Visual Methods in Social Research on Lanna Mural Painting: A Case Study of Wat Phumin, Nan Province

Tawipas Pichaichanarong
Silpakorn University Bangkok, Thailand
email: tawipas.p@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

According to most of tourists who have visited Thai temples and have seen Thai mural paintings with untrained eyes, they might not understand a story on walls at first sight. It may be because Thai mural paintings look confusing, crowded with colorful figures that appears similar in detail and character, leaving no place to focus one's attention (David K. Wyatt, 2004). Thai mural painting is a disparate of the visual arts because of conventions that are entirely its own. This research is designed to study the capability of Thai and Foreign tourists in order to apprehend Lanna mural painting through visual methods in social research. For Methodology, questionnaires were used by collecting the data from the total of 411 Thai and foreign tourists who have been visited Wat Phumin, Nan province. At the same time, qualitative method was used by collecting the data form tourists who have been visited Wat Phumin, Nan province. The data then were analyzed using mean, descriptive statistics, and qualitative data. This study concludes that the comprehension of Lanna mural painting at first sight from Thai and foreign tourists at Wat Phumin, Nan province are not positive. In addition, the results reported that our respondents have verified that there is no direction in order to understand stories on Lanna mural painting from the beginning. Furthermore, the results reported that our respondents have established visual methods in social research in order to discover more effective solutions to facilitate Thai and foreign tourists to obtain the information of the storytelling in Lanna mural painting at first sight as possible.

Keywords: *visual methods, social research, Lanna mural painting, Nan province*

INTRODUCTION

In his 'Study of Thai Traditional Architecture', Wattana Boonjub (2009) describes that Mural paintings recreate the walls consists of ordination and visual images with some texts which designed for spiritual instruction. He points out that Mural painting are used in order to teach Thai people dates back before the 20th century. At that time the majority of Thai population were illiterate, only Buddhist monks were educated in the temple, which to study the ancient scriptural language 'Pali'. As a result, murals were used to represent the teachings of Buddha because they were easy to understand and remember.

As times went by for many centuries, Thailand's heritages become the tourist's attraction for tourists all around the world. More research supports Thailand's tourism, Mingsarn Kaosa-ard (2002) found that the composition of tourism consists of

three characteristics; there are 1. The product is composed of natural resources which are public goods: beaches, waterfalls, mountain, and the general environment. 2. Safety and infrastructure are also important elements of the product. 3. A nation's people and their culture, and visitors' access to both are important components of any tourism product or package.

One of Thailand's cultural heritages is mural painting. The problems emerged from tourists' experiences. Another study (Hacker, 2008) explained about experience for the first time to look at Thai mural painting, the author was fascinated by exuberant painting on the wall, and felt impossible to decide where to start to look.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lanna mural painting at Wat Phumin, Nan Province

In this study, the researcher determines to select Lanna mural painting at Wat Phumin, Nan province as a case study to be the scope of study. According to Lanna mural paintings, Nan province has unique characteristics that can reflect Lanna arts and cultures more precisely.

Much of the content inside these works is from Wat Phumin in Nan Province. Nan mural paintings consider as Lanna Art, which represents the northern part of Thailand, known as 'the Kingdom of Lanna.' As the matter of fact, this study will focus on the government's region that represents 'the Kingdom of Lanna,' consisting of 8 provinces (Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lampang, Lamphun, Phayao, Phrae, Mae Hong Son and Nan).

Nan province, located in the most eastern part of Northern Thailand and at the border with Laos, is a sparsely populated part of the country. Only about 500,000 people live in the valley along the Nan river and in the mountain ranges on both sides of the river. This geography is reflected in the ethnic make-up (Amalia Rossi, 2012), they are made up of various different ethnic or language groups such as the Mon-Khmer speaking minorities Lua, Htin, Khamu, Mlabri, and the Hmong and Mien groups (Davis, 1984; Delcore, 2008; Rossi, 2012).

In addition, Nawit Ongsavangchai (2013) points out that Nan has been ranked Thailand's top five most livable cities for many years. It is well known among tourists as a living old town and becomes a famous destination for Thai tourists who love living heritage. The rich culture of Nan city and abundant nature of Nan province have attracted many tourists to make a visit. The numbers of them have increased every year; nonetheless most of them pay a visit to only some famous places. Especially, in the city such as, Muang district, the city centre where many famous temples and noble family's houses are located. For this reason, Wat Phumin, Nan province will suitable to be a focus place in this study.

VISUAL METHODS

The definition of 'visual methods' (Hine, 2005) or 'digital methods' (Rogers, 2009) explains these methods include the adjustment and transformation of conventional

research techniques such as participant observation, interview, focus groups and surveys, as well as innovative proposals.

The use of visual methods to resolve interactions and build understandings within social science research. For example, this research will focus on visual materials such as Lanna mural painting and the processes associated with the audiences.

As a result, this research aims to enhance visual methods and build spread across the social science research in effective ways.

Methodology

Questionnaires were used by collecting the data from the total of 411 Thai and foreign tourists who have been visited Wat Phumin, Nan province. At the same time, qualitative method was used by collecting the data from tourists who have been visited Wat Phumin, Nan province. The data then were analyzed using mean, descriptive statistics, and qualitative data. In addition, qualitative data were arising from questionnaire and in-depth interview.

Tool of Measurement

The participant's responses were measured by scales adapted from Barbara Sommer (2011). The five-point differential scale asked respondents to rate whether storytelling on Lanna mural painting from tourists' standpoint that there were a lot of information to obtain at first sight while they were at Wat Phumin, Nan Province. In addition the question was asked a tourist to rate whether is there a starting point in Lanna mural painting at Wat Phumin, Nan province.

Procedures

To test the hypothesis, information was gathered by a questionnaire with the approval of the tourists. To ensure instrument reliability and to prevent respondent sensitization, respondents were instructed to answer the questionnaire with conditions of storytelling of Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province, storytelling of Lanna mural paintings in general, and storytelling of Thai mural paintings in general.

RESULTS

For the questionnaire, there're 411 representative samples by random sampling. There are 161 male (39.2%) and 250 female (60.8%) which is accidentally equal. For the status issue, there are 12 persons (2.9%) for young tourists, 388 persons (94.4%) for Thai tourists, 11 persons (2.7%) for foreign tourists. For the education level, there're 22 persons (5.4%) have primary school education, 48 persons (11.7%) have secondary school education, 15 persons (3.6%) have vacation school education, 249 persons (3.6%) have bachelor degree education, 70 persons (17%) have master degree education, and 7 persons (1.7%) have Ph.D. degree education.

Test of Hypothesis

To test the hypotheses were used range of means from the measured scale. The

intervals of measured; there are four intervals, which are 1- 1.8 refers to very little, 1.8 – 2.6 refers to little, 2.6 - 3.4 refers to somewhat, 3.4- 4.2 refers to very, and 4.2 – 5 refers to very much. This study tests the comprehension from Thai tourists and foreign tourists;

H-1 predicted storytelling on Lanna mural paintings contain a lot of information, which was overwhelming for tourists to obtain at first sight.

To test H-1, Q 4.1, Q5.1 and Q 6.1 refers to storytelling of mural paintings in different setting;

Table 1

Questions for storytelling of mural paintings in different setting	Mean
Q 4.1 predicted storytelling on Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province contain a lot of information, which was overwhelming for tourists to obtain at first sight.	3.65
Q 5.1 predicted storytelling on Lanna mural paintings in general contain a lot of information, which was overwhelming for tourists to obtain at first sight.	3.26
Q 6.1 predicted storytelling on Thai mural paintings in general contain a lot of information, which was overwhelming for tourists to obtain at first sight	3.16

Finally, the result of Mean scores (3.65) from Q 4.1 determined that most tourists agree that storytelling on Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province contain a lot of information, which was overwhelming for tourists to obtain at first sight places in the measured scale 3.4 -4.2 which refers to very agree.

H-2 predicted most of tourists do not know there is a starting point for looking at Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province.

To test H-2, Q 4.2, Q5.2 and Q 6.2 refers to mural paintings in different setting;

Table 2

Questions for refers to mural paintings in different setting	Mean
Q 4.2 predicted most of tourists do not know there is a starting point for looking at Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province.	4.08
Q 5.2 predicted most of tourists do not know there is a starting point for looking at Lanna mural paintings in general.	3.64

Q 6.2 predicted most of tourists do not know there is a starting   3.46
point for looking at Thai mural paintings in general.

Finally, the result of Mean scores (4.08) from Q 4.2 determined that most of tourists do not know there is a starting point for looking at Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province places in the measured scale 3.4- 4.2 which refers to very agree.

Reliability

Tavakol and Dennick (2011), both professors, have pointed out that reliability is concerned with the ability of an instrument to measure typically. In fact, the reliability of an instrument is cooperative with validity. In general, there is a widely use 'Cronbach's alpha' to measure of reliability.

To test the reliability of this questionnaire, this research use Cronbach's alpha to find the reliability of Q 4 (4.1 and 4.2), Q 5 (5.1 and 5.2), and Q 6 (6.1 and 6.2).

Table 3

Questions	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Q 4 (4.1 and 4.2)	.629	2
Q 5 (5.1 and 5.2)	.673	2
Q 6 (6.1 and 6.2)	.775	2

Kanlaya Vanichbuncha (2002) explains for most widely use Cronbach's alpha to validate the reliability of items, they have accepted the value of Cronbach's alpha at 0.7. However, if the value of Cronbach's alpha is less than 0.7 but exceed 0.6. It also considers the value of Cronbach's alpha > 0.6 is trustworthy (Peterson, 1994; Chen et al., 2007).

In sum, the evaluations of the questionnaire were acceptable from the results in Table 3.

In addition, the findings from in-depth interview from Thai and foreign tourists, we can finish that there is a problem to obtain arts and information from Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province at first sight and we also can confirm that most tourists do not know where to start to look at Lanna mural painting inside Wat Phumin, Nan province.

Qualitative methods: an example from some tourists at Wat Phumin, Nan province.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the personal experiences from tourists who have been seen Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province?

Are they any problems to obtain information from Lanna mural painting at Wat Phumin, Nan province?

Theories integrated

The framework used was the process-context approach to demographic behavior (Willekens, 1990; De Bruijn, 1999)**.** Leo J.G. and Van Wissen (1999) added the process-context approach in demographic research has got momentum in recent years. This development is emulated not only in theoretical developments but also in an alteration in the methodological at the center of the field.

Fieldwork approach

Focus group discussions were used to identify the broad range of opinions on storytelling of Lanna mural painting' among tourists who have been visit Wat Phumin, Nan province (Figure 1). Focus group discussions were conducted with both women and men, who were older and younger with average ages between 23-40 years old, and from urban and rural areas.

In order to learn about personal experiences about looking at Lanna mural painting, the researcher then conducted in-depth interviews with individuals who were selected from the focus group discussions. The fieldwork lasted for one day. When developing the study, the researcher was uncertain whether it would be possible to collect information on subjective issues from tourists. In fact, the researcher founded that some of tourists came to Wat Phumin only to see a renowned painting 'Poo Marn Yar Marn' ('Whispering of Love') (figure 2), it was famous internationally.

Indeed, most of tourists do not know the storytelling from the painting on the wall entriely. When the researcher told the tourists the right ways to look at storytelling on Lanna mural painting. All tourists felt appreciating more about the storytelling on Lanna mural painting. There are three categories for storytelling on Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province; First: 'Story of the Buddha', Second: 'Previous Life Stories of the Buddha', and Third 'The ordinary life of local people'. According the amount of storytelling on Lanna mural painting are in great numbers. The researcher asked individual tourists to place in order of importance, which storytelling from the wall they would to see in moving images; First: 'The ordinary life of local people', Second: 'Previous Life Stories of the Buddha', and Third: 'Story of the Buddha'.

However, some tourists said they don't have time to watch the moving images. It should be short and interesting instead of making longer and have too much information.

The conclusion from in-depth interview from tourists, we can conclude that the tourists' personal experiences came to be important role in order to develop proper solutions to facilitate tourists to obtain information from Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province for this study.
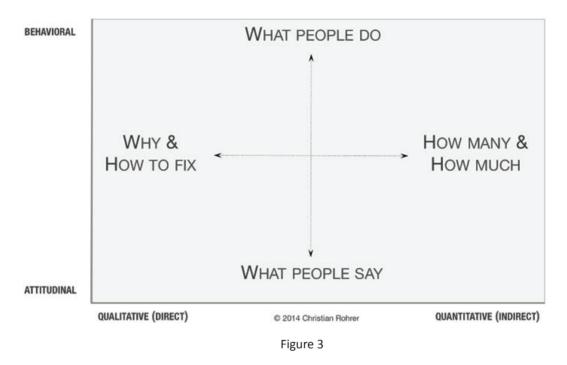

Figure1. Wat Phumin, Nan province

Figure 2. 'Poo Marn Yar Marn' ('Whispering of Love')

Quantitative vs. Qualitative

In this research, the researcher used both Quantitative and Qualitative to test hypotheses. Due to the nature of their differences, Christian Rohrer (2014) suggested that quantitative methods has a better explanation about the events, it is dealing with how many and how much types of questions. Whereas qualitative methods are more suitable for answering questions about why or how to fix a problem,. The following figure (Figure 3) illustrates how two methods affect the types of questions that can be asked.

Figure 3

DISCUSSION

The results support the mentioned hypotheses. This study concludes that the comprehension of Lanna mural painting at first sight from Thai and foreign tourists at Wat Phumin, Nan province are not positive.

Furthermore, the results report that our respondents have verified that there is no direction in order to understand stories on Lanna mural painting from the beginning.

In addition, the results report that our respondents have established visual methods in social research in order to discover more effective solutions to facilitate Thai and foreign tourists to obtain the information of the storytelling in Lanna mural painting at first sight as possible.

As a result, this study can use 'personal experiences' from tourists in order to design a preliminary item or new knowledge in order to solve the problem of this study effectively and usefully.

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