



## Tourism Cooperation between China and Thailand: Opportunities, Challenges, and the influences on Sustainable Tourism Development

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### Abstract

The travel and tourism sector are significant in China. Since the commencement of reform and opening some decades ago, there has been a significant increase in the quantity of tourism that has taken place. Both the rise of a newly wealthy middle class and the Chinese government's loosening of limitations on people's freedom of movement is contributing to an increase in the country's tourist industry. To explore the opportunities and challenges of tourism cooperation between China and Thailand. Finally, use the qualitative method with interviews to get results. The study has identified the opportunities, challenges, and outcomes of tourism cooperation between China and Thailand. The opportunities for tourism cooperation lie in the maximization of resources such as knowledge sharing, shared markets, and resource exchange. This allows the tourism industry to expand into a larger market, reducing the risk of losses.

**Keywords:** Tourism Cooperation, Tourism Opportunities, Tourism Development

### Introduction

The expansion of the travel and tourism industries can be attributed to the sheer volume as well as the complexity of the supply of services geared toward tourists. As a result of this, the phenomenon of tourism ought to be dealt with as a separate component of the economy. This sector of the economy is deeply intertwined with the other sectors of the economy in terms of their respective degrees of development and rates of expansion. Because of the diverse array of activities that are included in the tourism industry and the fact that some of these activities overlap in the organizational framework of other economic branches, the tourism industry is an economic sector that is highly dependent on association and interconnectedness (Assessment, 2020). This specifies the scope as well as the level of complexity of the links that exist between tourism and other parts of the economy.

The travel and tourism sector are a significant industry in China. Since the commencement of reform and opening some decades ago, there has been a significant increase in the quantity of tourism that has taken place. Both the rise of a newly wealthy



middle class and the Chinese government's loosening of limitations on people's freedom of movement are contributing to an increase in the country's tourist industry (Baatarsuren, 2021). China has rapidly developed into one of the most watched and most lucrative inbound and outbound tourism marketplaces in the world (Qiu, Lin, Feng, Peng & Fan, 2020). Tourism has grown here after the rest of the world started to learn a little bit about China and its people since the country of China has a rich history that has been unfurled through time and the area is full with historic locations. On the other hand, the flourishing culture and increasingly contemporary amenities in China have given a boost to the lively operation of the tourism. The Great Wall of China, the Forbidden City, and other sights in China, such as the Silk Road, are just some of the many reasons why tourists flock to China (Baatarsuren, 2021). However, based on Figure 1.2, it could be clearly seen that the contribution of China's travel and tourism industry to the country's gross domestic product shrunk to -59.9 percent in 2020, a significant decrease from 9.3 percent in the 2020 due to Covid-19 pandemic. There is a need to deal with such issue.

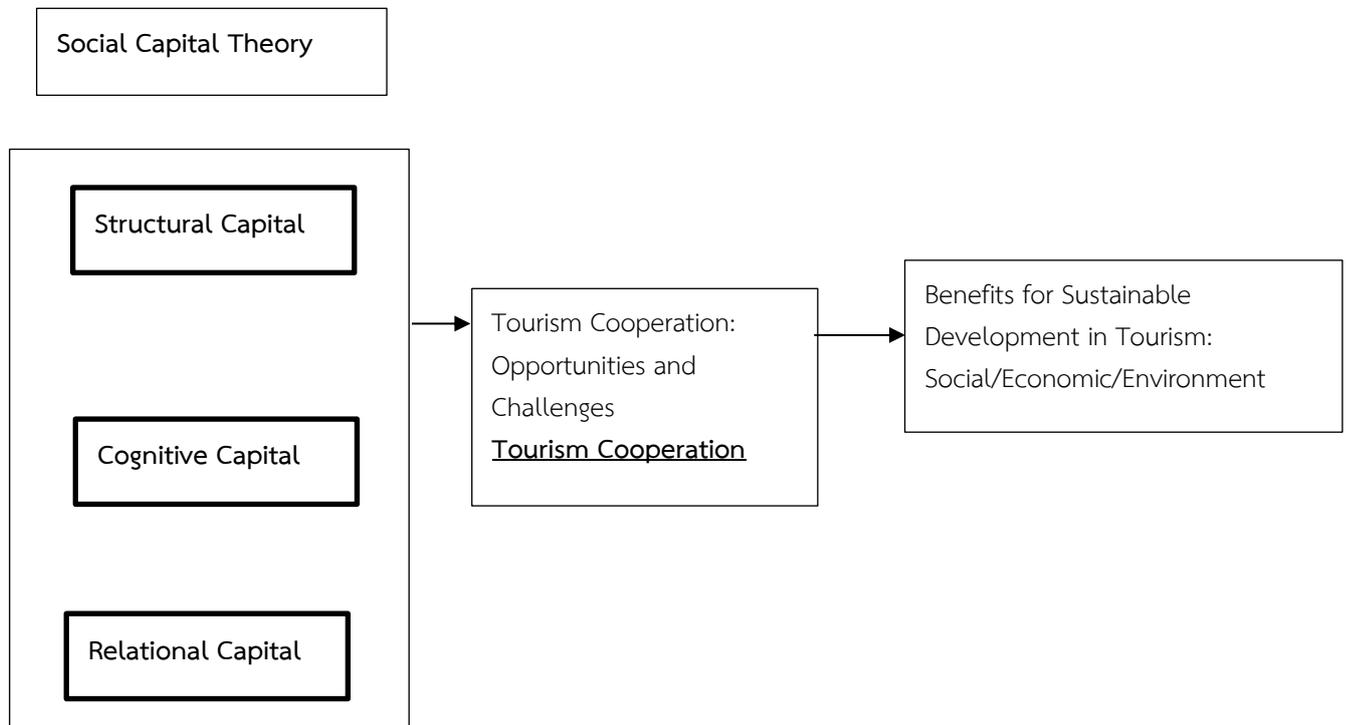
China and Thailand both have their stance on the global for tourism and it is always important for their economy. However, based upon the discussion above, it could be clearly seen that Covid-19 pandemic has made the economy made by tourism shrunk dramatically. Indeed, the performance of the tourism is still relatively low because most of the Chinese are in health risk concern for the pandemic and this make them in low sustainability development. But then, nowadays, the pandemic is started to be in the recovery stage and the tourists are started to intend to visit to the other countries. Indeed, it is actually a need to help the tourism to get back to the situation before the pandemic and international cooperation actually a way to help for it, which means tourism cooperation between the countries such as China and Thailand will be helpful for the sustainable development of tourism industry. However, there are only few studies have been found through Google Scholar to examine the international cooperation and sustainable development, but only one of them is talking about tourism and none of them is up to date to deal with the pandemic situation. Hence, this study is in need and will be explore the relevance of the tourism cooperation as well as its relation with sustainability development.

## Objectives

1. To explore the opportunities of tourism cooperation between China and Thailand
2. To explore the challenges of tourism cooperation between China and Thailand
3. To explore the benefits for sustainable development in the tourism industry



### Concept theory framework



### Materials and Methods

The current study is adopted the qualitative method as the research methodology. Qualitative research may be characterized as the study of the nature of phenomena and is especially good for addressing questions of why something is (not) seen, analysing complicated multi-component treatments, and focused on intervention improvement. As per mentioned earlier, the scarcity of the research related to the international cooperation in the tourism industry remains. Hence, this study would use qualitative study instead of quantitative to gain in-depth information.

All these research objectives are related to the tourism in China and Thailand; hence, the population of the study is the one who works in tourism industry in China or Thailand. Based on the past studies, there are actually strong tied of relationship and cooperation between China and Thailand, and as this study are studying cooperation based on these two countries, the one who works in the cooperation between the countries should provide more information that valuable for this study than those are not. In term of that, the sample of the current study is the ones who are from the government, travel agency, other tourism companies (offices in Thailand/China). This is because employees from management level might have a deeper understanding to the industry. In short, fifteen participants from the government, travel agency, other tourism companies (offices in Thailand/China) would be recruited. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling



method were used for recruiting the participants.

The data collection of the current study was utilized the in-depth interviewing. In-depth interviewing is a method of qualitative research that entails conducting in-depth individual interviews with a limited number of respondents in order to investigate their perspectives on a specific concept, program, or circumstance.

Thematic analysis is used as the data analysis in the current study. It is a process for analyzing qualitative data in which the information is coded and compared across categories, patterns are recognized. The coding process are included open coding, axial coding and theme construction. Open coding is about the labelling of the statements that highlighted in the transcript, while the axial coding is the process of forming the subthemes and lastly the themes would be formed based on this.

Variables	Interview Questions	Target informants (5 people)	Target informants (10 people)	Adapted From
Social Capital Theory	-	Government	Travel/Tour agencies	-
Structural Capital	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How long China and Thailand spend time together in social occasions?</li> <li>How do you think China and Thailand maintain a close social relationship?</li> <li>How do you think China and Thailand communicate frequently?</li> </ol>	<p>How long have Chinese and Thai government started their cooperation? Is the relationship between two nations considered close relationship? And why? How often do the government of China and Thailand communicate? How do they communicate?</p>	<p>Who is your business partner (s) in China? How long have you had relationship with these companies? Is your relationship close? What kind of collaborations do you have together? How often do your company communicate with the Chinese business partners? How do you communicate?</p>	Chowdhury, Mesbahuddin, Prayag, Girish, Orchiston, Caroline, Spector & Samuel (2018)
Cognitive Capital	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How are the tourism organizations in China and Thailand share the same ambitions and vision?</li> </ol>	<p>In terms of tourism cooperation, what are visions and goals that are shared by both government? Which organisations are part of tourism supply chain in Thailand and</p>	<p>In terms of tourism cooperation, what are visions and goals that are shared by both companies?</p>	



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. How are the tourism organizations in China and Thailand enthusiastic about pursuing a collective goal for the whole supply chain?</li> <li>3. How are the tourism organizations in China and Thailand share similar corporate culture and management style?</li> <li>4. How are the tourism organizations in China and Thailand share the same business values?</li> <li>5. How are the tourism organizations in China and Thailand agree on what is in the best interest of the relationship we have with them?</li> </ol>	<p>China? Are they working closely together? How enthusiast are they when working together?</p>	<p>Which other organisations in Thailand and China are you working with? Are they working closely together? How enthusiast are they when working together?</p>
Relational Capital	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How is the relationship between China and Thailand is characterized by close personal interaction?</li> <li>2. How is the relationship China and Thailand is</li> </ol>	<p>Is the cooperation between the two nations in tourism made up by mutual trust and respect? How the tourism industry in both nations will be benefiting from the cooperation? What are the resources and how are they exchange between the</p>	<p>Is the cooperation between you and the other organizations made up by mutual trust and respect? How both parties will be benefiting from the cooperation?</p>



	<p>characterized by mutual respect?</p> <p>3. How is the relationship China and Thailand is characterized by mutual trust</p> <p>4. How is the relationship China and Thailand is characterized by personal friendship?</p> <p>5. How is the relationship China and Thailand is characterized by high levels of reciprocity?</p>	<p>cooperation in the two nations?</p>	<p>What and how are the resources that could be exchange between the cooperation?</p>	
<p><b>Tourism Cooperation</b></p>	<p>1. How could product creation differ in designing tourism products of tourism cooperation between China and Thailand?</p> <p>2. How could strategies and policy design differ for tourism planning and development of tourism cooperation between China and Thailand?</p> <p>3. How is the tourism cooperation between China and Thailand in marketing and promotion, the mutual promotion</p>	<p>How are the tourism cooperation could make changes in the tourism industry in the two nations in respect of the product, strategies and policy design, marketing and promotion, knowledge exchange, and assessing fund?</p>	<p>How are the tourism cooperation could make changes in the tourism industry in you and your cooperated partners in respect of the product, strategies and policy design, marketing and promotion, knowledge exchange, and assessing fund?</p>	<p>Alexandra Cehan, Mihail Eva &amp; Corneliu Iațu (2021)</p>



	<p>between two stakeholders?</p> <p>4. How the cooperation between China and Thailand providing difference in complementary services between stakeholders?</p> <p>5. How the cooperation between China influence knowledge exchange and research?</p> <p>6. How the cooperation between China accessing funds/ Common projects?</p>			
<b>Sustainability Development</b>	How does the tourism cooperation influence the sustainability development?	How are the tourism could be sustained and develop well in the industry through the cooperation between the two nations?	How are the tourism could be sustained and developed well in the industry through the cooperation between the two organizations?	Own

## Results

The current study aims to explore the opportunities of tourism cooperation between China and Thailand; to explore the challenges of tourism cooperation between China and Thailand; and to explore how the tourism cooperation makes sustainable development in tourism industry. The current study used in-depth interview as data collection and 15 interviewees are included in the current study.

All the interviewees are from the government, travel agency, other tourism companies (offices in Thailand/China). This is because employees from management level might have a deeper understanding to the industry. The first participant in this study is a female who aged 55 years old, and she has been working in related department in the government in China. This participant has been working more than 20 years. The second



interviewee in the current study is a male participant. He is 54 years old and working in tourism immigration department in China. The third interviewee is a female participant who are 46 years old and also work for the government in relation to the tourism industry in China. The fourth interviewee in the current study is a female participant who are 48 years old that works in the government bodies mainly focuses in tourism in China. The fifth interviewee in the current study is the male participant who are aged 36 years old and currently working for government in Thailand. Indeed, this study included five participants who are working in the government bodies that are related to the tourism industry.

Other than that, the current study also included 10 participants who are working in the travel agency. The sixth interviewee in the current study is a 28 years old male who are working in a travel agency in China. The seventh interviewee is a male participant who are 50 years old and currently working a travel agency in Thailand. The eighth interviewee in the current study is a 35 years old female who are working in a travel agency in Thailand. The ninth interviewee is a male participant who are 49 years old, he is now working in a travel agency in Thailand. The tenth interviewee is a male participant who are 27 years old and he is also working in a travel agency in Thailand. The eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth interviewees are both male participants who are currently working in the travel agencies in China. They are 43 years old, 43 years old and 38 years old, respectively. The fourteenth interviewee is a male participant who are 35 years old and currently working in a travel agency in Thailand. The last interviewee in the current study is a 35 years old female travel agent in China in international cooperation.

Based on the subthemes that formed by the extracts of the interviewees, the theme for answering the first research question is formed as “resources maximization”. This means that the opportunities of the tourism cooperation between Thailand and China is they could maximize the resources in the tourism industry. The theme and subthemes of the first research question is as follows:

Subthemes	Themes
resources exchange	Resources Maximization
knowledge sharing	
shared market	

In conclusion, the challenges of tourism cooperation between China and Thailand can be attributed to the tourism economic recession. The sub-themes of "disruption of tourism", "low inflow tourists", and "low spending power" highlight the challenges faced by the tourism industry during the pandemic. The tourism economic recession not only



affects the overall economy but also has a direct impact on the businesses in the tourism industry and job opportunities. Moreover, it can hinder the cultural exchange and understanding between the two countries. Therefore, it is important for both countries to work together to address the challenges and find solutions to revive the tourism industry and promote international cooperation in the tourism industry.

Subthemes	Themes
disruption of tourism	Tourism Economic Recession
low inflow tourists	
low spending power	

While based on the interview sessions as stated in the previous chapter, the current study formed the theme to answer this research question, which is “Providing Better Service”. The subthemes of this theme are “high quality of management”, “meet the demand of tourists” and “high performance of tourist experience”, this illustrated as follows:

Subthemes	Themes
high quality of management	Providing Better Service
meet the demand of tourists	
high performance of tourist experience	

## Conclusions and Discussion

The current study formed three research questions and formed the themes to answer respectively. The first research question is about “What are the opportunities of tourism cooperation between China and Thailand?”, and theme of resources maximization is used to answer it. This means that the opportunity of tourism cooperation between China and Thailand is to maximize the resources that have in the tourism industry. The second research question is “What are the challenges of tourism cooperation between China and Thailand?”, and the theme used to answer is the tourism economic recession. This implied that tourism cooperation between China and Thailand might be affected and challenged by the tourism economic recession. Lastly, the third research question is “How the tourism cooperation makes sustainable development in tourism industry?”, and the theme used to answer this research question is providing better service. This means that tourism cooperation allows the service providers in the Thailand and China provide better service in turn to have sustainable development in tourism industry.



In summary, the study found that tourism cooperation between China and Thailand presents opportunities for resource maximization, as both countries have unique and diverse offerings in the tourism industry. However, the cooperation also faces challenges due to the tourism economic recession caused by the pandemic, which includes the disruption of tourism, low inflow of tourists, and low spending power of tourists. To overcome these challenges and promote sustainable development in the tourism industry, tourism cooperation can focus on providing better service through high quality management, meeting the demand of tourists, and delivering high-performance tourist experiences. By addressing these themes, tourism cooperation between China and Thailand can continue to thrive and contribute to the growth of the tourism industry in both countries.

In addition to the themes identified, the study also revealed the importance of government support in facilitating tourism cooperation between China and Thailand. The government plays a crucial role in creating policies and regulations that encourage and promote cooperation between tourism-related businesses in both countries. For instance, the government can offer financial support, provide easier access to visa applications, and improve transportation infrastructure to facilitate cross-border tourism. Moreover, the study also highlighted the significance of cultural exchange in promoting tourism cooperation. By exchanging knowledge and understanding each other's culture, tourism-related businesses in China and Thailand can better tailor their offerings to meet the needs and preferences of tourists from both countries. This can also help to create a more inclusive and welcoming tourism environment that promotes cultural understanding and appreciation. Overall, the study suggests that tourism cooperation between China and Thailand has great potential to promote sustainable development in the tourism industry. While the cooperation faces challenges, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing the themes of resources maximization, tourism economic recession, and providing better service can help to overcome these challenges and foster sustainable growth in the tourism industry.

The findings of the present research have been given recommendations to the governments and travel agencies of China and Thailand. The first piece of advice that was provided to the governments of China and Thailand was to reduce taxes, since this would be the most effective way to encourage travel agencies in either country to collaborate (Edwards, 2013). It is essential for governments to implement policies and provide support in order to create conditions that are amenable to international cooperation in the tourism industry. It should entail the formulation of tourist laws and regulations that are in line with the objectives and priorities of both nations' respective tourism industries. This can be accomplished in particular through the provision of incentives and resources for



collaborative endeavors and projects. The tourist sector may continue to play an important role in fostering stronger international cooperation and supporting sustainable development if certain measures are put into place.

The findings of this study have significant implications for tourism policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in China and Thailand. The study provides insights into the opportunities and challenges of tourism cooperation between the two countries and suggests ways to enhance sustainable tourism development. Future studies could expand the scope of the research to include other countries or industries to gain a broader understanding of tourism cooperation and sustainable development.

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