

Visual Mixing Research Methods on Lanna Mural Paintings: A case Study of Wat Phumin, Nan Province

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Abstract

According to most of visitors who have visited Thai temples and have seen Thai mural paintings with untrained eyes, they might not understand a 3story on walls at first sight. It may be because Thai mural paintings look confusing, crowded with colorful figures that appears similar in detail and character, leaving no place to focus one's attention (Wyatt, 2004). Thai mural paintings is a disparate of the visual arts because of conventions that are entirely its own. This research is designed to study the capability of Thai and Foreign visitors in order to apprehend Lanna mural paintings through visual mixing research methods. For Methodology, questionnaires were used by collecting the data from the total of 411 Thai and foreign visitors who have been visited Wat Phumin, Nan province. At the same time, qualitative method was used by collecting the data form visitors who have been visited Wat Phumin, Nan province. The data then were analyzed using mean, descriptive statistics, and qualitative data. This study concludes that the comprehension of Lanna mural paintings at first sight from Thai and foreign visitors at Wat Phumin, Nan province are not positive. In addition, the results reported that our respondents have verified that there is no direction in order to understand stories on Lanna mural paintings from the beginning. Furthermore, the results reported that our respondents have established visual mixing research methods in order to discover more effective solutions to facilitate Thai and foreign

visitors to obtain the information of the storytelling in Lanna mural paintings at first sight as possible.

Keywords: Visual methods; Mixing research methods; Lanna mural paintings, Nan province

Introduction

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

As times went by for many centuries, Thailand’s heritages become the visitor’s attraction for visitors all around the world. More research supports Thailand’s tourism, Mingsarn Kaosa-ard (2002) found that the composition of tourism consists of three characteristics; there are 1. The product is composed of natural resources which are public goods: beaches, waterfalls, mountain, and the general environment. 2. Safety and infrastructure are also important elements of the product. 3. A nation’s people and their culture, and visitors’ access to both are important components of any tourism product or package.

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

Literature Reviews

Lanna mural Paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan Province

In this study, the researcher determines to select Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province as a case study to be the scope of study. According to Lanna mural paintings, Nan province has unique characteristics that can reflect Lanna arts and cultures more precisely. Much of the content inside these works is from Wat Phumin in Nan Province. Nan mural paintings consider as Lanna Art, which represents the northern part of Thailand, known

as ‘the Kingdom of Lanna.’ As the matter of fact, this study will focus on the government’s region that represents ‘the Kingdom of Lanna,’ consisting of 8 provinces (Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lampang, Lamphun, Phayao, Phrae, Mae Hong Son and Nan).

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

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

Visual Methods

The definition of ‘visual methods’ (Hine, 2005) or ‘digital methods’ (Rogers, 2009) explains these methods include the adjustment and transformation of conventional research techniques such as participant observation, interview, focus groups and surveys, as well as innovative proposals. The use of visual methods to resolve interactions and build understandings within social science research. For example, this research will focus on visual materials such as Lanna mural paintings and the processes associated with the audiences.

As a result, this research aims to enhance visual methods and build

spread across the social science research in effective ways.

Mixing Research Methods

Some fieldwork approach combines with mixing of various research methods. There are meanings in distinctive ways in the scientific literature, essentially a triangulation approach, a mixed methods approach or as sequencing of methods. On the grounds, “Mixed methods” research refers to the use of quantitative and qualitative methods, as delineated in its terminology as Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) define research is a process of examiner collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draw reasoning using both qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in a single study or program of investigation.

Consequently, the term mixing research methods is refer to the fieldwork approach when researchers merge several research methods, either across paradigm (e.g. qualitative and quantitative) or within the interpretive paradigm (e.g. mixing qualitative methods) (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011).



Figure 1 Professor Silpa Bhirasri



Figure 2 Assistant Professor Fua Haripitak

This research has inspiration from the Artists and Academic Professors who have seen the value of mural paintings in Thailand.

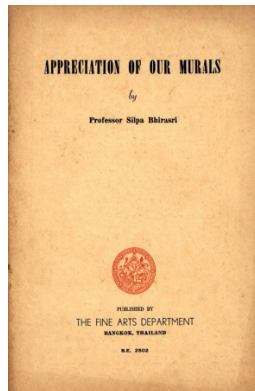


Figure 3 Appreciation of our Murals

The book calls “Appreciation of our Murals” written by Professor Silpa Bhirasri (b. Corrado Feroci: 15 September 1892 – 14 May 1962) who is founder of Silpakorn university then Assistant Professor Fua Haripitak (b.22 April 1910 – 19 October 1993), Thai national artist who followed his teacher Professor Silpa Bhirasri in order to preserve Thai mural paintings inside the temple throughout Thailand.

Professor Silpa Bhirasri (1959) pointed out there were 13 provinces throughout Thailand which have valuable mural paintings inside the temples;

1. Bangkok
2. Yala
3. Sukothai
4. Pra Nakon Si Ayutthaya
5. Thonburi
6. Ratchaburi
7. Phetchaburi
8. Uttaradit
9. Chonburi
10. Phitsanulok
11. Chiang Mai
12. Nakorn Ratchasima
13. Nan



Figure 4 Associate Professor Sone Simatrung .

Then Associate Professor Sone Simatrung (b.20 April 1946 -), who followed Assistant Professor Fua Haripitak to study Lanna mural paintings for many years and wrote a book called “The structure of Lanna mural paintings (1983)” and many books which related to Thai mural paintings.

Methodology

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

Tool of Measurement

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

a visitor to rate whether is there a starting point in Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province.

Procedures

1



Wat Phumin

2



Wat Phra Singh



Wat Phra That Lampang Luang



Wat Phra That Hariphunchao

3



Wat Kongkaram



Wat Yai Suwannaram



Wat Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan

Figure 5 Pictures of Wat (Temple) in Thailand using for this research

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

Results

For the questionnaire, there're 411 representative samples by random sampling. There are 161 male (39.2%) and 250 female (60.8%) which is accidentally equal. For the status issue, there are 12 persons (2.9%) for young visitors, 388 persons (94.4%) for Thai visitors, 11 persons (2.7%) for foreign visitors. For the education level, there are 22 persons (5.4%) have primary school education, 48 persons (11.7%) have secondary school

education, 15 persons (3.6%) have vacation school education, 249 persons (3.6%) have bachelor degree education, 70 persons (17%) have master degree education, and 7 persons (1.7%) have Ph.D. degree education.

Test of Hypothesis

To test the hypotheses were used range of means from the measured scale. The intervals of measured; there are four intervals, which are 1- 1.8 refers to very little, 1.8 – 2.6 refers to little, 2.6 - 3.4 refers to somewhat, 3.4- 4.2 refers to very, and 4.2 – 5 refers to very much.

This study tests the comprehension from Thai visitors and foreign visitors;

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

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

Table 1 The result of Mean scores on Questions 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1

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

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

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

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

Table 2 The result of Mean scores on Question 4.2, 5.2 and 6.2

Questions for refers to mural paintings in different seting	Mean
Q 4.2 predicted most of visitors do not know there is a starting point for looking at Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province.	4.08
Q 5.2 predicted most of visitors do not know there is a starting point for looking at Lanna mural paintings in general.	3.64
Q 6.2 predicted most of visitors do not know there is a starting point for looking at Thai mural paintings in general.	3.46

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

Reliability

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

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

Table 3 The result of Cronbach’s Alpha on Question 4, 5 and 6

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

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

In sum, the evaluations of the questionnaire were acceptable from the results in Table 3. In addition, the findings from in-depth interview from Thai and foreign visitors, we can finish that there is a problem to obtain arts and information from Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province at first sight and we also can confirm that most visitors do not know where to start to look at Lanna mural paintings inside Wat Phumin, Nan province.

Mixing qualitative methods

Research Question

What are the personal experiences from visitors who have been seen Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province?
Are they any problems to obtain information from Lanna mural paintings at Wat Phumin, Nan province?

Theories integrated

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

Fieldwork Approach

This study used the fieldwork approach of mixing quantitative and quality methods. The researcher wanted to investigate visual methods in order to discover the solution to help Thai and foreign visitors. Using survey data, qualitative methods were used to understand the broad range of

opinions on “storytelling of Lanna mural paintings” among visitors who have been visit Wat Phumin, Nan province.

Focus group discussions were used to identify the broad range of opinions on “storytelling of Lanna mural paintings” among visitors who have been visit Wat Phumin, Nan province (Figure 5). Focus group discussions were conducted with both women and men, who were older and younger with average ages between 23-40 years old, and from urban and rural areas.

In order to learn about personal experiences about looking at Lanna mural paintings, the researcher then conducted in-depth interviews with individuals who were selected from the focus group discussions. The fieldwork lasted for one day. When developing the study, the researcher was uncertain whether it would be possible to collect information on subjective issues from visitors. In fact, the researcher founded that some of visitors came to Wat Phumin only to see a renowned painting ‘Poo Marn Yar Marn’ (‘Whispering of Love’) (Figure 6), it was famous internationally.



Figure 6 Story of the Buddha



Figure 7 Previous life stories of the Buddha



Figure 8 The ordinary life of local people

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

ordinary life of local people’, Second: ‘Previous life stories of the Buddha’, and Third: ‘Story of the Buddha’.

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

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



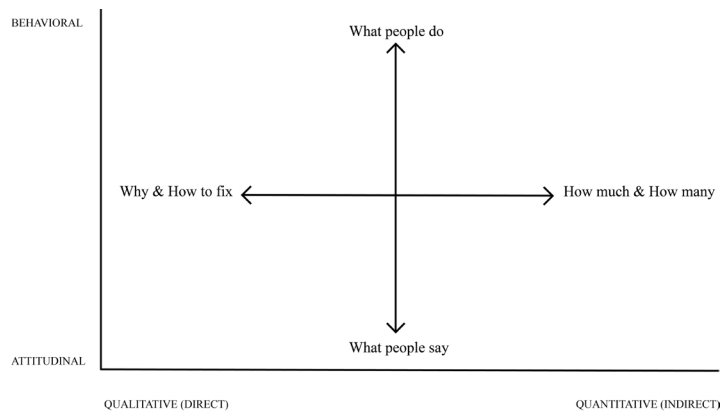
Figure 9 Wat Phumin, Nan province



Figure 10 ‘Poo Marn Yar Marn’ (‘Whispering of Love’)

Quantitative vs. Qualitative

In this research, the researcher used both Quantitative and Qualitative to test hypotheses. Due to the nature of their differences, Christian Rohrer (2014) suggested that quantitative methods has a better explanation about the events, it is dealing with how many and how much types of questions. Whereas qualitative methods are more suitable for answering questions about why or how to fix a problem. The following figure (Figure 11) illustrates how two methods affect the types of questions that can be asked.



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Discussion

The results support the mentioned hypotheses. This study concludes that the comprehension of Lanna mural paintings at first sight from Thai and foreign visitors at Wat Phumin, Nan province are not positive. Furthermore, the results report that our respondents have verified that there is no direction in order to understand stories on Lanna mural paintings from the beginning.

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

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

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