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# Integrating process for agro-ecotourism marketing of Sam Ruean community, Thailand

*Proceso de integración para la comercialización del agroecoturismo  
de la comunidad de Sam Ruean, Tailandia*

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### ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research are 1) to study the model and strategy of agro-ecotourism of the Sam Ruean community, 2) to study the integration process of special interest tourism marketing to create a niche market-based tourism network, and 3) to propose the integrating process of the agro-ecotourism marketing. The samples were community tourism stakeholders. The study results can be summarized as follows: The integrating process of the agro-ecotourism marketing of the Sam Ruean community revealed that they have a tourism marketing model that could be linked to two specific marketing types.

**Keywords:** Marketing integration, agricultural ecotourism, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, cultural heritage.

### RESUMEN

Los objetivos de esta investigación son 1) estudiar el modelo y la estrategia de agroecoturismo de la comunidad Sam Ruean 2) estudiar el proceso de integración del marketing turístico de interés especial para la creación de una red de turismo de nicho de mercado; y 3) proponer el proceso integrador de la comercialización del agroecoturismo. Las muestras fueron partes interesadas del turismo comunitario. Los resultados del estudio se pueden resumir de la siguiente manera: El proceso de integración del marketing de agroecoturismo de la comunidad de Sam Ruean reveló que la misma tiene un modelo de marketing turístico que podría vincularse a dos tipos de marketing específicos.

**Palabras clave:** Integración de marketing, ecoturismo agrícola, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, patrimonio cultural.

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## INTRODUCTION

Thailand is a country rich in natural resources that are beautiful and suitable for ecotourism that can be combined with agro-tourism that brings income into the country. By the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) included tourism (income No. 1) and agriculture (income No. 2) together. The result is that tourists can tour and see agricultural products as well as learning the culture of the people in the area and as a good choice for people in the city and foreigners who come to see the way of life of the villagers they never known. One of the activities in the Amazing Thailand campaign is Thai agriculture or Amazing Agricultural Heritage, which is divided into smaller activities: 1. Rice Cultivation 2. Cutting Flowers 3. Fruit Gardening (Horticulture) 4. Vegetable Gardening, 5. Herb Gardening 6. Animal Farming 7. Products Festival.

The researchers, therefore, developed a plan for the development of eco-tourism with the participation of Sam Ruean in the year 2015 by studying the tourism patterns and activities suitable for the area in order to develop agricultural ecological tourism routes for both land and water of Sam Ruean community and presented the route and model of agricultural eco-tourism with community participation using the concept of agricultural eco-tourism and concept of participation in research studies. This operation resulted in the development of the participatory agricultural eco-tourism route of the Sam Ruean community in 2016, which laid the foundation for natural resources, culture, and environmental learning that allows tourists to learn about abundant natural resources. Furthermore, the development of the agricultural ecological tourism route with participation also helped the community and schools in the area learn about natural resource management, including understanding the correct conservation practices and make natural resources sustainable in the area (Haukeland, 2011; Kongdit et al.: 2017; Ratanapongtra et al.: 2020).

The results of the study over the past two years led the researchers and people involved in the research in the community found that guidelines for the development of agricultural eco-tourism of the Sam Ruan community had clear goals and directions for development, including the form of tourism activities resulting from the participation of the community in the design, the identity and the uniqueness of the lifestyle of Sam Ruan community were presented with great interest. However, the whole process lacked a suitable marketing promotion channel to make tourism of the Sam Ruan community to be known to tourists who are widely interested in this unique form of tourism and access. In this regard, considering the trend of world tourism in 2017 stating that future tourists tend to look for tourist destinations that are traditional in life and culture, in line with TAT's 2017 market direction, which is: Promoting Thainess deep into the Local Experience to distribute income to local communities. (TAT Institute of Tourism Research Center, 2016) in line with the guidelines for the development of agricultural eco-tourism of the Sam Ruan Community that has developed tourism routes and community tourism activities resulting from the adoption of the traditions of life, agriculture, and their own cultural capital to be presented as an interesting tourism product

From the importance of the tourism marketing promotion mentioned above, the researchers had a discussion with the Sam Ruean Subdistrict Administrative Organization, villagers accommodating in agricultural eco-tourism, and villagers from the agricultural eco-tourism group of Sam Ruean community through a forum to restore the research data in 2016 which found that issues in tourism development of the Sam Ruean community that have not yet been fully completed are marketing promotion issues. This was because the community has already obtained tourism routes and tourism activities suitable for the area, but the community should still be promoted to knowledgeable about marketing management so that their tourism products can enter the tourist group. (Khampuanbutra, 2014; Nawatnatee et al.: 2017) Thus, creating a suitable marketing study question for the agro-ecotourism of the Sam Ruean community was a study that presents the process of integrating marketing as a tourism network for the area that comes from the development of tourism styles based on local potential and identity to be a new alternative for tourists by searching for the target market of agricultural eco-tourism (Agro-Ecotourism) among Thai and foreign tourists and the process of distributing income gained from agro-ecotourism to the foundation economy and marketing channels that are suitable for the marketing of the area with the objectives to study the model and strategy of agricultural eco-tourism marketing of the Sam Ruean community, to study links for tourism marketing, special interests, and creating a niche-market tourism network and to propose a process of linking the agricultural eco-tourism marketing of the Sam Ruean community. The objectives of this research are 1) to study the model and strategy of agro-ecotourism of the Sam Ruean community, 2) to study the integration process of special

interest tourism marketing and the creation of a niche market-based tourism network, and 3) to propose the integrating process of the agro-ecotourism marketing.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The principles of sustainable tourism management can be summarized into the concept used in this study as Sustainable tourism focuses on the resources including environment, traditions, culture, and the way of life of the local people that emphasizes balance in all dimensions. It is a form of tourism that uses resources properly, focusing on resource conservation, including benefits to the local community and returns back to local tourism and environmental resources (Kaewsuriya, 2001; Poonphiphat, 2002)

The importance of marketing mix, which can be concluded that is critically necessary and important as it is a process that aims at meeting the needs and satisfaction of tourists in terms of products and services, price, channels, distribution channel, marketing promotion, purchase process, physical and personnel management in the organization, product composition including business cooperation. When tourists purchase products or services, it gives tourists an impression. If there is an error that occurs with tourists, the market mix can be kept as information for development in various fields. (Pimonsompong, 2005; Jittangwattana, 2006)

In conclusion, the definition and meaning of agricultural tourism can be summarized as follows: Agro-ecotourism refers to tourism using agriculture as a tourism attraction, including the introduction of agriculture to create tourism activities where tourists can travel to agricultural areas to admire the beauty, fun including participating in activities to exchange knowledge with the owner of the tourist attraction and also gain knowledge and new experiences that can create a better understanding of the agricultural methods and values of the respective tourist destinations through agricultural tourism activities. (Thailand Institute of Scientific and Technological Research, 1999; Srisomyong, 2005; Kaewsuriya, 2001; Sattarattanakajorn, 2007)

Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization) or DASTA in Thailand (2015) determined the criteria for community-based tourism management as five major areas: 1. Community tourism groups with sustainable management; 2. Community-based tourism has distributed benefits to the local area. Society and quality of life; 3. Community-based tourism conserves and promotes cultural heritage; 4. Systematic and sustainable management of natural resources or the environment, and 5. Services and safety. Many researchers mentioned community-based tourism as the community is truly involved in tourism management starting from the determination of community pattern and conditions, group rules, income distribution, cultural and historic resource management, lifestyle and environment, and the adaptation of resources developing into tourism activities focused on creating shared experiences between tourists and communities (Kongdit & Ratanapongtra, 2017; Ratanapongtra et al.: 2017).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The process of change and acceptance of the target community in the research of the integrating process for Agro-ecotourism Marketing of Sam Ruean Community in Ayutthaya World Cultural Heritage, Thailand, deployed a combination of research methods, including quantitative research, qualitative research, and participatory action research (PAR) with the following research steps:

- 1) Held a large group meeting to clarify a niche-tourism marketing operation plan
- 2) Organized a training workshop to provide knowledge on the niche- tourism marketing to Sam Ruan Sub-district Administrative Organization, a group of villagers piloting in arranging accommodation in agro-ecotourism, and a group of villagers piloting in the management of agro-ecotourism of the Sam Ruan community.
- 3) Studied marketing models that are suitable for ecotourism and agriculture with other places with similar contexts.
- 4) Jointly analyzed the marketing mix (4 P's), agricultural eco-tourism that is suitable for the area. The participants in the analysis were the researchers, Sam Ruan Sub-district Administrative Organization, a group

of villagers piloting in arranging accommodation in agro-eco-tourism, and a group of villagers piloting in the management of agro-ecotourism of the Sam Ruan community.

5) Jointly analyzed tourism SWOT and TOWS Matrix to propose tourism marketing strategies by participants in the analysis, namely the researchers, Sam Ruan Sub-district Administrative Organization, a group of villagers piloting in arranging accommodation in agro-ecotourism and a group of villagers piloting in the management of agro-eco-tourism of the Sam Ruan community, Ayutthaya Tourism and Sports and the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Office.

6) Studied the method of linking tourism marketing of special interests and how to build a niche tourism network by participants in the analysis, namely the research team, Sam Ruan Sub-district Administrative Organization, a group of villagers piloting in arranging accommodation in agro-ecotourism and a group of villagers piloting in the management of agro-eco-tourism of the Sam Ruan community, Ayutthaya Tourism and Sports and the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Office

7) jointly established a community-based tourism network in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province to link the tourist attractions of the Sam Ruan community to marketing in the form of network marketing

8) Organized promotion activities for tourism in the area through organizing educational trips within the community to the tourism network group, media representatives, and travel agencies by focusing on target groups of youth and both Thai and foreign tourists interested in local wisdom and agriculture. As a sequence, these target groups can use the information that has been presented in various media, including creating marketing channels that are appropriate and able to reach the target audience

9) Proposed an innovative agro-ecotourism marketing integration that is suitable for the area and meets the needs of the community to cause efficient and sustainable local tourism through a true community-managed network marketing management.

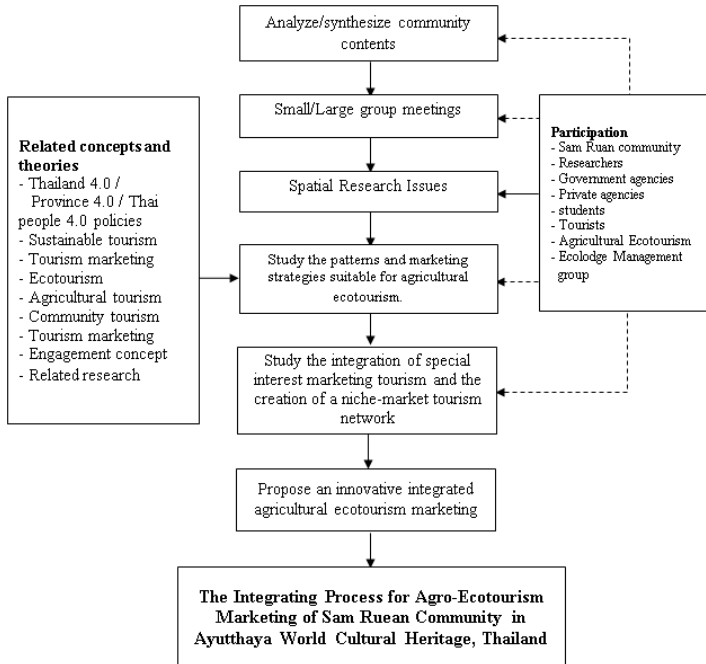


Figure 1. Research framework

## RESULTS

### Model and strategy of agro-ecotourism of the Sam Ruean community

The large group meeting organizing resulted in a common conclusion between communities, local authorities, and researchers, which found that the study of marketing models suitable for agro-ecotourism and elsewhere with a similar context to Sam Ruean used study tour method to study examples of successful tourist destinations in tourism management and tourism marketing by conducting a study tour in Ang Thong province agricultural tourism sites such as the Royal Initiative Farm Project, Nong Rahan Chin and Into Farm. From the study tour, it was found that the community had more knowledge of marketing and can be applied to marketing in the community and from the organizing of a large group meeting to define a marketing strategy by choosing from a SWOT Analysis with the TOWS Matrix principle, it was found that Sam Ruean community will use proactive strategy in the implementation of marketing activities that can be linked to two specific tourism marketing: 1) single marketing through community management with marketing tools that are suitable for the community, such as creating a Facebook fan page to provide community tourism information to various partners who are responsible for marketing such as the Tourism Authority of Thailand, etc., and 2) Travel network marketing by offering itself to join the network and accelerating the strength of the network focusing on specialized tourism marketing links, organizing activities to promote tourism marketing in the area by providing educational trips for youth, Thai and foreign tourists, media and travel agencies, etc. Both forms must aim at creating satisfaction and impressive experiences for tourists by organizing new tourism activities such as food tourism, health tourism, etc.

### Integration of tourism marketing of special interests and a niche tourism network

The integration of tourism marketing of special interests received from organizing meetings to study on methods to integrate tourism marketing of special interests with the participants consists of researchers, Sam Ruean Sub-district Administrative Organization, a group of villagers piloting in arranging accommodation in agro-eco-tourism ad a group of villagers piloting in the management of agro-ecotourism of the Sam Ruean community, Ayutthaya Tourism and Sports and the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Office. It was found that marketing of tourism in the Sam Ruean community requires a new marketing process that could link tourism networks to the area by using good things in the community in areas such as the way of life, tradition and culture, local wisdom, and natural resources in the community to develop into a tourism product through the creation of a unique but flexible community tourism program that can be adjusted according to the suitability and the needs of the tourists and the results of the study on methods for creating a niche market-based tourism network from meetings to mobilize opinions of stakeholders in tourism management in the Sam Ruean community revealed that Sam Ruean should have a marketing management process by joining the tourism network at the provincial level to be the starting point for public relations work to the community of Sam Ruean to be known more. The study of the tourism network in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province found that Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province has not yet established or gathered any form of tourism network until September 23, 2017, a discussion under the name "Lunchbox Championships under the trees" which was a grouping of leaders of the tourism community in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province. The format of the meeting was to use the circulation of events in various communities. Sam Ruean community, therefore, offered itself to join the network and would like to propose to host an event to promote tourism in the Sam Ruean community. The 14 community members in the network are namely Ban Lat Chado Community, Ban Sai Noi Community, Ban Bang Sai Community, Ban Plub Community, Ban Pom Community, Klong Takian Community, Phukhaothong Community, Ban Khor Kert Community, Ban Uthai Community, Khor Rean Community, Ban Rang Chorakae Community, Ban Pho community, Khlong Chik community, and Sam Ruean community. The way merging to establish a community-based tourism network in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province revealed the facts related to the community tourism network as follows: 1. Get happiness; 2. Get youth return home; 3. Get better income and economy; 4. Get exchange learning; 5. Get the preservation of unique cultures in each area, and 6. Get cooperation and harmony from grouping into a network

According to the community tourism network meeting in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province, it was found that the marketing tools used by the network in marketing communication with tourists, namely 1. Online media

(IT); 2. Professional salespeople including local tour entrepreneurs, ABT Journeys and Ayutthaya Boat and Travel company as mentors; 3. Public relations Ayutthaya community-based tourism network that there should be a variety of public relations channels that can be done through the community itself and the use of networks in public relations; 4. Accountants to take care of the finance for the network to be used in the following activities; 5. Network coordinator; 6. Producers responsible for the production of tourism programs of the network to present through various distribution channels and 7. Managers in the network provide flexibility in decision-making in areas that require speedy management.

Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya tourism network had a conclusion to create a joint selling point by using "Lunchbox" as a common selling point by making the community aware of the following factors:

1. Flavor is important for tourists to taste and impress the food. Therefore, the food in each community must be cooked intently in order to attract tourists with the flavor and then announce through various channels such as via social media, by word of mouth, etc.

2. Environmental conservation with lunchbox service is to reduce the use of polluted resources and to protect the environment itself as well.

3. Participation and lunchbox service through the concept of community participation for the people in the community to cook one lunchbox each house is a distribution of income to the community thoroughly instead of cooking food for tourists one by one.

4. Value creation in various areas as follows. 1. Using Story Telling by merging stories of local wisdom, cultures, and ways of life to allow the tourists to see the value of cooking with local identity; 2. Safe Food that the food to serve tourists in the lunchbox is free of MSG; 3. Self-garden vegetable picking, which is in addition to being an activity that tourists are interested in, is also a way for tourists to learn how to do and divide in each locality. Such activities are activities that can create a good interaction between tourists and the owners of the attraction; 4. Tourists' choice of buying ingredients from local markets to season their food and teaching cooking by the locals and 5. Attention to local cooking to make delicious food that must be delicious and clean. In the process, every step has to be done in order to be "Spectacular looks and tastes."



**Figure 2.** Tourism activities of the Sam Ruan community, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province

### **Process of integrating agro-ecotourism marketing of the Sam Ruan community.**

The process of integrating can be used in network marketing connections in which the community is preparing itself to cope with the changes and uncertainties of the current tourism market conditions. Innovation must be achieved through planning with clear metrics. There is a target including the productivity and results of working in a network that is clear and shared goals. From the study of the integration progress of marketing of the community-based tourism network in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province, it was found that the process to take place must look at the outcome of the operation, not measured by the product alone and what are the components that can lead to innovation collaboration in network format should consist of:

1. Community experience can draw the experience that each community has worked through and then be analyzed in order to create a capital of experience.

2. Proficiency refers to the expertise in operations in various fields that can bring that expertise to benefit in linking the tourism marketing that can create competitive potential at present. The integration to the tourism community to marketing requires expertise in many sciences, whether it is expertise in the analysis of weaknesses, strengths, opportunities, and obstacles of travel marketing, expertise in manufacturing products and services that can meet the needs of a unique group of tourists, tourism management expertise of the area. Expertise in coordinating with local members. Work that must be coordinated with various network partners.

3. Creativeness refers to the conceptualized thinking to think of new things that can create tourism products and services of each community that reflect the identity of the area and create a marketing point. Creativity can be used to develop work processes in tourism management of each community to be more efficient.

4. Skills refer to the frequent practicing that becomes a skill that can lead to effective work, whether the skills in the production of tourism products and services of the community or skills for transferring tourism experiences of the community to tourists. This includes collaboration with network groups to drive effective marketing efforts and reach more target audiences.

5. Cooperation refers to the participation in the collaboration of community members and network partners, starting from planning, defining work procedures, operating, auditing, including collaborative assessments. All members must be involved in order to be able to work successfully.

6. Learning refers to the study and research in various forms of an individual's expertise and are relevant to the effective tourism management of the area. Learning can be achieved through the study of successful models, trials including training for enhancing skills in various fields. Such learning may arise from unexpected situations encountered. When those situations have passed, it is possible for the community to learn

7. Patience refers to the efforts to drive the community together in order to achieve the set goals, which is very necessary that requires patience in work due to the fact that there are many factors that cannot be controlled in tourism. It is discouraging for members of the community and can give up work at any time

8. Opportunity refers to external factors that can be controlled but can create opportunities for the work of the area. In particular, the market opportunity is one that allows the operations of the tourism network members to achieve the objectives they have set. The opportunity can therefore be considered a variable that all members have to understand and adapt to work on in time to seize those opportunities and help the tourism marketing link to be successful in the most beneficial way. The process of integrating the agro-ecotourism marketing of the Sam Ruan community in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province can be summarized as a model as follows:

From the tourism marketing integrating model, it can be summarized that the process of integrating the agro-ecotourism marketing of the Sam Ruan community in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province, the central region of Thailand, is a new process that the community uses to connect tourism networks and participates in determining the tourism marketing elements, such as tourism products, pricing, distribution channels, as well as marketing promotions. There is a set of joint selling points to create a marketing process through a community-driven tourism network that the community of Sam Ruan has a tourism marketing model that can

be linked to two specific tourism marketing: 1) Single marketing through community management and marketing tools that are appropriate to the community and 2) network marketing tourism using a common selling point, namely "Lunchbox," which has the following characteristics: (1) Local food identity (2) Story Telling (3) Comprehensive income and benefits distribution (4) Value creation for all forms of tourism products. The marketing tools used to link the agricultural eco-tourism marketing of the Sam Ruan community to a specific group of tourists requires a link between (1) tourism operators, (2) non-profit, governmental organizations, (3) travel networks, and (4) marketing by the community itself through various forms of public relations marketing materials. An essential aspect of the Sam Ruan community marketing process is a marketing model that focuses on marketing communications through the happiness of the community itself and focus on building awareness of "happiness" for tourists; in addition, this marketing process is a marketing model where the community can develop self-evolving marketing processes and processes on their own and create sustainability.

## **DISCUSSION**

The study on Agricultural Ecotourism Marketing Models and Strategies of Sam Ruan community were consistent with the concept of Srisomyong (2005), who mentioned agricultural tourism with activities as the main resource that attracts tourists attention. The main goal is to generate income for farmers in the community, to allow local people to participate in the development of tourism fully, which model of agricultural tourism is one of the forms of sustainable tourism. It was also in line with Chomsiri (2004) concept mentioned that participatory learning should consist of formal learning by organizing educational activities and training to stimulate and seek solutions to problems together in a systematic manner and informal learning as brainstorming to reflect thoughts by participating in conversation activities and changing attitudes and experience from an experienced person, successful people or elders to various groups of people or the individual through a formal learning process learning from the interaction of friends and the surrounding environment.

While the integration of tourism marketing, special interests, and how to build a niche-market tourism network. In addition, the Sam Ruan community should provide information for promoting tourism in the community to tourists as well, such as information on accommodation in agricultural ecological tourism sites, service and facilitation, travel and community outreach in terms of price safety as an option for deciding the traveler's travel products as well. Besides having suitable travel products, the key factor in making the community known in the tourism market is public relations. Sam Ruan community can use the public relations for tourism in the community in various forms of media that can be done by the community itself, namely brochures, travel guides, posters, dissemination of information through websites and social media, inviting the media to study or learn in the area through various events or festivals both in and in the provinces. The promotion of community tourism through various media can create a connection to the community with tourists, tourism entrepreneurs, and travel networks in order to benefit each other. This is a promotional process that directly reaches the target audience (Murphy & Boyle, 2006; Anuar et al.: 2012). The thinking process that can be used to link the network marketing of the Sam Ruan community was in line with the concept of Youngsooksathaporn (2016); Ratanapongtra et al. (2020), which mentioned the community innovative thinking process that innovation is not the only matter of productivity but must also be a matter of results, which is a combination of the efforts, experience, expertise, skills, and collaboration of the people in the organization. That innovation is part of the mindset of how we view business and how do we look at business growth opportunities. Most importantly, it is also a matter of uncertainty. This thinking process can be considered as an important part of the tourism network collaboration attitude in order to continue to create sustainable community market innovation. The process of integrating the agro-ecotourism marketing of the Sam Ruan community in Phra Nakhon Sri Ayutthaya province. is a new process that the community uses to connect tourism networks and participates in determining the tourism marketing elements, such as tourism



products, pricing, distribution channels, as well as marketing promotions. There is a set of joint selling points to create a marketing process through a community-driven tourism network that the community of Sam Ruean has a tourism marketing model that can be linked to two specific tourism marketing: 1) Single marketing through community management and marketing tools that are appropriate to the community and 2) network marketing tourism using a common selling point, namely "Lunch box," which has the following characteristics: (1) Local food identity (2) Story Telling (3) Comprehensive income and benefits distribution (4) Value creation for all forms of tourism products. The marketing tools used to link the agricultural eco-tourism marketing of the Sam Ruean community to a specific group of tourists requires a link between (1) tourism entrepreneurs, (2) non-profit, governmental organizations, (3) travel networks, and (4) marketing by the community itself through various forms of public relations marketing materials. An essential aspect of the Sam Ruean community marketing process is a marketing model that focuses on marketing communications through the happiness of the community itself and focuses on building awareness of "happiness" for tourists. In addition, this marketing process is a marketing model where the community can develop self-evolving marketing processes and processes on their own and create sustainability. (Blackman et al.: 2004; Jermittiparsert et al.: 2019). The thinking process that can be used to link the network marketing of the Sam Ruean community was in line with the concept of Youngsooksathaporn (2016); Ratanapongtra et al. (2020) mentioned the community innovative thinking process that innovation is not the only matter of productivity but must also be a matter of results, which is a combination of the efforts, experience, expertise, skills, and collaboration of the people in the organization. That innovation is part of the mindset of how we view business and how do we look at business growth opportunities. Most importantly, it is also a matter of uncertainty. This thinking process can be considered as an important part of the tourism network collaboration attitude in order to continue to create sustainable community market innovation.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of this research synthesis were completed with the support of the budget from the Office of the Science Promotion Commission. Research and innovation. This result caused an achievement in local authorities to be able to organize community tourism through Sam Ruean Community Tourism Network. by adopting the network's joint selling points to link the specific tourist routes in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province. Furthermore, new technologies and innovations should be integrated into the process of linking the networked tourism market to the community widely and reach more niche customers.

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