



Good Practice Story Title: Together We Rise: How a Hok Peng Festival Became a Reviving.

Destination: Wieng Phu Phiang Chae Haeng

Country: Thailand

Submitting Organization: Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA)

Category:

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

Destination description:

Nestled on a picturesque eastern hill overlooking the Nan River, Wiang Phu Phiang Chae Haeng beckons travelers seeking cultural immersion and spiritual connection. This revered site, roughly 670 years old, holds immense significance for the Lanna people, especially for those born in the Year of the Rabbit. It enshrines sacred relics of the Lord Buddha, drawing devotees not only from Nan Province but also from across Thailand.

Every year, around March, the 15th day of the waxing moon phase witnesses a vibrant spectacle unfold. A grand procession, meticulously adorned with local handicrafts, winds its way through the landscape. Traditional performances, folk games, and faith-filled rituals practiced for generations by all 15 districts of Nan Province come alive, imbuing Wat Phra That Chae Haeng with electrifying energy. This annual celebration serves as a powerful testament to the enduring legacy passed down through generations, ensuring Wiang Phu Phiang Chae Haeng remains a vibrant center of cultural heritage.



Summary of Good Practice Story:

Revitalizing the Hok Peng Festival is a collaborative effort aimed at transforming it into a year-round attraction. Nestled on a picturesque hill overlooking the Nan River, Wiang Phu Phiang Chae Haeng holds immense cultural significance, drawing devotees from across Thailand. However, tourism in Nan Province faces challenges during the off-season, impacting local businesses. To address this, a unique solution has emerged: revamping the traditional Hok Peng festival with the help of monks, government agencies, tourism businesses, and local communities. This initiative aims to preserve traditions while offering a vibrant cultural experience. Through meticulous planning and a three-step approach focusing on tradition, local culture, and innovation, the festival celebrates Nan's heritage. Collaboration among stakeholders is key, with the private sector offering support and government agencies ensuring smooth operations. The revitalized festival has shown promising results, boosting tourism numbers and revenue, while promoting economic, social, cultural, and environmental sustainability. Establishing a central coordinating body is essential to overcome challenges and drive Nan towards sustainable development goals.

Issues faced:

Tourism is Nan Province's economic lifeblood, with bustling hotels, restaurants, and shops thriving during the peak season (October - February) of 2022. This period sees an average of 150,000 tourists monthly, with an average monthly income of 290 million baht. However, the low season (March - September) paints a starkly different picture. Tourist numbers plummet to a monthly average of 103,000, representing a decrease of 47,000 per month, or 31.34 percent. The average monthly income during this period is 233 million baht, reflecting a decrease of 19.66 percent.

One significant attraction impacted by the low season is Wat Phra That Chae Haeng. Recognizing this challenge, a collaborative effort has emerged. Monks, government officials, tourism businesses, communities, scholars, local philosopher, and youth groups have joined forces to revitalize the temple's festival, attracting visitors during the traditionally quieter months. Their aim is to enhance its appeal and bridge the tourist gap during Nan's low season.



Solution:

Nan Province faces a drop in tourists during the low season, impacting local businesses. To tackle this, a unique solution is emerging. Monks at Wat Phra That Chae Haeng are joining forces with government agencies, tourism businesses, and local communities. Together, they are revamping the traditional Hok Peng festival. This collaborative effort aims to transform Hok Peng into a captivating low season attraction. By preserving rituals, showcasing local crafts, and incorporating innovative youth ideas, the festival will offer a vibrant cultural experience. This approach not only spreads tourist income throughout the year but also ensures the legacy of Nan's heritage thrives.

Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:

To address this, a visionary project aims to transform the annual Hok Peng Festival into a vibrant year-round attraction. This ambitious initiative hinges on a meticulously planned three-step approach that leverages the strengths of various stakeholders.

Step 1: Reconnecting with Traditions – Unearthing the Festival's Roots

The journey begins with a deep dive into the festival's rich history. Monks take the lead, meticulously researching traditional beliefs and rituals. This in-depth exploration delves into the practices surrounding the creation of ceremonial objects used in the festival. Additionally, they research the specific chants used to pay homage to the revered relics and various elements that make up the festival experience.

Following this, academics embark on a historical investigation. Their focus is on uncovering the fascinating story behind the Hek Peng Festival itself, laying the foundation for a deeper understanding of the festival's significance and its potential for future growth as a cultural and economic driver.

Step 2: Celebrating the Heart of Nan – A Showcase of Local Culture

The second step brings the vibrant tapestry of Nan's culture to the forefront. A community group, comprised of esteemed philosophers and wisdom teachers, takes center stage. They orchestrate a magnificent showcase of local products, a true celebration of Nan's unique identity.



Imagine a bustling marketplace overflowing with exquisite, locally woven fabrics and intricately crafted silverware, each piece a testament to the skills passed down through generations. As visitors wander through the stalls, the air vibrates with the captivating rhythm of the Long Nan dance and the diverse performances of Nan's ethnic groups. Local musicians, their melodies echoing through the festival grounds, complete this immersive cultural experience. But the festivities extend beyond presentations. To actively engage visitors, the community group organizes a series of exciting competitions. Aspiring artisans test their skills in the bamboo weaving competition, while creativity flourishes in the "Bai Sri Lanna" (flower arrangement) and hanging fanfare contests. The rhythmic pulse of Nan is further amplified with competitions for the best long drum performance and the most captivating Krua Tan parade, a traditional cattle procession held in all 15 districts.

Step 3: Embracing the Future – Modernity Meets Tradition

The revitalization effort doesn't stop at a celebration of the past. A group of young minds brimming with fresh ideas, the new generation youth group, injects a dose of modern innovation into the festival. They curate a dedicated creative space, where local cultural identity is reimaged through the lens of contemporary design.

This space could draw inspiration from the rich heritage of Nan boat racing, leveraging this knowledge to develop innovative tourism products with a contemporary appeal. Imagine locally made souvenirs or experiences that incorporate elements of boat racing design. A revitalized festival that not only honors tradition but also resonates with a wider audience, attracting visitors seeking a unique cultural experience.

Collaboration is Key: Weaving a Success Story

The success of the Hok Peng Festival's revitalization hinges on a crucial factor: collaboration. The private sector, recognizing the festival's potential to attract visitors during the low season, steps forward with tourism promotion activities. This could involve offering reduced room rates, enticing guests with discount vouchers, and actively promoting the festival to guests during their stay. Government agencies play a pivotal role in ensuring the smooth operation of the festival. The Nan Province administration takes the lead, assigning duties



and responsibilities to the vast network of 63 organizations involved. This collaborative spirit shines through in the division of tasks:

- Nan Provincial Cultural Office: Organizes decorating and craft competitions.
- Nan Provincial Administrative Organization: Coordinates the venue, stage, and performance schedules.
- Nan Provincial Community Development Office: Creates opportunities for communities to showcase and sell their local products and culinary delights.
- Nan Provincial Statistical Office: Collects and analyses data on visitor numbers, revenue generated, and feedback from tourist, providing invaluable insights for future improvements.

Achievements and Results:

The Hok Peng Festival holds the potential to be a game-changer for low season tourism.

Economic Engine: The festival drives business during the off-season, attracting tourists and generating income for local souvenir shops, restaurants, hotels, and producers of community products. Statistics paint a promising picture: a 21.64% increase in tourist numbers (March 2022: 113,151 vs. March 2023: 137,639), and a significant 44.18% rise in tourism revenue (2022: 270.76 million baht vs. 2023: 390.39 million baht). This revitalization effort fosters a positive, sustainable cycle across economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions.

Social and Cultural Revival: Lost rituals, like those associated with the revered Phra That Chae Haeng temple, are being revived thanks to the research efforts of monks. This knowledge is passed on to the younger generation through "creative spaces" showcasing innovation based on local heritage. A prime example is the reimagined design of Nan's iconic boat bow, now transformed into merchandise at the festival.

Environmental Initiatives: The Krua Tan parade competition emphasizes the use of eco-friendly, biodegradable materials. Additionally, the festival encourages vendors to adopt biodegradable packaging, promoting sustainable practices.



In conclusion, the Hok Peng Festival rekindles cultural heritage, invigorates the economy, and embraces environmental responsibility. This collaborative effort positions Nan as a captivating year-round destination for tourists seeking a unique cultural experience.

Lessons Learned and Advice:

Organizing the Hok Peng Festival won't be a large-scale event to draw tourists beyond Nan's peak season. Cooperation from communities, especially religious leaders, private sector, local philosopher, youth groups, and government agencies is crucial. Meticulous planning and continuous coordination among stakeholders throughout Nan province are essential. The challenge lies in bridging diverse groups with different limitations and ideas. However, establishing a central coordinating body can earn respect from all sectors. In Nan Province, religious leaders could notably drive the city towards sustainable development goals.

Recognitions and Additional References

Announcement from the Ministry of Culture of Thailand Honoring the Hek Peng tradition as a tradition to raise it to the national and international level on January 31, 2023. <https://www.thaigov.go.th/news/contents/details/77017>

Nan's Hok Peng Festival 2023 celebrated throughout the Year of the Rabbit <https://www.tatnews.org/2023/02/nans-hok-peng-festival-2023-celebrated-throughout-the-year-of-the-rabbit/>

