

Socio-cultural Impact of Songkran Festival

[Name of Writer]

[Name of Institution]

[Name of Supervisor]

### **Abstract**

Cultural events and festivals have dire consequences on the societies of host cities and countries. These events and festivals play a decisive role in the social, cultural and economic aspects of the society. Songkran festival is a religious and cultural festival of Thailand which occurs in the month of April in Bangkok every year. This paper aims to explore the socio-cultural impact of Songkran festival of the city of Bangkok in particular and on Thailand in general.

For this purpose this research study conducted a qualitative research in which primary data was collected by using semi-structured interviews of fifteen participants within the age bracket of 22-28 years who came to Bangkok to attend Songkran festival.

This study concluded that Songkran festival has significant and direct social, cultural and economic impact on the society of Bangkok and it helps to project a positive cultural image of Thailand among the foreign tourists. However, it has also been found that this festival has some negative impacts too which include Crimes, sexual harassment, excessive use of alcohol, increased road accidents, increased traffic congestion, lot of waste etc. In order to disseminate the positive image of the city and society, the government must formulate strategies to reduce these negative impacts.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the Study

In the relationship between the city and culture, it has been noted that as much the city expands, the more it materialized in the centre. The central part of the city organises events, cultural shows, festivals etc. to improve and propagate the positive image of the city (Elias-Varotsis 2006). In other words, large festivals, with a touch of certain centrality and urbanity, ensure the pre-eminence of the sprawling city. Festivals and events outweigh the territories; fragmented spaces reflect the transformation of social relationships less formed on the basis of geographical proximity and more due to close affinity.

The world has experienced a sharp increase in group celebrations since 1980 (Funk & Bruun, 2007). It is no longer only religious holidays or festivals celebrating a national event, but also newly created or adopted festivals like music festival, Halloween, St. Patrick etc. Traditional feasts and festivals are more specialized kind of mixture of recreation, tourism, culture and celebration come together to cover almost the entire hexagon (Wildman & Baker, 1985). These events, where the crowd and groups outweigh the individuals, punctuate the time; it becomes important when it comes to reseal an urban community increasingly marked by social, spatial and generational segmentation (Wildman & Baker, 1985).

Celebrations and festivals give "body" to the urban society to restore a "community" even though it is a point in the time. Their multiple accounts provide intense relationship and both fleeting spaces and places that local authorities are eager to generate through the transformation of places and animations, participating in the image of the community.

The cultural festivals are to differentiate between cities participated in the territorial

competition and the cities that are not. Thus, the number of festivals and their impact differ in particular hierarchical levels of cities. Today, many cities are evaluated in terms of image, the characteristics, their economy and their cultural potential (Chalip 2006). Culture, thus, allows for profits under the guise of support of "cultural activities" by the Municipality of festival or celebration. It creates jobs in the areas of animation, creation, management, and also at restaurants, cafes, hotels, transport and trade (Tyrrell & Johnston, 2001). This job creation suggests that the path of economic development now follow the path of culture. The proposition is that cultural events and festivals can be an important and unexploited input, for the understanding of the urban economy and social conditions.

An urban festival is primarily an artistic event; but it is also an event that is so ephemeral in an urban area. This installation is not invisible, inaudible and odourless and it is not without consequences. Conversely, cultural productions are especially dependent on spatial and social contexts of their production sites (Gabr, 2004). Being a part of a city, the festival builds its own frames while adapting existing spaces, model these spaces according to their needs (Boyko, 2008). Settling in a city, a festival transforms (to varying degrees and for varying periods) of urban spaces into festival spaces (Gabr, 2004). In the relationship between urban space and festival event, several scenarios can arise. They vary to map to the extreme case of the event confined to existing equipment and operating in a closed bubble during its entire duration (Boyko, 2008), if the event during the term widely irrigates part of the urban area. The festival performances take place either in the pedestrian streets, squares and gardens of city, or in more closed as schoolyards spaces (Gabr, 2004).

The sustainability of an event is often desired by local actors because through such events the municipality hopes to maximize the benefits (economic, media, tourism etc.) and the

host association of the festival seeks to legitimise their position in the city (Boyko 2008). If this does not impose sustainability to mandatory construction or allocation of premises and specific equipment, it is observed that there is often a link between the length of time of registration and the importance of the spatial registration. In other words, the sustainability of the event can be expressed by the official or squatting (tags, posters) public or private space of the city, but it is maximised when the event in question lives "within its walls" (Fredline et al. 2005).

Events have invested very different realities regarding their registration and visibility during the festival. The total investment of the city was, from the outset, a claim to, both artistic and political, organisers of the festival. While holding the festival, the city is transfigured (Willis 2000). It is virtually impossible to reach the city centre during the festival days (Garcia 2005). This particular study, in the context of cultural events and festivals, analyse the socio-cultural impact of Songkran Festival celebrated in Thailand.

### **1.1.1 Songkran Festival**

The Festival of Songkran is celebrated between 12 to 15 April to celebrate the New Year (Understanding Songkran 2013). The city of Bangkok becomes empty of its inhabitants for 4 to 5 days. Townspeople indeed return to their families to celebrate the New Year between 12 and 15 April. The tradition states that everyone cleans his house, puts on their best clothes, go to the temple to pray before feasting with family. A custom for children is to pour water on the hands of their elders before spraying water from near rivers and canals. An air of madness reigns in these battles with excessive use of water (Understanding Songkran 2013). The battles continued late into the night even with the help of fire-fighters.

It is a very festive time and many tourists want to get entangled in the joyous melee.

Just the Bangkok International Airport is expected to accommodate 164,000 travellers daily until April 18 against 157,000 usually. This peak will be observed in Phuket, Pattaya or KohSamui also. The authorities make every effort to ensure that the festival would not turn into tragedy because on overcrowded roads, the traffic accidents are common.

In Bangkok, the backpacker district of Khao San Road is the place where the party is in full swing. The festival is also celebrated enthusiastically at the Silom Royal City Avenue and the Central World shopping centre. If someone lives downtown, he is unable to avoid the jets of water for four days. Almost 14.9% of those who participate in the festivities of the Buddhist New Year, celebrates the festival in the capital of Northern Thailand. Chiang Mai is also the number one destination to Phuket for tourists wishing to fully experience the tradition of watering the new Buddhist year (Understanding Songkran, 2013).

### **1.1.2 Impacts of Songkran Festival**

In order to appreciate the impacts of festival, it is necessary to distinguish the character of Songkran festival. It is likely to have a significant impact on Social, cultural and economic activities of Thai society. Ritchie (1984) defines hallmark events as sports or cultural events aimed at primarily to improve the knowledge and attractiveness of a tourist destination. The event is set up in order to increase tourism demand in the region. The organisation of festival like Songkran generates actual or pecuniary profits.

The first influence of the festival is on the well- being of the community. If the organisation of the festival helps to raise awareness of the region and these results in an important influx of tourists, the whole region has a real advantage (Martins & Serra, 2007). One way to measure would be to estimate the importance of promotional expenses that would have been required to achieve the same result. Benefits and financial costs are imposed by individuals



or businesses and other agents through the market. Unlike the benefits and actual costs, however, they do not affect the well-being of the community: they have a redistributive effect, gains of some individuals being offset by losses of others (Martins & Serra, 2007). These effects are resulting solely from the changes in relative prices while the economy adjusts to find a new balance. For example, the organisation of a festival involves the construction of some infrastructure or renovation of existing facilities. This provides extra work for businesses in the host region. To meet the increased demand, the latter will have to hire additional staff. The wages of employees in the construction industry will tend to increase (Martins & Serra, 2007). This is a win – win situation, not only for them, but for the community as a whole; however, it is not a real benefit. Indeed, the increase in the salaries will be offset by a relative decrease in workers' compensation of other sectors (Martins & Serra, 2007). It follows from the process of unchanged welfare of communities. The increase in salaries of the construction sector is therefore a monetary benefit.

Finally, note that the economists who study the impact of a project on economic activity usually make the assumption of full employment of factors of production. Therefore, productive activities related to the organisation of an event - infrastructure construction, increase in hotel occupancy etc. do not constitute a profit for the community. Indeed, under the assumption of full employment, if the factors of production - Working machines - were not used for the organisation of an event, they would in any way for another activity. This assumption can be questioned, especially at the present time when economies are under-employment of productive resources (unemployment). If an area is in a state of under-employment, the increase in activity caused by the economic organisation of a festival may constitute a real benefit to the community. It makes possible to use resources that would otherwise untapped.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The aim of this study is to evaluate the social and cultural effects of cultural events and festivals in the context of Songkran festival of Thailand.

## **1.3 Rationale of the Study**

Festivals are essential events that affect the socio-cultural aspect of the destinations. Some of these impacts are negative while some are positive. There is a vast literature available on socio-cultural impacts of different mega-events and festivals, but not much has been written about the socio-cultural impacts of Songkran festival of Thailand.

The rationale of this study is to shed light on the effects of Songkran festival in Thailand. This study is highly useful because it provides a glimpse of Thai's festival to the Western people and tries to eliminate some of the prejudices of the Western countries' people regarding Thai society, culture and festivals.

## **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

- To identify how cultural events affect the society in general
- To determine socio-cultural effects of Songkran festival of Thailand
- To discuss some possibilities in order to enhance the positive impact and decreasing the negative impact of Songkran festival

## **1.5 Research Questions**

- What is the importance of events in the lives of societies?
- What is the impact of cultural events or festivals on society?
- What is the socio-cultural impact of Songkran festival on society?
- How the Songkran festival impacts the hospitality industry of Thailand?

- How to enhance the positive impact of Songkran festival?

### **1.6 Assumptions**

Assumptions in a research study are important to maintain the relevance of the study. In the same way, following assumptions are developed control on research topic:

- Festival registration is a ephemeral priori that leaves the traces, both material and immaterial, in the city. It affects the way the city is practiced and fitted and how it is perceived and felt. Places of conduct of parties and festive events are not defined so randomly. The choice of places often have an important symbolic value corresponds to strategic decisions that are inherently interesting to analyse. If any place can, in principle, be party place, a particular party does not hold anywhere. The party venues do not draw themselves so completely coincidental. They meet several considerations of spatial order (centrality for certain holidays, periphery etc.), commercial (concentration of retail, entertainment), political (decision and will of local actors). While bending to practical considerations, the festival structures elect places which suit the desired atmosphere. The inclusion celebrations in space is far to be neutral and their geographical distribution influences the way the space is seen and experienced by those who attend (or those who suffer);
- The festive and cultural events are closely related to a power issue. They are used as instruments of development or urban renewal. The political and economic intentions are explicitly or implicitly exposed. It does remains that cultural events are often a lever of urban

### **1.6 Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation consists of 5 main chapters as following:

- **Chapter 1:** This chapter is an introduction of the dissertation, which is a guideline of this dissertation that includes background of the problem, an introduction of Songkran festival, aim and objectives of this study, research questions, assumptions and the structure of this dissertation.
- **Chapter 2:** It is a chapter of the literature review, which consists of academic definitions, concepts, frameworks and theories that related to the topic of this dissertation.
- **Chapter 3:** This chapter is for methodology, which represents the methods applied to collect and analyse information and data for achievement of this dissertation. This chapter will describe the type of data collection that used for this dissertation.
- **Chapter 4:** For main findings section, it provides the result of data collection from chapter four. It is an analysis of the data collection for this dissertation;
- **Chapter 5:** This chapter is a conclusion of this dissertation. It is a final part of this dissertation, which will conclude all information of this dissertation, as well as give recommendations for the future study related to the topic. This conclusion will help the readers to understand why this research is important along with suggestions for further research work related to this topic

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The first topic of this chapter is about events, which this topic shows some definitions of event from various authors as Berridge (2007), Bowdin (2011), Getz (2012) and Bladen et al. (2012). The second topic is about types of events. It tells how to classify events and give some of samples types of events like hallmark, festival and cultural events. This topic will also provide summary of types of events. The next topic is about event impact, which includes economic, environmental and social and cultural impacts with summary of event impacts. Then, it is about understanding socio-cultural impacts of event. This topic will show general idea of socio-cultural impact of events. It also shows a table of socio-cultural impacts that mixed from various authors, as well as a social impact model from Small (2007). Finally, this last topic of this chapter is about socio-cultural impacts particularly in Songkran festival in Thailand. It will show positive and negatives impacts of Songkran from several literatures. Moreover, there will be summary of the topic and lead to the next chapter.

### 2.1 Definition of Event

The general definition of event from dictionary says that “*Event: an occurrence at a given place and time; a special set of circumstances; a noteworthy occurrence. Events, by definition, have a beginning and an end. They are temporal phenomena, and with planned events the event programme or schedule is generally planned in detail and well publicized in advance.*” (Getz 2012; 37). It means that an event should have its start and end. It is temporary incident and it should be planned in advance.

Berridge (2007) found that the two earliest academic writers who gave definitions of event are Getz and Goldblatt (1991). They said that events are unusual from ordinary day and they would not happen regularly. Events are the chance for relaxation and occasion for people to

go outside and do different activities from their normal routines.

Since definitions from Getz and Glodblatt in the early 1990s, there are many writers who wrote about definitions of events. While, Bowdin et al (2011) found that The Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX) Industry Glossary of term (CIC, 2005) describes event as a set up phenomenon like meeting, exhibition, gala dinner, and so on. Event has to be a planned before the day of the event.

Bladen et al (2012) say that there are many definitions of event presented by different authors like Getz and Glodblatt; but they define events as they are temporary and they are reasons why people are together. This is mean that events are not permanent and people meet there for the same objectives, like people are at the concert to watch their favourite band perform on the stage, etc.

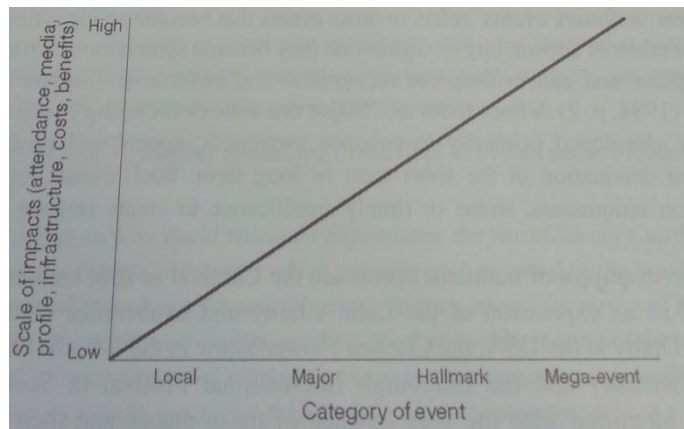
As there are various definitions from many authors, those definitions are defined in the same directions as events are unique and planned, while they are temporary.

## **2.2 Type of Events**

There are various types of events. Van Der Wagen and Carlos and Getz (2005; 2007) indicate many different types of events such as sport events, entertainment, arts and cultural events, commercial marketing and promotional events, festivals, fundraising events, carnival, heritage commemorations, parades and processions, religious events, political and state events, performing arts, literature, visual arts, meeting and conventions, exhibitions, fairs, education and scientific events, recreational events, private events, flash mobs, protests, and miscellaneous events. As there are various types of events, there is also many ways to classify types of events. Events can be classified either by size or form and content. To classify events by the dimension,

they can be called as major events, mega-events, hallmark events and local or community events.

In Figure 1, it is a figure to help classify type of event by size and impact. The size of impact in the figure is include attendance, media, profile, infrastructure, costs and benefits, which the smallest size is a local event, which owned by community like a family event, and the biggest size of event is called mega-event, which is the event that effect to international media as Olympics and World cup (Bowdin et al 2011).



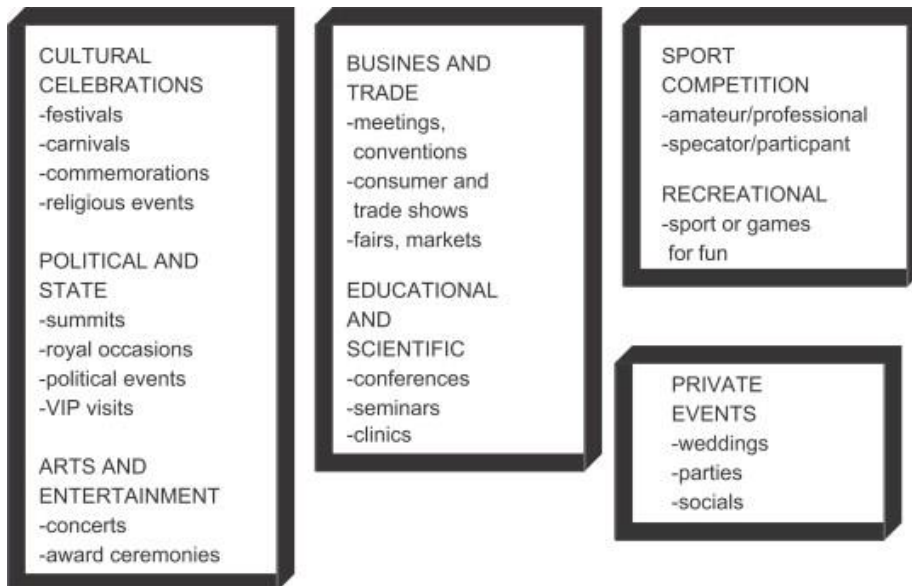
**Figure 1: Categorization of event**

Source: Bowdin et al. (2011)

Another way to classify events is by form and content. It means that events can be categorised by purpose of event such as festival, conference, exhibition, sport events and so on (Bowdin2011). Figure 2 is a figure from Getz (2005) which shows events that ground on their form with difference purposes. They might be public ceremony, while other events are planned, which their main objectives are entertainment, competition, business, fun or socialising. They often need an extra feature, and the managers of those features, for example like meeting centres

and sport stadiums. Those might need to aim their specific types of events. Professional associations and career paths have originally been linked to these types of events (Getz 2008).

**Figure 2: Typology of Events**



Source: Getz 2005 (cited Getz 2008)

### 2.2.1 Festivals

Berridge (2007) mentioned that festival is a cultural ceremony. It might relate to religious, set up by local in those areas. It can be set up alone or in associate with other events. Some festivals consist of bringing supplier and dealer concurrently in the festival. Bladen et al. (2012) also support that festival is an event that related to culture or local histories in each area.

According to Arcodia & Whitford (2013), festivals are the celebrations of something that local residents want to share to others and also want them to experience those celebrations. Festivals must have as an objective to persuade a maximum amount of people participation, which must be an experience that is different from ordinary day. It can be a day event or more than that, and it is often economically likeable.



All these definitions suggest that festivals are beneficial for society as well as country because it facilitate business along with social solidarity. In this way, festivals are also good for maintaining cultural and traditional background of a country

### **2.2.2 Hallmark Events**

While Hall (1989) defines that hallmark events can refer to mega or special events, which can be sport events, expositions, fairs, cultural and festival events. Ritchie (1984 cited Hall 1989, p.263) mentioned the definition of hallmark events as an important one-time or repeated event that happen in limited period, industrialized originally improve the consciousness, attract and capability to the host destination in either short or long period of time. A hallmark event is a significant event that promotes the national and international image and reputation of the destination (Berridge 2007). Those hallmark events are depending on achievements and uniqueness of those events that can gain people's attention. Getz (2007) suggested that hallmark events are related to culture, reputation, ability and promotion, which are every useful for the host area of that event.

## **2.3 Event Effects**

### **2.3.1 Macroeconomic effects in the short and long term**

A festival causes two types of economic effects: short-term and long-term effects (Connell & Page, 2005). The short-term benefits are primarily the outcome of spending of visitors and organisers during the planning and organisation of the festival. These expenses represented a net injection into the local economy, stimulating production or promoting job creation. However, these effects are temporary: they generally found that the level of economic activity returns to its initial low level of time after completion of the manifestation (Connell & Page, 2005).

Festivals, however, can exert long-lasting effects (or long term) in leading to a permanent

increase in the level of economic activity of the city or the host region. This can result, for example, improving knowledge of the region with the extensive media coverage that accompanies major sporting festivals (Connell & Page, 2005). This helps to promote the growth of tourism sector in the host region. Construction and improvement of general infrastructure - roads, telecommunications etc. are accompanying the organisation of festivals and also have an impact in the long run on the local economy, through improved accessibility and reducing the cost of communications (Connell & Page, 2005). It is for organiser of the regions to implement strategies to maximize the long-term benefits (and not short-term) arising from the festivals.

### **2.3.2 Tangible and intangible effects**

The benefits and costs caused by festival facilities set the tangible and intangible effects of festivals. Note that this distinction concerns the real effects. The costs and materials benefits have a specific value in a market, unlike the intangible costs and benefit, for which there is no market. Thus, the cost of building festival facilities are classified since the material costs are sanctioned by a set price on a market - that of the construction or capital goods (Dwyer et al, 2005). The negative impact of festival include the degradation of the natural landscape subsequent to the organisation of festival does not have a fixed value in market. Indeed, the natural heritage is not the subject of market transactions (Dwyer et al, 2005). Violations of the environment, however, correspond to a real cost that is integrated into the decision to hold the festival. So the absence of prices that distinguishes benefits and material costs and intangible costs. However, there are various techniques to assign a monetary value to them (Dwyer et al. 2005).

The short-term effects are generally measured using income multipliers or employment. In the case of festival, include material benefit as additional profits by companies in the host region

- or producer surplus in the economic sense. Material costs are for example the costs of organising the event or the construction and operation of facilities (Daniels et al. 2004).

Intangible benefits consist in particular of pleasure experienced by spectators, the pride felt by the inhabitants of the city or host region or improvement of the image of the region (Dwyer et al. 2005). The intangible costs include the damage to the natural environment (pollution, destruction of resources, degradation of landscapes) or nuisance imposed on the resident population (noise, congestion etc.) (Jura Consultants. 2006). These intangible benefits and costs involve a modification of well-being of the community. As such, they should be given a monetary value, so it can be incorporated into the decision to organise a festival.

### **2.3.3 Cost**

The costs and benefits of the organisers of festivals are essentially financial (Daniels et al, 2004). As for benefits, the first category is revenue related to the organisation of the event (operating revenue). The majority of it results from tourists and broadcasting rights granted to various national and international media channels (Jura Consultants, 2006). They also include product sales of official merchandise.

Regarding costs, it is necessary to distinguish between operating costs and infrastructure costs. The first include all current expenses related to the organisation of a festival. The latter include construction costs and improving facilities supported by the organisers. In operation costs are, for example, the costs of promotion and advertising expenses, administrative and management costs associated with the establishment of a security system or transport costs and accommodation. Among the infrastructure costs include the costs of construction of temporary facilities (Jura Consultants, 2006).

If revenues exceed operating and infrastructure costs, organisers make a profit. As part of a cost-benefit analysis, it corresponds to a surplus indicates that from the point of view of the organisers, it is appropriate to organise the event (Jura Consultants, 2006). To judge the overall profitability of the project, it should however to establish a balance of costs and benefits for the other two groups, namely visitors and society as a whole.

#### **2.3.4 Image and Reputation Effect**

The organisation of a festival allows the host region to benefit from a positive economic impact in the long term due to the large media coverage that accompanies it. This allows the organising city or region a large number of people in most countries. The festival becomes a unique opportunity to discover a city or region. It is indeed a very effective vehicle for communication and is used by host cities or regions as a true instrument of advertising (Lim & Lee, 2006). The numerous articles and reports devoted to the event and, indirectly, to the host region or coverage through national and international radio and television media allow it to have broad visibility. The coverage is then similar to advertising campaign to publicize a city or a region and promote the growth of the tourism sector. The advertising impact is the main long-term benefit of a festival. The picture effect may even extend beyond the tourism sector and promote the development of new industrial and commercial activities in the host region (Lim & Lee, 2006).

Advertising reveals the new investment opportunities to entrepreneurs and encourages business location. If the image effect is undoubtedly an important aspect of the host regions and in particular, for their tourism sector should be interpreted with caution link of media coverage and tourists. Festivals allow a large number of people aware of the existence of the host region with the extensive media coverage that accompanies it (Lim & Lee, 2006). It is not certain that

this awareness will result in a significant increase in tourism.

#### **2.4 Event impacts**

Every event has its own impacts (Hall 1997 cited by Sharpley and Stone 2011). Sharpley & Stone (2011) said that all events have their own purpose and it is very normal that most of academic researches of event industry are normally concern about event impact. Pearce & Butler (1995) state that impacts are commonly effects in either positive or negative ways to something or someone. The examination of many perspectives of this influence is significant for understanding the activity widely. When the outcomes of the activity are known and thoroughly considered, it is easier to analyse its advantages and disadvantages then make a decision what measures to take. The activity may need to support the positive impacts prevail, while the negative impacts should be controlled (Dana, 1999).

Tassiopoulos & Johnson (2009) also support that every events impact society in both good and bad ways. Events are one of the most important factors to the economy. However, they are also important to socio-cultural, environment and politics as well. Moufakkir & Kelly (2010) found that to identifying event impact is depending on how the manager conduct and stage the events in different ways, and argued that there are six different impacts for event which are economic, physical, socio-cultural, psychological, political and environmental.

Moufakkir & Kelly (2010) said that there are some experts who suggest that the successful events are depending on the measurement of their economic abilities of the events' stakeholders, the host destination areas. These authors also show the current research about positive ways of socio-cultural and psychological impacts of events that focused on the chances of societies and guests that associate and enjoyed, then keeping in touch and develop the connections. There are also other impacts that can be used to develop host community pride, improve traditional culture

and attitudes of people in that local area, as well as their faiths and values. Moreover, events can have a huge impact on intercultural study, and also public and health attractiveness. This is the important reason for knowing the main impacts especially for events; it is one of the most considerable ways to improve the proper tactic to sustaining the advantage for the host destination (Moufakkir & Kelly, 2010).

Bowdin et al (2011) stated that events have various kinds of impacts in both positive and negative ways toward the host and stakeholders. It is an event manager, organiser and all presenters' responsibility to recognise and assume the impacts of their events and prepare for the upcoming impacts and deal with it to get the best results for the event, so the manager will receive the positive impacts for their overall event. To get the best result for the event, the event manager should know all possible impacts so the manager can improve the predictable positive impacts, while can also obstruct all the negative impacts.

There were many theoretical frameworks about event impacts that focused on many different things (Bourdieu 1973 cited by Andersson & Lundberg, 2013). According to Andersson & Lundberg (2013) "event impact is how to give priority to or depreciation of social, economic, environmental and human principals" (pg. 34).

Cultural events have on the local and regional development an impact not only cultural but also economic and social importance. From these cultural events, festivals play a key role. These cultural festivals mobilize substantial budgets and attract a large audience towards the country (Uriely et al, 2002). On the one hand, festivals contribute to the cultural development of human communities in which they occur (Barrow, 2000). Moreover, festivals provide hundreds of thousands of people the opportunity to get their earnings (Barrow, 2000). Festivals can

undoubtedly attract many spectators who would, perhaps, never come to attend this type of representation. Similarly, their exceptional character to organise in places even relatively populated, shows the ordinary court elite, such as contemporary music, and thus to provide a new public performances traditionally available only in the big cities (Boyko, 2008).

On the other hand, some festivals are involved in economic and social development of communities that host them. In many cases, they raise or support the economic development; for example through tourism development. However, it is important to note that Tourism development (integral) i.e. all activities related to event management of a particular area requires the interaction of a number of agents or actors: coastal towns, inland towns, population of nuclei receptors, government agents / promoters of tourism and, finally, users of the holiday experience (Daniels, 2007). All of them, in their interaction, generate some economic revitalization of really complex socio- cultural and environmental processes. In this context, there is no doubt that the perceptions and attitudes of residents towards the impact of tourism should be considered in studies of tourism policy planning (Ap, 1992; Mason & Cheyn, 2000).

#### **2.4.1 Economic impacts**

Oldenboom (2006) found that economic impacts of events are mainly about the further continuous spending of the economic on the local areas. It is found that the payouts by local people cannot be inspected as supplementary as the assets are changed from a local area with others. Furthermore, events have a huge impact on the difference types of local business, which may consist of hotels, restaurants, and transportation.

Bowdin et al (2011) suggested that economic impacts are the basic concern for event manager and organisation. One of the most important factors for economic impacts is tourism. It helps to increase economic growth and career benefits for the host area, as guests are normally

spend their money for travelling around, accommodations and shopping around in the event area.

Bladen et al, (2012) found that economic impacts assessments are the factors that government used to decide the investment to support the event industry, such as the construction of the conference centre and other event venues. Morgan & Condliffe (2006 cited Bladen et al. 2012) defined the three steps to improve the method of the economic impacts evaluation. First, it is the step to define where to hold the event. Second, choose the related business to relate with the issue to collect the data, for example, choose construction business to collect data about the investments in the construction. Finally, collect the data from the business in the second step. With the three steps earlier, they can use to predict the economic impacts for the events.

Wyludda (2009) found that the economic causes on the nation are essentially visible causes, as they can be tested correctly. For those famous events that can allure lots of participants, they are having positive economic consequences to host destination and communities, as those visitors are pleased to spend their money on other services, such as accommodations, food, shopping, and other activities in those areas. The main cause is events have their potential to attract lots of visitors when they want to have foreigners, financial aids or sponsorships either in direct or indirect purpose. Nowadays, many events are found on the long-lived and extremely valued by greater number of event organisers, community's proxies and government, as the economic sustainability they create for the society through event tourism (Raj & Musgrave, 2009).

Pruess (2007), one of the well-known academic writers about economic impacts, defined that majority of politician wanted to host the major event, as it will attract lots of visitors to the area and those people will spend their money to the related local business and event. After the



event, it also helps to increase the future tourism in that host destination. It is essential to evaluate the number of visitors in economic impact, so that can help to evaluate the overall spending for that event. Moreover, Pruess (2006) suggested that events are usually analyse economic impact because economic impacts are visible and they are the reasons for government to spend on the limited public supplies in events. The basic method of analysing economic impacts is to define the fiscal inflow from visitors of that area as an impact of that event. That impact is basically relevant to tourists' spending that related to the event (Andersson & Lundberg, 2013).

The economy and trade are not the only beneficiaries, although profits matter. The integration of the festival celebration in the social life operates through consequences of new behaviours. The fight against exclusion by the integration of young people also requires desired and organised collective action both through educational and formative playful participation (Barrow 2000). A successful festival may be the detonator of any range of municipal activities open to youth, or operations of introduction to culture and cultural action in schools and universities. From there, the big names of the scene and staging were given the task of animating volunteer workshops, dance, theatre, jazz, open to young people who have never approached such opportunity which was reserved for professionals or privileged. They are able to create in the spontaneous, improvised groups. Some, for their enthusiasm, originality, drawn from their social condition itself so by invention of their creativity, professionalism and approach even made their way into the profession.

#### **2.4.1.1 Costs and benefits to society**

The organisation of a festival brings benefits but also imposes costs to society. Among the benefits include improved productivity factors of production of the host region and the effect of

image and reputation. The establishment of a major event can develop in the area of skills and new skills in many areas (tourism, computer industry etc.). These effects are accompanied by an improvement in the organisation and processes of production techniques as well as the skill level of the workforce (Daniels 2004). The results therefore increase the productivity of labour and capital.

The improvement of transport infrastructure that accompanies the organisation of a major event also allows, through better access to the region and a decrease in transport costs, increase productivity (Daniels 2004). The second type of benefit is the effect of image and reputation associated with festivals. This latter benefit is from extensive media coverage to publicize the host city or region in the world. The media effect is akin to a form of indirect advertising campaign for the city or region. Demonstrations of festivals, therefore, is very effective means of communication for a region, the tourism industry will be the first to benefit.

One final benefit is the prestige and reputation of festival. Millions of people help to develop a sense of pride among the population of the host region. The translation into monetary terms of pleasure and pride felt by individuals is certainly difficult, but economic theory has appropriate evaluation methods. The first category of cost is the damage caused to the natural environment; the second is related to the phenomenon of network transport congestion (Daniels, 2004). The latter concern of the infrastructure costs is borne by the government. The damage includes the destruction of ecosystems at major work. Finally, the same sequence of event causes damage to the natural environment - waste or air pollution, for example - and the quality of life of resident populations – sound pollution. Although environmental characteristics have no market value, they not contribute as much to the well- being of individuals. Therefore, it should be integrated into cost-benefit analysis the damage imposed by the festival to the natural

environment.

The second type of cost incurred is linked to the phenomenon of congestion accompanies the festival. The influx of visitor causes saturation of transport routes, resulting in lost time and increase in the number of accidents (Gossling et al. 2005).

These damages must be included in the cost-benefit analysis. Some of the costs associated with the construction of facilities are supported by organisers. However, public authorities are also involved in their financing. They also support the development of general infrastructure costs -new roads access, improved telecommunications systems, modernization of airports, etc. These investments, financed by the budget of public authorities of the host region are borne ultimately by the taxpayers. They are the costs to society. If benefits exceed costs, the festival resulted in increased well -being of the community. Otherwise, the establishment of this event led to the loss to society (Gossling et al. 2005).

The diversity of the effects of a major event like Songkran festival makes the cost-benefit analysis very complex. In particular, the valuation of intangible effects raises many difficulties (Getz. 2005). Since the analysis can lead to a negative conclusion, the organisers of the festival prefer to highlight the short-term benefits only, through studies of the macroeconomic impact and the results are always positive. It is probably for these reasons that the cost-benefit analysis applied to major events are not many. In most cases, the evaluation is only a few costs and benefits.

#### **2.4.1.2 Total Economic Value**

The total economic value is divided into use and non-use of value. Direct use of value is related to the direct use of natural resources (Crompton, 2006). The indirect use value is linked to the benefits derived from the indirect use of natural resources (pleasure associated with the use

of environment). The natural heritage features a value for individuals who do not wish to use it immediately, directly or indirectly, but want to save this option later (option value). The benefit is that the natural heritage still exists when the individual exercises this option.

The value of non-use of property includes the heritage value and existence value. One is the value assigned by an individual to the preservation of natural resources for transmission to future generations. The second is not related to any use present and future of the natural environment. The individual gives a value at its sole existence.

Damage to the natural heritage is immediate costs – impairment use - or future to be taken into account in the decision to hold festival demonstrations (Crompton, 2006). Their establishment should be part of the logic of sustainable development, that the immediate benefits should not be achieved at the expense of future generations. The difficulty is that environmental characteristics are not the subject of commercial transactions and therefore does not have a price.

#### **2.4.2 Environmental impacts**

It is essential to consider the impact of weather because environment greatly influences the activities of an event. Therefore, it is necessary to carefully consider potential environmental impacts while coordination of event.

Bowdin et al (2011) defined that environment is the factor that should also concerned about, as most of the major events are also demand an environmental impact assessment before starting the production. Bladen et al (2012) defined environment as a natural and physical appearances, and for events the environment is an essential section for event industry. It is about the evaluation of the nature around the venue, which include the construction facilities, wastes and pollutions in the area. Every event has environmental impacts.

David (2009) said that environmental impacts appear in event industry either in direct or indirect ways. People are the main factor that makes environmental impacts while they are travelling. This is including all kind of pollutions, decreasing of natural supplies and also the changing in basic natural structure. Environmental impacts can happen by people, as they could make all air pollution with their transportations, noise pollution, or even about food supplies and water intake.

Environmental impact has not been seen much in event industry's researches for many years, but there is more and more research in environmental impact today. Environmental impact is usually shows the evaluation of the uses of natural resources like land, water and air. One of them well known environmental issue is the use of carbon dioxide, which can lead to greenhouse effect and can define as one of the adverse environmental impacts of the event (Anderson & Lundberg 2013).

Cultural events and festivals are a major economic and social phenomenon. This has necessitated the consideration of the environment in the festival. Indeed, as the festival occupies a small area, environmental issues do not really become part of the culture of responsible movement. However, with the decision of growing awareness of limited natural resources, a discussion is gradually developed to integrate environmental considerations into the sphere of festivals. The organisation of events and festivals are more important for the natural heritage. With regard to major events and festivals, we can identify related nuisances of spectators - waste, trampling - or competitors - noise, erosion etc. But the most important are related to the construction of facilities and general will associated with the organisation of any major event (degradation of landscapes, destruction of ecosystems). Given the magnitude of these phenomena and the increasing sensitivity of population, the different actors in the sports world

have taken a number of measures to integrate environmental issues in the organisation of events.

The use of transport infrastructure is not constant over time. In large cities, peak is observed corresponding to the movement of commuting between their home and their workplace (Rietveld & Bruinsma 1998). A similar phenomenon appears at holiday time on the roads to the resorts. The capacity of transport infrastructure is fixed in the short term, it generally results in a saturation phenomenon - or congestion - of the network. Congested transport corridors involve significant costs: loss of time for users, increased consumption of fuel, increased risk of accidents and increased air pollution.

According to the terminology adopted above, there are external costs imposed by additional users on all users of the transportation system. The organisation of major events also causes congestion phenomena. Despite the improvement in infrastructure that supports the development of these events, transport networks are generally insufficient to meet the increased visitor's traffic (Rietveld & Bruinsma, 1998). This gives a significant cost to the community - loss of time, increased costs of vehicle use, quality degradation of air - which should be taken into account in the evaluation. These phenomena have prompted the organisers to implement effective systems for visitors' transport to minimise congestion costs.

Aware of the fact that life in a modern society inevitably causes significant ecological footprint, festival organisers have made a firm determination to assess their environmental impact and make decisions and measures to reduce and compensate (Gossling et al, 2005). Some initiatives that have been undertaken in this direction for the festival have confirmed that with will and resources, it is possible to achieve good results in reducing environmental impact. The actions in the use of more sustainable materials, to increase collection and recycling and

reducing greenhouse gases, as well as the inventory, among others, are thus a part of the organisation and logistics festival.

### **2.4.3 Socio-cultural Impacts**

Bladen et al. (2012) said that there are less studies on social impacts comparing with other impacts but most of the events are related with social and culture. Evaluations of social impacts are normally using the perception of the participants. In general, although the socio-cultural impacts are numerous and varied, most of them can be classified into ten major topics: community involved in a larger system, the nature of interpersonal relations, the basis of social organisation (sexual and generational composition, change the size and type of family, transforming an urban to rural population, etc.), the pace of social life (daily life), migration, division of work and the type of occupation (increased demand for female labour force), stratification (both work and social), the distribution of power, misuse of customs and art.

Andersson & Lundberg (2013) found that socio-cultural impact is how local residents evaluate advantages and disadvantages toward the event. This can express that it depends on local people's perception to define impact of each event. However, Janeczko et al (2002) suggested that the negative socio-cultural impacts can create bad experiences to participants and this will create the negative image for the event and can be harm to the future of the event and local community.

Historically, the attitude of access to culture was preserved for the privileged classes. On the other hand, consciously or unconsciously, it remains in the back thoughts of many artists and creators, this principle they would transcend, the implementation, the staging of "make visible" is a gift of the same free creation. The cost, as the operating balance would be a constraint that threatens the power of creation itself. Local communities are discreet and prudent

when it comes to give publicity to a balance sheet. It does not take effect in this area off standard. But now the culture has a dual intellectual and economic dimension. The sociologist, economist - or designers or artists, or local authorities know that today each local event requires rigorous investigation on economic and social grounds.

The basic impact of a successful cultural festival is an effect on image and reputation that gives a spotlight to a city or region (Dwyer et al. 2000). But cultural action seen in the environment is not a free and inconsequential event. The media success of national and international reputations of festivals, is also witnessing a reversal of the founding process. For a city, the fallout may outweigh the first cultural interest. But without the existence and originality of creation, its artistic value, the process would be ridiculous.

The effects produced by the organisation of cultural festivals accompanied by media coverage which, if any, may be considerable (Keogh 1990). "International Film Festival de Cannes" has popularised the city to the world. The Lorient Inter-Celtic Festival attracts not only visitors of the Celtic countries, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Galicia but are also those that come with regularity like Quebec or Australia among others. Many festivals are organised in small towns or even in simple villages contributed to the reputation of places where they were held. This ability of cultural events to attract media attention, demonstrates the extraordinary resonance that give them information. This success is certainly due in part to the legitimate interest of media culture; but probably it is also a lot of character of festivals which are particularly well suited to the needs of modern media.

This reputation brought by a festival is all the more interesting for affected communities it tends to give them a positive dynamic and festive image of a cultural city. Local elected officials



have understood this characteristic and many of them supported events whose principal purpose was to provide the largest number of high quality performances that enhance the identity and image of their city.

Cultural events play a prominent social role in cities in which they occur, most with a regional or local public majority. The role of local animation is tenfold in the case of synergy caused by a partnership with other cultural activities, for example, some ongoing activities of a city, including its music conservatories. Cultural and semi-religious festivals like Songkran of Thailand, do not stand whole year-round, unlike the "seasons" of permanent cultural organisations, but are "moments" that should not be missed, their off-site conduct drive to bring down the barrier that separates value by usual lack or used by too many people.

As noted by Harril (2004), despite the growing interest in the subject only a few articles on this area have found their way into tourism planning journals (Harril and Potts 2003; Inskeep, 1988; Loannides 1995; Marcouiller 1997; 1995) and books are also scarce (Bosselman et al. 1999; Gunn 1994; Hall 2000). However, in general, the impact of festivals is positive on tourism. There is no shortage of examples of this mutual influence. A large number of tourists attend the cultural festival. Tourists, attracted by cultural event, sometimes choose to extend their stay beyond the duration thereof. They can, on the occasion of their visit, to discover the places and decide to go back there next year, including out of the festival season. Cultural festival, thus, constitute a new customer, which in many cases would not frequently visit the area. The festivals have also the advantage of seeing their content to renew every year. Therefore, they can attract more times the same audience. They have time to focus on places where the festival takes place. In other cases, the organisation of cultural festivals designed to attract less additional tourists to offer a service which is an attraction more in a room (Richards and Wilson 2004). This

animation is likely to increase satisfaction of local tourists and thereby encourage them to return the following year. The importance of linkages between tourism and cultural festivals and increasing professionalism of the organisation of festivals explain marketing of tourism products through various intermediaries (Johnson et al, 1994).

Cultural festivals generate employment. The employment generated by the festival is not limited in areas related to cultural festival activity but also in other areas. These jobs are diverse in nature, but also by their structure. Many are seasonal, some are created part-time, some are clearly required by the entertainment industry and finally, there are subsidized jobs. Often these jobs benefit the local economy (Jura Consultants, 2006). Many industries benefit through festivals that also generates permanent and temporary jobs. Such industries are;

- Hotels;
- Restoration;
- Transport;
- Cleaning companies or security;
- Food and trade in general;
- The area of health and social work;
- Post Office;
- Telecom (Jura Consultants 2006);
- Socio-cultural associations that are involved in the entourage of festival etc.

It is however difficult to grasp accurately and without error the real value of these related jobs because of valuation methods used, one based on the magnitude of the induced activities, on the other observation of potential employers. In addition, spending festival or actors who are responsible for these job creations involved in a wider geographical area than the city, under whose limits are difficult to define precisely (Jura Consultants, 2006). On the other hand, the sectors in which the festival performs their expenses are very diverse. Identify the job requires then induced systematic observation of the labour market and in the completeness of identification of sectors involved. Finally, many "odd jobs" are also developing. This makes possible a whole parallel economy to develop and therefore, induced impacts are likely to be underestimated.

So overall, the festivals have important social, economic and cultural impacts on society whose beneficiaries are both public and private. Communities see their strong reputation, traders their sales and business improved. Employment is confirmed, valued community life, tourism developed. Festivals support cultural development and are factor of social cohesion. All this attests to the health of a new born and economy nourishing cultural life (Jura Consultants 2006). Additional measures are needed to provide support to these festivals and increase their impact on local development. They pass including a better understanding of cultural events and their impact through better coordination between them as festivals with other types of cultural activities and support for strengthened and modernized cultural events.

Insofar as it relates to many events, miscellaneous, occasional and sometimes ephemeral, the festival area is probably more difficult than others to be known and studied rigorously. However, it seems necessary to better assess the significance of festival of Songkran occurs in Thailand, because it mobilizes significant public funds and is a vector of importance of

increasing cultural and economic policy. Moreover, Cultural activities, like any other economic activity, are generators that create added value and occupation, with a growing contribution in the development of the most advanced economies and can positively contribute to the development of other sectors, as given very significantly in the case of tourism, festivals and cultural industries. This empirical research is plated through Social Impact Analysis generating a cultural festival in a Thailand multicultural city. Has selected a festival for the capabilities that have the means to generate direct involvement with the audience and has selected the city, by socio-demographic change that it has experienced in recent years. One of the keys to this methodological research has been the Festival selection analysed. This festival was selected to present from a broad cultural region and represent part of the population newcomer to the city. Similarly, it was considered that its festival representation and projection in not only represent a minority.

## **2.5 Understanding Socio-Cultural Impacts**

Before going further, understanding socio-cultural impacts is the necessary for analysing impacts of event. Bladen et al. (2012) suggested that event impacts could separate into three groups as personal impacts, external impacts and organisational impacts. People could get positive or negative experiences in each event. For positive experience, it can describe that participants enjoy with what their first expected with the event. It can also mean that the event change their attitude toward the event in a better ways. On the other hand, the negative experiences are described as participants don't satisfy with the event and they don't want to continue or attend the event again.

There are several methods to define positive and negative impacts for events. Most of authors define positive and negative impacts for each kind of impact into table. Different authors

may have different ideas for impacts, but there are also many authors that have similar idea about impacts for event. Most of them consist of all kind of impact, such as, socio-cultural, environment, political and economic impacts. The table below gathers only the positive and negative impacts of event from many authors. The theoretical discussion about the economic and cultural globalization is an ongoing debate that takes place within a continuum going from the logic of economic rationality to the cultural progressivism of society, given the profound implications of the globalization phenomenon in the identity complexity and education of the individual. In this frame of reference epistemic this scientific article which was proposed as a central objective, generate some reflections on economic globalization and its socio-cultural implications in Thailand is located. For this purpose, a model supported by the qualitative research paradigm, based on a literature interpretive documentary theoretical design as a way of approaching the phenomenon investigated was employed. For the development of documentary analysis, from a critical perspective interpretation, referral to the hermeneutic method, which is assumed to be a reflective process based on the interpretation and analysis of textual discourse. Some of the most important conclusions of the article has to modernity as civilizational paradigm assumed the term economic globalization as a model to relate man to market production of goods and services, which is in crisis and with it culture.

This table can use to measure whether any impacts are positive or negative by compare the impact with the table below.

**Table 1: The impacts of events**

**Table 1: The impacts of events**

Impact of events	Positive impacts	Negative impacts
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<p>Social and cultural</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renew the traditional culture</li> <li>• Community improvement</li> <li>• Community Pride</li> <li>• Increase educational and cultural understanding</li> <li>• Support of tolerance and diversity</li> <li>• Support local trade</li> <li>• Develop value of life</li> <li>• Protect the local culture</li> <li>• Help to develop relationship between residents and visitors</li> <li>• Showcase effect</li> <li>• Stimulus for community revolution</li> <li>• Long-term promotional benefits</li> <li>• Increased employment opportunities</li> <li>• Shared experience</li> <li>• Validation of community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community alienation</li> <li>• Manipulation of community</li> <li>• Negative community image</li> <li>• Bad behavior</li> <li>• Substance abuse</li> <li>• Social dislocation</li> <li>• Loss of amenity</li> <li>• Future use of infrastructure not maximised</li> <li>• Interruption of normal business</li> <li>• Resident exodus</li> <li>• Media impacts</li> <li>• Community apathy and antagonism</li> <li>• Increased risk of security Issue</li> <li>• Unequal distribution of wealth</li> </ul>
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	<p>groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased community participation</li> <li>• Introduction of new and challenging ideas</li> <li>• Expansion of cultural perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal issue in the society</li> <li>• Disturbance to residents' routines</li> <li>• Habits changing</li> <li>• Lack of community ownership</li> <li>• Prostitution</li> <li>• Traffic jam</li> <li>• Disregard of civic rights and liberties</li> <li>• Anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Decreasing of tourism growth</li> <li>• Drug</li> <li>• Environmental issues</li> </ul>
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**Source:** Adapted by author (2013) from Aas (2005), Brown (2003), McIntosh et al. (2002), Allen et al. (2005), Reid (2008), and Wood et al. (2006), Hall (1989), Musgrave and Raj (2009), Allen et al. (2011), Bowdin et al. (2011) and Ferdinand and Kitchin (2012).

In this table, it shows that the good point of event or festival, such as it can extend or continue the traditional culture, make local residents proud of their area, make local people be in unity by working together, get new experiences, get to know more people from different areas, make the traditional culture to be known, entertain people, encourage people to accept others'

ideas, help enlarge business in local area, improve local residents' life and develop the community. However, event can also create bad images to the area, make local residents move away from the area, make people behave badly, change the purpose of the traditional culture, create internal issues, change local residents' routines, exploit local business, increase the number of prostitution, make traffic problem, decrease the attractiveness of the area, decrease the ownership of the area, create media impacts, increase the dangerous issues, drugs, damage environment and increase the number of litter. It is event manager's matter to control and analyse event impacts to improve negative impacts and develop positive impact for their future events.

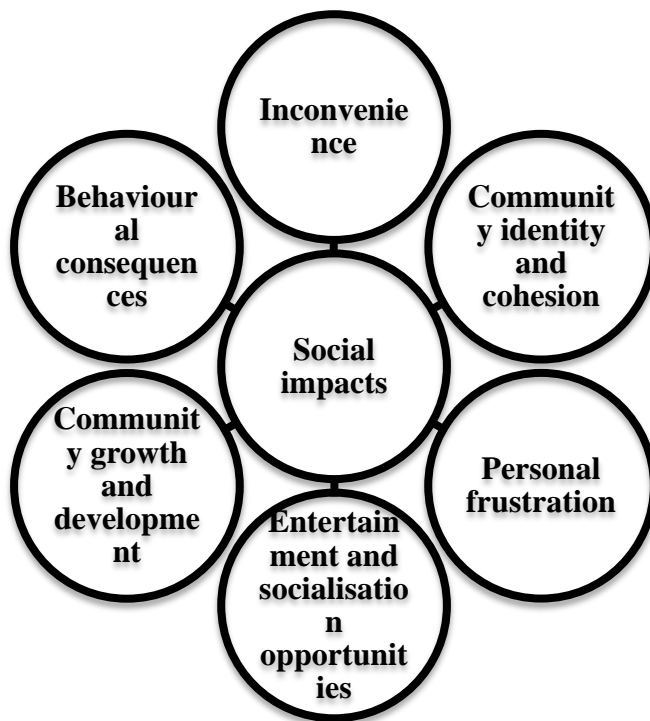


Figure 3: Small's Social Impact Model

Source: Small (2007, p.48)



There is another method that use to define impact of events. It is called Small's social impact model (Figure 3). As the figure, this model from Small is mainly concentrated on the social impact assessment of festivals and on the evaluation of the local residents' perspective of the important social-cultural impacts of events. Society-based events have a gigantic impact on social and cultures of the host area (Small 2005).

## **2.6 Socio-Cultural impacts of Songkran Festival in Thailand**

### **2.6.1 Effects of Songkran Festival in Thailand**

Songkran Festival is one of the most important events in Thailand, so there are many effects of this event. Firstly, Songkran Festival is known as Thai's New Year, which people are normally celebrated annually during 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> April. It is long holidays that normally gather all family members together. This period of each year defines as a family event, as on the 13<sup>th</sup> April is the New Year day and a national elderly day, while the 14<sup>th</sup> is defined as Thai's National Family Day. The National Family Day was first set up since 1991. In 1982, the government first announced the 13<sup>th</sup> April as a National Elderly Day in Thailand (The Government Public Relations Department 2008; Ministry of Education ca.2012; Department of Cultural Promotion ca.2012). However, there is a disagreement that about 80% of Thai people has no idea about Thai's Family and Elderly Day (Kom Chad Luek Online 2013)

Secondly, Songkran Festival is an event that happened since from the past period and it still continue in present time. This event truly defines Thai's traditional life style that can pass to the next generation. People have many choices of traditional activities to celebrate this event. They are going to the temple for many traditional purposes such as make merit, bathing the Buddha statue or the monk by Thai's traditional fragrant called Narm-Ob, build the sand stupas at the temples. People do these activities because they believe that they are good to start the New

Year with these good activities. These activities are for people who want to pay respect to Buddha. There are also other activities for Songkran Festival. There is bathing ceremony, this activity is to pour Narm-ob into parents or elderly relatives' hand to pay respect and ask for good blessing from them, and the most well know activities as Songkran's water fight.

The Songkran's water fight is an activity to tenderly splash the water to each other. For this activity, it usually appears everywhere in Thailand particularly in all main towns. All activities are mostly related to water, as Thai people believe that water can refresh their life by turning all bad into the better life on the New Year (National Culture Commission 2007, Tourism Authority of Thailand 2012).

Lastly, another positive impact for Songkran Festival is to increase the number of visitors in Thailand during this event. This is not just only for foreigner, but also includes Thai people that are travelling around during this period of time. Most of the major cities in Thailand hold Songkran Festival to attract visitors such as Bangkok and Chiang Mai. The Government of Thailand spent about 70 million baht or 1.4 million pound sterling to promote campaign for Songkran Festival in Thailand.

Bangkok and Chiang Mai are two of the most popular tourist attractions for foreigners. When it comes to Songkran Festival, they are even more attractive to visitors, which include foreigners and people from other cities in Thailand. There are celebrations in majority of the cities around the country and visitors are please to experience Songkran Festival once (Lauzon 2010).

Tourism Authority of Thailand (2013) found that the estimated number of domestic traveller is over 2 million and there is more than 600,000 foreigners come to Thailand during

Songkran Festival in 2013. Most of the accommodations in the major cities in Thailand such as Chiang Mai, Phuket and Hat Yai are fully booked. As well as the domestic travel, most of people leave their town to other cities in Thailand to celebrate their Songkran Festival. Tourism Authority of Thailand (2013) also shows the increasing number of visitors for all over country in 2013, it increased by almost 10% comparing with the number in 2012.

### **2.6.2 Negative impacts of Songkran Festival in Thailand**

Songkran Festival is just like other events. It also has several negative impacts. There are some crimes happened during this event, as some people celebrate this event with wrong purposes. As already mentioned before that Songkran Festival has an activity where people are tenderly splash water to each other and sometimes, people are also use talcum powder with water to politely touch on others' cheeks, but there are some people use talcum powder to touch women's chests, bottoms or other parts of their bodies, so these can becoming a sexual harassment problem for this event. Thaweessit & Boonmongkon (2010) found that there were almost 20% of women who ever joined this event had ever found themselves sexual harassment, so nowadays; there is some place that prohibit using talcum powder during this festival (Lauzon 2004).

Moreover, there are some group of people using high pressured water gun to play Songkran's water fight, while they supposed to use an ordinary water gun or a simple bucket of water. The high pressured water gun causes serious issues, as it can hurt other people. So the high pressured water gun was prohibited for Songkran Festival and illegal since 2003, according to Bangkok Post (2012). Alcohol is another issue for this event. As this is an event for celebration, some people use alcohol to celebrate and they get drunk and become violent. From this problem, some areas are promoted themselves as alcohol-free safety areas since 2005 to

decrease all issues that lead to violence (Dailychilli ca.2011; Suphisit ca.2011).

Alcohol not only leads towards violence, but it also leads to road accidents from drunk driving. Road accidents are one of the main problems in Thailand, which consist of drunk driving, speedy driving and non-seatbelt users. As Songkran Festival is long holiday, people set up their holiday by travelling around either by public transportation or private cars. According to this fact, the numbers of road accidents during Songkran Festival are more than other periods of time (Sivirojet *al.* 2012; Ponboon and Tanaboriboon 2005). There is a study about road accidents which depicts that numbers of people that get serious injuries is twice or thrice as compared to normal season.

However, the Thai government is trying to decrease this issue. As in UbonRatchathani, one of big cities in the north-east of Thailand with a population almost 2 million people, this city promoted Ubon Road as safety area to avoid or decrease the number of road accidents in UbonRatchathani during Songkran. This campaign cooperates with other related organisations decrease the road accidents in the area as much as possible (Saipan et al. 2010).

## **2.6 Summary**

One event can define as many types of event and Songkran can be both festival and hallmark event. As the definitions of festivals and hall events are quite similar to each other. Songkran can use either form or purpose of the event to classify its type of event. Songkran Festival can define as festival because it is a cultural ceremony for Thai's people. Moreover, Songkran festival can also be a hallmark event, because Songkran is a well-known national event that attract lots of tourists either foreigners or Thai people from other part of the country. It is one of the most significant events in Thailand that happened annually at the same period of time. Actually, hallmark events can refer to festivals as well.

One event can be more than one type of impacts. An event can involve with all economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts. Defining impact of event is depending on people's perception that they want to focus on economy, environment or social and culture perspective. However, this dissertation is mainly focusing on socio-cultural impacts. As this event is a festival, and as mentioned earlier that festival is a cultural celebration. It is directly impact on social and cultural. So the following topics will mainly concentrate with socio-cultural impacts.

For positive impacts, Songkran festival help to extend the culture of Songkran by continue celebrate Songkran festival in traditional ways like make merit and spend the time with traditional activities. Songkran festival is also an event to spend time with family and relatives. Most of people will go back to their hometown or travelling around with their family during Songkran festival. During Songkran festival period, there are also national family day and elderly day, so people can celebrate their holiday with their families. Moreover, Songkran festival is one of the huge events in Thailand, so there are many travellers travelling around Thailand to join the ceremony.

There are also negative impacts for Songkran festival. First, the major issue in Thailand during Songkran festival is the road accident. As most of the people will travel around and one of the way to transport around is by cars. This problem is including drunk drivers, non-seat belt users and high-speed drivers. Another positive impact is the bad behaviour from the participants. There are some problems from Songkran festival as sexual harassment to ladies, using high-pressured water gun and violence that cause from drunken people who join the event.

As Thai's government set up Thai's national family day and elderly day during Songkran holidays to let people spend their time with their families with various of activities. However,

there is a research show that about 80% of people didn't recognise those special days except Songkran festival. So this fact needs to be prove in this research as well.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The term methodology refers to how researcher approaches the problems and seeks the answers and how to conduct research. This chapter discusses in detail the steps undertaken to conduct the research study (Bryman, 2008) and to get the desired results of the study.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

The goal of any research is to acquire knowledge and choosing the right method that allows knowing the reality is therefore fundamental. The problem arises in accepting as true the erroneous knowledge or vice versa. Inductive and deductive methods have different goals and may be summarized as theory development and theory analysis respectively. Inductive methods are generally associated with qualitative research while the deductive method is often associated with quantitative research. Social scientists using qualitative approaches currently facing

epistemological and methodological problems have to do with power and ethics in data generation and external validity (Yin, 2004). In this research, the qualitative research approach is employed.

Quantitative research is one in which data are collected and analysed in quantitative variables. Qualitative research prevents quantification. Qualitative researchers make narrative records of the phenomena that are studied by techniques such as participant observation and interviews (May, 2001). The fundamental difference between the two methods is that quantitative studies are the association or relationship between quantified and qualitative variables in structural contexts. Qualitative research seeks to identify the deep nature of reality, the system of relationships, its dynamic structure (Peffer et al, 2007). Quantitative research seeks to determine the strength of association or correlation between variables, generalization and objectification of results through a sample to make inference to a population sample from which all proceeds. After the study of the association or correlation aims, in turn, make causal inference to explain why things happen or not in a particular way (May, 2001).

The fundamentals of quantitative methodology can be found in positivism that emerged in the first third of the nineteenth century as a reaction to the empiricism that was dedicated to collect data without introducing knowledge beyond the field of observation. In the early twentieth century, there is the logical positivism or being one of the most important contributions of probabilistic induction (Peffer et al, 2007).

### **3.3 Research Strategy**

For this particular research study, the researcher has chosen qualitative research methodology. For any researcher, it is important to identify the area of study and then determine

the analytical methodology employed. The qualitative analysis researchers give their priority value to understand the phenomena from a personal level understanding of the reasons and beliefs that are behind the actions of people. In contrast, the quantitative paradigm is a hypothetical -deductive, direct and objective method, which has an approach to the world of natural science (Neuman, 2007).

The use of the qualitative method has a better and more detailed perspective for this research because researchers are more in touch with the issue studied by following all necessary steps of qualitative research methodology particularly in data collection. The methodology is chosen according to the interest, problem or research question and the situation in which the project is to investigate. After the review of both the methodologies, the researcher has come to the conclusion that qualitative research methodology is the most appropriate methodology for information necessary to achieve the stated objectives of the research. The reasons for choosing to qualitative analysis as follows: first, it is that qualitative research produces descriptive data (words and behaviours of people, personal understanding, and approach to process discovery and attitudes proximity to the data) and, second, it gives a deep understanding and actual potential user (Silverman, 2005).

Researcher of this qualitative study is sensitive to the effects causes about the people who are the subject of study, trying to understand people within the framework or suspended and turn their beliefs, perspectives and predispositions. It is essential to experience the reality as others experience. For researcher all perspectives are valuable and emphasizes on the validity in his research (Ruane, 2004).



Broadly speaking, qualitative methodology could be defined as research that produces descriptive data: the words of the people, spoken or written and observable behaviour.

Qualitative research is inductive can also be deductive as you have prior knowledge through undertaking a literature review, so researchers must understand and develop concepts based on patterns in the data and not collecting data to assess preconceived hypotheses or theories.

Qualitative method allows to know the look of personal inner life, perspectives, beliefs, concepts, successes and failures, moral struggle, efforts etc. It ensures a close fit between the data and what people actually do and says. Watching people in their daily lives, listening them talk about what they have in mind and seeing the documents they produce, the qualitative researcher obtains direct knowledge, unfiltered by concepts, operational definitions and qualifying scales (Saunders et al, 2007).

Underline the validity, compared to quantitative emphasizes reliability and reproducibility of research. The qualitative study is systematic and rigorous research, not standardized, which controls the data recording. However, attempting to produce valid studies of real world is not possible to achieve perfect reliability (Saunders et al, 2007). All contexts and people are both similar and unique. They are similar in the sense that between any stage or group of people can find some general social processes and unique in that at each stage or through each informant can be studied in a best way. Qualitative research is flexible in the way of conducting studies (Taylor, 1998).

Qualitative studies attempt to describe systematically the characteristics of the variables and events (in order to generate and refine conceptual categories, discover and validate associations between phenomena or compare constructs and postulates generated from observed phenomena in different contexts) as well as the discovery of causal relations, but avoid to assume

a priori constructs or relationships. They try to find theories that explain the hypotheses inductively data created or adjusted for causal propositions and constructs data generated can then develop and confirmed. Data collection may precede the final formulation of the hypothesis or the data can be obtained for descriptive and analytical studies of exploratory type.

The qualitative design is particularly well suited to substantive theories because it provides an empirical data collection that provide complex descriptions of events, interactions, behaviours, thoughts etc. leading to the development or application of categories and relationships that allow the interpretation of data. In this sense, the qualitative design is attached to the theory as that a theory is necessary to explain and integrate data interpretation.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

Provide descriptive data relating to the meanings they attribute the participants to events, processes and behaviours. How to define your reality and based on what constructs organise their world. Qualitative data are generally detailed nature descriptive elaborations and include a wide variety of information regarding relatively protracted period of time (Hesse-Biber et al, 2006). The data provide and conceal multiple meanings are considered valid, but little reliability, difficult to reproduce, because they are context-specific and given time. Through the descriptions of the observed phenomena, possible to explain processes, identify generic principles from the exploration of specific behaviours and situations and generalize in each case and to compare the findings in different cases.

Data in this particular study is collected through both primary and secondary methods. For secondary data collection, the researcher has used books, journals, magazines articles,

newspapers and websites. On the other hand, primary data is collected through semi-structured interviews.

### **3.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are deliberate and systematic observation that reflects general characteristics. The questions, derived from the theoretical and conceptual framework that informs the study, the researcher entering the field, defined in a broad sense (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). The researchers enter the field with extensive questions before continuing specific lines of investigation since they must allow the threads emerge in the context, data are beginning to emerge as the researcher interacts with subjects in the daily flow of events.

The questionnaire consists of both closed end and open-ended questions and with the help of these questionnaires the research analyses the response of the participants and try to answer the research questions for which the study is conducted.

#### **3.4.1.1 Sample of Questions**

The list of questions below is the questions for the interview for this dissertation. These questions were used to gather primary data in order to attain research result.

#### **Questions**

1. Name?
2. Age?
3. Occupation?
4. Which city are you from?
5. Which city are you currently living in?
6. Have you ever experience Songkran Festival in Thailand? (y/n)
7. When and where was your last experience with Songkran festival?
8. What did you actually do during Songkran holiday?
9. Who did you mostly spend your Songkran with?
10. Do you agree that Songkran festival is the event for extend the traditional culture? Why? Give samples for those cultures?
11. Do you agree that Songkran festival will support family value? Why? How?
12. Do you know about National family and national elderly day? (y/n)

13. Do you agree that Songkran Festival helps to increase the number of visitors in Thailand?  
Why? (y/n)
14. Do you agree that there are many people who celebrate Songkran festival in the wrong ways? Why?
15. What will you say about Songkran festival in both positive and negative ways?
16. Please look at the table
  - Circle and rate top three impacts in both positive and negative sides.
  - Give reasons to support your answers
  - Are they any recommendations for each impact?

Impact of events	Positive impacts	Negative impacts
Social and cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Revitalization of traditions</li> <li>○ Community development</li> <li>○ Civic Pride</li> <li>○ Provides educational and cultural understanding</li> <li>○ Encouragement of tolerance and diversity</li> <li>○ Provides more recreational opportunities</li> <li>○ Improve quality of life</li> <li>○ Help Preserve the local culture</li> <li>○ Help to foster relation ship between residents and visitors</li> <li>○ Showcase effect</li> <li>○ Stimulus for urban regeneration</li> <li>○ Induced development and construction expenditure</li> <li>○ Long-term promotional benefits</li> <li>○ Increased employment opportunities</li> <li>○ Shared experience</li> <li>○ Building of community pride</li> <li>○ Validation of community groups</li> <li>○ Increased community participation</li> <li>○ Introduction of new and challenging ideas</li> <li>○ Expansion of cultural perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Community alienation</li> <li>○ Manipulation of community</li> <li>○ Negative community image</li> <li>○ Bad behavior</li> <li>○ Substance abuse</li> <li>○ Social dislocation</li> <li>○ Loss of amenity</li> <li>○ Future use of infrastructure not maximized</li> <li>○ Interruption of normal business</li> <li>○ Resident exodus</li> <li>○ Disruption of normal business</li> <li>○ Media impacts</li> <li>○ Community apathy and antagonism</li> <li>○ Increased risk of security Issue</li> <li>○ Unequal distribution of wealth</li> <li>○ Culture clashes</li> <li>○ Community irritation</li> <li>○ Job level friction</li> <li>○ Disruption to residents’ lifestyles</li> <li>○ Change in social and leisure habits</li> <li>○ Loss of community ownership and control</li> <li>○ Prostitution</li> <li>○ Traffic Congestion</li> <li>○ Disregard of civic rights and liberties</li> <li>○ Anti-social behaviour</li> <li>○ Degradation of positive tourism and promotional imagery</li> <li>○ Substance abuse</li> </ul>

		o Environmental damage and litter
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“Thank you for helping with this research”

### 3.4.2 Sample

There are different types of sampling like intentional sampling, accidental sampling, quota sampling etc. which can be used for choosing the relevant sample (Devine & Heath, 1999). In order to understand how Songkran festival of Thailand affects tourists, the researcher, in this research study has used intentional sampling method and has chosen participants from tourists within the age group of 22 to 28 years. The basic reason for choosing this age group is that they are young and can not only participate in most of the activities of the festival but there is also a chance that they can involve with the local population and feel the positive and negatives impacts of that festival.

The researcher did interview 15 people, which each of interview takes about 30 minutes per person.

#### 3.4.2.1 List of Interviewees

There are 15 interviewees for this dissertation as following;

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
<b>1.</b>	Anusara V.	24	Female	Employee
<b>2.</b>	Totthong L.	24	Male	Freelance
<b>3.</b>	Chutiwat S.	28	Male	Business Owner
<b>4.</b>	Puncharut K.	24	Female	General Manager
<b>5.</b>	Ingpalth K.	28	Female	Employee
<b>6.</b>	Annop P.	22	Male	Student
<b>7.</b>	Asawin P.	22	Male	Porter

8.	Boonthong S.	28	Male	Chauffeur
9.	Pornpimol K.	22	Female	Student
10.	Pasita C.	25	Female	Secretary
11.	Wannisa P.	24	Female	Employee
12.	Vorawan A.	24	Female	Manager
13.	Wichuda R.	25	Female	Graduate Student
14.	Warisa M.	25	Female	Business Owner
15.	Penporn W.	24	Female	Freelance

### 3.5 Piloting

A pilot study should be tested on a small group of target respondent to find the problems or difficulties of the survey (Waliman, 2005). Therefore the instructions and questions can be rewritten through the pilot section (Bell, 2005). The pilot test was conducted with 5 respondents in the Bangkok area. All of them are Thais who currently lives in Bangkok area. After the pilot test of the interview was finished, the researcher realised the point that should be changed before the actual interview.

The point is that the researcher needs to translate all questions including the table in the interview into Thai language as English language is not their first language so they are not familiar with English. Moreover, there is a different in education levels, the ones with the lower education levels found the interview difficult in English so it was better to do it in Thai language as those people can easily answer the questions.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis involves the systematic examination of something to determine its parts, the relationship between the parties and their relationship to the whole. The purpose of the analysis is a better understanding of reality analysed on that one could develop some kind of

explanatory model. The interconnection between the processes of collecting and analysing the data has resulted in designs such as sequential selection that is an open process in the collection and data analysis are performed at the time and influence each other, the progressive construction of the theory determines the data collection, so that as research progresses determining new concepts for analysis. The basic aim of data analysis is to facilitate the emergence of constructs and theories or eliminate constructs, theories or rival hypotheses. This process stops when considers that the construct is sufficiently developed to explain new cases (Patton, 2000).

When taking the methodological decision of what type of analysis continues to work with collected data, the researcher can choose different options there being an ideal way to perform the analysis. Obviously, like many other methodological decisions, choosing one or the other is not something that done at random but must be made with justification and rigorous response to guidance of methodological or theoretical method to continue the research and the nature of the data. Different currents will guide the researcher in the analysis process, among others, the analysis of content and discourse analysis. There is some ambiguity in the literature on concerning what is most appropriate for qualitative research (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

In this particular study, the researcher will use Latent Content analysis to analyse the data because it will make a more consistent triangulation strategies based on the latent content analysis. It is the process of identifying, coding and categorizing major axes underlying meaning in the data. It goes beyond the description of the obvious and visible components of the data (manifest content) to interpret and to abstract data, thus, accessing the hidden meaning of the same (latent content). It is the analysis and interpretation of operations and systems of signs symbols in order to communicate their human experience. Latent content analysis involves the

first phase of organisation, processing and analysis of data for later work on abstraction and interpretation thereof.

The organisation and data processing is in the process of qualitative data analysis, an essential task for: (I) extract the data roughly, those really have an important significance in relation to this study's objectives and (II) establish relationships between the data provided to the researcher and abstraction efforts for high generation concepts, propositions, models, and theories (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). The organisation and data processing is no mechanical work but is fraught with interpretive nuances. So, from the first moment, the researcher started working on the data, doing analysis, abstracting and are leaving part of the subjectivity in the process of meanings emerge from the data.

The term encoding refers to the process by which the researcher fragmented or segmented data according to its significance for the questions and objectives investigated. It involves an initial work to prepare the raw material which must be abstracted and interpreted. The encoding allows the researcher to condense the data in analysable units and thus thoroughly review the data.

After this, the researcher began with the encoding process by identifying words, phrases or paragraphs that have considered remarkable significance in relation to the study objectives. While the researcher is identifying these elements of meaning, he also assigns them a name tag or label in order to compile the emerging significance (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). The code assignment may be "in vivo" (when the informant himself has used a word or short phrase that has much significance in itself) or a result of creative and interpretive capacity of researcher. It is



advisable, once finished with allocation of codes, develop a list of them explaining the significance attributed to the researcher to each

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

In any case, the ethical issues are inherent to all research involving human subjects, regardless of the theoretical and methodological approach used (Alderson, 2004). In the past 60 years, various codes, rules and laws have been established on the conduct of human research. The categorical imperative shared by most of these codes of ethics is that research must safeguard the dignity, rights, safety and welfare of all research participants. The principle of autonomy includes two fundamental ethical considerations: respect for the autonomous decisions and the protection of persons whose autonomy is diminished and deteriorated (Corti & Thompson, 2007).

Ethical issues in qualitative research arise primarily from the emerging nature, creative, unpredictable, flexible and elastic of methodology. Therefore, the major ethical issues related to the qualitative research process relating to informed consent, confidentiality, researcher - participant relationship and the reason of research.

Informed consent ensures voluntary participation and competition to decide whether to participate in the proposed research. The consent requirements include information about the purpose, risks, benefits and alternatives to research, understanding of the subject of that information and their own situation and making a free choice not forced upon whether to participate or not (Gregory, 2003). It is usually not easy to adequately inform a participant in research since the researcher cannot predict what will happen in the development of the study given the emerging nature of qualitative design. Thus, in a qualitative study the informed consent

should be considered as a continuous transactional process called consent process that can be negotiated and agreed upon in the course of the research process to reach agreements regarding the use of recorder or camcorder to record data, aspects to be observed, the possibility of a second interview or waiver of the informant to talk about a certain topic.

The issue of confidentiality and anonymity concerns not unveil the identity of the persons involved in an investigation and that you cannot link your identity with information obtained. In qualitative studies we are obliged to carefully protect the confidentiality and anonymity of our participants and we get them a lot of information which reveal highly personal aspects and know their identity to be relatively small. Therefore, we have a specific agreement on the management of information, promising not to share this information with anyone outside the research team and ensuring both the custody of the raw data of the study in a safe place for their destruction after a reasonable time.

Another consideration is the relationship between the researcher and participants. The nature of this relationship has an effect on participant observation in interviews and in the interpretation of the data. To carry out their study, the researcher has to develop a relationship of rapport with informants but without losing sight of the ethical issues (Iphofen, 2009). Therefore, it is very important that this relationship is reciprocal rather than hierarchical, with the necessary feedback.

The research will comply with the requirements of data protection by using “dominant approach”. Dominant approach compels the researcher to collect, analyse and use data without compromising the identities of the participants (Sieber, 1992). Researcher will ensure to uphold

the “convention of confidentiality” (Baez, 2002) in order to maintain the ethical standards of the research study. All of the above mentioned ethical considerations are applied in this study.

### **3.7 Limitations**

Like all other practical research studies, this research study also has some limitations. First of all, in ideal situation the data should be collected till the point of saturation; however, in this study, the saturation point does not occur mainly due to the constraint of time and resources. Secondly, the research study mainly focuses on the tourists who visit Bangkok during Songkran festival and put little emphasis on local people. Due to this limited focus there was no benchmark for comparison of the findings from this research.

The last but not the least limitation of this study is that, as it is a student level research, the limited availability of finances has narrowed the scope of the research. The researcher has to rely on his own resources to collect data and that is the main reason that he could not contact and collect views of local people and local authorities to ascertain the socio-cultural effects of Songkran festival.

### Chapter 4: Main Findings

More than half of the tourists who are interviewed in Thailand said that they have experienced Songkran festival one or more times during their visit to Thailand. They all are of the opinion that they experience Songkran festival in Bangkok, because, according to them local people have suggested that they should experience Songkran festival in Bangkok, that is why they gathered in Bangkok during Songkran festival. Besides the fact that the Songkran festival is one of the factors that multiplies the tourist attractiveness towards Thailand, the use of Songkran festival in urban marketing indices change in strengthening the brand image of the city. All that makes Songkran festival different is always used, provided register in time values. The apparent simplicity of reasoning usually works very well. At present, the facets of cultural festivals cannot be divorced from the business Interests of tourism, regional and local economy and place promotion. This is evident from this expression of one respondent, *'yes, this festival has great impact on number of tourists in the country. Tourists from all around the world make special visit to Thailand mainly to Bangkok and Phuket during this festival'*.

As the sample of this research belongs to an age group between 22 to 28 years, all of them are of the opinion that they danced, participated in water sports and got drunk. They enjoyed the way local people participated in the festival. Majority of the participants said that they were not aware of the tradition of Songkran festival but their local guide or a local friend described different activities of Songkran festival to them. This revealed that the western people are not well aware of this traditional festival and if strategies should be adopted to enhance the positive impacts of the festival then this would attract more visitors to Bangkok. This has a dire cultural impact on destination country because the role played by Songkran festival in the dissemination of culture, is really important and this cultural festival must be coordinated as best as possible.

The increased coordination between different stakeholders of the festival could take place at several levels. Greater cooperation of event organisers would be needed first. This cooperation would allow them to share their experiences and thereby contribute to better organisation of the festival. Similarly, a greater coordination of public and private officials on different levels is also desirable. Furthermore, the development of closer links between festival and activities within the framework of permanent cultural facilities is clearly necessary. Cooperation and coordination may be more effective if it was made well in advance and for the sake of true partnership where everyone feels truly involved. As one local respondent shared, *'It is not just a fun based water fight activity that happened in the festival, we do perform their traditional rituals like temple activities in order to make merit and remove misfortunes. This shows that this festival is the depiction of our culture as symbol of hospitality, love and importance of maintaining strong relationships'*.

Songkran is a festival that claims its centrality. Virtually no event only takes place outside the city centre. This rather impersonal nature is accentuated by the location of most of the places outside the festival town intramural in large arteries or large spaces. Intramural places might seem better integrated into the city but they are limited in number (Williams & Lawson, 2001). The use of urban marketing to transform the image of Bangkok with the help of Songkran festival is particularly clear. Thailand has commercialised the Songkran event in order to attract new business, industrial, commercial, tourism in particular. The objective is to create a "euphoric" connotation. However, the themes of the festival, the festivity of the city have been systematically employed in the tourist literature.

Most of the participants said that they have a positive impact of Thai culture and tradition through this festival. According to them, this festival plays an important role in disseminating cultural norms, values and traditions of Thailand. The way the children pour water on the hands of their elders is a strong tradition which depicts the importance of family values of Thai culture. Cultural festivals like Songkran festival are the objects closest to the synthesis functions of a culture of contemporary societies. In practice, Songkran festival seeks to meet three objectives; i.e. attracting massive cultural spending, conceive a new urban image and be a factor of creativity and progress of civil society. Thus, through Songkran festival it is possible to promote the cultural tradition of Thailand, the development of tourism resources and competitiveness of destinations. Songkran festival has direct impact on proliferation of Thai culture, traditions and family values to the Western world as well as to create a good brand image of the country which ultimately further improves the tourism situation in the country. Songkran festival is a strong magnet to promote and attract cultural tourism towards the country. As mentioned by one of the respondents, *'This event is positive due to its cultural and traditional significance for local*

*people as well as its festivities for both local and international people mostly tourists. However, the negative impacts of Songkran are also alarming particularly increasing fatalities due to road accidents as well as violation of alcohol drinking laws'*

The creation of a new image is the deliberate construction of the festive city. Songkran festival can play a decisive role to the fame of the city of Bangkok as well as disseminating Thai culture. It is more interesting to look at the nature of the image provided by the event in the city, how the image is constructed and the process of its creation. Commissioning of these processes has been dramatic in cities like Bangkok, where the festival transforms the city into a cultural centre of Thai traditions. Some respondents also contributed that,

*'Yes, this festival is considered important due to strengthening family values in the country. We see Songkran as an event which brings our focus on family values i.e. we pay respect to elders, worship, and spending time with family, friends and even with community members'.*

*'Yes, this National family and national elderly day is also a fundamental constituent of Songkran festival. It is celebrated on the second day in which Thai people wake up early to give donations (alms) to the monks'.*

From the supply side, the hotel capacity has experienced the construction of temporary facilities to meet the high demand during the period of the festival. These installations are dismantled after the event (Dwyer et al, 2006).

The participants also unanimously said that they sure want to attend the Songkran festival again as soon as they get chance to do so. According to them, attending Songkran festival is a life time experience which they not only enjoyed but also have a very positive image about Thai traditions, culture and family values. This shows that the role of Songkran festival has

been enormous to promote urban regeneration, greater image representation, quality of life improvement and achieving greater tourist attraction.

Just more than a quarter of the respondents say that there are some people who celebrated the festival in a wrong way but they also praised the local authorities that they have managed the crowds intelligently. According to the findings of the interviews, the top three positive impacts, of all the positives impacts mentioned by the researcher, are revitalization of traditions, help preserve the local and community development, increased community participation and expansion of cultural perspectives respectively. For instance, *‘Some people do celebrate this festival by over drinking and this becomes the major cause of road accidents in the country. Songkran is supposed to mean something but the meaning is all but lost when you walk down the street smashed with ice cold water. People die in Songkran and I’m not talking about a couple of people I’m talking about hundreds of people all over the country die due to this crazy festival’.*

As far as the negative impacts of the festival are concerned, are concerned, resident exodus and disruption of normal business is the most important negative impacts of the Songkran festival, interruption of normal business is in second place while culture clashes is in the third place.

#### **4.1 Discussion**

From the above mentioned findings it can easily be said that among the documented efforts to promote the culture for the renovation of the public space, cultural policies are highlighted as element of government. These are the result of a slow process of development and renewal, which requires high and always consistent investment. As mentioned in literature review part, Songkran Festival is one of the most important events in Thailand, so there are many effects of this event. Firstly, Songkran Festival is known as Thai’s New Year, which people are



normally celebrated annually during 13<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> April. It is long holidays that normally gather all family members together. Songkran festival highlighted the importance to identify and analyse successful processes of relationship between cultural and economic goals for the renewal of a city (Dwyer et al, 2006).

However, to be successful, cultural festivals, like Songkran, need planning from the beginning which includes costs and sustainability of environment and infrastructure. Thus, the planning of the festival needs consultation from all levels of community that facilitate the sustainable production of local culture investment associated not only to the environment but communities also (Dwyer et al, 2006). Thus, the Songkran festival can be designed as means to contribute to local development and considered as urban development project.

The integration of Songkran festival to urban tourism and specific regions is to raise economic and social transformations (Daniels, 2007). Therefore, the design of Songkran festival is responsible for worldwide recognition, such as tourism generators which implies, while the need and opportunity to develop the local tourism industry. Tourism is the benefit of cultural consumption, which generates new media subsistence and wealth from the new offers and cultural attractions (Daniels, 2007).

Thus, culture becomes a regeneration factor for urban makeover and representation of quality of life, consequently attracts to get new tourists. In this context, sources of competitiveness can be defined as processing capacity of the production factors of images and products experiences in new capacity to renew resources and authorities available to a destination for creating new products and markets and generating a continuous stream of innovations to the attractions that Bangkok has. The theoretical findings also confirm that

Cultural events and festivals are a major economic and social phenomenon. This has necessitated the consideration of the environment in the festival. Indeed, as the festival was an area of small, environmental issues did not really part of the culture of responsible movement.

However, with the decision of growing awareness of limited natural resources, a discussion was gradually developed to integrate environmental considerations into the sphere of festivals. The organisation of events and festivals are more important for the natural heritage. With regard to major events and festivals, we can identify related nuisances of spectators - waste, trampling - or competitors - noise, erosion etc.

In general, most of the visitors of Songkran festival belong to middle class. However, there are different audiences between street shows and other events related to Songkran festival. Most of the visitors attend this festival have no knowledge about culture, norms and family traditions of Thailand. This leads to the recognition that the public have enough knowledge and are driven by the recommendations made in magazines, newspapers, television, etc (Reid, 2006). However, the locals found in the Songkran festival an excellent opportunity to enjoy a greater number of social activities because the assistance to the festival was accompanied by other social activities such as dinners, take coffee, a drink, etc. These supplemental plans are reinforced for increased perception of security, lighting, toilet, available car parking, diversity of services and ease to reach (Reid, 2006) and adequate infrastructure in neighbourhoods and where the Songkran festival held.

Songkran festival contributed a lot to the growth of Thai national culture. Year after year the number of visitors is increasing, given more importance to the culture and family traditions of Thailand. However, most of the people who are attending the Songkran festival do not have a

solid criterion of choice. Many of them made by chance, by the title of the work dissemination and media promotion and above all, for the price of admission. This happens to be one of the most difficult obstacles to overcome and requires educating the public about the tradition of Songkran festival.

In this regard, Songkran festival has included in its programming a series of information workshops open to the public. This effort would definitely contribute a lot to increase the knowledge of the tourists as well as the local public about Thai family traditions and about the tradition of Songkran festival.

Biehl et al. (1986) provide a fairly comprehensive list of various types of infrastructure. They distinguished: transport infrastructure, communication, water supply and energy, medical, environmental, educational, urban, tourism, social and cultural. This list is recognized by most writers on the problem of the economic impact of infrastructure. Public infrastructure contributes to regional economic growth, along with other factors of production, namely private capital and labour. They represent an impact needed to produce the same element to promote the productivity of labour and private capital. Improved links reduces the cost of transport and mobility aids the delivery of products to market in so doing, it leads to an increase in the productivity of other factors of production, value and production added to an economy.

However, the improvement of transport infrastructure often has a negative effect on the economy of a region. Reducing the time and cost of transport makes individuals to leave the periphery to settle in urban centres and submit local businesses to increased competition. The infrastructure also plays an important role in the attractiveness of a region involved in the

location decisions of firms. General infrastructure of developed and good quality is indeed an important factor in choosing a place for business implantation (Rietveld & Bruinsma, 1998).

The increase in economic activity is closely related to the conduct of the Songkran festival. Once it is completed, the local production returns to its original level. The impact in the long term corresponds to a lasting change in the activity of regional economic. It is based on mechanisms other than the multiplier effect. Finally, it should be noted that the principle of the economic impact study is not compatible with a long-term approach (Coates & Humphreys, 2006). The organisation of Songkran festival helps to develop skills and expertise in many areas such as tourism and information technology, which do not previously exist in the host region. This is the result of improved techniques and organisation of production and better qualification of the workforce.

The long term effects can only be redistributive. This is the case when the Songkran festival causes a simple transfer of economic activity between regions of the same territory. If the people attending the festival have given the chance to go in resorts to other regions of the country, running of the event causes a redistributive effect: the development of region, hosting the event at the expense of other regions where attendance of tourist decreases. The running of the event does not generate an increase in value as a result of higher productivity factors. (Coates & Humphreys, 2006).

The findings of this study suggests that besides shedding water between them, people celebrate Songkran as a Buddhist festival and head to a temple (wat) to pray and give food to monks. The faithful should clean Buddha images they have in their houses as well as Buddha images at monasteries by gently pouring water over them mixed with fragrances. It is believed

that by doing this good luck and prosperity are achieved in the New Year. In many populations, such as Chiang Mai, the Buddha images from all major monasteries are displayed in a parade through the streets so that people can pour water on them, so you can enjoy beautiful beautifully decorated floats. In northern Thailand, people often take handfuls of sand to their monastery to recompense the dirt that has been on your feet for the rest of the year.

Today, the emphasis is on fun and water sheds more for fun than spiritual or religious aspects, which sometimes resulted in complaints from traditionalists. In recent years it has become a clarion call to reduce traffic accidents related to alcohol and inappropriate attributable to the effect that can cause water to shed behaviours motorcycle injuries. Water is a symbol of cleanliness and ward off evil, and sometimes mixed with herbal fragrance when it is celebrated in a traditional way. Additionally, in many places, Songkran is celebrated with a parade where young women show their beauty and talent. Financial support usually determines the winner, since such support helps young people gain necklaces and so has a better chance of getting elected.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Conclusion**

This research is part of the research aim what is the socio-cultural impact of Songkran festival on Thai society. The researcher has conducted a qualitative research analysis to find that Songkran festival has direct impact on the social, cultural and economic aspects of Thai society. This festival, undoubtedly leave traces in the city of Bangkok where it is celebrated, however, these traces are more immaterial than material. The first objective of this study has achieved by identifying how cultural events affect the society in general. This has proved by the respondents responses as well as literature search as both confirms that events like Songkran is an opportunity to relish culture and tradition by practicing religious rituals as well as enjoying fun activities that strengthen social relationships.

In this research study the researcher has analysed the socio-cultural impact of Songkran festival of Bangkok. This study examines the direct effects, indirect effects and induced effects

of Songkran festival. The festival affects especially the tourism sector of the city, as well as business services. The findings of this study are right on the fundamental role of cultural festivals in general. It shows that festivals play pivotal role in the socio- cultural life of the destination, preserving and protecting the social values and cultural image of the city and improve the welfare of citizens and enhance social cohesion. They thus contribute to economic development and social and cultural progress of the territories. The second objective of this research i.e. to determine the economic and socio-cultural effects of Songkran festival of Thailand is met evidently.

From all the above discussion we can draw a number of conclusions. Moreover, the third objective of the study that is to discuss some possibilities in order to enhance the positive impact and decreasing the negative impact of Songkran festival suggests that Songkran festival is important cultural event of Thailand, the most celebrated and popular, but also, in light of results, is an event of great social and economic impact attracting many visitors. The festival is celebrated in the city centre and most people move often to walk and enjoy the environment. Most importantly it attracts tourists from different parts of the world who have good purchasing power, which affects the average spending over the days of the festival.

The Songkran festival of Thailand turns the city of Bangkok into a huge cultural and tourist scene for the enjoyment of local and visitors, the city becomes more cosmopolitan than ever. Moreover, this has grown steadily since its beginnings until today becoming a mega – event. Songkran is important for Thailand because it increases the number of visitors attracted for this mega event and consequently improves the occupation and power infrastructure of tourism destination. The socio-cultural impact of the festival is reflected in the generation of

direct and an indirect employment, expressed in job opportunities that helps bring in major social challenges of city, such as employment generation.

With the celebration of Songkran, Bangkok enhances its reputation as a cosmopolitan tourist destination positioning inasmuch as the media exposure and, above all, it represents an opportunity to diversify their product as tourist destination transmits a message of cultural and business. Additionally, the residents associated with the Festival, have the opportunity for the city to show it as cultural tourism destination and a positive value exchange with different cultures. Consequently, the Songkran has contributed significantly in the construction of the identity of the city of Bangkok as cosmopolitan and cultural city.

The city of Bangkok has been reinforced in its image by Songkran festival. The confrontation of urban centres like Bangkok by festivals is against a less expected result. All temporary or permanent locations used by festival are increasingly concentrated in urban cores and put in relation to the urban trade, cafes and restaurants in the first place. Yet even in this city, the locations are designed to occupy parts of urban space that the municipality would like to attach to the centre. It therefore hopes that Songkran festival is a strong enough marker centrality. Several interpretations of this concentration are possible.

It is, in part, related to organisational optimization. Nearby places are easier to manage the festival is more readable for the public, which does not have to look for shows. A festival demands clearly an important work details and must necessarily considering links between sites. On the other hand, it is part of a continuous cultural presence in the city centre, the cultural facilities there are often close to each other and more. Finally, the concentration and centrality are affirmed as values to defend against bursting, anonymity and often standardizing both



peripheries view of the landscape from the point of view of the social bond. The urban crowd aroused by festivals gives body to the city.

This festival has an impact on the demography and environment of the city. It converted many places of city into hotels and restaurants, schools are converted into theatres or meeting places, even places of worship are open to the culture. However, the festival goes think traces by reducing the visibility alone in space, during the festival, or the rest of the year, would be reductive. Customization, to be one with a festival, weaving interpersonal networks organised in the vertical, resulting in a lesser involvement in the community are very pronounced in the fields of culture, perhaps even on the festival sphere. But again, we cannot generalize the implications and local networks that exist, collaborations by cons between local festivals are not commonplace. In the end, it can be concluded that Songkran festival is an important element of proliferating the social and cultural values of Thailand in the world. However, it seems that the public have less cultural capital (perhaps more in terms of economic capital) are still not affected.

Greater support is needed at a departmental or regional level for the marketing of Songkran festival. These efforts must be continued and encouraged. A better marketing of Songkran festival with creation and distribution of tour packages including tickets, accommodation and restoration can help bring a wider audience which affect positively on Thai economy. These additional resources will continue and strengthen the social tariff policy under development.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that government must plan beforehand to accommodate all the tourists coming into the city and also instruct the organisers that they would not change the face of the

city. Government with the help of different tour operators and organisers make a comprehensive plan of waste management, traffic congestion and hygiene maintenance so that people of Bangkok will not suffer after the festival was ended.

At the same time, it is also recommended that such festivals will also be arranged at large level in other cities of Thailand. It would help to create tourism, employments and improves the social image of other cities of Thailand also.

It is also recommended that tourists shall be given proper care so they should not feel cultural shock and enjoy the festival. For this purpose, the government and tour operator should publish brochures as well as arrange half day workshop which will brief the tourists about the history and tradition of Songkran festival.

A short list of good environmental practices must be prepared to encourage people to follow, both during the festival as the rest of the year. Some of the important measures to reduce environmental impact are:

- Use cycle or use public transport. 100 % effective and comfortable all hours of the festival;
- Reuse the glass when you want to consume the same drink;
- If you want to drink water use drinking water sources;
- Preferably ask and consume products with minimal packaging and locally produced;
- Waste deposited selectively in containers;
- Be careful with trees and plants. They are our allies against climate change. Use the toilets enabled;
- Do not waste water

### Future Research

There is a dire need of serious and comprehensive research on the effects of Songkran festival on Thai society as well as on tourists visiting the country and attending the festival. The future research will also collect primary data from local population to get their side of story and are they affected, socially, culturally and economically through this festival. The future study will also cover the point that whether is it possible to arrange this festival in other cities of Thailand or not.

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