

Lanna Food: The Cultural Management Strategy for the Creative Economy Development

Onanong Thongmee, Chamnan Rodhetbhai and Wisanee Siltragool

Faculty of Cultural Science, Mahasarakham University,

Maha Sarakham, Thailand

Corresponding Author: ornanong16@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study of local wisdom for the production and development of *Lanna* food, a reference to local food of the upper northern region of Thailand, provides great benefits towards the creative economy and sustainable business, and also promotes conservation of *Lanna* food. This research aims to (1) study the history and the culture of *Lanna* food (2) study problems and solution guidelines of *Lanna* food, and (3) study the cultural management of *Lanna* food in order to develop the creative economy. A qualitative research method was applied in this research, with the districts in Chiang Mai Province as target areas, namely: Mueang, Fang, Chiang Dao, San Pa Tong, Hang Dong, Mae Taeng, Doi Lo, Phrao, Doi Saket, Mae Wang, Wiang Haeng, and San Sai. The research instruments of this study, employed in field data collection from key informants, casual informants, and general informants, included interview, observation, focus group discussion, and workshops. Documentary approach was also used to collect data. In terms of the verification of the aforesaid data, triangulation method was used, while a review of descriptive data analysis was chosen as a means of the presentation of research findings. In terms of the guidelines for the cultural management of *Lanna* food to develop the creative economy, it was found that the producers coped with the cultural management of *Lanna* food as follow. Producers should select the products and participate in the OTOP Product Champion (OPC) campaign which held every two years, in order to maintain quality and standard of the products. Apart from that,

a creative economy framework should be applied in order to develop the creative economy which consists of local wisdom, the *Lanna* food identity, appropriate technology, and distinctive services with the application of outstanding package design that would help increasing the value and prices of the products. This would contribute to job creation, competitive competence and healthy consumption. All in all, these practices would improve *Lanna* food as a means to create job opportunities, provide a stable income, and develop a creative economy in the community. In conclusion, *Lanna* food contributes to the creative economy of the community and the country. Therefore, both the public and private sectors should recognize its importance and promote *Lanna* food by means of academic and financial support in order to ensure the cultural conservation and effective management for the sustainability of *Lanna* food.

Keywords: Cultural management; Lanna food; Lanna; Creative economy

Introduction

Thai food such as the northern local food, or so-called *Lanna* food should be conserved as a cultural item. The foods of each local area are culturally unique. These foods have been improved and the recipes have been passed down from generation to generation. Moreover, Thai local food reflects the wisdom of Thai ancestors who invented these healthy nutritious dishes. The products of Lanna food play an important role in career creation. Furthermore, it is part of the creative economy which aims to establish Thailand as the creative industrial hub of ASEAN, to increase the value of creative industries and to encourage the Thai creative economy to focus on adapting culture and traditional wisdom combined with the modern technology. Additionally, the main problem found with Lanna food is that appreciation in the food has decreased because of the appeal of foreign food in Thai society, as well as changing consumer behaviour and the adaptation of a lifestyle based upon modern society.

These circumstances added up to vital problems with respect to Lanna food in terms of management, marketing, distribution, hygienic production process, and lack of knowledge in adding to product value. It is thus necessary to develop Lanna food using the creative economy principle which is an approach to business and economic development with properties derived from creative thinking. The creative economy is an economic system which integrates cultural properties, local wisdom, and Thai identities with the knowledge and appropriate technology to produce unique goods and services by the innovation of the locals. This would develop *Lanna* food as a sustainable business of the community, as well as to conserve the *Lanna* food for career creation and community empowerment. Therefore, researcher needed to study the cultural management of *Lanna* food for the development of the creative economy in order to impart the wisdom and identity of *Lanna* food, as well to promote a sustainable economy.

Research Goals

1. To study the history and culture of *Lanna* food

2. To study problems and solution guidelines of Lanna food
3. To study the cultural management of Lanna food for the development of the creative economy

Research Methodology

Quality research method was applied in this research. Data were collected with interview and observation, including focus group discussions and workshop, and were analysed towards the research goals.

Research Areas

The research areas were districts in Chiang Mai province: Mueang, Fang, Chiang Dao, San Pa Tong, Hang Dong, Mae Taeng, Doi Lo, Prao, Doi Saket, Mae Wang, Wiang Haeng, and San Sai districts.

Populations and Samples

There was a total population of 120 made up of 3 groups, namely 48 key informants, 36 casual informants, and 36 general informants. The samples studied in this research were general citizens and tourists chosen by purposive sampling method.

Research Results

Part 1 History and Culture of *Lanna* Food

Traditional *Lanna* food used wild vegetables, fish, and the meat of animals such as frogs and other wild animals from natural sources with ingredients mixed with various seasonings. Nowadays, people prefer to eat pork, chicken, beef, and fish respectively. Sugar was not common in *Lanna* food, but sweetness was taken from certain ingredients in the food. The tradition of *Lanna* food derives from the mixing of the old culture with various traditions of many other groups of people.

Food in the areas along the Thailand-Myanmar border such as Kaeng Hang Lay (pork curry with garlic) originated in Myanmar. Khanom Jeen Nam Ngiao (rice noodles with spicy pork sauce) comes from the Shan or Tai Yai people, and tea, noodles, and food with pork

ingredients are derived from Chinese food cultures. These different tastes contribute to *Lanna* food. The local food of the Upper North called, “*Lanna* food”, belonged to the upper north people who called themselves “Khon Mueang” which means “the people of the city”. They had a unique culture, language, beliefs, traditions, and local food which was considered as cultural capital collected and passed on continuously from the past to present. Khon Mueang’s food was naturally simple and less seasoned. Most dishes were made with seasonal ingredients available in each area. Availability of the ingredients resulted in slight differences between the dishes in each community with different features.

Part 2 Problems and Solution Guidelines of *Lanna* Food

Problems and solutions of *Lanna* goods are discussed here:

Because of the problems with workers, poor hygiene practices in food production were detected. For example, some of food production staff did not wash their hands before cooking, and some followed other unhygienic practices causing contamination to food, etc. To solve this problem, training should be given priority, especially on the subject of basic hygiene in food production. Moreover, the government sector should concentrate on the OTOP program.

For the technology and equipment problem, it was found that there was insufficient budget for up-to-date technology or the latest equipment which would save time and energy in the production process. The solution guidelines for the lack of the budget were that the officials should help with the budget plan, by, for example, managing a loan in cooperation with a bank.

As for *Lanna* food quality, the problems were: firstly, the adaptation of the food recipe or cooking technique to match with consumer demand while maintaining the identity and taste of local food; and secondly, the limitation of seasonal food materials. The solution guidelines were that the food producers should have standard recipes for which the ingredients were precisely measured, while good hygiene practices such as wearing cooking caps and gloves should be followed. Furthermore,

Lanna food products should be regularly inspected and tested by government officials after receiving a quality guarantee.

Further regarding *Lanna* food quality, the problems were: firstly, the product packages had not been improved to appeal to consumers; and secondly, the improvement to the food rating of *Lanna* food was hard to find. These problems were rooted by the low budget, and that is why a new package design could not be provided for the OTOP Product Champion contest. The solution is for a permanent, standard production house to be built, and a new package design, with a valid label, should be created to meet customer expectations. Therefore, sources of financial support need to be found to fund development of new package to participate the next campaign.

For the marketing and management, there was occasionally no market access for *Lanna* food products because the staff's lack of knowledge of marketing. To solve this problem, market access should be managed to support *Lanna* food products. The producers should have an opportunity to learn about market access and coordination with networks such as district and provincial units, shops, or the private sector, in order to distribute the products.

Problems concerning the creative economy were, firstly, that *Lanna* food producers had been not developed the products to meet customer demand. Secondly, the lack of a circulating capital was identified. Another problem was the current lack of experienced person with management know-how who could help prepare the competition for an increasing number of competitors. Also, the similarity of products made it difficult to develop standout examples. Furthermore, problems concerning intellectual property registering were found as well. The solution to these problems was for cultural management to be applied to develop the creative economy, in a way that can be understood by the community. Next, *Lanna* food design should be developed as an innovation of the local community, applying traditional wisdom to adapt and develop various new product forms. Further studies on the development of new products should be conducted as well.

Part 3 Guidelines for the Cultural Management of *Lanna* Food to Develop the Creative Economy

Guidelines for the Cultural Management of Lanna food

The research results reveal that the food producers should participate in the OTOP Product Champion (OPC), which is held every two years, in order to maintain product quality. The food producers who are skilful at producing *Lanna* food will be able to maintain the products' quality and high standard. Also, the ingredients which are commonly found in the local areas should be brought for use in producing *Lanna* food products. The production process must be up-to-date and hygienic. Moreover, producers should utilize advertisement channels that can be widely accessed such as the internet. Clear roles should be designed for *Lanna* food producing staff according to each person's skill. An outstanding and attractive product package should be designed based on the product's identity, for example, recipe. Furthermore, the identity of the products must be highlighted by, for example, inventing a new production technique. Food producers should offer their employees an opportunity to learn and search for more knowledge. A new member of the business group should allocate his/her time towards contributing most to the production of *Lanna* food. Additionally, members in key occupations should spend time contributing to the part-time business group to produce and develop *Lanna* food. Moreover, group members may have full-time jobs, but they should also contribute to the part-time business group to produce and develop *Lanna* food. Producers should seek market access, probably through network sources, or consult with the government officials.

Guidelines to Cultural Management of Lanna Food for Creative Economy

The result reveals that producers should systematically apply resources for greatest effectiveness and efficiency. Experts and knowledgeable persons in the communities should be invited to teach or pass on the knowledge of *Lanna* food wisdom to producers. The plan should be carried out and the future situation should be predicted. The uses of the creative

economy in Lanna food, in brief, are as follows:

1) Local wisdom - The producers should seek knowledge of *Lanna* food in each local community. Most producers are experienced and knowledgeable; they should impart to new generations the knowledge of *Lanna* food, including local culture, economy, production technology, and self-reliance.

2) Identity of *Lanna* food – The producers should present the identity of *Lanna* food to attract consumers. Moreover, a *Lanna* food product centre should be established in order to collect, display, and distribute *Lanna* food products from local communities, such as, Sai Ua or Northern Thai sausage, Nam prik Noom or green pepper chilli paste, and Kab Moo or crispy pork skin, etc.

3) Technology – Producers should obtain affordable and appropriate technology. It should be up-to-date technology aimed at minimising the production process, such as solar oven or hot air ovens, and large scale food mixers, etc.

4) Services – Producers should provide food service based on the identity of *Lanna* food. The food's exquisite, attractive, and appetizing looks and traditionally delicious taste should be considered along with the traditional customs of serving *Lanna* food with various kinds of accompaniments. “Khan Tok” or a food set is an example of a mixed dinner set offering variety.

5) Product design – Producers should give the products a modern design by engaging a package design centre run by either the government sector or the private sector in order to design packaging to match market needs. An example is the packaging of Nam prik Kua Sai (traditional Thai chilli paste) found in Wiang Haeng district that has a red colour with a modern look to make it appealing to the consumer.

6) Value adding – Producers should add value to *Lanna* food products by applying traditional wisdom and culture with modern technology. Although this practice would bring *Lanna* food into the creative economic system, the original taste and production process should be maintained.

7) Increasing price – In order to be able to raise prices in both production and service sectors, producers should combine creativity with the value of Lanna’s society and its unique art, as well as empowering the food business.

8) Career creation – Producers should recognize the value of *Lanna* food by providing food producers and others with suitable training on *Lanna* food production to improve career opportunities.

9) Competitive competence – Producers should recognize the importance of public relations such as applying modern technology, managing a webpage for *Lanna* products or *Lanna* restaurant. Package development and *Lanna* food product projects should be conducted in numerous districts, in cooperation with a college or relevant government organisation.

10) Health – Producers should support *Lanna* food production emphasizing the health benefits because *Lanna* food are highly nutritious. In addition, a “Healthy *Lanna* Food” contest could be arranged on various occasions.

Discussion

History and Traditions of *Lanna* Food

Traditional *Lanna* food is cooked with plants and vegetables and meats from natural sources, mixed with various ingredients. Just a culture spreads throughout society by various means, *Lanna* food emerged as a result of combining tradition and culture with the cultures of other ethnic groups. The tastes of food along the Thailand-Burma border or food derived from Chinese food culture are different from the taste of “Khon Mueang” or typical *Lanna* food. This finding supports Prayat Saiwichian’s (2004: 84-91) who described the local culture process, meaning, how the local people’s way of life in each area is connected and relies upon the natural environment, affecting their health, quality of life, as well as the morality and virtue of people in the community. Such a way of life has been practiced for a long time, becoming the tradition and culture of locality.

Problems and Solutions of Lanna Food

The researcher aims to present the problems and solution guidelines for *Lanna* food in 12 districts in Chiang Mai, namely: Chiang Mai province: Mueang, Fang, Chiang Dao, San Pa Tong, Hang Dong, Mae Taeng, Doi Lo, Prao, Doi Saket, Mae Wang, Wiang Haeng, and San Sai districts.

This research presents the results of data analysis in term of the issues of problems and solution guidelines for *Lanna* food based on field data collection by means of observation, formal and information interviews, as well as small group meetings with three groups of key informants, casual informants, and general informants, which are people and tourists who visited Chiang Mai. The summary of the results of data analysis is as follows.

1. The problem concerning food practitioners is that some of them lacked knowledge of hygiene in food production. Therefore, the public and private sectors should cooperate to manage a program to provide hygiene knowledge to *Lanna* food producers and other interested persons. This is consistent with Yos Santasombat's functional theory (2005: 30-32) which states that the instrumental needs of the people in the society requires the participation of people in the community in order to respond to the basic needs both physically and mentally. Therefore, the duty of the *Lanna* food producers is to produce clean, safe, and hygienic food that is acceptable to consumers.

2. Regarding equipment and technology, producers should look for new knowledge about equipment and technology in order to develop food production, increase product quantity, save time, and maintain quality. Relevant units should provide practical training in food production. This supports the research results of Seibert (1994: 1320 - A) which reveal that corporations from various sectors involved in production or innovation, are needed for developing new products. Other than this, each producer or the work of each individual, though in a different framework, could be applied together.

3. As for the quality of *Lanna* food, producers should invite the

public and private sectors together with respected locals, colleges, and relevant units, to provide them with knowledge of the *Lanna* production process, including conducting a project with the community in order to increase the producers' capacity to produce *Lanna* food of good quality. With good quality, *Lanna* food products would be able to enter the selection process of OTOP Product Champion. This idea is supported by the research findings of Paweenapas Kalamsiri (2004: 74-77) who studied "*The Local Food Wisdom: A Case Study of Taonor Village in Sila Sub-district, Muang District, Khon Kaen Province.*" Her research described how various working units conducted research in order to study the quality of *Lanna* food and to collect knowledge and local wisdom related to food recipes in terms of the food gathering, cooking, and preserving. The research also explored the nutritional and herbal value of the local food from the community's perspective.

4. As for *Lanna* food standards, producers should launch a project together with the relevant sectors in order to improve and develop *Lanna* food products and seek selection for the OTOP Product Champion. A new package design for the next competition might be the subject of the training given to producers. The producers could consult with various sectors such as experts from universities and colleges, and relevant government agents. This suggestion is in line with Paritad Bhandhubanyong et al. (2003: 292) who stated that the production standard is specific information giving details of each product's production standard, with a different design. It is designed to display details of the product production defined by the forms, types, production techniques of each product, etc.

5. Regarding the marketing and management, producers should carry out systematic management to produce *Lanna* food products. Furthermore, *Lanna* food products must be guaranteed in terms of quality and food standard and market access should be available to sell the products. Various channels should be made available to distribute *Lanna* food products, including OTOP's product display supported by the public or private sectors such as at IMPACT Arena Muang Thong Thani, or on the internet etc. This idea supports the Community Development Department

(2012) which explained how the OTOP Product Champion is selected; saying the objective of OPC is to urge the community to produce the products from the local wisdom and local resources. In this, the government is ready to give the community support in order to manage the products and the database management system together with the cooperation of all relevant sectors. This finding also agrees with Philip Kotler (2000: 99) who believes that products and services are things that are offered by business in order to respond to consumer demand. The products that match with consumer demand must be products that, in the consumer's view, come with utility and value. What makes products attractive to buyers are product differentiation and competitiveness.

A workshop under the topic "*Lanna Food: The Cultural Management to Develop the Creative Economy*" was held on the 2nd of July, 2014 at the conference room of Saraphi District Office, Yang Noeng, Saraphi district, Chiang Mai province. The conference participants included key informants, casual informants, and general informants who offered suggestions how the cultural management of Lanna food could develop the creative economy as discussed below.

The Cultural Management Guidelines of Lanna Food to Develop the Creative Economy

This research presents the results of data analysis in term of the issues the cultural management guidelines of *Lanna Food* to develop the creative economy. Currently, based on the study of data obtained from field data collection by means of survey, observation with and without participation, formal and information interviews, group discussions and workshop, and the results of study conducted by the researcher, the summary of the cultural management guidelines of *Lanna Food* to develop the creative economy is as follows.

1. The cultural management guidelines of *Lanna* food are as follows:

The cultural management of *Lanna* food should be managed systemically by clearly dividing each person's duty and should apply

a rating method for products based on the number of stars (from 1 to 5 star) with plans to support and develop the products. In so doing, each community can use its own resources and local knowledge to develop their own products. The government should be prompt to help communities to obtain new knowledge, to find sources of funding, and to widen the potential in management and marketing in order to help make community products available in both the domestic and international markets. This point agrees with Saowapa Sakayapan and Yupayon Wijitsin who stated that local food as a part of the local life, is connected with local occupations, ingredient trade, and supports a variety of occupations related to food production and the food industry. Furthermore, certain local food could be developed into the international market.

2. The cultural management of *Lanna* food to develop the creative economy

Cultural management of *Lanna* food to develop the creative economy involves elaborate production processes and an increase in product prices by developing and branding products. Producers need to consider consumer demand and need to find markets where products can be made available. Producers should apply the creative economy framework to *Lanna* food in order to develop and research *Lanna* food in the future. Moreover, there should be a market to support the products. Also, the producers should be encouraged to seek out and develop networks in order to exchange knowledge and find reliable markets, based on local capital and potentials in creating the region's charms. This includes traditions, history, commentaries on local knowledge, natural resources, facilities, innovation and technology, as well as the integration of the cultural management with the creative economy of the community. Consequently, local people in the communities and interested persons would be able to earn their living in sustainable occupations based on the self-reliance paradigm. This point supports the research findings of Wanipa Thongkon (2005: 60-66) which identified factors that contribute to the success of the OTOP producers in Ratchaburi province. The research revealed these as being to do with public relations, and effective

training. Business networking activities provided opportunities for producers to meet and gather and share ideas, knowledge, and experiences concerning production and marketing problems, leading to mutually determined resolutions.

Suggestions

Suggestions for Research Application

1. The history and culture of *Lanna* food has a distinctive identity; a unique culture, language, and belief, system culminating in unique local food. The local food can be considered as cultural capital of the locality comprising local knowledge collected and passed down over generations.

2. As for problems and solutions concerning *Lanna* food, task overlap in the role of government officials with respect to the OTOP program was found.

3. Academic institutions should support producers of *Lanna* food in conducting research to develop *Lanna* food products, and provide them with know-how on the application and adaptation of traditional wisdom to meet consumer demands.

Suggestions for Further Study

1. The cultural management of *Lanna* food for creative economy development should be studied further to meet the needs of communities as well as those of Thai and foreign consumers.

2. There should be more research conducted on development of *Lanna* food products, using materials in the local areas to attract income and a creative economy in the communities.

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