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Transforming Chiangmai-Lamphun-Lampang railroad history and commercial quartier study into SRT creative railroad travel service products

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Abstract

This research aimed to synthesize and transform Chiangmai-Lamphun-Lampang railroad history and commercial quartier study into SRT creative railroad travel service products. This qualitative research by participatory action research approaches, researchers, selected 100 key informants by purposive sampling with fieldwork data collection and in-depth interviews. The locales were 6 commercial quartiers and 3 railway stations in 3 provinces. The result found that, in historical context, train route and track from Bangkok to Lampang have brought local prosperity according to trade in Lampang Province, and later on, Lamphun and Chiangmai. The historical and area's identity could be illustrated as the beauty of the Lanna Renaissance from its landscape, scenery, building and its decoration, and color, that could reflect the atmosphere in the past. The mood and tone of the entire product design were "Contemporary Architecture on Trains" or "Asian Luxury". As a result of the research process, 3 cabin decorations, 1 food container, and a set of staff uniforms were launched. The outcomes were an introduction of SRT new revenue channel, accumulating of country's tourism-based competitiveness, and multiplication of income from tourists' major city (Chiang Mai) to the secondary cities (Lamphun, Lampang).

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Introduction

A continuation of losses since 1975, as well as lack of revenue remittance of the State Railway of Thailand (SRT) have been caused by four major problems: infrastructure management, financial and investment

factors, organization structure and its management, and lastly, property management. It could be said that the entire problem is caused by an imbalance between revenue and expenditure. To solve the problems, the SRT has tried many ways to reduce losses including value-adding strategies. Adding value means making the price higher than usual based on the belief of the customer and comes in several ways such as branding, convenience, quality, unique selling points, and design.

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In present times, a transformation by applying cultural heritage into product and service design, including history, would create a unique identity for a product or merchandise. By managing the area's historical data, the area's creative railroad tourism management and SRT need to provide tourists with a clear, accurate, and insightful database to target them in various dimensions.

Thus, this study aimed to synthesize and transform Chiangmai-Lamphun-Lampang railroad history and commercial quartier study into SRT creative railroad travel service products. The result would strengthen its identity, create a selling point, as well as improve product and service to be more efficient.

Literature Review

The Construction of a Northern-Thailand railway from central Siam (Bangkok) to Payap County (Lampang-Lamphun-Chiangmai) was another way to consolidate power through a convenient transportation system that connected major cities and Bangkok. As a result, internal trade grew prosperously; on the other hand, trading with outsiders' cities was very difficult due to various legal trading barriers, which were applied by foreign countries.

Kongthup (2021) illustrated that King Prajadhipok Rama VII of Siam, went on his royal promenade to northern territories in 1926 to start abolition of dominion state governor and gain easier profit from trading by bestowing a symbolized-royal weapon to every governor, as illustrated in [Figure 1](#), in order to pay homage, and organized an oath of allegiance ceremony (The 1926 archive of Royal Promenade in Northern County and Chiangmai, 1967). After the change of Siam regime in 1932, roads were built to connect to various places to provide a more convenient transportation system.

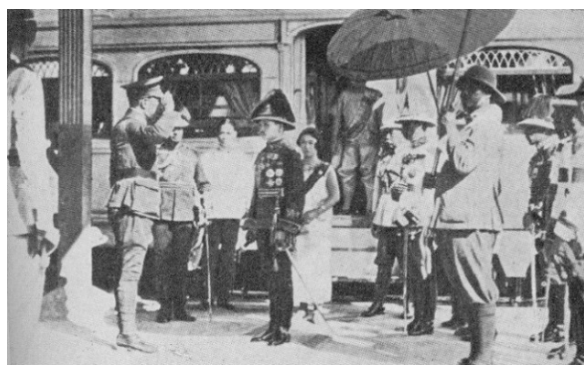


Figure 1 HM King Rama VII on his royal promenade to Payap country

Northern people faced hard times during WWII. After the war, the state of the country began to improve, therefore, there were city revitalizations in various fields such as business operations and expansion of trade. During the post-war period, especially in the trading business of consumer goods and modern appliances, big shopping malls were expanded in big cities such as Chiang Mai and Lampang. Ongsakul (2009).

In Chiang Mai, the expansion of modern society was caused by economic expansion and the growth of urban society after the 2nd World War. Resulting from the increasing urbanization, there is a trace of an old business quartier established in 1957 along the Ping River, now known as Nawarat Market, on the former area of Chao Kaew Nawarat residence and 3 adjacent markets (Nawarat, Warorot, Lamyai) Chutima (2014).

In Lampang, after the 2nd World War, the city expanded eastward along a new road, Phaholyothin Road. This road was built according to the policy of the People's Party government, that wanted to build a major highway to all regions of the country, named Highway No. 1 or Phaholyothin Road. The growth of the "city" resulted in hotels, restaurants, cinemas, but not yet very high standard. As a consequence, a new trading community followed the train track or car route and still remains to this day.

Tourism Product at a Glance

Product means an item that is presented to the market to attract customer attention and could led them to buy with a fulfillment of their satisfaction. In the tourism and service industry, products are usually unseparated production from consumption, and service is part of the product that travelers get when purchasing a travel product. Esichaikul (2003). Tourism products mainly have characteristics and affect influence on marketing as follows: (1) Most tourism products are intangible as a tourist experience; (2) Tourism products are Heterogeneity; (3) Tourism products are integrated products; (4) Tourism products are difficult to separate; (5) Perishability of Travel products; (6) Tourism products are traded seasonally; and (7) Tourism products are easily imitated. Tourism and service suppliers must create products differently and improve service quality in order to achieve re-visitation. Esichaikul (2014). In developing a product and service, it is a prerequisite for satisfying tourists' changing demands and insuring the long-term profitability of the industry. Ideally, tourism products meet marketplace demands, are produced cost-efficiently, and are based on the wise use of the cultural and natural resources of the destination (Smith, 1994).

By putting the context from railroad and commercial quartier's history into tourism and service design, the researchers applied people or Human-centric design to create unique traveling experiences. There are 3 important stages in the process: (1) Understanding the problem phase (Issues and needs); (2) Development phase of ideas (Creating); and (3) Innovative prototypes delivering phase. All stages are done before the testing stages to meet the customer's needs and attention. Dachum (2018). In this research, the approach of stages in cultural creativity creates concepts. Boonpracha (2021) as; Identification Stage, this step is to search for critical cultural features in railroad and commercial quartier's history by fieldwork study. Translation Stage uses observation techniques, pictures, and various secondary sources to analyze the meaning and suitability reflected in the product. Then, the Development Stage is the conceptual development and design realization using drawing sketches. Finally, the Implementation Stage gets prototypes which are ready to examine.

Methodology

This qualitative research method in participatory action research approaches was conducted mainly in Chiangmai – Lamphun – Lampang Province, Kingdom of Thailand. During the study, data collection methods were used for 6 months starting from January 2021 and were divided into 2 major phases; (1) fieldwork (mainly from 6 commercial quarters along the SRT railroad in Chiangmai – Lamphun – Lampang: (1.1) Wat Ket, Tha Pae, and Sanpakhoi for Chiangmai; (1.2) Inthayongyout for Lamphun; (1.3) Sobotui, Kongtha-Tha Ma-O for Lampang) from primary and secondary sources; and (2) Developing Stage of the design from inspiration, design principles, prototyping to final product. 100 key informants comprising of 12 SRT managerial staff, 15 tourism experts, 51 local people, 15 house owners, and 7 designers were allocated for data gathering by purposive sampling technique, using focus-group discussion and informal interview as a research instrument to figure out policies, feedback, insight of research locale, and service product production. Both instruments were carefully investigated and validated by experts. Data analysis applied content analysis and data triangulation technique.

Results

Chiangmai-Lamphun-Lampang Railroad History and Commercial Quartier Study in Brief

During the colonial era, around the second half of the 17th century, Asia was the main destination of colonialism especially in Mainland China (Qing Dynasty) as the center of the fertile-natural resources in Asia. Westerners, especially Great Britain, tried to pave the way to the center of the resource and had planned to expand their influence into China through the independent states of Northern Burma and Siam. The British planned to reach southern China by railroad. In these circumstances, the Siamese government at that time, was not very satisfied. This is because the British planned-rail route would pass through the Lanna Kingdom, which had abundant natural resources Younghusband (2017).

The Siamese government had the idea of having their own railway system. Nana (2021) explained the significant factors which led King Rama V to have the railways built. The British Ambassador, Sir John Bowring, with an offering of royal tributes from HRM. Queen Victoria, asked to extend a new treaty. Among the royal tributes, a set of miniature train models were given to King Rama IV, shown in Figure 2, as well as an offering of organization establishment recommendation. However, at that time, due to the unstable Siamese economic system and insufficient appropriate manpower, the project was not born. Later in the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the Government of Siam approved a concession to build the first railway from Bangkok to Samut Prakan, and opened a public route to Ayutthaya Station, illustrated in Figure 3, as described by Boonnak (2021), and responded to Royal initiation to build a northern-route railway from Ban Phachi Station to Chiang Mai Station. The construction was halted for up to 11 years due to great problems in drilling tunnels over Doi Khun Tan in Lampang Province before the opening ceremony of the northern railway on January 1, 1921.

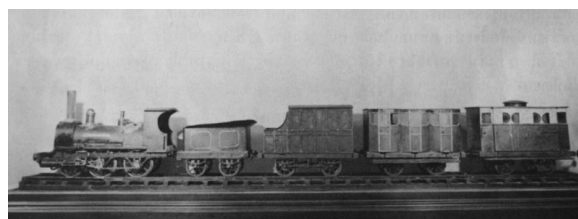


Figure 2 A miniature train as a Royal tribute from The Great Britain



Figure 3 HM King Rama VII opening Bangkok – Ayuthaya train station

Haripunchai (2021) reported that a large amount of labor pioneered the northern train tracks and railroad system, illustrated in [Figure 4](#), and there was a group of merchants who came to play an important role in the local trade by delivering supplies and necessities for railroad construction to companies and workers. By caravan-based bull and horse carriage, these merchants took the trade from both the city of Lampang and the side of Lamphun and also in Chiang Mai. When the construction of the railroad system ended, these merchants and laborers settled and permanently traded in the areas of Lampang, Lamphun, and Chiang Mai; it was considered a radical change in Lanna's social and economic system.

In the adoption of Western culture in Siam, beginning in the reign of King Rama IV, Siam entered into the Bowring treaty with Great Britain, causing an influx of Western culture into Siam. During that period, Siam held a forest concession with the British. In 1897 and 1900, The



Figure 4 Chinese laborers in Northern-Thailand railroad construction

Royal promenade by King Chulalongkorn to Europe led to an advancement of modern technology to improve the country's development and to change the economic and social structure to stabilize the foundation for the country's prosperity in every aspect. These also included an appreciation of Western-influenced architecture from foreign architects and engineers (Thaidee, 2011). This benefaction caused changes in the architectural style in the country, called western style house or Colonial Architecture, which has been applied to suit the local craftsmanship of Siam and then Thailand in the later reign (Chutima, 2014).

During the reign of King Rama VI, new construction materials, especially reinforced concrete, were introduced into the country. Due to its modernity, it could reduce construction constraints. This allowed architecture to create and develop more building styles than with traditional materials in Thailand. This advancement is another factor that determined the architectural style and response to many Western architectural styles in Thailand such as the Panya House, Manila House, Gingerbread House etc. (Chutaviphat, 2009).

For more than 10 years during the construction of the Khun Tan tunnel, which aimed to connect Lampang to Chiang Mai, Lampang became a stopover point for both people and products from Bangkok before being transported to Chiang Mai by other means (Buranaat, 2014). The rapid development of Lampang had commercial quarters developed around Lampang Train Station, from vernacular architecture as wooden blockhouses to modern architecture made of concrete. These circumstances made Lampang a pioneer city in modern construction and architecture, which clearly affected the changing landscape of Lampang. Western architecture was widely recognized and spread its influence to various cities as shown in [Figure 5](#). Additionally, rail transportation also brought a number of important changes to Lampang City including the rapid urbanization, settlement, commercial-based occupation, and the connectivity of the intra- road system from residential zones to commercial quarters.



Figure 5 Siam Commercial Bank, Co., Ltd. Lampang Branch Identification Stage

The train route from Bangkok to Lampang brought local prosperity according to trade in Lampang Province. This can be seen in the main commercial quarters surrounding Lampang Railway Station as well as an entry of British timber concessions and a broadened number of Burmese workers, all of which created prosperity in the timber trade, especially on both sides of the Wang River. In later years, there was a train connection from Lampang to Chiang Mai, the center of Lanna, which resulted in various ethnicities settling for trade, religious propagation, education, public health, etc. Chinese people also migrated from Lampang to Chiangmai pre-World War II. Some of them settled in Lamphun Province. Therefore, an important commercial quartier was formed in the old city of Lamphun province.

The collective identity of SRT railroad history and important commercial quarters as shown in [Figure 6](#) derived from the cultural interpretation

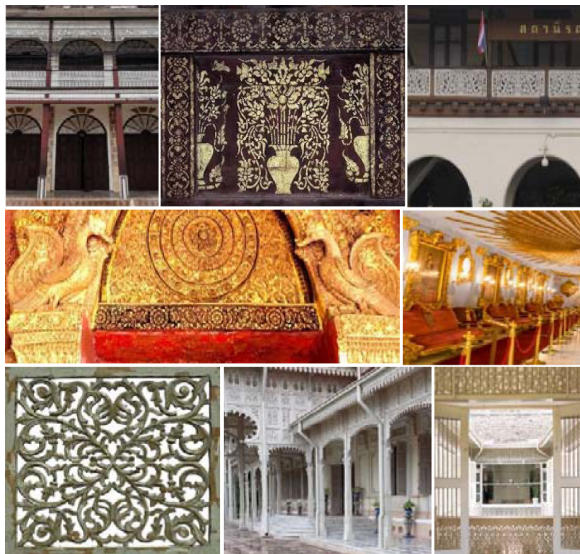


Figure 6 The prominent cultural features in the research locale as designing inspiration

process which would conclude as: (1) Trains route; (2) Landscape and scenery; (3) Buildings and their architectural forms; (4) Building decoration; and (5) Color that impresses with the atmosphere of the past.

Translation Stage

Main Concept and inspiration, mood and tone: Contemporary architecture on trains (Asian Luxury) A contemporary architecture with a mixture of Thai, Chinese and European styles. From different materials and structures, this collection gathered unique architectural works from different places. Dating back to the days when train travel began, the use of Earth Tone colors of light brown, dark brown, black, and gold gives a warm and luxurious feel. Furthermore, another inspiration is of gold metal on Thai architectural elements, with a reduction of pattern and glazed, giving a feeling of luxurious Southeast Asian retro style.

Train cabins

The train cabin was designed by keeping the main concept from the translation stage with a feeling of each province. All cabins illustrate the Lanna Luxury concept, the interior is decorated with arches inspired by contemporary buildings and monasteries. The sketches in [Figure 7](#), showing the train cabin, were inspired by a uniqueness of a monastery's decoration in each province, such as Chiangmai Cabin inspired by Paco Fern Motif, Lamphun Cabin inspired by Golden Swan Motif, and Lampang Cabin Vase and Flowers Motif. The Cabin's window frames are decorated with a motive derived from Chinese and colonial architectural motives. A redesigned curtain was derived and inspired by Lamphun's brocade textile.

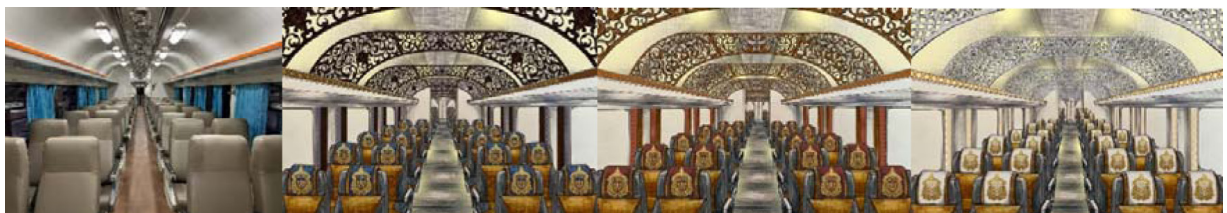


Figure 7 Three cabins sketch

Lunch and snack box

Figure 8 illustrates a mixture of contemporary collections between Thai, Chinese and European characteristics from trains in the past, which could be applied in the form of Lunch Boxes



Figure 8 Lunch and snack box

Staff uniform

The concept of designing staff uniforms for SRT Northern train travel comes from the identity of the Lanna Thai people and dress during the reign of King Rama V, which was the first era of train travel. The Kingdom of Siam gained prosperity from good relations with foreigners. Therefore, there has been a linkage of dress culture from Europe with an adjustment to modernization. Therefore, the uniform comes in a ready-to-wear style that can be mixed and matched, depicted in Figure 9.



Figure 9 A sketch of staff uniforms

Development Stage

This process is to figure out important features on historical, architectural, and artistic features along 6 ancient commercial quarters in Chiangmai – Lamphun – Lampang (Mentioned in research methodology section). All data were collected using survey collection from and photographs. After that, investigation and selection of important features and issues to gain a study model were conducted by multilateral collaboration between researchers, SRT, and designers.

Implement Stage

Researchers, SRT, and designers transformed Chiangmai-Lamphun-Lampang railroad travel and commercial quarter history into SRT creative tourism

railroad travel service products by mixing, adding, or deducting an existing collective identity into designing by doing focus-group discussions, in-depth interview, idea sketch in text and pictograph form. Additional suggestions were added by PMU-C (Program Management Unit for Competitiveness) expertise for rearranging of time and rescheduling to offer more comfort and flexibility program. Figure 10 shows a set of SRT creative railroad travel service products after feedback suggestions for continuous improvement.



Figure 10 Service product on the move

Discussion

The beginning of train travel in upper-north provinces occurred in 2016 through the collaboration between the Tourism Authority of Thailand (Upper-North Office 1) and the State Railway of Thailand (SRT). They had organized railroad travel connecting 3 provinces (Chiang Mai, Lamphun, and Lampang) on an event basis and had terminated their operation that year. Now, the revival of the domestic tourist market after the COVID-19 pandemic has thus become an opportunity to bring tourism revenues into the economy to replace the country's lack of income from the foreign tourist market. The quick-win creative railroad travel project would help and drive the tourism economy to increase the country's competitiveness

The aim of conducting this research was to operate creative railroad travel which links into communities to gain more income from tourist expenditure using a retro approach of the first railway operation during the reign of King Rama V by delivery of nostalgic values, emotions, and feelings, together with a combination of the sense of Lanna Modernization. This creative train travel project creates an indulgence of train tourists while traveling, with this campaign in a full-service pattern.

Products and Service Core Concept driven by "Train Journeys in the Past" explain the design concept of "the impression of train travel atmosphere". The products were designed for the target group to get emotional value with "feeling good" by delivering value through

exceptional product and service comprising cabin decoration, food containers, and staff uniforms. Overall, products required design thinking, according to Brown (2009), which is the principle of brainstorming new ideas and solutions to problems.

The three-passenger cabin was inspired by motifs depicting the main architecture of the 3 provinces in addition to the uniqueness of the pattern of Lamphun's Brocade textile. The food container was inspired by the important train station in Chiangmai – Lamphun – Lampang. The uniform was inspired by many tourist attractions in the 3 provinces to deliver both sense and comfort to customers. These statements agree with the principle of the facility arrangement: (1) improvements for accessibility and usable; (2) improvements for greater use in various areas; (3) improvements to promote the service; and (4) improvements based on functional or structural constraints (Dorst, 2011).

The outcome of the new tourism model had an impact on the State Railway of Thailand, which introduced a channel for generating new revenue, and it also generates more income in the tourism sector, increasing the competitiveness of the country's tourism, distribution of income from tourists from the main city (Chiang Mai) to the secondary cities (Lamphun, and Lampang), as well as having a positive impact on travel suppliers in the area, including local transportation systems, such as trams, horse carriage, souvenir products entrepreneurs.

Conclusion and Recommendation

1. After developing and revitalizing the train's service products, a multilateral collaboration should be programmed to strengthen the SRT's service products. SRT service products could reflect the firm's identity to deliver and communicate corporate values to its customers. A universal user-friendly focus, modernization in designing, and legally protecting are the recommendations for making further service products with a uniqueness and to be seen and used only on SRT train travel.

2. An application of corporate identity, area, and community through service products in the SRT creative tourism railroad travel in Chiang Mai - Lamphun - Lampang, where the interwoven multicultural concept is applied along with the sync of modernity and the world's design trends.

3. To avoid monotony and to inspire the need for revisiting, the SRT should set up a time frame to launch in-cabin new product and service, such as launching

festive menus, and seasonal employee costume design. Researching service products that the tourists are interested in would help the SRT with future design planning.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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