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# Tourist attraction-based cultural identity and local participation propelling sustainable cultural tourism in northern Thailand

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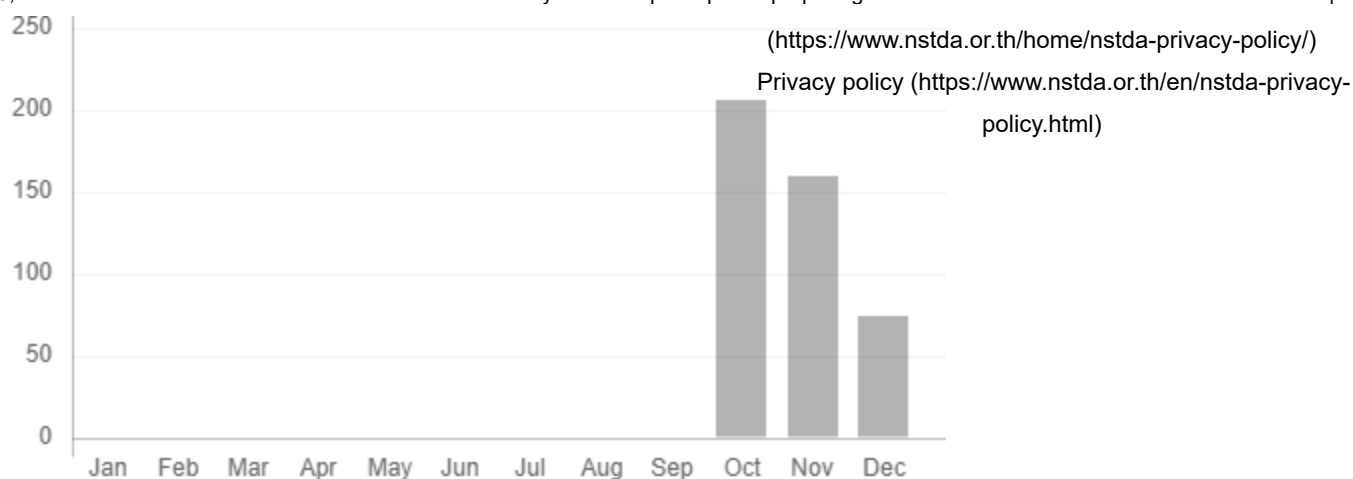
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## Abstract

Thailand is recognized to be exuberantly rich in cultural heritage. Thus, cultural tourism contributes significantly as one of the primary sources of national income. This article focuses on cultural tourism in Mae Hong Son, a northern province of Thailand with three specific objectives. First, it aims to establish the shared cultural identity of the cultural attractions in the target area. Second, it focuses on appraising the attributes of the tourist attractions associated with this identity. Finally, this study aims to assess a tour program developed by the researchers based on the attraction-based cultural identity. Initially, data regarding the area's cultural attractions from documents, surveys, and interviews were examined to determine the attractions' shared collective identity. Then, site visits were performed to objectively examine the attractions' six-dimension attributes. Finally, a tour program highlighting the attractions' identity was assessed by tourism stakeholders. Documentary data analysis reveals that "teak trade" seems to represent the attractions' identity, reminiscing the past splendor with abundant teak resources contributing to the area's rapid expansion and prosperity. Furthermore, six out of ten cultural attractions were positively appraised and incorporated in the tour program, which was favorably evaluated. The findings are beneficial for local cultural tourism development, potentially serving as a model for other areas to achieve sustainable tourism. Implications were offered to encourage and mobilize local community participation across the entire paradigm.

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