Continuous Development of Local Wisdom of Pha Jok Products toward Commercial Competitive in Ratchaburi

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1. Introduction

From an overview of Thailand textile and clothing export and import, regarding textile and clothing export in 2015, it was found that Thailand had the highest value of textile and clothing export to the ASEAN member states (Thailand Textile Institute, 2015). With this situation, it can be analyzed that the requirement for Thai textile product industry had constant developed in terms of business.

To earn income from local wisdom, it requires a good planning for the stable foundation and a development from the accurate model. With this reasons, it would help to develop and further in commercial field. Some people may not concern with this matter because they never know or recognize the products. Another important reason is that local youths have the habit since they were born so they do not recognize the importance of preservation. They may think that the job needs delicacy and does not return enough money for their expenditure. In the meantime, there are groups of people who preserve the local wisdom although it is very few numbers. This is because it takes time to produce one work piece so there is little chance for them to earn income from other sources. Apparently, having unique product is the commercial benefits as it can provide the occupation to the area. Local people can use the resources and apply knowledge transferring from the ancestors to create products from local wisdom to add value and develop the production worthiness for sustainable development and creating occupation that will eliminate poverty constantly.

Weaving in Ratchaburi, a loom is mainly used in the production. All steps are handmade and only use ancient loom, no machine used to save time or decrease production steps. The target market needs the weaver to use the loom because it gives the delicate work and narrates people’s lifestyle in the old day through the unique pattern of each area. Silk thread used in the production should have high quality to maintain the value of the textile.

With these reasons, the researcher is interested in studying the continuous development of Local Wisdom, Pah Jok handicrafts in Ratchaburi toward the commercial competition, and aims to study the readiness of career building in the original area of Pah Jok handicrafts. It is expected that the target area will develop the community and create the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from Pah Jok handicrafts to become a sustainable community and promote the knowledge to be the foundation for the next generations to have awareness and
see importance of local wisdom inheritance. This would help them to preserve and make money from the unique of Pah Jok handicrafts, which is very expensive. Although the number of consumers is very limited, they have high demand. Because of the decrease of inheritor, there are insufficient products to fulfill the customer’s need. If there is the development on the strong SMEs, the product will become well-known in other countries and will finally lead to international trade.

2. Objectives

1. To study the guidelines on employment creation from Pha Jok products for commercial exploitation.
2. To study the feasibility of building Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) from Pha Jok handicrafts.

3. Research Methodology

The data were collected by interviewing and questionnaires, which were based on theories and literature review. They were also piloted by scholars to be able to ensure that they are consistent with the objectives. The in-depth interviews were used to obtain information from the fulltime and part-time Pha Jok weavers in Kubua district and Donrae district in Ratchaburi, the remaining 10 Pha Jok weavers.

The data were analyzed by the Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), and percentage. The data from interview were analyzed and categorized as follows: financial status of fulltime and part-time Pha Jok weavers, distribution channel, packaging, the amount of members of Pha Jok clusters, problems and obstacles of weaving and distribution, attitudes, and level of government support.

4. Results or findings

The study found general information that both full time and part-time weavers were female amounted to 10 people (100%), aged over 51. The majority was aged between 61-70 amounted to 5 people (50%), aged between 51-60 amounted to 3 people (30%), and aged over 70 amounted to 2 people (20%), respectively.

Regarding the weavers’ profiles, 7 people were debt-free (70%) and 3 people were in debt (30%). All of the weavers had finished primary school, and resided in their hometown estates in Ratchaburi. The incomes earned from weaving Pha Jok were between 3,000 – 7,500 Baht per month. 6 full-time weavers had previous work experiences in other fields (80%), 3 people were part-time weavers (30%), and 1 person started her career as a weaver (10%).

Regarding the distribution channel, most buyers purchased at the weaving places because it was necessary to pre-order as each fabric took around 1 month for textile finishing process. However it was not normally on sale in the market, if any, it would be overpriced. Currently there was no package for Pha Jok fabric yet as when weavers had finished each fabric, they would sell it to distributors or wearers immediately. Another important issue was that there
was not a successor to inherit this local wisdom as the income gained was not worth the time consumed in weaving each fabric, and this eventually resulted in insufficient supply. Speaking of the idea of Pha Jok business cluster, Pha Jok weavers found that weaving activities had decreased, and there were not many weavers continuing the activities in order to inherit Ratchaburi’s reputed arts and crafts. Therefore creating commercial alliance would not occur as the process of textile finishing was time-consuming, and yielded low outputs.

5. Discussions

5.1 Guidelines on Employment Creation from Pha Jok Products for Commercial Exploitation.

The study found that the monthly average income from weaving Pha Jok products as full-time and part-time weavers earned approximately 3,000 – 7,500 Baht per month. Their highest education levels were elementary school. All of the full-time and part-time weavers resided in their hometown in Ratchaburi. Both full-time and part-time weavers had other work experiences. And it was also found that most of part-time weavers and those who started their career as weavers were debt-free, as the Pha Jok weaving places located in their hometown, Ratchaburi.

Regarding distribution channel and its store, most of the time, buyers had to come to weaving places as they needed to pre-order because each fabric took around one month to finish and most of weavers did this as their second jobs. Although some people proposed to send some silks, they would just charge only the labor costs. Therefore, there were no Pha Jok available in any shop, or it would be extremely overpriced if it could be found in shops.

And Pha Jok fabric had no packaging meaning that they were not contained in packages, as fabrics were send straight out from weavers to dealers or to users immediately. Although it was required to pre-order, customers were willing to buy them without beautiful packages. Nevertheless, this was a kind of household enterprise which consisted of one or two people who earned from this as a second job, and neither responsibilities nor positions were specified.

The obstacles in weaving and selling Pha Jok Fabric – it took quite a long time to finish. Averagely it took around one month to weave the end of fabric, and there was no successor. Due to time-consuming in producing each fabric, products were insufficient for demands.

5.2 Feasibility of Building Small and Medium Enterprises (Smes) from Pha Jok Handicrafts

It was reported from the weavers that 10 weavers (100%), and was seen that the number of this business was diminishing. A few number of weavers who did not expect to gain large income continued doing this business in order to inherit the reputed handicraft of Ratchaburi.
However, weavers wished to have more production of Pha Jok in order to promote uniqueness and creativity of the product which create income for families.

Furthermore it was consistent with the research result of Walailuk Ariyasajjakewin (2009) which studied on local wisdom management: case study of Pha Jok Kubua in Kubua District of Ratchaburi. Among the diversity and constantly changing global society, Tai-Yuan Ratchaburi community needed to conserve its culture and uniqueness such as weaving. This local wisdom could be a tool to be applied in their weaving knowledge management, for example, providing publication in book form, utilizing technology in storing knowledge, creating instruction media, establishing museums to display materials, establishing weaving places, weaving courses for villagers and outsiders, and building weaving capacity to weavers.

5.3 Cluster of Weavers in Ratchaburi

Weavers seemed to seldom share their knowledge among a group, therefore a commercial alliance was not founded due to a small number of Pha Jok fabric that could be produced and its time-consuming process. Currently the development of product pattern was still based on what their ancestors had given. Besides, the added distribution channels were in the town of Ratchaburi. Silk (raw material) was sourced meticulously from 2 manufacturers who supplied quality silks for the best fabric. However, if there were more weavers, the more famous Pha Jok would be. And it would lead to income generation for community. And if weavers could supply the demand sufficiently, Pha Jok would be a regular souvenir from the city. With support within a group, customers looking for the product could find it easier. Moreover, with more support from the government to ensure stable incomes, Pha Jok would not disappear because people were encouraged to weave more.

5.4 Attitudes Before and After Weaving Pha Jok

Weaving Pha Jok created employment and conserved uniqueness of the community. Furthermore, the inheritance of this handicraft from ancestors occurred which could be passed on the younger generations. Weavers agreed that it was important to raise awareness of local wisdom’s value and importance among young generation, to encourage cultural activities to raise awareness of being a local necessary to protect their local wisdom, and to establish a local museum to display living condition and background of the community which would build knowledge base and pride among locals. Selecting a local wisdom which was going to disappear or already disappeared could promote value and importance for community, moreover integrity and values should be adapted to current situations to highly benefit daily lives. Therefore knowledge in science and technology should be applied to develop manufacturing, marketing, administration and environmental conservation.

The local wisdom had to be filtered carefully and reasonably before conveying to people in the society so that they could understand, realize of values, and appropriately act through family institutions, educational institutions and cultural activities. Also it was highly
recommended to build a network to develop and inherit local wisdoms via media or other methods within the country and other countries, and promote the capacity of villagers and weavers to perform their ultimate capacity and present certificates for their specific field of knowledge.

The research result was also consistent with the research of Jarunda Janjam and members (2014) that studied about guidelines on contribution of people in conserving Pha Jok local wisdom for younger generation of people in Tai-Yuan community in Kubua District, Ratchaburi to inherit. The study found that the most effective way was to let people in the community participate in the activities so they could be aware of values and importance of the local wisdom, then they would be interested and willing to keep it for the younger generation to inherit.

5.5 Support from Government

Interviewees were a group of people promoted to be instructors to handle knowledge management of government sectors, and government sectors had encouraged people to wear Thai clothes therefore this advocated the increase in sales volume. Moreover they displayed beauty and meticulousness of Pha Jok on websites, so people could get to know its characteristic and history. Also, the research result suggested to find actual manufacturing costs was consistent with the research of Saowaree Taponethong and members (1998) that studied about problem analysis and weaving obstacles by using E-commerce to enhance the market capacity of cultural products of Tai-Yuan people. By utilizing E-Commerce such as creating an exclusive web site of Pha Jok Kubua, joining the government project called “One Tumbon (District) One Product”, distribution channels were added to serve customers in larger areas, and it also benefited in cultural dissemination. However, there were some weaknesses to be improved such as pricing strategy and quality standard.

6. Recommendations

1. Guidelines on employment creation from Pha Jok products for commercial exploitation should be as follows:
   - Raise awareness of value and importance of local wisdom among young generation.
   - Promote cultural activities.
   - Raise awareness of being a local who must protect their unique local wisdom.
   - Increase public relations channels to publish knowledge of weaving Pha Jok for people in the community and outside.
2. Feasibility of building Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) from Pha Jok handicrafts could occur if proceed the following:

- Share knowledge about creating employment to benefit commercially.
- Build weaver enterprise network and network of weaving local wisdom.
- Establish activities to promote local wisdom inheritance.
- Encourage establishing of a local museum to display living condition and background of the community which will build a knowledge base and pride among locals.
- The government ensures stable incomes.

7. Conclusion

Hence, the objectives of this research could be concluded that Objective 1: the guideline to career building from Pha Jok Product for commercial benefits was supposed to raise awareness of the value of local wisdom for young generation and promote establishment of traditional and cultural activities, to emphasize the awareness of being local people. And there might be some public relations channels to disseminate knowledge of weaving Pah Jok to both people in and outside the community to encourage career building. Objective 2: The feasibility of setting up SMEs from Pah Jok handicrafts - the researchers found that it was possible that the community could set up small and medium enterprises from Pah Jok handicrafts by educating locals about career building from Pah Jok handicrafts for commercial benefits, establishing activities promoting inheritance of local wisdom for commercial competition, building Pah Jok entrepreneur network and Pah Jok weaving knowledge network, and encouraging establishment of a local museum as a community’s hall of fame to display lifestyle and community background. Furthermore, another important factor was the government support which could advocate steady income generation.

References


