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Research Article

Host and Tourist Dynamics: Exploring Sustainable Landscape in Santichon Village

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Abstract

In recent decades, the expansion of global tourism has significantly impacted ethnic minority communities, particularly in rural areas where cultural heritage and local identity are often transformed under the pressures of commercialization and modernization. Santichon Village, a Yunnan Chinese community in northern Thailand, provides a unique case study of how tourism development intersects with cultural preservation. This research was conducted to better understand how such communities navigate the dual imperatives of sustaining their cultural traditions while pursuing economic growth through tourism. By focusing on the cultural construction and transformation of Santichon Village, the study investigates the complex interplay between internal community dynamics and external tourism forces. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and participatory observation, the paper analyzes how the village responds to tourism through four key perspectives: dynamic adaptation, human-nature interaction, cultural diversity promotion, and community empowerment. The findings reveal that Santichon Village has adopted a strategic approach to cultural innovation—transforming traditional Yunnan customs, cuisine, and architecture to meet modern tourist expectations, while retaining core cultural values. Additionally, eco-friendly infrastructure and inclusive community governance have played vital roles in ensuring equitable participation and benefit-sharing among residents. The study argues that tourism development in ethnic rural communities can be sustainable when rooted in local participation, cultural pride, and environmental consciousness. Santichon Village's experience illustrates a model of culturally sensitive tourism that aligns with the broader goals of social equity and cultural resilience. The insights gained from this case provide practical implications for other rural and ethnic communities grappling with the tensions between cultural continuity and economic modernization.

Keywords

Santichon Village, Sustainable Tourism, Yunnan Chinese Community, Host-Guest Interaction

1. Introduction

The "tourist destination" concept primarily denotes a geographical construct, encompassing location, spatial dimensions, latitude and longitude, and distinctive geographical features. This concept underscores the dynamic interactions between two fundamental groups: "tourists" and "hosts."

These interactions manifest through various physical, psychological, cultural, and social exchanges, culminating in a distinctive "cultural landscape." In this context, spatial practices transform, not necessarily reflecting or reproducing the "past image" of a geographical space but instead creating a

novel, unique entity. This new construct, interwoven with temporal, spatial, and symbolic elements, emerges as a structured composition shaped by diverse factors. In contemporary society, tourism is widely recognized as an industry commonly referred to as the "tourism industry," where commercial factors, especially the symbolic value of "capital," play a pivotal role. Once tourism becomes an instrument of capital investment and business operations, it transcends traditional national, regional, and ethnic boundaries. Furthermore, as technological advancements—such as the internet and digital technologies—increasingly permeate social domains, the conventional notions of "national and ethnic borders and territories" within tourism contexts become less significant.

Addressing the anthropological discourse on "culture" and its inherent challenges, Nash emphasizes the need to situate cultural encounters within the specific contexts of interactions between "tourists" and "hosts." He posits that tourism inherently constitutes an encounter between diverse cultures, which, in turn, catalyzes social transformations. These encounters are multifaceted, extending beyond the simplistic dynamic of one group (tourists) engaging in leisure activities while another (tourism workers) provides services. They also encompass broader cultural exchanges, where members of the host community may assume roles ranging from active participants to passive observers. Simultaneously, other societal dimensions, such as political and commercial influences, intertwine with these cultural encounters.

The advancement of transportation systems has substantially streamlined tourism planning and implementation, rendering it faster, more accessible, and more efficient. The widespread availability of private vehicles and other means of transportation has enabled individuals to undertake more flexible and diverse tourism activities. As globalization accelerates, the conventional boundaries between nations and ethnic groups within tourism contexts increasingly blur. In contemporary settings, tourism has emerged as a distinctive practice within international relations, as visitors now traverse national territories with unprecedented ease and speed. From the outset of anthropological research, two distinct characteristics have shaped its trajectory: fundamental research and applied research. Tourism anthropology, as a subfield, inherently embodies both aspects. Theoretical exploration in tourism anthropology encompasses studies on concepts such as "otherness" and intercultural exchanges. In contrast, its applied dimension addresses practical challenges that arise within tourism contexts, transcending the conventional concerns of travel agencies. Instead, it focuses on understanding cultural systems, social identity, ethnic diversity, community development, social production and reproduction, power relations, and ecological conservation. Tourism anthropologists often evaluate and develop cultural resources within diverse ethnic and regional contexts, frequently collaborating with international organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank in project assessments and policy-making.

One of the primary challenges within tourism studies lies in understanding how diverse stakeholders perceive tourism. Proprananon [13] introduces the concept of sustainable tourism development, advocating for four foundational perspectives. First, tourism must be contextualized within evolving economic, social, and environmental frameworks, recognizing tourism as a dynamic rather than a static phenomenon. Second, tourism should be perceived as a human-nature interaction within a unified ecological system. These necessitating strategies promote sustainable resource use while fostering community engagement in environmental conservation. Third, tourism must respect cultural diversity by acknowledging the inherent value of diverse lifestyles, customs, and traditions, fostering equitable and meaningful interactions. Lastly, tourism and development should be interconnected, emphasizing integrating community-based strategies and adaptive management to ensure that tourism and development progress in tandem.

Achieving sustainable tourism in Santichon Village necessitates a balanced approach that harmonizes cultural preservation with economic advancement. Tourism development should prioritize cultural revitalization, as culture constitutes the core of tourism appeal. This involves creating distinctive, irreplaceable tourism products that blend cultural heritage with economic benefits, fostering long-term sustainability. Integrating local cultural heritage into tourism not only generates economic gains but also elevates the community's cultural value, thereby achieving dual benefits in both economic and social dimensions. Sustainable tourism development should incorporate comprehensive planning, active community participation, and innovative approaches to meet the expectations of both tourists and local stakeholders. As tourism sites evolve, it becomes imperative to maintain environmental and cultural integrity, requiring continuous efforts to balance tourism expansion with conservation initiatives.

In this context, the tourism development model of Santichon Village exemplifies sustainable tourism practices, achieving harmony between economic benefits and socio-environmental responsibilities. By integrating ethnic culture into rural tourism, the village boosts economic activities and safeguards traditional cultural heritage. This model promotes a symbiotic relationship between tourism and cultural protection, fostering a positive feedback loop where both elements reinforce each other. The overarching objective is to develop tourism that respects local culture, involves community stakeholders, and aligns with sustainable development principles, ensuring long-term cultural resilience and economic viability.

2. Literature Review

With the global expansion of tourism and the increasing mobility of people, the interaction between tourism and tourist destinations has intensified. This dynamic exchange ac-

celerates cultural transformation, raising questions about the impact of tourism on the cultural evolution of destinations. Cultural transformation is an inevitable trend for ethnic groups as they adapt to changing socio-economic contexts. The cultural changes occurring in various regions result from the interaction between internal and external factors, and relevant studies on this topic are abundant.

American cultural anthropologist Geertz [6] is renowned for his contributions to cultural interpretivism and semiotics, particularly his exploration of symbolic meanings within social and individual lives. His work predominantly addresses the symbolic and interpretative aspects of culture, emphasizing how beliefs and rituals shape social transformation and cultural continuity. In his seminal study, A Social History of an Indonesian Town, Geertz examines the role of religious rituals—such as weddings, funerals, and religious celebrations—in reflecting and shaping social change. His focus on how ritual symbols convey cultural values, social order, and identity significantly influenced later anthropological inquiries into the relationship between ritual practices and social transformation. This pioneering research not only deepened the theoretical understanding of cultural and social interactions but also provided practical insights into managing cultural heritage in changing societies.

In China, the study of ethnic cultural tourism emerged relatively late. However, as ethnic cultural tourism rapidly developed, Chinese scholars began to shift their focus from examining the economic effects of tourism to analyzing its cultural impacts. Wang and Zhang [21] critically examined anthropological theories, focusing on the relationship between tourism, disposable income, and cultural confidence. They analyzed the reversal of behavior patterns within tourism activities, addressing how factors such as social class and lifestyle influence tourist behavior. Furthermore, their research proposed methodological approaches for studying tourists from various social strata. In the field of ethnic village tourism and cultural transformation, several scholars have contributed significant insights. Yang and Chen [24], in Tourism, Anthropology, and Chinese Society, reviewed the development of tourism and cultural transformation studies abroad. Tian [19] analyzed the dual impact of tourism on the social and cultural transformation of ethnic communities, emphasizing the need for an objective and scientific approach to managing tourism-induced changes. Yan [23] discussed cultural transformation as a process of innovation, development, and adaptation, highlighting the shift from fragmentation to reconstruction as a pattern of cultural evolution.

Chen [4] analyzed the drivers and characteristics of social transformation in ethnic villages, suggesting that ethnic culture should be viewed as a fluid and evolving phenomenon rather than a static entity. Yang's research on the socio-cultural impact of tourism on the Tibetan areas at the eastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau found that tourism significantly influences residents' daily lives, marriage practices, moral values, religious beliefs, and attitudes toward tourism [25]. In addition, Sun's ethnographic study of the Tibetan community in Xiahe highlighted the transformation of material and spiritual culture, particularly in aspects such as dietary diversity, modernized architecture, fashion trends, commodity awareness, and improved communication infrastructure [17].

Studies on tourism and cultural transformation in Thailand reveal both positive and negative effects. Some scholars argue that tourism development leads to socio-cultural transformation and demonstrates how communities improve economic conditions and quality of life through tourism. Anuchonphan's research on Mae Hong Son Province highlights the direct and indirect impacts of tourism on land use, economic status, and environmental conditions, showing that increased tourism has transformed residential areas into commercial and service zones, providing employment opportunities [2]. However, challenges such as waste management and water pollution have also emerged. Charoenchai [3] studied the relationship between local attitudes and physical changes in rural tourism towns, exploring factors that influence future cultural preservation. Sermsawatsri [15] analyzed tourism data from the Royal Project Development Area and investigated the cultural changes among the Akha people in Chiang Rai Province, revealing both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, tourism has helped preserve and restore cultural customs; on the other hand, it has led to changes in clothing, consumption patterns, and religious practices, with younger generations increasingly adopting modern lifestyles. Tunnukul [20] explored how social development in Mae Hong Son has altered traditional Thai lifestyles, with tourism-driven community development introducing external cultural influences. The adoption of modern living standards, influenced by external material culture, has shifted the local way of life. In the Poi Sang Long Festival, for example, traditional practices have been reshaped to fit modern tourism contexts, reflecting the challenge of preserving cultural traditions amidst rapid modernization. Some scholars believe that tourism development can enhance the protection, transmission, and innovation of ethnic culture, reinforcing the cultural identity of minority groups. Conversely, others argue that in the pursuit of economic benefits, ethnic culture is increasingly commercialized and homogenized, risking the loss of its unique characteristics [16, 18]. Tourism's dual impact on cultural transformation requires a nuanced approach that balances preservation and innovation. Overall, studies on tourism and cultural transformation in Thailand highlight the complex interplay between economic development and cultural preservation. While tourism stimulates cultural revival and economic growth, it also poses risks of cultural homogenization and social tension. Balancing the development of tourism with cultural and environmental sustainability remains a critical challenge.

In recent years, research on sustainable tourism has increasingly focused on the interplay between cultural resilience and community participation, particularly within rural and

ethnic settings [8]. Cultural tourism is not only viewed as an economic driver but also as a means of preserving and adapting local traditions amid globalization pressures [1]. Ethnographic fieldwork remains essential to understanding these transformations, particularly when researchers critically reflect on positionality and ethical engagement within community contexts [11]. These findings collectively reinforce the relevance of examining Santichon Village's experience, where Yunnan Chinese cultural heritage intersects with evolving tourism practices. Despite extensive research on tourism and cultural transformation, gaps remain in understanding how rural ethnic communities, particularly in Thailand, balance cultural preservation with tourism modernization. While existing studies address the socio-economic impacts and challenges of cultural commodification, few examine the nuanced interactions between hosts and tourists, especially how local communities proactively negotiate these challenges. Additionally, limited attention is given to community-driven initiatives, sustainable infrastructure, and the integration of cultural and ecological preservation. In the case of Santichon Village, there is a need for comprehensive analysis on how the community innovates cultural practices while maintaining authenticity and achieving sustainable tourism. This study addresses these gaps by examining Santichon Village's strategies through an anthropological and tourism studies lens.

3. Methodology

This study employs an anthropological and cultural studies approach to analyze the transformation and sustainable development of tourism in Santichon Village. By focusing on the dynamic interactions between hosts and tourists and the socio-cultural changes accompanying tourism development, this research examines the duality of cultural preservation and modernization within sustainable tourism.

Grounded in the theoretical foundations of cultural anthropology and tourism studies, this research adopts a qualitative methodology that prioritizes ethnographic fieldwork and participatory observation. Drawing on Clifford Geertz's concept of "thick description" [6], the study aims to offer a nuanced understanding of how tourism influences local cultural practices, identity formation, and community dynamics within Santichon Village. The objective is to capture the complex and often contradictory ways tourism reshapes the cultural landscape, reflecting both internal adaptations and external influences. Furthermore, the study integrates elements of cultural critique, as proposed by Clifford [5], emphasizing the fluid and hybrid nature of cultural identity as local traditions interact with global tourism forces. By centering on the experiences and perceptions of hosts and tourists, the research endeavors to uncover the multifaceted dimensions of cultural transformation and tourism sustainability.

Ethnography serves as the primary methodological tool for this study. Fieldwork was conducted in Santichon Village over several months, focusing on participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and the collection of oral narratives. Following Malinowski's advocacy for long-term immersion [10], the researcher engaged deeply with the community to gain firsthand insights into residents' daily lives, their perceptions of tourism, and the strategies they employ to navigate cultural changes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including community leaders, tourism operators, and residents. This approach aligns with the reflexive ethnography model suggested by Rosaldo [14], which acknowledges the researcher's positionality while prioritizing the voices and perspectives of the local community. Additionally, interviews with tourists were conducted to explore their perceptions of Santichon Village, their expectations regarding cultural authenticity, and their understanding of sustainable tourism practices. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Following the grounded theory approach outlined by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss [7], the data were systematically coded and categorized to identify recurring patterns related to cultural transformation and sustainable tourism.

By integrating anthropological perspectives with tourism studies, this methodology comprehensively analyzes how tourism reshapes cultural identity and social practices within Santichon Village. The combination of ethnographic fieldwork, participatory observation, and cultural critique forms a robust framework for examining the complexities of sustainable tourism in culturally sensitive contexts.

4. Main Findings

4.1. Insights into the Cultural Construction of Santichon Village

The cultural construction of Santichon Village in northern Thailand exemplifies a dynamic process shaped by the intersection of internal community identity and external tourism development. The relationship between social change and sustainable tourism development is complex and evolving, particularly within Santichon Village's context, which is distinguished by its rich cultural heritage rooted in Yunnan Chinese traditions. The process of cultural construction within the village not only influences the developmental trajectory of local tourism but also profoundly impacts the community's social structure, identity formation, and cultural values.

4.1.1. Opportunities for Sustainable Development Through Cultural Construction

(i). Cultural Resource Innovation and Value Enhancement

In the context of sustainable tourism, Santichon Village has adopted cultural resource innovation as a strategic approach to

preserving and enhancing its cultural identity. The village actively capitalizes on its unique Yunnan Chinese heritage to attract global visitors. Tourists are particularly drawn to the village for its distinctive cultural elements, including traditional cuisine, local lifestyle, and immersive cultural experiences. The residents take pride in presenting their cultural heritage, particularly highlighting aspects that contrast with mainstream Thai culture.

For instance, traditional Yunnan dishes such as "Yunnan Noodles," "Yunnan Bacon," and "Yunnan Sausage" are not merely culinary offerings but serve as symbolic representations of the community's cultural roots. These dishes were initially featured prominently during family gatherings and special occasions but have been thoughtfully adapted for tourism. To cater to tourists, they are presented in smaller, more accessible portions, yet they retain the traditional culinary techniques and presentation styles. Moreover, successfully integrating traditional Yunnan courtyard-style architecture with modern dining settings enhances visitors' immersive cultural experiences. This thoughtful combination exemplifies how traditional practices are reinterpreted to align with contemporary preferences, thereby balancing cultural preservation with modern tourism demands. By achieving this balance, Santichon Village enriches visitors' cultural understanding and ensures the continuity of its cultural identity, fostering a harmonious coexistence between heritage and tourism development.

The cultural transformation process in Santichon Village demonstrates how cultural innovation functions as a mechanism for dialogue with external influences. In response to the increasing demands of tourism, the village has creatively mobilized its cultural resources, incorporating them into performances and interactive events. A prime example of this adaptive strategy is the integration of traditional Chinese New Year celebrations into tourism programs organized under the auspices of the local cultural cooperative. These events now include interactive activities that engage visitors, significantly enhancing the festival's appeal while generating additional income for the community. This reinvention of cultural symbols bolsters villagers' cultural pride and augments the economic value of cultural resources. The village effectively sustains its heritage while fostering economic development by framing traditional practices as part of a broader cultural narrative. This approach highlights cultural innovation's capacity to foster community identity and sustainable tourism, serving as a model for other culturally rich rural destinations.

(ii). Cultural Dissemination and Identity Construction

The transformation of Santichon Village into a "Chinese Cultural Village" exemplifies the strategic mobilization of local knowledge and cultural memory to construct and project a distinct community identity. By leveraging their cultural capital, villagers present everyday practices in ways that harmonize local authenticity with the expectations of tourists.

This process of re-contextualizing tradition enables the village to navigate the tension between global tourism demands and preserving indigenous lifestyles.

Santichon Village's cultural elements are displayed through symbolic representations, spatial arrangements, and interactive events, creating a unique cultural landscape. For instance, the cultural center features shops selling Chinese-themed products and traditional costume rentals for photography, horseback riding, and archery activities. These initiatives blend tradition with modern tourism trends, catering to visitors' desire for "exotic" and "authentic" cultural experiences. Simultaneously, these practices generate economic benefits while raising social awareness about the cultural heritage of the Yunnan Chinese community.

Fieldwork interviews revealed that villagers actively shape cultural narratives, emphasizing their agency in the transformation process. One local leader remarked on the intentionality behind transforming the village into a cultural destination: "We are not just selling culture; we are sharing our identity. Every festival, dish, and costume tells a story about our ancestors and journey" [22]. This statement underscores that cultural presentation in Santichon Village is not a passive response to external pressures but a proactive choice to preserve and showcase cultural heritage. The transformation reflects the community's commitment to maintaining cultural continuity while engaging with the tourism economy.

However, this transformation is not without challenges. Interviews with local officials revealed concerns about governmental bodies' limited support and promotion. One official noted: "Santichon Village has the potential to become a cultural landmark, but the lack of consistent promotion and support has limited its visibility. More strategic planning and partnerships are needed to enhance its cultural appeal" [12]. This perspective highlights the gap between community efforts and institutional support, indicating the need for enhanced collaboration between local governance and community stakeholders. Strengthening this partnership would increase the visibility of Santichon Village as a cultural tourism destination and ensure the sustainable development of its cultural identity.

4.1.2. Strengthening Community Cohesion and Governance

Establishing the Santichon Cultural Center exemplifies how community-driven initiatives can foster cohesion and strengthen local governance. Conceived as a space to present the village's heritage and lifestyle, the cultural center functions as a cultural hub and a symbol of collective identity. During interviews, many villagers expressed a profound sense of pride in the center, viewing it not merely as a tourist attraction but as a manifestation of community solidarity and a platform for cultural transmission. One villager emphasized: "Building the cultural center was not just about tourism; it was about bringing our community together, giving us a shared purpose and identity" [12]. This sentiment highlights how the

center is a focal point for community cohesion, reinforcing a sense of belonging and cultural continuity.

To promote economic fairness within the tourism economy, the village council implemented a structured system for regulating product pricing and managing retail spaces within the cultural center. A uniform pricing policy for similar goods helps prevent vendor conflicts, particularly during high-tourist seasons. The council holds regular meetings to discuss pricing strategies, fostering a spirit of solidarity while also maintaining economic competitiveness. By implementing these regulations, the village not only reinforces internal cohesion but also enhances the transparency and efficiency of tourism management.

The cultural center has also become an essential hub for community activities, significantly contributing to local governance. Through organized community meetings and transparent decision-making processes, the village council ensures that tourism development remains inclusive and advantageous for all residents. This participatory governance model has been instrumental in reducing internal tensions and promoting a sense of shared ownership over the tourism economy. Consequently, integrating governance with cultural initiatives has strengthened community resilience and sustainable tourism management in Santichon Village.

4.1.3. Challenges of Cultural Authenticity and Social Inequality

Despite the notable achievements in cultural construction and tourism development, the commercialization of cultural practices in Santichon Village has sometimes led to the dilution of cultural authenticity. Once integral to community life, some traditional rituals have been simplified or transformed into staged performances to align with tourist expectations. For instance, while certain traditional celebrations are presented as cultural shows, other deeply rooted practices remain confined to private spaces, disconnected from the tourism narrative. This selective presentation risks reducing rich cultural traditions to mere spectacles, compromising their original social and spiritual significance.

Social inequality also emerges as a critical issue in tourism development. The economic benefits derived from tourism are not evenly distributed, as residents living closer to the cultural center or possessing entrepreneurial skills tend to generate higher incomes than others. A villager articulated this disparity during an interview: "Not everyone here has the same opportunities. Some families make good money from tourism, while others still struggle with agriculture. The difference in income sometimes creates tension" [22]. This statement reflects the socio-economic divide within the community, where tourism's economic advantages are concentrated among those better positioned to capitalize on tourism opportunities. As a result, the increasing gap between those who benefit from tourism and those who continue to rely on agriculture generates underlying tensions and a sense of social disparity.

The commodification of culture and the uneven distribution of economic benefits reveal the ongoing struggle to reconcile traditional values with the realities of modern economic development. As tourism continues to shape the village's socio-cultural landscape, there is an urgent need to address these challenges to ensure that tourism development remains sustainable, equitable, and culturally respectful. Santichon Village's journey of cultural construction exemplifies the continuous interplay between tradition and innovation, self-identity, and external expectations. The community's efforts to innovate cultural practices while preserving authenticity represent a model of sustainable tourism development. However, moving forward, the village must remain vigilant against the pitfalls of commercialization and social inequality, ensuring that tourism benefits are shared equitably and that cultural integrity remains intact. The experiences of Santichon Village provide valuable lessons for other rural communities seeking to balance tourism development with the preservation of cultural heritage.

4.2. Insights into the Cultural Construction and Transformation of Santichon Village

The cultural transformation of Santichon Village, shaped by tourism development, represents a nuanced interplay between preserving traditional cultural identity and adapting to external influences. Rather than merely signifying a loss of heritage, this dynamic process of cultural construction reflects a strategic adaptation aimed at maintaining cultural relevance while capitalizing on the opportunities presented by tourism. The interaction between the "self" (the local community) and the "other" (external tourists) within this context reveals the complexity of balancing cultural preservation with economic development. As tourism increasingly influences the village's social and cultural landscape, residents face the challenge of presenting their heritage in ways that appeal to visitors while safeguarding cultural authenticity. This ongoing negotiation between internal identity and external expectations is essential to understanding how communities manage cultural transformation in tourism-driven settings.

In this context, the transformation of Santichon Village provides valuable insights into how rural communities can navigate cultural change while fostering sustainable tourism practices. By actively engaging in cultural innovation and implementing adaptive strategies, the village not only preserves its distinctive cultural heritage but also aligns its identity with the evolving demands of global tourism. This case exemplifies how community-driven cultural adaptation can establish a harmonious balance between tradition and modernity, offering a practical model for other communities confronted with similar challenges.

4.2.1. Balancing Cultural Preservation and Recreation

The cultural construction of Santichon Village does not

signify the disappearance of traditional culture; rather, it represents a dynamic adaptation process. In the context of tourism development, the community has proactively utilized ethnographic research to identify and preserve local culture's core values while incorporating modern elements to package and present this heritage effectively. This approach attracts tourists and reinforces the community's cultural identity.

One of the most significant aspects of this cultural adaptation is transforming traditional food culture. Historically, dishes such as "Yunnan Noodles," "Yunnan Bacon," and "Yunnan Sausage" were primarily prepared for family gatherings or unique festivals. However, with the rise of tourism, the village has creatively merged these traditional dishes with contemporary dining trends. They are now offered in smaller, more tourist-friendly portions, appealing to modern tastes while preserving their authentic preparation methods. Additionally, the village restaurants have incorporated courtyard-style architecture that reflects Yunnan's cultural heritage, creating an immersive dining experience that harmonizes traditional cuisine with an aesthetically authentic environment. This thoughtful integration facilitates the promotion of traditional culinary practices and preserves their cultural significance, presenting traditional food within a modernized yet culturally respectful framework.

Santichon Village effectively balances cultural preservation with tourism development through this innovative approach. The modernization of cultural resources, without compromising their inherent value, exemplifies a sustainable cultural conservation and tourism promotion model. This strategy demonstrates how cultural heritage can be dynamically adapted to meet contemporary demands while maintaining its essential identity.

4.2.2. Socio-Economic Disparities in Tourism Engagement

The development of tourism in Santichon Village has brought both opportunities and challenges. Traditionally, agriculture was the primary source of income for villagers. However, with the increasing influx of tourists, local shops and the sale of souvenirs have become significant contributors to the village economy. Villagers who ventured into tourism-related businesses, such as renting shops within the cultural center or selling local specialties, have experienced substantial income growth. Despite these economic opportunities, the benefits of tourism development have not been evenly distributed. In an interview, a villager named Wokarakun [22] shared his struggles with the economic disparity: "My work is tough. I wake up early daily to tend the fields, plant vegetables, and care for pigs and chickens. Sometimes, I have to go outside the village to earn extra money, and our family has always struggled. Other villagers involved in tourism businesses make much money, but we barely get by. It feels unfair when I see those who run shops at the cultural center, earning comfortably while I am still laboring in the fields." His account reflects the challenges faced by villagers

who continue to rely on traditional agricultural activities. The economic gap between those who have adapted to tourism and those who remain in agriculture highlights the uneven distribution of tourism benefits. Similarly, Kansrila [9], who runs a Chinese costume rental shop at the cultural center, expressed her concerns about the increasing competition: "Initially, my shop did well. I rented traditional Chinese outfits to tourists for 100 baht each. However, with more similar shops opening, my income has dropped. My husband used to drive tourists around the village, but his work became less frequent as more villagers got their cars, reducing our family income significantly." These interviews reveal the socio-economic disparities between villagers who have successfully transitioned to tourism-based income and those who have not. The primary factors contributing to this disparity include differences in entrepreneurial skills, social networks, and initial resources. Additionally, the rise in competition among tourism-related businesses has further complicated income stability for some villagers.

While tourism has undeniably enhanced the village's overall economic profile, it has also created a widening gap between those with the means and skills to capitalize on new opportunities and those dependent on traditional livelihoods. Addressing this disparity requires targeted interventions to ensure that tourism development benefits the entire community rather than exacerbating existing inequalities.

4.2.3. Integrating Cultural and Ecological Preservation

Tourism development in Santichon Village has prompted the community to address the integration of cultural and ecological preservation. The village's natural landscape is inherently linked to its cultural identity, making maintaining this relationship essential for sustainable tourism. In response, Santichon Village has established eco-friendly homestays incorporating traditional Yunnan architectural aesthetics while minimizing environmental impact. These accommodations are designed to limit the use of non-renewable resources and encourage sustainable practices, offering tourists a culturally rich yet environmentally responsible experience. This integrated approach safeguards the ecological landscape and aligns with the community's long-term tourism strategy. By balancing cultural and ecological preservation, Santichon Village maintains its appeal as a tourist destination while protecting its natural heritage. Emphasizing sustainable practices ensures that tourism development does not compromise the village's cultural and environmental integrity.

4.2.4. Reconciling Self and Other: Cultural Identity and Tourism

The cultural transformation of Santichon Village reflects a dynamic interplay between the "self" (the local community) and the "other" (tourists). Rather than merely accommodating external expectations, the village proactively

redefines its cultural identity by merging traditional practices with contemporary tourism demands. This strategic negotiation illustrates the community's deliberate effort to preserve local identity while engaging with the global tourism market. By actively shaping their cultural narratives, the villagers ensure that their heritage is not simply commodified but thoughtfully presented to visitors. This process fosters meaningful cultural exchanges, allowing tourists to engage with the village's unique traditions while reinforcing local pride. Santichon Village exemplifies how rural communities can modernize without losing their cultural essence through this approach.

The transformation of Santichon Village offers valuable insights into how cultural preservation and tourism development can coexist. By innovating traditional practices while honoring their cultural foundations, the village navigates the complexities of modernization. Nonetheless, challenges related to economic inequality and the potential commodification of culture persist, requiring ongoing attention to maintain long-term sustainability. The village's efforts to harmonize cultural preservation with tourism growth serve as an instructive model for other rural communities seeking to balance tradition and economic advancement.

4.3. Exploring the Sustainable Development Pathways of Santichon Village Through Host and Tourist Interactions

The sustainable development of tourism in Santichon Village is intrinsically connected to the dynamic interactions between hosts (local community members) and tourists (visitors). In cultural construction, Santichon Village has established a fluid balance that adapts and evolves with the growth of tourism. This balance is driven by cultural exchange, infrastructure enhancement, community involvement, and policy support. By fostering a synergistic relationship between hosts and tourists, the village strives to preserve cultural integrity while simultaneously promoting socio-economic development.

This section examines how Santichon Village navigates the complexities of tourism sustainability through key strategies, including strengthened cultural exchange, improved infrastructure, human resource development, community participation, and multi-stakeholder cooperation. These efforts support sustainable tourism and reinforce the community's cultural resilience, allowing Santichon Village to maintain its unique identity while benefiting from tourism-driven economic growth.

4.3.1. Strengthening Cultural Exchange and Promotion

Strengthening cultural exchange and promotion is fundamental to the sustainable development of Santichon Village. As a community rooted in distinctive Yunnan Chinese cultural

heritage, Santichon Village naturally represents a convergence of diverse cultural influences. Historically, cultural interactions have shaped its identity, making cultural exchange an integral part of its tourism strategy. By leveraging its rich cultural resources, Santichon Village has positioned itself as a vibrant cultural destination, drawing visitors eager to experience its unique traditions. The village has implemented a series of cultural linkage activities to facilitate cultural exchange. These include festivals and interactive cultural performances that enhance the tourist experience and enable locals to showcase their heritage proudly. By combining traditional Yunnan practices with modern tourist expectations, Santichon Village effectively bridges cultural gaps while preserving its unique identity. This proactive approach fosters a more open and dynamic cultural environment, allowing the community to incorporate valuable external cultural elements without compromising its core traditions.

A key component of sustainable tourism in Santichon Village is strategically promoting its cultural assets. Local policymakers and publicity departments plan annual promotional activities, ensuring sufficient financial, material, and human resources to support these initiatives. An effective strategy involves utilizing mass media, including television, news outlets, and digital platforms such as YouTube and vlogs. Collaborating with content creators to produce documentaries and cultural features can significantly boost the visibility of Santichon Village as a cultural tourism hub.

Moreover, effective public relations and advertising play a crucial role. Creating comprehensive advertisements highlighting the village's cultural sites and unique experiences helps potential visitors make informed travel decisions. Tailoring promotional content to diverse target audiences is essential to increase tourism demand in the short and long term. By maintaining a clear, consistent, and culturally rich promotional strategy, Santichon Village attracts visitors and deepens their understanding and appreciation of the community's cultural heritage. Through these efforts, Santichon Village continues strengthening the symbiotic relationship between cultural preservation and tourism development, reinforcing its status as a sustainable cultural tourism destination.

4.3.2. Enhancing Infrastructure and Cultural Industry Development

Infrastructure development is crucial for supporting sustainable tourism in Santichon Village. Since the onset of tourism development, the village has made significant strides in upgrading its infrastructure, including paving roads, improving electricity networks, and providing Wi-Fi connectivity. However, further enhancements are needed, particularly in maintaining existing facilities within the cultural center. During fieldwork, it was observed that some buildings, such as shops and museums within the cultural center, show signs of neglect and deterioration. This issue primarily stems from a lack of maintenance after the original owners moved away.

For instance, the cultural center's museum, initially constructed by students from Chiang Mai University, now features faded signage and aging exhibits, reducing its appeal and informative value.

To address these challenges, the village requires a comprehensive plan for maintaining and upgrading its existing infrastructure. Priority should be given to restoring cultural and tourism facilities to preserve their historical significance while maintaining their functionality. Additionally, ensuring a reliable power supply and efficient communication networks is essential to accommodate the increasing number of visitors and to improve the overall tourism experience. Alongside infrastructure improvements, the development of the cultural industry is vital for sustainable tourism. Santichon Village has made commendable efforts to produce local handicrafts and specialty foods as tourism commodities. However, several challenges persist, particularly concerning the uniqueness of these products. Many souvenirs available in the village are not locally produced but instead sourced from other areas, such as Mae Salong in Chiang Rai Province.

During interviews, villagers expressed concerns about the lack of distinctiveness in the products offered to tourists: "Many of our products come from Chiang Rai's Mae Salong, including dried fruits and Chinese snacks. We also order goods from online platforms like Shopee and Lazada. It is hard to offer something truly unique," one villager explained" [9]. This practice undermines the cultural authenticity of the village's tourism offerings. To enhance the cultural industry's appeal, the community should develop unique, locally crafted products that reflect the village's heritage and craftsmanship. Establishing workshops to teach traditional crafts would empower residents and preserve valuable cultural skills. Additionally, fostering a distinctive cultural brand centered around Santichon Village's heritage could elevate the perceived value of local products, thereby strengthening the tourism economy.

Santichon Village can create a more sustainable tourism model that balances modern convenience with cultural integrity by prioritizing infrastructure maintenance and fostering an authentic cultural industry. These efforts will ensure that the village remains attractive while preserving its unique cultural identity.

4.3.3. Developing Human Resources Through Cultural Education

Sustainable tourism in Santichon Village fundamentally relies on the development of human resources, emphasizing education and skill enhancement. As tourism increasingly shapes the village's socio-economic landscape, investing in local capacity-building has become essential. To achieve sustainable tourism, educational programs must focus on fostering environmental awareness, cultural pride, and practical skills in tourism management. Training initiatives for local tour guides, craft producers, and hospitality workers are particularly important. By enhancing service quality and promoting cultural knowledge, these programs enable community members to engage more effectively in tourism-related activities. For instance, organizing workshops on business management and customer interaction empowers residents to manage tourism enterprises more efficiently and professionally.

Moreover, integrating cultural education into these training programs reinforces the preservation of local heritage while boosting the community's capacity to deliver culturally enriched tourism experiences. This dual focus on practical skills and cultural awareness improves the quality of tourism services and strengthens the community's connection to its cultural roots. By fostering a skilled, culturally informed workforce, Santichon Village can ensure that tourism development aligns with both economic goals and cultural sustainability. This approach enhances the village's appeal as a tourist destination and supports long-term community empowerment and cultural resilience.

4.3.4. Strengthening Community Participation and Benefit-Sharing

Community involvement is a fundamental pillar for achieving the long-term sustainability of Santichon Village's tourism sector. As primary stakeholders, residents must be actively engaged in the planning, managing, and implementing tourism activities. Empowering the community fosters local ownership and ensures that tourism development aligns with the villagers' needs and cultural values. One practical approach to strengthening community participation is establishing a cooperative platform that manages tourism revenue and oversees fair distribution. This platform should function through transparent decision-making processes involving representatives from diverse social groups within the village. By implementing a system of equitable profit-sharing, the village can mitigate conflicts and ensure that all community members, including marginalized and vulnerable groups, benefit from tourism.

Promoting participation through ethnographic methods—such as community dialogues, participatory workshops, and cultural training—fosters a stronger sense of ownership and collective responsibility. These methods encourage residents to voice their perspectives and contribute actively to tourism planning. Moreover, offering targeted training programs in handicrafts, local cuisine, and small-scale entrepreneurship designed for women, elderly residents, and low-income households ensures more inclusive participation. Incorporating fair and transparent benefit-sharing mechanisms addresses existing income disparities and enhances social cohesion. For example, organizing village meetings to discuss revenue distribution and allowing community input on financial decisions can reduce feelings of exclusion and inequality. By fostering an inclusive tourism model, Santichon Village can promote social solidarity while maximizing the socio-economic benefits of tourism for the entire community. By strengthening community participation and ensuring fair

benefit distribution, Santichon Village enhances local engagement and builds a resilient, community-centered tourism model. This approach ensures that tourism development remains inclusive, equitable, and sustainable in the long term.

4.3.5. Enhancing Policy Support and Multi-Stakeholder Cooperation

Practical policy support and multi-stakeholder cooperation are essential for sustaining Santichon Village tourism. Local governments play a pivotal role in facilitating sustainable tourism by introducing targeted measures that promote cultural preservation and economic development. Such measures may include financial assistance for cultural conservation projects, grants for small tourism businesses, and incentives for local entrepreneurship. Strengthening legal frameworks to balance tourism growth with ecological and cultural protection is critical for maintaining the village's long-term sustainability.

Collaboration with academic institutions, such as universities, can provide valuable insights into cultural preservation and tourism management. Research initiatives led by these institutions can help develop strategies for integrating cultural heritage with modern tourism practices while ensuring that local traditions are respected and sustained. Furthermore, establishing public-private partnerships can align tourism development with broader economic strategies, fostering community-based projects prioritizing local participation and benefit-sharing.

Encouraging non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to participate in educational and conservation projects is another important aspect of multi-stakeholder cooperation. NGOs can contribute to community capacity-building by offering training programs that enhance local skills in tourism management, environmental conservation, and cultural heritage preservation. Their involvement also promotes environmental awareness, helping residents understand the importance of sustainable practices.

Santichon Village's sustainable tourism development is fundamentally tied to the dynamic interaction between hosts and tourists. The village can establish a harmonious balance between economic development and cultural preservation by fostering cultural exchange, upgrading infrastructure, enhancing human resource development, and building strong community participation. Reinforcing policy frameworks and fostering cooperation among government bodies, academic institutions, private enterprises, and community groups will further support this process, creating a sustainable tourism model that benefits locals and visitors. The experience of Santichon Village illustrates that the key to sustainable cultural tourism lies in maintaining a dynamic balance between tradition and modernity. By fostering a strong sense of community identity and encouraging active participation, the village can continue to thrive as a cultural tourism destination while preserving its unique heritage.

5. Conclusion

The cultural construction and sustainable tourism development of Santichon Village exemplify the intricate balance between cultural preservation and economic growth. This study highlights four core perspectives for sustainable cultural tourism: dynamic adaptation, human-nature interaction, cultural diversity promotion, and community empowerment. These approaches enable Santichon Village to effectively harmonize cultural heritage with the economic benefits driven by tourism.

Firstly, tourism should be perceived as a dynamic process. Since the inception of tourism development, Santichon Village has continuously adapted its strategies to accommodate the growing influx of visitors. This flexibility reflects the necessity of sustainable planning that responds to evolving tourism demands.

Secondly, viewing tourism as an interaction between humans and nature underscores the importance of ecological preservation. Santichon Village's eco-friendly homestays, which integrate traditional Yunnan architectural elements, illustrate how cultural and ecological tourism coexist harmoniously. This model not only protects the natural landscape but also enriches the cultural experience of visitors.

Thirdly, promoting cultural diversity through traditional festivals has proven to be an effective strategy for attracting tourists and enhancing cultural transmission. By combining cultural heritage with modern tourist engagement, Santichon Village ensures that traditional practices are preserved and economically beneficial.

Lastly, community empowerment and equitable resource sharing are vital for sustainable development. By actively involving residents in tourism-related decision-making and ensuring fair distribution of tourism revenue, Santichon Village fosters social cohesion and community solidarity. This inclusive approach reduces socio-economic disparities and strengthens the community's capacity to manage tourism sustainably.

Santichon Village serves as a model of how balancing internal and external interactions, host-guest relationships, and the dynamic between self and others can facilitate sustainable cultural tourism. Through proactive cultural innovation, ecological integration, and inclusive community practices, the village offers valuable insights for other rural communities aiming to harmonize cultural preservation with economic development.

Abbreviations

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Author Contributions

Dueanphen Ariyasapwatthana is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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