interviews, group discussion, in-depth interviews with the experts, knowledge management approaches, field study visit, meeting, seminar and international conference. Such investigations were conducted in Loei, Thailand, Vientiane and Luang Prabang, Lao PDR during 2006 – 2007. The major subjects of this study were 40 people related to or expert in tourism and regional development.

This study proposed 10 research problems for further investigation and development, as follows:

- 1) How to develop human resources involved or related with tourism and cross-boarder activities successively.
- 2) How to develop youth tourism networks among universities in GMS countries.
- 3) What are likely to be the high impacted research problems to be conducted among GMS universities for sustainable development of the region?
- 4) How to integrate various science and technological advancement, diversities of culture, historical, and human natural resources available in the region for the Mekong Tourism development.

- 5) How to manage the knowledge essential to youth education, Mekong tourism, and GMS sustainable development.
- 6) How to strengthen the capacity and competitiveness of people and public or/ and private organization for the regional sustainable development.
- 7) How to facilitate for the communication flows among the region, linguistically, socially, politically, and technologically.
- 8) How to respect, preserve and conserve the identities and uniqueness of local and regional languages, culture, believes, wisdoms, religion, histories, indigenous people, and natural and historical resources in the practices of networking for regional tourism and development cooperation.
- 9) How to encourage the business providers, development sectors, university bodies, and policy makers to collaborate for the knowledge investigation and sharing for further development of local and regional tourism
- 10) How to start the centre for Mekong tourism for regional cooperation and sustainable development in selected universities in GMS countries.

The research found 11 research topics essential for regional development through tourism practices, as follows.

- 1) A development of university networks on GMS tourism
- 2) GMS Tourism and knowledge managements for communication flow, mutual understanding and benefit sharing
- 3) Tourism research and cross cultural studies for GMS youth education
- 4) GMS Discoveries : borderless issues for regional strengthening and sustainable development
- 5) GMS Community based tourism development for poverty reduction and regional relationship
- 6) GMS tourism knowledge asset link
- 7) Potentials of tourism destinations and products at the area along the GMS cross-border routes
- 8) A development of an international degree program in regional tourism management for sustainable development
- 9) A development of the center for GMS university networks for regional development through tourism (GMSUnets for RDT)
- 10) A Development of English learning packages for communication in specific purposes related to tourism
- 11) GMS identities and uniqueness

There are at least 18 universities as member of university networks for GMS development practices, 10 are from Thailand and 8 from other GMS countries. To drive the goal of each project come true, and to fulfill the university mission, Loei Rajabhat University would like to propose projects for further collaboration as follows.

- 1) A project to initiate the center of GMS university networks for regional development through tourism practices at Loei Rajabhat University and its network branches at universities in different parts of GMS countries. This includes the cooperation among GMS universities for youth education through tourism practices. The primary tasks for the center are seek for cooperation from various sectors for the possibilities of research projects proposed above, and manage projects to reach the goal given.

2) A project of cooperation among GMS universities for the development of the international degree program in regional tourism management for sustainable development

All of these prospects require suggestion, help and support between the university networks, and from public and private sectors related to knowledge transferring, policy making and financial or technical support.

ชื่องานวิจัย : การพัฒนาเครือข่ายความร่วมมือการด้านท่องเที่ยวของเยาวชนในอนุภูมิภาคแม่น้ำโขง
ผู้วิจัย : ประกอบ ผลงาม และคณะ

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ เพื่อพัฒนาโจทย์วิจัยที่เกี่ยวกับการพัฒนาเครือข่ายมหาวิทยาลัยเพื่อความ ร่วมมือการท่องเที่ยวเยาวชนในอนุภูมิภาคแม่น้ำโขง และเพื่อพัฒนาเครือข่ายมหาวิทยาลัยเพื่อการท่องเที่ยว เยาวชน ภาควิชาการวิพากษ์และเสนอแนะประเด็น โจทย์วิจัยเป็นผู้เชี่ยวชาญด้านการท่องเที่ยวและการพัฒนาภูมิภาค ผู้บริหารมหาวิทยาลัย อาจารย์ นักศึกษา และผู้มีส่วนเกี่ยวข้องด้านการท่องเที่ยว ทั้งระดับภาคและอนุภูมิภาค การ วิจัยดำเนินการตั้งแต่เดือนมกราคม 2549 ถึง เดือน สิงหาคม 2550 สถานที่หลักที่ดำเนินการวิจัยคือ จังหวัดเลย กรุงเทพมหานคร เชียงใหม่ หลวงพระบางและแขวงนครเวียงจันทน์ กระบวนการวิจัยในครั้งนี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ ประกอบด้วย การวิเคราะห์เอกสาร ศึกษาภาคสนาม การสัมภาษณ์ การอภิปรายกลุ่ม การวิพากษ์ การประชุมระดม ความคิด การนำเสนอผลงาน และการทบทวนปรับปรุงผลงาน

ผลการศึกษาได้ประเด็นคำถามการวิจัย 10 ประเด็น และหัวข้อวิจัย 11 หัวข้อ และได้เครือข่าย มหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศและอนุภูมิภาคจำนวน 18 มหาวิทยาลัย ประเด็นงานวิจัยที่ได้จำนวน 11 หัวข้อ ประกอบด้วย 1) การพัฒนาเครือข่ายมหาวิทยาลัยเพื่อการท่องเที่ยวในอนุภูมิภาคแม่น้ำโขง 2) การจัดการความรู้ ด้านการท่องเที่ยวในอนุภูมิภาคแม่น้ำโขง : ความคล่องตัวด้านการสื่อสาร ความเข้าใจอันดี และการมีผลประโยชน์ ร่วมกัน 3) การท่องเที่ยวและ วัฒนธรรมข้ามชาติ สำหรับเยาวชนในอนุภูมิภาค 4) ภูมิภาคแม่น้ำโขงศึกษา: วัฒนธรรมไร้พรมแดนกับความร่วมมือและการพัฒนาแบบยั่งยืนในภูมิภาค 5) การจัดการท่องเที่ยวแบบชุมชนมี ส่วนร่วม เพื่อจัดการความยากจนและการสร้างความสัมพันธ์ที่ดีในอนุภูมิภาค 6) เครือข่ายอินเทอร์เน็ตกับคลังสมอง ด้านการท่องเที่ยวในอนุภูมิภาค 7) การศึกษาและพัฒนาศักยภาพแหล่งท่องเที่ยวในเส้นทางเชื่อมโยงระหว่างชาติ 8) การพัฒนาหลักสูตรนานาชาติด้านการจัดการการท่องเที่ยวเพื่อการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน 9) การพัฒนาศูนย์ ประสานงานเครือข่ายมหาวิทยาลัยเพื่อการพัฒนาอนุภูมิภาคแม่น้ำโขง ผ่านการท่องเที่ยว (GMSUnets for RDT) 10) การพัฒนาชุดการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารเฉพาะกิจในศาสตร์ต่างๆที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการ ท่องเที่ยว 11) การศึกษาและวิเคราะห์อัตลักษณ์ของภูมิภาคเพื่อการท่องเที่ยว

ประเด็นและหัวข้อการวิจัยที่พัฒนาขึ้นต้องการข้อเสนอแนะเพื่อปรับปรุง และการสนับสนุนระหว่าง เครือข่ายมหาวิทยาลัยและเครือข่ายแหล่งทุนเพื่อการดำเนินงานต่อไป ความสะดวกการสื่อสารและการคมนาคม สามารถช่วยให้ความร่วมมือระหว่างชาติประสบความสำเร็จยิ่งขึ้น ภาษาอังกฤษและการเชื่อมต่ออินเทอร์เน็ตเป็น สื่อกกลางในการสื่อสารได้อย่างดี และการการเดินทางเพื่อเยี่ยมเยียนอนุภูมิภาค สร้างความเข้าใจอันดียิ่งขึ้นระหว่าง เจ้าบ้านและผู้มาเยือน

Research Title : Developments of Youth Tourism Networks among the Greater Mekong Sub-region Countries

Researchers : Prakorb Phon-ngam, et al

Abstract

The objectives of this study were to: 1) develop topics of research projects essential for the program of a development of youth tourism networks among universities in GMS countries, and 2) to develop university networks of youth tourism and cross-border interests. Major data was collected from tourism and regional development experts, universities' administrators, teachers, students, and tourism stake holders. The processes of the studies started and completed, mostly, in Loei, Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Luang Prabang, and Vientiane during January 2006 to August 2007, using qualitative research approaches included: documentary analysis, field surveys, casual interviews, group discussions, meetings, work presentations and reviews. The studies attempted to analyze the current situations and trends of tourism practices in the region, formulated such trends into practical research topics essential for youth education, and then formed the GMS university networks for such practices.

The study proposed 10 research problems to be investigated, 11 research topics to be studied, and gained at least 18 universities as GMS university networks. The 11 research topics for further collaboration are: 1) A development of university networks on GMS tourism, 2) GMS Tourism and knowledge managements for communication flows, mutual understanding and benefit sharing, 3) Tourism research and cross cultural studies for GMS youth education, 4) GMS Discoveries : borderless issues for regional strengthening and sustainable development, 5) GMS Community based tourism development for poverty reduction and regional relationship, 6) GMS tourism knowledge asset link, 7) Potentials of tourism destinations and products at the area along the GMS cross-border routes, 8) A development of an international degree program in regional tourism management for sustainable development, 9) A development of the center for GMS university networks for regional development through tourism (GMSUnets for RDT), 10) A Development of English learning packages for communication in specific purposes in various fields related to tourism, and 11) GMS identities and uniqueness.

It is highlighted that the research topics developed need suggestion, commend and support between university networks and from fund providers for the improvement and further practices. Communication and transportation flows could help with effectiveness of the cross-border cooperation. English and internet link are proposed as means for the contacts. In addition, support for chances to make the excursions to all major parts of GMS countries could help visitors and regional host understand each other better.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Significance and Background of the Study

Thailand is one of six members of the Greater Mekong Sub-region countries (GMS). Loei is a province in the northeastern part of Thailand, in the border of Thailand and Lao PDR. The people in Loei of Thailand, Luang Prabang and Vientiane of Lao PDR share the same mother tongue (language of speaking), historical background, customs and culture. There is only one university in Loei, Rajabhat University. It is one of the universities for rural development. Its vision is to **be a leading university of learning organization and integrating local and international disciplines for rural and regional development**. There are more than 50 courses of studies available at the university, in the level of bachelor, master, and doctoral degree. The Ph.D course in **Regional Development Strategies** is to produce the experts in GMS Development Strategies. In term of the geographical area compared with other universities in Thailand, Loei Rajabhat is the only one which is closest to Mekong River and neighboring border, Lao PRD. As a university with the mission of local and regional development, Loei Rajabhat University has tried to seek for academic cooperation with universities in neighboring countries. Loei Rajabhat University, Luang Prabang Teacher Training College and National University of Laos had signed MOUs of educational cooperation in 2004, and since then a lot of exchanged, collaborative and assistant projects in training, higher educational allowance, and tourism have been implemented. Apart from universities in Lao PDR, Loei Rajabhat University also has official agreements with universities in China, Vietnam, Cambodia and plan to have one with university in Myanmar in the near future.

The aims of this research program are to prepare knowledge, skills, and comprehensive approaches essential for development of youth tourism networks among universities in GMS countries. The procedures are to have experts, lecturers, officials, graduate students, people from travel and tourism sectors, tourism stake holders and others from any related sectors integrate their work experiences or classroom lessons, use various research techniques, and apply knowledge management processes to study current situation of youth tourism and impacts caused by cross-border activities to select right problems for research. The frameworks focus on human resource development in tourism and youth tourism cooperation among universities in GMS countries. The expected outputs of research are the knowledge assets essential for regional tourism management. The implements of the research results are expected to create sustainable youth tourism networks, better understanding among regional people, and better cooperation among networking organization.

Networking, human resources, economies, and technological advancements have become key factors of political empowerment and national strengthening. To watch out only aspects inside national boundary is not sufficient for global touch,

since new sciences and hi-technologies can change all the times. A regional networking or cross-border strategy has been initiated for decades by regional governments, as in Europe and Asia. Cooperation among nations can help with the question of sustainable development and can make regional compete with others. For this reason, in 1992 the **Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS)** development scheme led by the Asian development Bank (ADB) was initiated with six member- countries: Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos PDR, Myanmar, and Yunnan Province of China. Since then, the six countries have launched many cooperation programs, namely the educational cooperation, the joint developments of transportation, energy, telecommunications, human resource development, trade, investment, tourism, and agriculture.

GMS area is rich in diversities of culture, historical and natural assets. These aspects make people from many parts of the world wanted to visit and explore the region. As a result, it is ranked as one of the foremost tourism growth destination. Tourism brings both positive and negative impacts to all countries in this region. Tourism gives good income, better jobs, more comfortable transportation, and convenient infrastructures to people; however, tourism can affect the traditional uniqueness of the natural environments, and historical sites, language and culture of the host countries. . Development of all aspects in tourism in GMS countries needs good policies, careful plans and efficient human resources.

According to GMS Flagship initiatives in 2005, major interests for human resource developments aim are to (1) develop and implement cooperative arrangements for addressing human recourses issues in the health, education, and labor sectors, with focus on impacts of cross-boarder activities, such as trade, transport and tourism. (2)To facilitate opportunities of long term sustainable capacity building and competitiveness in the GMS, (3) To support transfer of knowledge and experience leading to improved skills and competence of the labor force, and (4)o strengthen the sub-region's human resource capacity in harnessing the benefit from advance technology.

Refer to data from ADB 2004, GMS tourism resources attracted about 17 million international tourists and around \$ 10 billion in receipts. Estimates based on WTO 2020 vision forecasts indicate that if a sub-regional approach to develop and promote the tourism sector is adopted, the GMS countries could attract about 29.2 million international tourists by 2010 and about 61.3 million by 2020.

As for tourism mentioned in the GMS flagship initiatives in 2005, majors objective of the projects are to develop sub-region as a single tourist destination, increase tourism in the GMS and strengthen sub-regional cooperation in tourism development among the GMS countries; promote increased tourism in the GMS as a means to reduce poverty, mitigate environmental degradation from unplanned and unsustainable development, and develop human recourses of the region.

Tourism has played an important part in Thailand business, according to ATTA' s service coupon 2005, international tourists in Thailand had been increasing dramatically from 1997-2002, it went from 1,630,060 in 1997 to 2,269,294 in 2002 , and went up and down from 2003-2005. The figures were 2,177,814 in 2003,

2688,455 in 2004, and then 1748,103 in 2005. The decreasing number of tourists in those periods was affected from Natural disaster, and disease, Tsunami and SAR.

Youth tourism has a long history in Europe. Young people independently travel through the networks of youth hostel and railways for their own pleasure. Tourists can even check in for short courses in university campus, they could choose to stay in university dormitory, hostel, or with host family.

As for Malaysian tourism planning research group, 2006, Youth Tourism becomes very important in many countries around the world, as can be seen recently, there was a Youth Tourism conference in Malaysia on May 3-5 2006, organized by Tourism Malaysia. The main focuses of the conference were; to provide a platform for the exchange of ideas, experiences and best practices in relation to youth tourism; to identify problems, issues and prospects in establishing youth tourism as a focus area for the tourism industry and to recommend policies, product development programs and strategic marketing approaches to improve the quality of youth tourism as a commercial venture as well as a catalyst for cultural exchange and regional integration.

Nancy Cockerell, Editor and Researcher of Pacific Area Travel Association, pointed out that youth travel market is an important generator of tourism that offers significantly better than average potential future growth. Asia Pacific has shown the highest growth of all regions worldwide in arrivals by young tourists. (Cockerell, Nancy; 1998)

In Canada, according to World Tourism Organization, in 2001, Young travelers represented approximately 20 % of all international tourist arrivals and the global youth market had been growing by close to 5% annually for several years. In addition, capturing the share of the youth travel market will help increase the share of global travel and expenditures in the future. (Alice d'Anjou; 2004)

For youth tourism in Thailand, a lot of young tourists come as bag pack travelers, still there is not much study about youth tourism. Koravic Nualkhair (2004) has initiated the first GMS Youth forum, under an advisory of Pramote Nakornthab, to educate youths on GMS development by having discussion with experts during the forum and traveling to places of interest in Thailand, Laos PDR and Vietnam.

Loei is one a few provinces in Thailand that have beautiful natural resources as well known tourist attraction, such as Phu Kradung and Phu Rue national parks, Phu Luang wild life sanctuary, Suan Hin Pha Rocket valley, and ect.. There are a lot visitor come to visit each year. In additional, there are 2 religious pagodas in Loei, Pra That Sri Song Rak and Phra That Satcha which mark a long relationship between Thai Loei and Laos people.

As mentioned earlier, Loei Rajabhat University has a vision of becoming a **leading university in GMS in term of integrating local and international disciplines for rural development**. The university runs also courses for Master and Ph.D degree in GMS development strategies. Our university is situated close to tourist landmark, Mekong River, Phurue and Phu Kradung, we always have a lot of visitors all year round.

Moreover, tourism promotion is one of project in our university and our province strategic development plans, therefore, we propose this program of research for the future benefit of our university and our neighboring countries.

1.2 Research Aims and Objectives

Aims of the Project

To create long term potentials and competitiveness of human resources in tourism and educational field in GMS countries, better understanding among regional people, better cooperation among networking organization, and to provide the opportunities of capacity building of people and organizations in the region The research program aimed at having people from universities and those from related sectors in Loei and / or the counterpart from GMS countries to conduct researches for the questions of cross-boarder impacts, and the outcomes of implementation of such researches are expected to give light to the region as mentioned earlier.

Proposed scopes of research problems, topics and tentative objectives obtained from the processes of the study are to proposed to the university networks and grant donors for further practices.

Objectives of the Project

- 1) To develop topics of research projects essential for the program of a development of youth tourism networks among universities in GMS countries.
- 2) To develop networks of youth tourism and cross- border interests.

1.3 Research Questions:

- 1) Which research topics and frameworks are relevant to and essential for the development of youth tourism networks among universities in GMS countries?
- 2) How to form and cooperate the networks of regional research in Youth tourism and cross- border issues?

1.4 Terminologies

1) Development (noun) 1.1) (u) when someone or something grows or changes and becomes more advanced. 1.2) (c) a recent event which is the latest in a series of related events. (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2003)

2) Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) is a geological region that includes nations and territories located in Mekong River basin, namely: Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Burma and Yunnan Province of China. This is an addition to the Mekong Sub-region originally exclusive of Yunnan Province. From 1992 on, with the assistance of Asian Development Bank (ADB), these nations have cooperated in economic programs, environmental protection. (Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Mekong_Subregion)

3) Network (noun) (c) a large system consisting of many similar parts that are connected together to allow movement or communication between or along the parts or between the parts and control center. (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2003)

4) Tourism as defined by Tourism Society, *“the temporary short term movement of people to destinations outside places where they normally live and work and their activities during their stay at these destinations”*. (The Tourism Network Handbook, 2005 at www.tourismknowledge.com and www.Tourismtraining.Info)

5) Tourism Network as defined themselves, the Tourism Network (2005) is a not-for-profit industry support organization, offering consultancy, training, networking opportunities and publications such as The Tourism Network Handbook and a free monthly newsletter containing “how to” advice covering marketing related topics. The Tourism Network has also developed the Tourism Knowledge website which has several marketing sections, including a free e-learning marketing workshop.

(www.tourismknowledge.com **Susan Briggs, 2005**)

6) Youth (noun) (u) young people, both male and female, considered as a group. (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2003)

7) Youth Tourism Network is defined as cooperative or partnership organizations representing both tourism education and tourism market with the demonstrated ability to attract new and returned visitors to the ultimate quality experience with mutually beneficial results. (Adapted from Collaborative Approaches to Cultural/Heritage Tourism, Canadian Heritage Website at <http://www.pch.gc.ca/>)

1.5 Scopes of the Study

1) Content Frames

The study focused on the investigation of research questions and research topics for the development of youth tourism in GMS.

2) Time Frames

The periods of the study were during June 2006-June 2007.

3) Subjects for the Study

The subjects of the study included GMS universities' lecturers and students, tourism experts, and tourism stakeholders.

1.6 Research Utilization

Results of this study are expected to be a useful for those in universities who deal with travel and tourism business or university business incubator in tourism. They could implement the plan in various aspects, namely;

(1) Develop short courses training in campus to meet visitors' needs, such as language, sport, customs, culture, spa and health courses, plus excursion packages to explore the regions.

(2) Provide possibilities for visitors to participate with universities classes, activities, and important events.

(3) Arrange wide ranges of accommodation, in hotel, shared houses, host families or in campus dormitories.

(4) Prepare basic services essential for tourists.

(5) Capacity building in various aspects useful for youth tourism management

1.6.1 Research Outputs

1) Research Topics for Youth Tourism Developments in GMS

2) A Research proposal for research project under the framework of the research program entitled "Human resource development and youth tourism cooperation among the Greater Mekong Sub-region Countries".

3) Knowledge assets concerning how to choose research problem and topic for further research.

1.6.2 Research Outcomes and Key Performance Indicators

The people involved can gain additional knowledge in research problem and topic identifying, developing research conceptual paper and research proposals, as evidence in the quality of research proposal.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literatures

To understand the background of GMS youth tourism network situation for this study, three domains are reviewed in this chapter: framework of sustainable tourism, related researches, and Issues and Events. The reviews are then followed by conceptual framework essential for this research developed from situation investigated.

2.1 Framework of Sustainable Tourism Reviews

According to the sustainable development of tourism conceptual definition (WTO, 2004), sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability. Thus, sustainable tourism should:

- 1) **Make optimal use of environmental resources** that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- 2) **Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities**, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- 3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, **providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders** that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Sustainable tourism development requires the **informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership** to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a **continuous process** and it requires **constant monitoring of impacts**, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.

Sustainable tourism should also maintain a **high level of tourist satisfaction** and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them." (WTO,2004, Retrieved from <http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/top/concepts.html>)

The Office of Tourism Development website has proposed the **7 P** in tourism development for the OTOP tourism village:

- **P₁** (Planning and Management)
- **P₂** (Presentation and Concept Development)
- **P₃** (Place)
- **P₄** (People)
- **P₅** (Products and Services)
- **P₆** (Promotion)
- **P₇** (Post-launch management)

Sasithorn Juynam (2004) mentioned the important elements in tourism. Those elements include: attractions, facilities, infrastructure, transportation, and hospitality.

As for the general theory of tourism, Travis F. Smith (http://www.hopstudios.com/nep/unvarnished/item/general_theory_of_tourism) mentioned that *“As I jaunted about town (town currently being Singapore) today by taxi, bumboat, escalator, staircase and metro, enjoying restaurant, museum, statue, skyscraper and crowds, I found myself musing on a general theory of tourism. The way I see it, all tourism can be reduced to six categories 1) Learning something new 2) Eating something new 3) Buying something new 4) Watching/seeing something new 5) Doing something (physically) new 6) Meeting someone new”* . His statement could be theorized as follows.

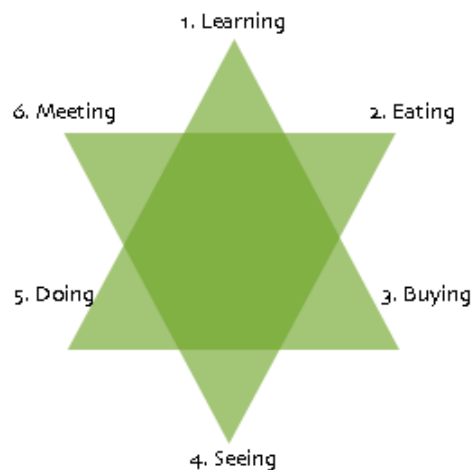


Figure 1: General Theory of Tourism by Travis F. Smith

One of the five strategic areas is “Tourism Cooperation”. The objective is to promote joint strategy for tourism cooperation among the CLMT countries, *Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand*, in order to facilitate travels of people from outside or within the region. 1) Conduct joint promotion and marketing of the sub-region and convene top-level tourism marketing missions to promote the CLMT countries; 2) Jointly promote existing and explore new forms of tourism development, in which the natural and cultural resources are preserved; 3) Cooperate to enhance tourism safety and security; 4) Develop a joint CLMT tourism website/ information database; 5) Establish a network of tourism training centers and develop trainers and training materials for employment across the CLMT; 6) Upgrade international border checkpoints to promote cross-border facilitation and ease travel into and within the CLMT countries; 7) Cooperate and promote air linkages among the CLMT countries. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website)

2.2 Related Research Reviews

Noppadon Krutnak (1997) studied a tourism carrying capacity of supply-side factors of Moo Koh Phi-Phi and found that there are 13 major supply-sided factors of tourism as: 1) transportation 2) restaurant 3) accommodation 4) water supply 5) electricity 6) communication 7) public health 8) security 9) recreation area 10) natural resources in tourism 11) waste treatment system 12) local people’s attitude toward tourism and 13) tourists’ attitude toward to tourism. (Noppadon Krutnak, 1997, abstract)

Sasithorn Juynam’s (2004) studies on tourist conditions in six northeastern provinces, Loei, Nong Khai, Nakhon Phanom, Mukdahan, Amnat Charoen and Ubon Ratchathani, along the Mekong River, marketing strategies that brought the growth of tourism, turned out that the development of infrastructure, transport, public relations service in tourist attractions and provision of conveniences for tourists in the six provinces were important factors that helped attract tourists. After analyzing the factors, she found opportunities and weaknesses so it was recommended that some strategies should be developed in order to overcome the weaknesses and to build opportunities in the provinces along the Mekong River. (Sasithorn Juynam, 2004, abstract)

Khanungporn Wongwien’s work(2000) entitled “Tourism Relations between Thai-Laos: A Case Study of Thai-Laos Friendship Bridge” studied the foreign policy, tourism policy, socio-psychological problems of Thailand and Lao PDR, including perception of benefits of Thai-Laos Friendship Bridge. It was found that the bilateral relationship of Thailand and Lao PDR are based on common historical, political, economic, social and cultural understanding. Some tourism problem occurred but can be solve within each country along with co-development on the basis of common understanding and cooperation for the maximum benefits of the two countries. (Khanungporn Wongwien , 2000)

Nancy Cockerell, Editor and Researcher of Pacific Area Travel Association, pointed out that youth travel market is an important generator of tourism that offers significantly better than average potential future growth. Asia Pacific has shown the

highest growth of all regions worldwide in arrivals by young tourists. (Cockerell, Nancy; 1998)

Pradtana Pratummaranon studied the aims of the Greater Mekong Subregion (The GMS Program), involving 6 countries: Yunnan Province of China, Myanmar, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Thailand. Attention was paid to the relationship among member countries with particular interest in relationship between Thailand and the Program. It was found that the national interest of each member country is the most important factor contributing to the cooperation within the program, leading to its concrete implementation. (Pradtana Pratummaranon, 2000)

2.3 Issues and Events Reviews

The GMS priority projects are grouped into 11 flagship initiatives in pursuit of these strategic thrusts. They include North-South, East-West and Southern Economic Corridors, telecommunications and energy interchanges, cross-border trade and investment, support for greater private sector participation in development, development of human resources, joint initiatives for the management of the sub-region's shared environment and natural resources, and the promotion of the GMS as a single tourism destination. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website, 2005)

With the Lancang (Mekong) river, according to Merrick Lex Berman (1998) was touted as an "Oriental Danube". It has become the focus plan to promote tourism for the GMS. Representatives of the GMS members met in Kunming in late 1994 in a five day seminar on tourism, agreed on a five point plan:

- 1) Promoting the sub-region as a tourism destination
- 2) Holding a sub-regional tourism forum
- 3) Training instructors in basic tourism skills
- 4) Training resource managers in conservation and tourism
- 5) Implementing a Mekong River Tourism planning study

WTO (2007) "*World tourism has entered into historically new phase of growth, which began three years ago. In 2005, it broke through the barrier of 800 million international arrivals. Last year, it reached 842 million. This new phase is characterized by a more solid and responsible type of growth*", UNWTO Secretary-General, Francesco Frangialli, said during his key note speech on the opening of the ITB international tourism in Berlin. (WTO, 2007, retrieved from www.world-tourism.org/newsroom/Releases/2007/march/global_climate.htm)

Paul Leung, et al., (1996, pp 3-4) mentioned the annual conference of the Pacific Asia Travel Association held in Bangkok in April, 1996 in their work about the agreement of the six countries that border the Mekong River to devise a strategy to jointly market the sub-region as "Asia's last tourism frontier" The six countries consisted of Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Cambodia, and the southern part of Yunnan in China. The Greater Mekong Sub-region Initiative, the tourism

committee will produce videos for promotional purpose, to train tourism personnel, and to initiate a Mekong River Tourism planning study.

Judhaphan Padunchewit, Ph.D. (2001) noted, Tourism, one of the chief vehicles of globalization, has been a major industry and a leading earner of foreign exchange for Thailand for decades. National Tourism in Thailand is said to be a willing agent in the development and marketing of primordialism of Thainess. An international advertising agency was hired to promote and aggressively sell Thailand's images abroad. (Judhaphan Padunchewit, 2001)

Mingsarn Kaosa-ard, et al., noted, The Kingdom of Thailand possesses a physical and ethnic richness that has led to its establishment among the world's major tourist destinations. In 1996, an estimated 7.44 million international tourists visited Thailand and their collective expenditures of 201,389 million baht proved to be the country's primary source of foreign exchange that year (TDRI, 1997). (Mingsarn Kaosa-ard, et al.,)

In 2006, there was the Public Private Partnership agreement signed by UNWTO and Microsoft. They will seek to deliver YouTourist.net as a unique e-Tourism Social Network. This platform allows tourist to connect with one another to exchange information based on the UNWTO's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism by using WISeKey Digital Identification and Microsoft Cardspace technologies. (PR Newswire,2007) <http://www.sys-con.com/read/331457.htm>

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and George Washington University's International Institute of Tourism Studies (IITS) created website "DANTEI" or "The Development Assistance Network for Tourism Enhancement and Investment" in full name to facilitate global communications by addressing tourism-relevant information disconnects between host countries and destinations, donors, government and NGO aid recipients, researchers, investors and development practitioners. (e-TAT Tourism Journal at <http://www.dantei.org>)

In 1990 the George Washington University convened the first WTO Tourism Policy Forum (TPF). The objectives of the Forum are to:

- 1) Exchange views with bilateral & multilateral donor organizations, as well as representative recipients;
- 2) Discuss sustainable tourism development policies in relation to the MDG's
- 3) Report on WTO general initiatives in relation to sustainable tourism and development and particularly the WTO ST-EP program to bring sustainable tourism development into the service of poverty elimination.
- 4) Share promising practices for sustainable development and consider lessons learned from exemplary tourism projects supported by donors
- 5) Formulate recommendations for utilizing tourism as a sustainable development tool for achieving MDG outcomes. (WTO, TPF forum. 2004) (<http://www.dantei.org/wto-forum/objectives.html>)

John Eyles finds innovative ways to get people from different backgrounds and location to collaborate in common ideas space using digital media and internet by creating a self financing tourism game that promotes the Greater Mekong Sub-region and help support sustainable community based economic development. (retrieved from www.johneyles.info/cp5.htm)

WTO welcomes the World Economic Forum's (WEF) focus on travel and tourism competitiveness as a valuable new research process. It is a timely reference for states participating in the final stages of the Doha Development Round to provide proactive for developing countries to help increase their tourism competitiveness to reduce poverty and advance sustainability.

UNWTO (2007)notes particularly that:

- Its useful, initial research on tourism competitiveness strengths and weaknesses, complementing actual performance in the market place.
- Its contribution to the global understanding of the socio-economic importance of the sector.
- The strong recognition that Tourism Service are especially important for the world's poorest countries.
- Its clear identification of the market advantage of states with evolved economies due in many respects to the flow through competitive benefits of industrialization and converse drag effect of poverty and development. In other words, the competitiveness playing field is not level.

In Washington Declaration on Tourism as a Sustainable Development Strategy October 20, 2004, the agreements are;

1) To build partnerships of equal opportunity and fair representation within destinations, and to strengthen their leadership;

2) engender local community awareness of the tourism planning process and its benefits;

3) To foster buy-in for the concept of sustainability by all sectors including the sharing of guidelines and good practices;

4) To delegate the authority for decision-making to the appropriate community level and build capacity there, and empower local development authorities;

5) To encourage and facilitate brand awareness and a collective image for a destination community;

To recognize the uniqueness of the business perspective as different from that of the public sector and to communicate effectively in business language;

6) To develop cross-sectoral demonstration projects that illustrates linkages, inter-relationships and working partnerships;

7) To call upon governments, bi-lateral and multi-lateral institutions to facilitate access to capital of all kinds, and to provide guidance, training and support on how to access such funding;

8) To develop land-use policies through a participatory process, and to provide policy incentives for private land owners;

9) To enhance communication and coordination between agencies including the use of advanced information communication technologies;

10) To develop educational programs directed to tourism policy stakeholders including local communities to promote the understanding of cultural/heritage resources, and the need for preservation and social responsibilities;

11) To encourage the development of a regional network of researchers, practitioners and donor agencies for sustainable tourism development. (WTO,2004)

Professor Dr. Fujiwara, Okitsugu (2007) gave reflection on Rationale for Regional Tourism, at the International Conference on GMS Discovery: Borderless Issues for Regional Strengthening and Sustainable Development, at Loei Rajabhat University, on 29th October 2007 that *“tourism is an important and essential activity for every human being to sustain and uphold quality of life. It is (1) a leisure activity for every human who needs to move away from their daily-life environment to heel fatigue, recharge battery, and refresh minds in order to return to energetic and productive normal life; (2) an eye opening experimental event which broadens and deepens international, regional, national, local understanding of and appreciation to difference and diversity of human beings, life styles, cultures, civilizations, histories, natures, and heritages, which would contribute not only mutual understanding and respect, but also reorienting life style, philosophy and values of life for better and meaningful lives to live. Therefore, everyone has obligation to contribute sustainable tourism development in the GMS. The emerging research activities on social, cultural, economic and environmental impact assessment of tourism along with recommendation of effective interventions to reduce negative impacts are essential academic activities to be pursued by a group of academicians in the GMS.”*

Parichart Visuthismajarn, et al, (2007) stated in their works that, to promote sustainable tourism, the four measures has to be used: *“(1) Restoration and conservation of arts and culture, traditions and local wisdom; (2) Restoration and conservation and utilization of historical and archeological sites, and tourism sites; (3) Development of network for learning and exchanging information about arts and culture, historical and archeological sites and local wisdom; and (4) Promotion of sustainable tourism considering potentials and carrying capacities of tourism sites, in line with communities’ need and their ways-of-life.”* From this point of view, it can be

seen that “Youth Tourism Network” is very useful for the development of tourism activities.

Situation of the networking could be concluded from Choophan Chomphoochan (2007) that any communities among any countries border are directly affected effective networking systems and collaboration on on-going sustainable tourism management.

Major activities of the Mekong Tourism, as suggested by Professor Dr.Fujiwara, Okitsugu,(2007) should be holistic, covering issues on (1) multi-facet tourism: ecotourism, agro tourism, cultural tourism, historical tourism, and geographical tourism, (2) suitable and innovative service position, (3) development of cross-country and regional tourism, (4) development of appropriate tourism performance indicators to review and monitor tourism development and group activities; and (5) integration of tourism with other relevant sectors such as, trade and investment, transport, environment, and agriculture.

Mark A. Ritchie (2007) introduced ISDSI courses at the international conference on GMS Discovery at Loei Rajabhat University. The courses integrated many useful approaches, such as, Landscape based, Leadership, Language learning, Home stays, Travel through the landscape, Direct learning, Appropriate place of teaching, Facilitation, Graceful failure, and Learning through challenges. These approaches are very useful for youth tourism networks.

Networking, human resources, economies, and technological advancements have become key factors of political empowerment and national strengthening. To watch out only aspects inside national boundary is not sufficient for global touch, since new sciences and hi-technologies can change all the times. A regional networking or cross-border strategy has been initiated for decades by regional governments, as in Europe and Asia. Cooperation among nations can help with the question of sustainable development and can make regional compete with others. For this reason, in 1992 the **Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS)** development scheme led by the Asian development Bank (ADB) was initiated with six member- countries: Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos PDR, Myanmar, and Yunnan Province of China. Since then, the six countries have launched many cooperation programs, namely the educational cooperation, the joint developments of transportation, energy, telecommunications, human resource development, trade, investment, tourism, and agriculture.

GMS area is rich in diversities of culture, historical and natural assets. These aspects make people from many parts of the world want to visit and explore the region. As a result, it is ranked as one of the foremost tourism growth destination. Tourism brings both positive and negative impacts to all countries in this region. Tourism gives good income, better jobs, more comfortable transportation, and convenient infrastructures to people; however, tourism can affect the traditional uniqueness of the natural environments, and historical sites, language and culture of the host countries. . Development of all aspects in tourism in GMS countries needs good policies, careful plans and efficient human resources.

According to GMS Flagship initiatives in 2005, major interests for human resource developments aim are to (1) develop and implement cooperative arrangements for addressing human resources issues in the health, education, and labor sectors, with focus on impacts of cross-boarder activities, such as trade, transport and tourism. (2) To facilitate opportunities of long term sustainable capacity building and competitiveness in the GMS, (3) To support transfer of knowledge and experience leading to improved skills and competence of the labor force, and (4) to strengthen the sub-region's human resource capacity in harnessing the benefit from advance technology.

Refer to data from ADB 2004, GMS tourism resources attracted about 17 million international tourists and around \$ 10 billion in receipts. Estimates based on WTO 2020 vision forecasts indicate that if a sub-regional approach to develop and promote the tourism sector is adopted, the GMS countries could attract about 29.2 million international tourists by 2010 and about 61.3 million by 2020.

As for tourism mentioned in the GMS flagship initiatives in 2005, major objective of the projects are to develop sub-region as a single tourist destination, increase tourism in the GMS and strengthen sub-regional cooperation in tourism development among the GMS countries; promote increased tourism in the GMS as a means to reduce poverty, mitigate environmental degradation from unplanned and unsustainable development, and develop human resources of the region.

Tourism has played an important part in Thailand business, according to ATTA's service coupon 2005, international tourists in Thailand had been increasing dramatically from 1997-2002, it went from 1,630,060 in 1997 to 2,269,294 in 2002, and went up and down from 2003-2005. The figures were 2,177,814 in 2003, 2,688,455 in 2004, and then 1,748,103 in 2005. The decreasing number of tourists in those periods was affected from Natural disaster, and disease, Tsunami and SAR.

Youth tourism has a long history in Europe. Young people independently travel through the networks of youth hostel and railways for their own pleasure. Tourists can even check in for short courses in university campus, they could choose to stay in university dormitory, hostel, or with host family.

As for Malaysian tourism planning research group, 2006, Youth Tourism becomes very important in many countries around the world, as can be seen recently, there was a Youth Tourism conference in Malaysia on May 3-5 2006, organized by Tourism Malaysia. The main focuses of the conference were; to provide a platform for the exchange of ideas, experiences and best practices in relation to youth tourism; to identify problems, issues and prospects in establishing youth tourism as a focus area for the tourism industry and to recommend policies, product development programs and strategic marketing approaches to improve the quality of youth tourism as a commercial venture as well as a catalyst for cultural exchange and regional integration.

Alice d' Anjou (2004) mentioned that according to World Tourism Organization, in 2001, Young travelers in Canada represented approximately 20 % of all international tourist arrivals and the global youth market had been growing by close to 5% annually for several years. In addition, capturing the share of the youth travel market will help increase the share of global travel and expenditures in the future.

Concerning youth tourism in Thailand, a lot of young tourists come as bag pack travelers, still there not much study about youth tourism. Koravic Nualkhair (2004) has initiated the first GMS Youth forum, under an advisory of Dr. Pramote Nakornthab, to educate youths on GMS development by having discussion with experts during the forum and traveling to places of interest in Thailand Laos PDR and Vietnam.

Loei is one a few provinces in Thailand that have beautiful natural resources as well known tourist attraction, such as Phu Kradung and Phu Rue national parks, Phu Luang wild life sanctuary, Suan Hin Pha Rocket valley, and ect.. There are a lot visitor come to visit each year. In additional, there are 2 religious pagodas in Loei, Pra That Sri Song Rak and Phra That Satcha which mark a long relationship between Thai Loei and Laos people.

As mentioned earlier, Loei Rajabhat University has a vision of becoming **a leading university in GMS in term of integrating local and international disciplines for rural development**. The university runs also courses for Master and Ph.D degree in GMS development strategies. Our university is situated close to tourist landmark, Mekong river, Phurue and Phu Kradung, we always have a lot of visitors all year round.

Moreover, tourism promotion is one of project in our university and our province strategic development plans, therefore, we propose this program of research for the future benefit of our university and our neighboring countries.

As noted in Himalayan Travel Trade Journal, International visitor arrivals (IVAs) to Asia Pacific in 2005 numbered nearly 330 million trips, representing region-wide year-on-year growth of 7.6% and a new regional record. Since 2001, IVAs have grown at an average annual rate of 6%. (PATA, 200, http://www.httj.com.np/dec_2006/pata.htm)

The First GMS Summit in 2002 endorsed the Strategic Framework for the GMS, which focuses on five strategic development thrusts:

- Strengthen infrastructure linkages through a multi sector approach,
- Facilitate cross-border trade and investment,
- Enhance private sector participation in development and improve its competitiveness,
- Develop human resources and skill competencies, and
- Protect the environment and promote sustainable use of the sub-region's shared natural resources.

2.4 Conceptual Frameworks of the Study

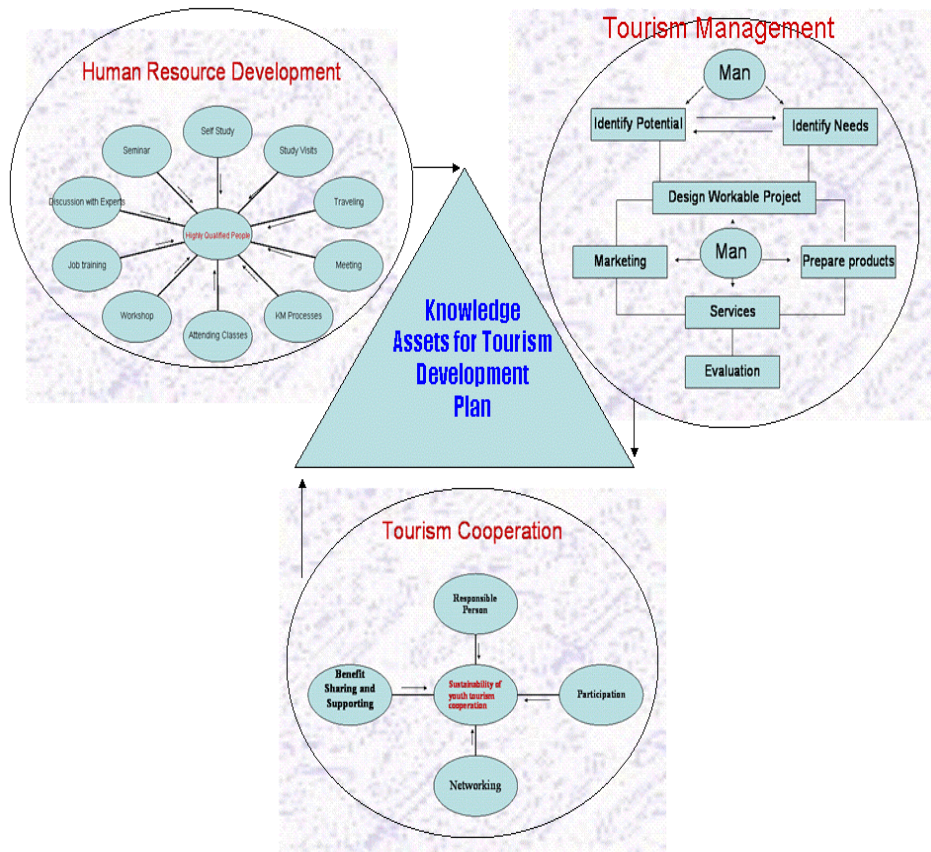


Figure 2: Knowledge Assets for Tourism Development Plan

Human Resource Development

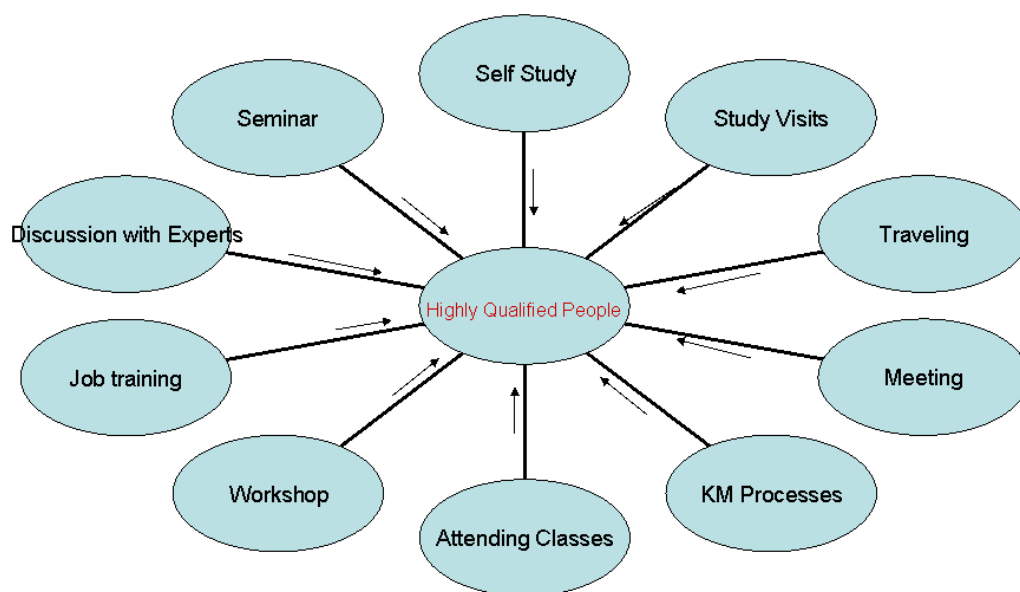


Figure 3: Human Resource Development

Tourism Management

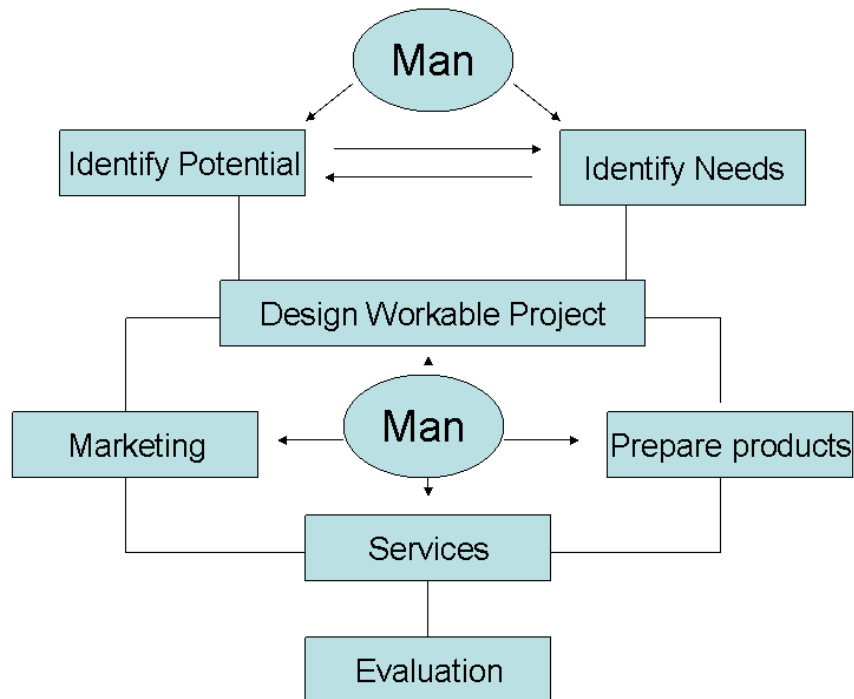


Figure 4: Tourism Management

Tourism Cooperation

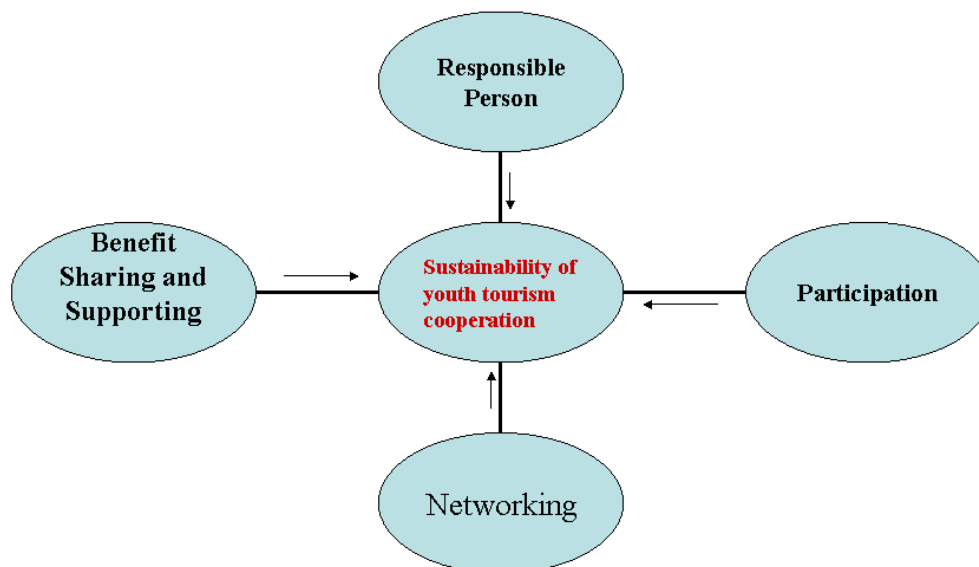


Figure 5: Tourism Cooperation

Chapter 3

Methodologies

This chapter describes the research methodologies designed for the development of research problems and topics for GMS youth tourism and networks. It starts with subjects for the studies, data accumulation, and data analysis.

3.1 Subjects for the studies

To develop the research problems and topics, the studies concerned the ideas and suggestion from selected bodies related to tourism practices, research and education. Totally, there were 40 major subjects participated in various events. The numbers did not include those interested in and applied for the events; lists of major subjects are as follows.

- 1) Researchers, lecturers and administrative board at Loei Rajabhat University (5 people)
- 2) Researchers and Lecturers in Rajabhat University Networks interested in tourism research (7 people)
- 3) Researchers and Lecturers from GMS universities and Networks (14 people)
- 4) Experts in Networking, Regional Development, tourism, education and Human resource development from Japan, America, Singapore, China, and Leading organization in Thailand (5 people)
- 5) The Administrators from Tourism Authority of Thailand from Loei and from Northeastern Region 5. (2 people)
- 6) Representatives from Thailand Research Fund (2 people)
- 7) Representatives from Commission on Higher Education (2 people)
- 8) The administrator from the International Sustainable Development Studies Institute (1 person)
- 9) The Administrator from Asian Development Bank (1 person)
- 10) The Administrators from UNESCO (1 person)

3.2 Data accumulation

Practically, the processes of the studies started and completed, mostly, in Loei, Bangkok, Chiangmai, Laung Prabang, and Vientiane during January 2006 to August 2007. Research tasks were those of the qualitative approaches included: documentary analysis, field surveys, casual interviews, and group discussion, meeting, work presentation and reviews. The studies attempted to analyze the current situations and trend of tourism practices in the region, formulated such trend into practical research topics essential for youth education, and then form the GMS university networks for such practices. To reach the research objectives, major events were accomplished as follows.

- 1) Studied current situation of tourism and the development of youth tourism networks in GMS countries from various literatures and had site visits at the certain

area of GMS countries. The study aimed at finding the current local or regional problems essential for youth education in tourism cooperation in GMS countries, develop the research topics for cross-boarder researches, and develop GMS youth tourism network.

2) Identified research problems and topics from the information gained from the surveys.

3) Had group discussion among research members and peers for the research problem and topic analysis and network development.

4) Hold meetings among researchers and peers for the development research projects in term of research problem analysis, research proposal development, and GMS youth tourism forming. In the process of the study, there were six meetings, once at Luang Prabang Teacher Training College in May 2006, twice were at National University of Laos, in July 2006 and January 2007, and three times of meeting at Loei Rajabhat University in August 2006, December 2006, and January 2007. All the meetings were held for the discussion of research problems and possibility of the collaborative projects, and to collect useful data for the study.

5) Had experts commend the research problems, topic frameworks and research proposal.

6) Reviewed more sources; adjusted the research problems, topic frameworks and proposal of each project in accordance with reasonable suggestions.

7) Presented the progress of the project in the major events or meeting occurred during the period of the project for suggestions and reviews to confirm the quality of the research problems, topics and proposal, and to find the research networks. For this stage, this work had been reviewed 4 times in 4 meetings hold by the coordinator from Thailand Research Fund. In addition, the works had been internationally reviewed for 3 times, once in the symposium on economic cooperation in Greater Mekong Sub-region: Potential for trade and investment promotion, hosted by School of Economics, Chiang Mai University on 18-19 September 2006, and twice at the international conferences on GMS discoveries hosted by Loei Rajabhat University at Loei on 6-8 December 2006 and on 27-30 August 2007.

8) Revised and adjusted the works in accordant with suggestions

3.3 Data analysis

As the study focused on the qualitative approach, the content analysis was based on frames given as follows:

- 1) Situation and trend of educational system and tourism practices in GMS countries.
- 2) Demands and supplies of universities and youth tourism stakeholders
- 3) Possibilities of grants supported
- 4) Sustainable developments factors
- 5) Suggestions from peers and experts
- 6) Development of the learning approach for youth and educational bodies

Chapter 4

Results of the Study

This chapter includes results of the study. The description divided into three parts: 1) research problems and topics together with the tentative objectives of the studies, 2) university networks of GMS youth tourism and 3) a sample of research proposal developed from the investigated topic.

4.1 Research problems and topics from further studies

To reach the objectives of research topic development, firstly, it needed to study how to develop human resources involved or related with tourism and cross-boarder activities successively, and then, tried to identify how to develop the sustainable youth tourism networks among universities in GMS countries. The workable and plausible research topics related to goals of the study are divided into three parts as follow:

4.1.1 Research problems

The areas of research problems to be investigated and developed in the whole program are shown as follows.

- 1) How to develop human resources involved or related with tourism and cross-boarder activities successively.
- 2) How to develop youth tourism networks among universities in GMS countries.
- 3) What are likely to be the high impacted research problems to be conducted among GMS universities for sustainable development of the region?
- 4) How to integrate various science and technological advancement, diversities of culture, historical, and human natural resources available in the region for the Mekong Tourism development.
- 5) How to manage the knowledge essential to youth education, Mekong tourism, and GMS sustainable development.
- 6) How to strengthen the capacity and competitiveness of people and public or/ and private organization for the regional sustainable development.
- 7) How to facilitate for the communication flows among the region, linguistically, socially, politically, and technologically.
- 8) How to respect, preserve and conserve the identities and uniqueness of local and regional languages, culture, believes, wisdoms, religion, histories, indigenous people, and natural and historical resources in the practices of networking for regional tourism and development cooperation.
- 9) How to encourage the business providers, development sectors, university bodies, and policy makers to collaborate for the knowledge investigation and sharing for further development of local and regional tourism
- 10) How to start the centre for Mekong tourism for regional cooperation and sustainable development in selected universities in GMS countries.

4.1.2 Research topics

The research topics including their tentative objectives developed from the studies are shown as follows:

Project 1 : A Development of University Networks on GMS Tourism

The objectives of the study are (1) to survey the demands of and supplies for youth tourism in GMS countries in two domains: 1) demands and behaviors of tourists traveling to selected area of the region, 2) potentials and needs of Universities in the region in term of youth tourism development and management, and (2) to develop youth tourism networks among Rajabhat universities in Thailand and Universities in GMS countries.

Project 2 : GMS Tourism and knowledge managements for communication flow, mutual understanding and benefit sharing

This project has the intention to support students and lecturers in GMS network universities in six countries including Thailand, Laos PDR, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, and China to conduct researches concerning knowledge management in GMS tourism. Those with the best piece of works will be selected to join the GMS discovery program and present their works in Thailand in 2008. The objectives are: 1) to provide useful information concerning national tourism products for regional promotion, and 2) to develop guide lines for the development of local and regional knowledge assets on language, culture, believes, wisdoms, religion, histories, homogeneous people, and natural and historical resources in the practices of networking for regional tourism and development cooperation for communication flow, mutual understanding and benefit sharing through youth tourism.

Project 3 : Tourism Research and Cross cultural studies for GMS Youth Education

This project is provide workshop and educational trips to selected parts of Thailand, Laos PDR, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, and China for region discovery and cross cultural studies for mutual understanding and benefit sharing. The objects are; 1) to have a 5 day-training course for the basic principle of cross cultural study, peacemaking, and basic research skills in tourism research for totally 24 students from 6 GMS countries, four students from each country, 2) to educate youths on how to do tourism research on any topic related to mutual understand and benefit sharing, and train them on how to work with people from different cultural background in the foreign countries by having them travel into four GMS countries: Thailand, Laos PDR and Vietnam within 15 days and meet with experts for their research, 3) provide knowledge and opportunities for GMS youth the prepare research papers to distribute or participate in the international conference.

Project 4 : GMS Discoveries : borderless issues for regional strengthening and sustainable development

This project first started as 1) “**the international seminar for the collaborative research among GMS universities**” hold during 6-8 December 2006 at Loei Rajabhat University, 2) the event continued for the second time as “**the international conference on GMS Discoveries : borderless issues for regional strengthening and sustainable development**” during 27-30 August 2007 at Loei Rajabhat University and National University of Laos in Vientiane. The project was planned to be hold annually in selected universities in GMS countries. The objectives of the projects are to : 1) bring together university faculties, students, researchers and scholars interested in GMS development and borderless issues to discuss and share knowledge and experiences for further study and implementation, 2) highlight issues on GMS development needing further exploration, 3) facilitate the sharing of knowledge for sustainable development through tourism practices and researches, 4) provide chance for graduate students and lecturers to present their research papers at the international venue.

Project 5 : GMS Community based tourism development for poverty reduction and regional relationship

The purpose of this project is to study how to encourage the business providers, development sectors, university bodies, and policy makers to collaborate for the knowledge investigation and sharing for further development of local and regional community based tourism. The tentative objectives are to :1) analyze the situation and formulate the tourism plan for the community based tourism for given purposes in selected parts of GMS countries, 2) implement such plans in the target communities in GMS countries.

Project 6 : GMS tourism knowledge asset link

The purpose of the project is to build the GMS knowledge assets in the form of retrievable internet information which is reachable worldwide and can be transferred among GMS Universities networks. The objectives are to (1) create the website of GMS development through tourism, (2) develop the system of knowledge investigation and distribution among networks, and to (3) provide the web blog for public participation.

Project 7 : Potentials of tourism destinations and products at the area along the GMS cross-border routes

The objectives of this study are, 1) to survey potentials of tourism destination and products at the selected cross-border routes in various parts of GMS countries, 2) study tourism stakeholders’ needs towards development and management of tourist destinations and products, 3) to design GMS tourism programs for the study routes, and 4) to create GMS tourism data bases for the public uses, both paper base and web-base.

Project 8 : A development of an international degree program in regional tourism management for sustainable development

The purpose of this project is to create an international curriculum for the degree program at the GMS universities in regional tourism management for sustainable development. The objectives are to 1) develop the international degree program in regional tourism management for sustainable development, 2) to run such program in the selected GMS University.

Project 9 : A development of the center for GMS university networks for regional development through tourism (GMSUnets for RDT)

The purpose of this project is to initiate the center of GMS university networks regional development through tourism practices at Loei Rajabhat University, and its network branches at universities in different parts of GMS countries. The tentative objectives of the center are to : 1) provide chances for university networks to help and share with each other in term of education, research and development through tourism practices, 2) to facilitate the practices of capacity and competitiveness strengthening of people and public or/ and private sectors to gain the benefit of cross-border activities, 3) to collaborate with the international, regional and national organization with financial and technical support for the practices related to investigation and transfer of knowledge, wisdom and experiences leading to the improvement of skill and competence of university bodies, local people or those in public and private sectors, 4) to enhance the researches and projects in unlimited fields or sciences that could be integrated with tourism implementation, and 5) to initiate the journal on GMS Discoveries.

Project 10 : A Development of English learning packages for communication in specific purposes in various fields related to tourism

The purposes of this project are to support graduate students and lecturers to study and develop English learning handbooks or packages for communication between host and visitors in specific purposes, namely regional food and drinks, religion, language, cultures, science and technologies, wisdom, products, etc.

Project 11 : GMS identities and uniqueness

The purposes of this project are to 1) to provide chances for researcher in the university networks to explore, and analyze the identities and uniqueness of various types of resources in each area, 2) to compare the uniqueness of such resources as the GMS identities, and 3) promote such identities for the tourism purposes.

4.2 University Networks for GMS Youth Tourism

The University Network development was initiated in three phrases;

1) Launched Networks for educational and research cooperation among Loei Rajabhat University, Thailand, Luang Prabang Teacher Training College, National University of Laos at Vientiane, and Suphanuvong University in Luang Prabang, the network was established in 2003. Major collaborative practices were educational staff exchange visits and grant allowance for degree level studies. This network started with university visit program and then developed into the stage of Memorandum of Understanding signing.

2) Thai University Network for GMS Tourism and sustainable and development, this network included Loei Rajabhat University and Rajabhat Universities in the north and northeast of Thailand, namely, Chiang Mai Rajabhat University, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Maharakam Rajabhat University, Surindra Rajabhat University, Buriram Rajabhat University, Udon Rajabhat University, Sakon Nakorn Rajabhat University, Nakornrachasima Rajabhat University, and Ubon Rajabhat University.

3) Universities Network in GMS countries for Mekong Tourism, this network includes Thai Rajabhat Universities mentioned in No.2, and (1) National University of Laos, (2) Supanu Vong National University at Luang Prabang, (3) Luang Prabang Teacher Training College, Lao PDR, (3) Hanoi University, (4) Vietnam National University, (5) Yunnan Institute of Sciences, Kunming (5) Kunming University of Science and Technology, P.R. China, (6) Royal University of Phnom Penh, (7) University of Technologies and Management, Phnom Penh, (8) Build Bright University, Phnom Penh.

4.3 A Sample of the Research Proposal

A research proposal which is one of the research results of this research created by the researchers to be submitted to the research fund, presented as in the following pages.

A Development of an International Degree Program in
Regional Tourism Management for Sustainable Development

(การพัฒนาหลักสูตรนานาชาติ ด้านการจัดการการท่องเที่ยวในอนุภูมิภาคเพื่อการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน)

by

Prakorb Phon-ngam, et al.

Loei Rajabhat University
2006

Proposed to
Thailand Research Fund

1. ชื่อชุดโครงการ

(ภาษาไทย) : การสร้างหลักสูตรนานาชาติด้านการจัดการการท่องเที่ยวในอนุภูมิภาคเพื่อการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน

(ภาษาอังกฤษ) : A Development of an International Degree Program in Regional Tourism Management for Sustainable Development

คำสำคัญ : การสร้างหลักสูตรนานาชาติ / การจัดการการท่องเที่ยวในอนุภูมิภาค/ การพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน

Keywords: A Development of an International Degree Program / Regional

Tourism Management / Sustainable Development

2. ชื่อหัวหน้าโครงการ

ชื่อ-สกุล (ภาษาไทย) นายประกอบ ผลงาม

ชื่อ-สกุล (English) Mr. Prakorb Phon-ngam

คุณวุฒิ : Ph.D (Linguistics), Cert. in Sustainable Tourism Research

ตำแหน่งงาน 1. รองอธิการบดีฝ่ายมาตรฐานการศึกษา มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเลย

(กำกับดูแลงานวิเทศสัมพันธ์ ศูนย์ภาษา และการประกันคุณภาพการศึกษา)

2. ประธานคณะ กรรมการบัณฑิตศึกษาศาखाวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเลย

หน่วยงาน มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเลย อ. เมือง จังหวัดเลย 42000

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4. ชื่อและสถานที่ติดต่อของผู้บังคับบัญชาของหน่วยงานของหัวหน้าโครงการ

ชื่อ-สกุล (ภาษาไทย) นายไพฑูรย์ ยามุขดี

ตำแหน่งทางวิชาการ ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์

ตำแหน่งงาน อธิการบดี

หน่วยงาน มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเลย อ. เมือง จังหวัดเลย 42000

ที่อยู่ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏ อ. เมือง จังหวัดเลย 42000

โทรศัพท์ 042- 835225 – 8 ต่อ 1111

โทรสาร 042-811143

5. ได้เสนอโครงการนี้ หรือโครงการที่มีส่วนเหมือนกับเรื่องนี้บางส่วนเพื่อขอทุนต่อแหล่งอื่นที่ใดบ้าง

(/) ไม่ได้เสนอต่อแหล่งทุนใด

6. งบประมาณของโครงการนี้	จำนวน		บาท
จาก สกว .			บาท
จากหน่วยงานร่วมโครงการ		---	บาท
งบประมาณของชุดโครงการ	จำนวน		บาท
จาก สกว .		---	บาท
จากหน่วยงานร่วมโครงการ		---	บาท

7. ระยะเวลาดำเนินโครงการ	12	เดือน
ระยะเวลาดำเนินชุดโครงการ	3	ปี

เสนอต่อ สกว. เมื่อวันที่

23 พฤษภาคม 2550

ลงนามผู้เสนอโครงการ

Research Proposal

1. Executive Summaries

Thailand is one of six members of the Greater Mekong Sub-region countries (GMS). Loei is a province in the northeastern part of Thailand, in the border of Thailand and Lao PDR. The people in Loei of Thailand, Luang Prabang and Vientiane of Lao PDR share the same mother tongue (language of speaking), historical background, customs and culture. There is only one university in Loei, Rajabhat University. It is one of the universities for rural development. Its vision is to **be a leading university of learning organization and integrating local and international disciplines for rural and regional development**. There are more than 50 courses of studies available at the university, in the level of bachelor, master, and doctoral degree. The Ph.D course in **Regional Development Strategies** is to produce the experts in GMS Development Strategies. In term of the geographical area compared with other universities in Thailand, Loei Rajabhat is the only one which is closest to Mekong River and neighboring border, Lao PRD. As a university with the mission of local and regional development, Loei Rajabhat University has tried to seek for academic cooperation with universities in neighboring countries. Loei Rajabhat University, Luang Prabang Teacher Training College and National University of Laos had signed MOUs of educational cooperation in 2004, and since then a lot of exchanged, collaborative and assistant projects in training, higher educational allowance, and tourism have been implemented. Apart from universities in Lao PDR, Loei Rajabhat University also has official agreements with universities in China, Vietnam, Cambodia and plan to have one with university in Myanmar in the near future.

The aims of this research program are to prepare knowledge, skills, and comprehensive approaches essential for development of youth tourism networks among universities in GMS countries. The procedures are to have experts, lecturers, officials, graduate students, people from travel and tourism sector, tourism stake holders and others from any related sectors integrate their work experiences or classroom lessons, use various research techniques, and apply knowledge management processes to study current situation of tourism management and impacts caused by cross-border activities to select right problems for further improvement. The research is to apply various techniques of data gathering and analysis: documentary surveys, interviews, group discussion, in-depth interviews with the experts, knowledge management approaches, field study visit and meeting for the development of the international degree program in **regional tourism management for sustainable development**. The implements of such an international collaborative degree course are expected to produce well qualify human recourses for regional tourism development to rank global standard.

2. Significance / Background of the Program

In Europe there is one famous international organization, European Commission that has a great success on running project “Eramus Mundus” which has many collaborative projects, such as, several numbers of Master Degree Programs and research projects.

Networking, human resources, economies, and technological advancements have become key factors of political empowerment and national strengthening. To watch out only aspects inside national boundary is not sufficient for global touch, since new sciences and hi-technologies can change all the times. A regional networking or cross-border strategy has been initiated for decades by regional governments, as in Europe and Asia. Cooperation among nations can help with the question of sustainable development and can make regional compete with others. For this reason, in 1992 the **Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS)** development scheme led by the Asian development Bank (ADB) was initiated with six member- countries: Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos PDR, Myanmar, and Yunnan Province of China. Since then, the six countries have launched many cooperation programs, namely the educational cooperation, the joint developments of transportation, energy, telecommunications, human resource development, trade, investment, tourism, and agriculture.

GMS area is rich in diversities of culture, historical and natural assets. These aspects make people from many parts of the world wanted to visit and explore the region. As a result, it is ranked as one of the foremost tourism growth destination. Tourism brings both positive and negative impacts to all countries in this region. Tourism gives good income, better jobs, more comfortable transportation, and convenient infrastructures to people; however, tourism can affect the traditional uniqueness of the natural environments, and historical sites, language and culture of the host countries. . Development of all aspects in tourism in GMS countries needs good policies, careful plans and efficient human resources.

According to GMS Flagship initiatives in 2005, major interests for human resource developments aim are to (1) develop and implement cooperative arrangements for addressing human recourses issues in the health, education, and labor sectors, with focus on impacts of cross-boarder activities, such as trade, transport and tourism, (2)to facilitate opportunities of long term sustainable capacity building and competitiveness in the GMS, (3) to support transfer of knowledge and experience leading to improved skills and competence of the labor force, and (4)to strengthen the sub-region’s human resource capacity in harnessing the benefit from advance technology.

Refer to data from ADB in 2004, GMS tourism resources attracted about 17 million international tourists and around \$ 10 billion in receipts. Estimates based on WTO 2020 vision forecasts indicate that if a sub-regional approach to develop and promote the tourism sector is adopted, the GMS countries could attract about 29.2 million international tourists by 2010 and about 61.3 million by 2020.

As for tourism mentioned in the GMS flagship initiatives in 2005, major objective of the projects are to develop sub-region as a single tourist destination, increase tourism in the GMS and strengthen sub-regional cooperation in tourism development among the GMS countries; promote increased tourism in the GMS as a means to reduce poverty, mitigate environmental degradation from unplanned and unsustainable development, and develop human resources of the region.

Tourism has played an important part in Thailand business, according to ATTA's service coupon 2005, international tourists in Thailand had been increasing dramatically from 1997-2002, it went from 1,630,060 in 1997 to 2,269,294 in 2002, and went up and down from 2003-2005. The figures were 2,177,814 in 2003, 2,688,455 in 2004, and then 1,748,103 in 2005. The decreasing number of tourists in those periods was affected from Natural disaster, and disease, Tsunami and SAR.

Loei is one of a few provinces in Thailand that have beautiful natural resources as well known tourist attraction, such as Phu Kradung and Phu Rue national parks, Phu Luang wild life sanctuary, Suan Hin Pha Rocket valley, and etc. There are a lot of visitors come to visit each year. In addition, there are two religious pagodas in Loei, Pra That Sri Song Rak and Phra That Satcha which marks a long relationship between Thai Loei and Laos people.

As mentioned earlier, Loei Rajabhat University has a vision of becoming a **leading university in GMS in term of integrating local and international disciplines for rural and regional development**. The university runs also courses for Master and Ph.D degrees in GMS development strategies. Our university is situated close to tourist landmarks, Mekong River, Phurue and Phu Kradung, and we always have a lot of visitors all year round. In addition, tourism promotion is one of the projects in our university and our province strategic development plans, therefore, we propose this program of the international curriculum development for the future benefit of university networks, and for the regional tourism improvement.

3. Research Questions:

- In what respects of the collaborative international degree program in regional tourism management that GMS universities' suppliers and customers need.
- What does the international program in regional tourism management for sustainable development look like?
- How to manage such course successively

4. Research Objectives

The objectives of the project are

- (1) to study needs of the collaborative international degree program on regional tourism management,
- (2) to develop the international degree program in regional tourism management for sustainable development, and
- (3) to run such program in the selected GMS University, (in the second phase).

5. Research Action Plans

(Phase 1, January – September 2008)

Objectives	Tasks	Time Frame	Venue	Output	People in Charge	Budget (Baht)
<p>1). To study needs of the collaborative international degree program in regional tourism management</p>	<p>1.1) Study current situation of tourism and the course available in universities in GMS</p> <p>1.2) Study the needs of students, university bodies and tourism stakeholders concerning the scope of the course</p> <p>1.3) Group discussion for the framework analysis and plan for the development of a Degree Program.</p> <p>.</p>	<p>Jan-Jun 2008</p>	<p>Loei, Thailand and Kunming, China</p>	<p>1.1-1.3</p> <p>Needs and basic information for curriculum development</p>	<p>All researchers in list</p>	<p>85,000</p>

<p>2). To develop the collaborative international degree program in regional tourism management for sustainable development</p>	<p>2.1) Hold a workshop among GMS universities for the development of the curriculum for the degree program.</p> <p>2.2) Have peers and experts comment the first draft of curriculum.</p> <p>2.3) Review and adjust the curriculum. Locate where the curriculum should be used and develop the second draft of the curriculum after have the experts and peers reviewed.</p> <p>2.4) Send the second draft to the university network in GMS, have experts from such universities comment the Curriculum.</p> <p>2.5) Hold a meeting for curriculum presentation and have a final discussion of any topics related to Tourism Management and the Development of the GMS for the curriculum improvement.</p> <p>2.6) Develop a complete curriculum.</p>	<p>July-September 2008</p>	<p>Loei /LAO PDR /Vietnam</p>	<p>2.1-2.7 Completed Curriculum/ And final report</p>	<p>All researchers in list</p>	<p>110,000</p>
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6. Research Outputs

The research is to get a final report focusing on three respects.

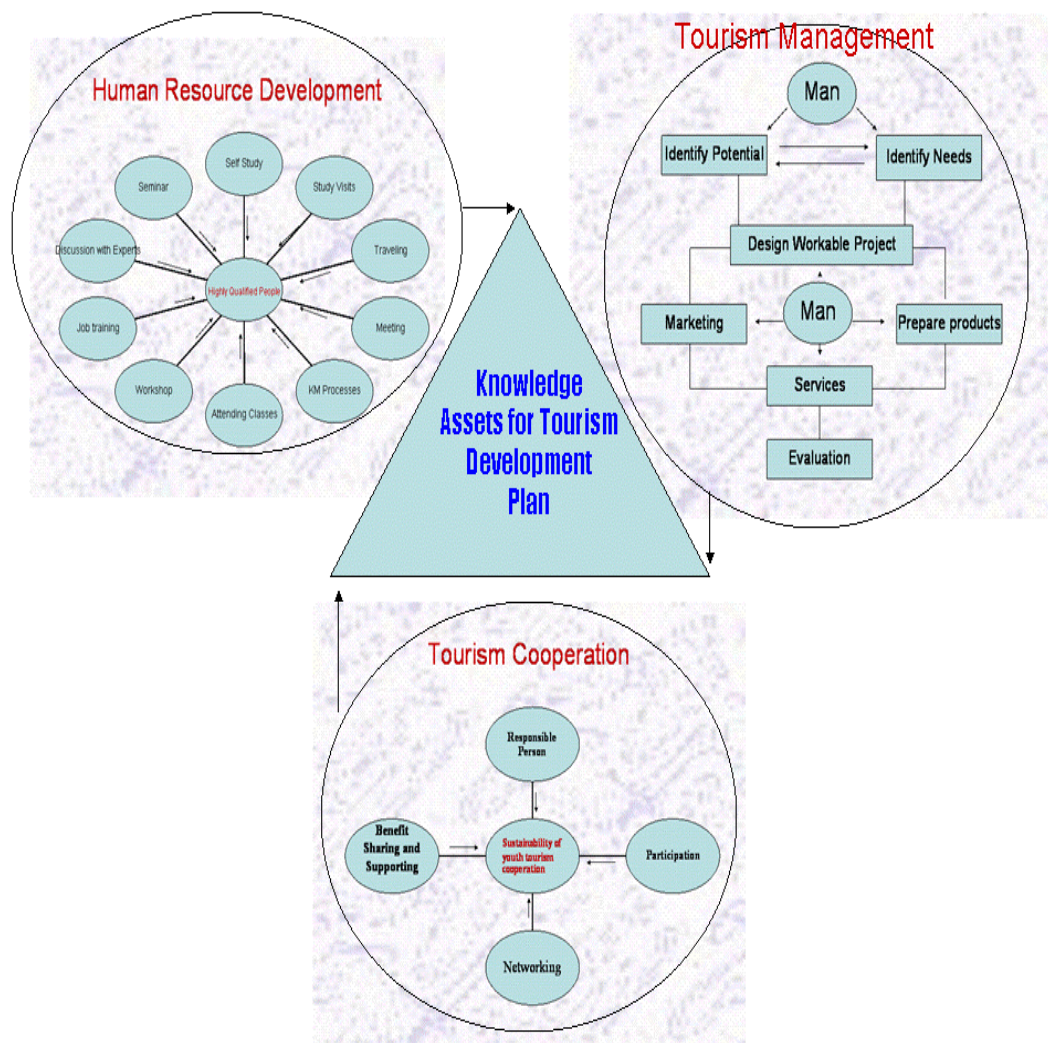
(1) The curriculum on regional tourism management for sustainable development

(2) Knowledge assets concerning how to development the curriculum to meet students and stakeholders needs.

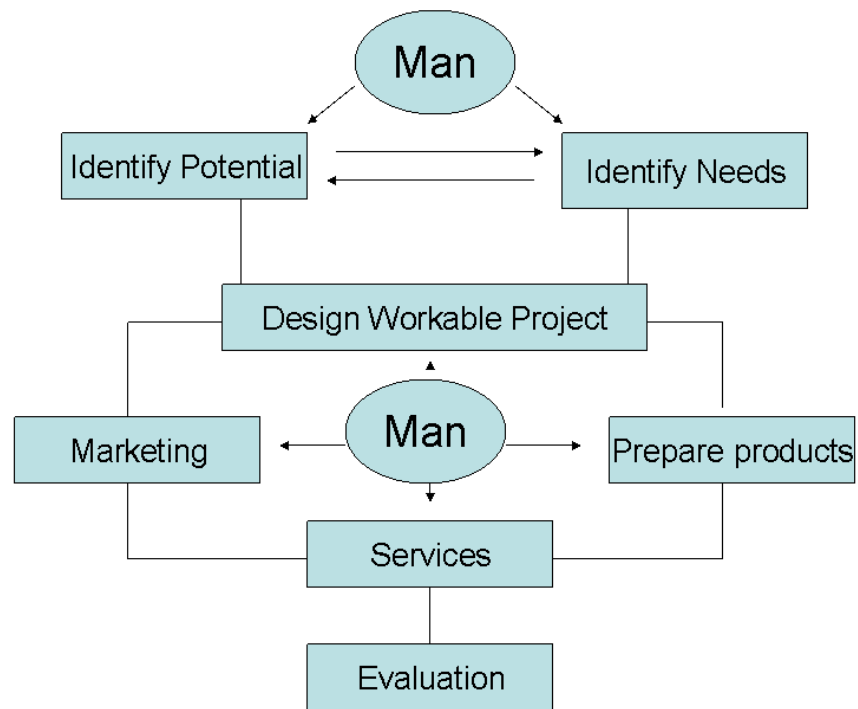
7. Research Methodologies

The research is to apply both survey and qualitative approach for curriculum design

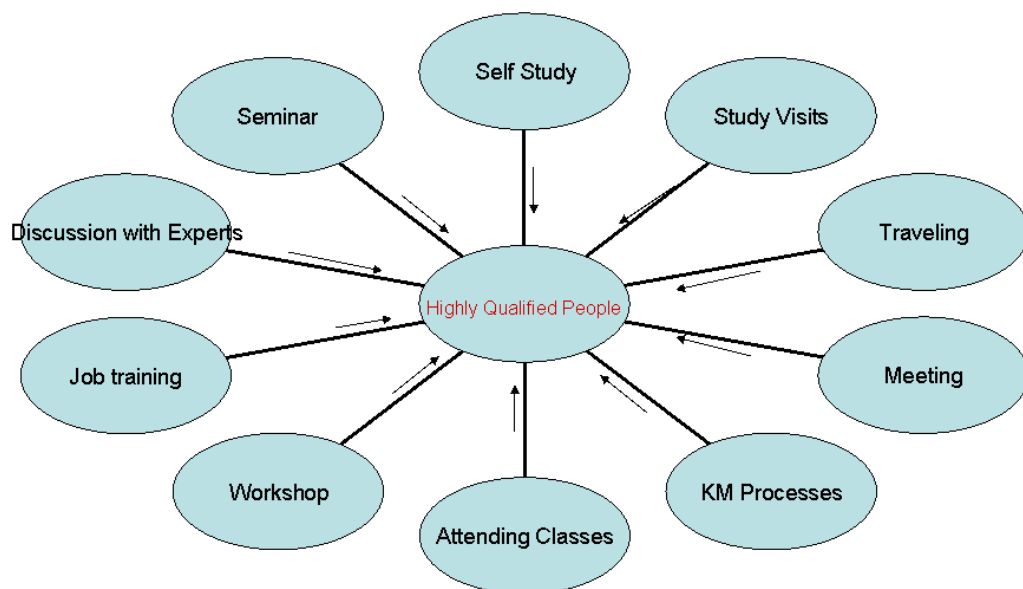
8. Conceptual Framework



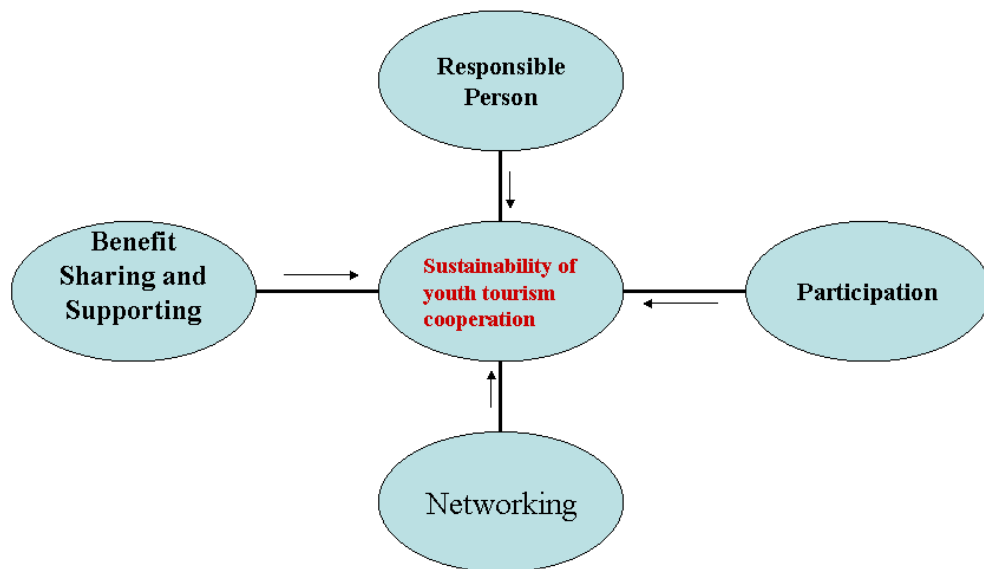
Tourism Management



Human Resource Development



Tourism Cooperation



9. Research Outcome and Key Performance Indicators

- Well qualified human resources in tourism management and in regional development
- Good relationship among university networks

10. Research Utilization

The curriculum is expected to be a useful for those in universities who deal with travel and tourism business or university business incubator in tourism. They could prepare other related projects in various aspects, namely;

- (1) Develop short courses training in campus to meet visitors' needs, such as language, sport, customs, culture, spa and health courses, plus excursion packages to explore the regions.
- (2) Provide possibilities for visitors to participate with universities classes, activities, and important events.
- (3) Arrange wide ranges of accommodation, in hotel, shared houses, host families or in campus dormitories.
- (4) Prepare basic services essential for tourists.
- (5) Capacity building in various aspects useful for tourism management

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This Chapter concludes the results of the research on the development of university networks for youth tourism practices. The study developed research questions and topics essential for GMS universities networking of regional discovery and development through tourism related tasks. The studies gained comprehensive research problems and topics for further research, as summarized detailed in this chapter.

5.1 Objectives of the study

- 1) To develop topics of research projects essential for the program of a development of youth tourism networks among universities in GMS countries.
- 2) To develop university networks of youth tourism and cross-border interests

5.2 Methodologies

The research applied various techniques of data gathering and analysis: documentary surveys, interviews, group discussion, in-depth interviews with the experts, knowledge management approaches, field study visit, meeting, seminar and international conference. Such investigations were conducted in Loei, Thailand, Vientiane and Luang Prabang, Lao PDR during 2006 – 2007. The major subjects of this study were 40 people related to or expert in tourism and regional development.

5.3 Result of the study

Based on the research frameworks, the findings are divided into 3 parts; research problems, research topics, and networks, as follows;

5.3.1 Research problems

The study proposed 10 research problems for further investigation and development, as follows:

- 1) How to develop human resources involved or related with tourism and cross- boarder activities successively.
- 2) How to develop youth tourism networks among universities in GMS countries.
- 3) What are likely to be the high impacted research problems to be conducted among GMS universities for sustainable development of the region?
- 4) How to integrate various science and technological advancement, diversities of culture, historical, and human natural resources available in the region for the Mekong Tourism development.
- 5) How to manage the knowledge essential to youth education, Mekong tourism, and GMS sustainable development.

6) How to strengthen the capacity and competitiveness of people and public or/ and private organization for the regional sustainable development.

7) How to facilitate for the communication flows among the region, linguistically, socially, politically, and technologically.

8) How to respect, preserve and conserve the identities and uniqueness of local and regional languages, culture, beliefs, wisdoms, religion, histories, indigenous people, and natural and historical resources in the practices of networking for regional tourism and development cooperation.

9) How to encourage the business providers, development sectors, university bodies, and policy makers to collaborate for the knowledge investigation and sharing for further development of local and regional tourism

10) How to start the centre for Mekong tourism for regional cooperation and sustainable development in selected universities in GMS countries.

5.3.2 Research topics

The research topics including their tentative objectives developed from the studies are shown as follows:

1) A development of university networks on GMS tourism

The study is (1) to survey the demands of and supplies for youth tourism in GMS countries and (2) to develop youth tourism networks among Rajabhat universities in Thailand and Universities in GMS countries.

2) GMS Tourism and knowledge managements for communication flow, mutual understanding and benefit sharing

This project is to support students and lecturers in GMS network universities in six countries to conduct researches concerning knowledge management in GMS tourism, and then select the national best practice for the further support.

3) Tourism research and cross cultural studies for GMS youth education

This project is to prepare the workshop to train student on how to do the field research on tourism, arrange educational trips to selected parts of Thailand, Laos PDR, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, and China for region discovery and cross cultural studies for mutual understanding and benefit sharing, and provide the chance for them to present their field research.

4) GMS Discoveries : borderless issues for regional strengthening and sustainable development

This project first started as **the international seminar in 2006 and developed to the international conference in 2007, the event is to be organized annually at the** selected universities in GMS countries. The objectives of the project are to : 1) bring together university faculties, students, researchers and scholars interested in GMS development and borderless issues to discuss and share knowledge and experiences for further study and implementation, 2) highlight issues on GMS

development needing further exploration, 3) facilitate the sharing of knowledge for sustainable development through tourism practices and researches, 4) provide chance for graduate students and lecturers to present their research papers at the international venue.

5) GMS Community based tourism development for poverty reduction and regional relationship

This project is to study how to encourage the business providers, development sectors, university bodies, and policy makers to collaborate for the knowledge investigation and sharing for further development of local and regional community based tourism.

6) GMS tourism knowledge asset link

This project is to build the GMS knowledge assets in the form of retrievable internet information which is reachable worldwide and can be transferred among GMS Universities networks.

7) Potentials of tourism destinations and products at the area Along the GMS cross-border routes

The objectives of this study are, 1) to survey potentials of tourism destination and products at the selected cross-border routes in various parts of GMS countries, 2) study tourism stakeholders' needs towards development and management of tourist destinations and products, 3) to design GMS tourism programs for the study routes, and 4) to create GMS tourism data bases for the public uses, both paper base and web-base.

8) A development of an international degree program in regional tourism management for sustainable development

The purpose of this project is to create an international curriculum for the degree program at the GMS universities in regional tourism management for sustainable development.

9) A development of the center for GMS university networks for regional development through tourism (GMSUnets for RDT)

The purpose of this project is to initiate the center of GMS university networks for regional development through tourism practices at Loei Rajabhat University and its network branches at universities in different parts of GMS countries.

10) A Development of English learning packages for communication in specific purposes in various fields related to tourism

This project is to support graduate students and lecturers to study and develop English learning handbooks or packages for communication between host

and visitors in specific purposes, namely regional food and drinks, religion, language, cultures, science and technologies, wisdom, products, etc.

11) GMS identities and uniqueness

This project is to 1) to provide chances for researcher in the university networks to explore, and analyze the identities and uniqueness of various types of resources in each area, 2) to compare the uniqueness of such resources as the GMS identities, and 3) promote such identities for the tourism purposes.

5.3.3 The GMS University Network

There are three group of university networks for GMS development practices, as follows:

1) Launched Networks for educational and research cooperation among Loei Rajabhat University, Thailand, Luang Prabang Teacher Training College, National University of Laos at Vientiane, and Suphanuvong National University at Luang Prabang, the network was established in 2003. Major collaborative practices were educational staff exchange visits and grant allowance for degree level studies.

2) Thai University Network for GMS Tourism and sustainable and development, this network included Loei Rajabhat University and Rajabhat Universities in the north and northeast of Thailand, namely, Chiang Mai Rajabhat University, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Mahasarakam Rajabhat University, Surindra Rajabhat University, Buriram Rajabhat University, Udon Rajabhat University, Sakon Nakorn Rajabhat University, Nakornrachasima Rajabhat University, and Ubon Rajabhat University.

3) Universities Network in GMS countries for Mekong Tourism, this network includes Thai Rajabhat Universities mentioned in No.2, and (1) National University of Laos, (2) Suphanuvong University in Luang Prabang, (3) Luang Prabang Teacher Training College, Lao PDR, (3) Hanoi University, (4) Vietnam National University, (5) Yunnan Institute of Sciences, Kunming (5) Kunming University of Science and Technology, P.R. China, (6) Royal University of Phnom Penh, (7) University of Technologies and Management, Phnom Penh, (8) Build Bright University, Phnom Penh.

5.4 Lesson learnt from all processes of the research

Lesson learnt from all major activities done during the processes of the research, namely, the GMS international seminar in 2006, the literature and event reviews, observing and from the international conference on GMS discoveries in 2007, it could be summarized as follows;

1) According to ADB, if South Asia wanted to remain an engine of economic growth in Asia and the rest of the world, South Asia needed to refocus on the development of education and health of the population in the region (ADB).

2) Some of benefit sharing needs big investment and good cooperation in order to be able to complete it. For instance, Yunnan Province-Viet Nam Railway Improvement Project, which will create great benefits not only for Vietnam and Yunnan Province of China but also Lao PDR.

3) Many international workshops related to GMS development asked the participants to develop research proposals. Those proposals need to be implemented but only some could be conducted. However, the development of GMS needs the utilization of those researches conducting by people in the region.

4) Many MOUs have been signed concerning GMS development. Those MOUs must be practical and can be acted; nothing will happen if there is no movement.

5) Misconceptions and misunderstanding usually happen among countries in the GMS because the people of each country have the cultures and believe of their own. The cultural issue is very sensitive in many cases, so there should be courses offer multicultural or cross cultural communication in universities in GMS countries.

6) The future of the region will be glorious if GMS universities, together, create international curriculum, intentionally, to facilitate the activities for regional strengthening and sustainable development.

7) Area base lessons and excursion should be provided for students of every major in order to let them have authentic experiences related to their fields of study in GMS universities.

From such practices, Loei Rajabhat University would like to propose projects for further collaboration as follows.

1) A project to initiate the center of GMS university networks for regional development through tourism practices at Loei Rajabhat University and its network branches at universities in different parts of GMS countries. This includes the cooperation among GMS universities for youth education through tourism practices. The primary tasks for the center are seek for cooperation from various sectors for the possibilities of research projects proposed above, and manage projects to reach the goal given.

2) A project of cooperation among GMS universities for the development of the international degree program in regional tourism management for sustainable development

5.5 Suggestions

1) The research topics developed need suggestion, commend and support from university networks and fund providers for the improvement and further practices.

2) Language and mass communication flows could help with effectiveness of the cross-border cooperation. Barriers of such factor need to be mitigated in the short run. English and internet link are proposed as means for the contacts.

3) Excursion to all major parts of GMS countries could help visitors and regional host understand each other better.

4) According to Dr. Sheldon Shaffer, the director of UNESCO Bangkok, possible areas of collaboration between a network of Rajabhat Universities and UNESCO includes tourism study and training, education for sustainable development, ICT integration in education, HIV/AIDS, Gender issues, inclusive education, human right education. The UNESCO would also provide materials, technical support and advice, links to universities in the GMS and probably some limited funding.

5) According Dr. Suwit Khunkitti' suggestion in his paper for the opening ceremony of the second international conference on GMS discoveries: borderless issues for regional strengthening and sustainable development at Loei Rajabhat University, there are six issues needed to be collaboratively researched and developed: labor, environment, negative impact of cross-border projects, development gap of GMS countries, community empowerment, and moving toward sustainable development.

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Appendixes

1. Pictures taken during the meeting and activities in Luang Prabang, Loa PDR



2. Pictures taken during the meeting and activities in Vientiane, Lao PDR



3. Pictures taken during the meeting and activities in Loei, Thailand



4. Pictures taken during the first international conference at Loei Rajabhat University in December 2006



5. Pictures taken during the second international conference at Loei Rajabhat University in August 2007





