

## The Study and Extensive Review of Cultural Identity of the ASEAN Countries leading to Development Guidelines and Enhancing the Awareness in ASEAN Identity

Supakarn Chairerg<sup>\*</sup>, Krittakorn Thongnokand and Sompong Raksatham

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University

---

### Abstract

The objectives of the research on the study and extensive review of cultural identity of the ASEAN countries leading to development guidelines and enhancing the awareness in ASEAN identity were to study and extensive review of cultural identity of the ASEAN countries, and develop guidelines for enhancing the awareness in the ASEAN identity. This research is the qualitative research methodology which is comprised of the process of studying, analyzing data from documents, documentary research, in-depth interview and expert group discussions to develop guidelines for enhancing awareness in ASEAN identity.

The results showed that the cultural identity of ASEAN countries consists of; 1) Peace, freedom and harmony; 2) Stability and steadiness; 3) Unity; 4) Mutual benefit cooperation; 5) Reliance; 6) Giving people as a center of development; 7) Mutual respect; 8) ASEAN organizational structure; 9) Flexibility; 10) Consciousness of love in art and culture; 11) Participation; 12) Southeast Asia territory; 13) ASEAN flag; 14) ASEAN music; 15) Rice symbol; and 16) Mutual understanding. With all identities would also reflect the culture, tradition, rules and social systems of various countries in the ASEAN community.

Therefore, in order to create a total consciousness of ASEAN, it is necessary to build guidelines to enhance awareness and recognition in the ASEAN identity as follows; 1) Using English in daily life; 2) Learning different cultures 3; Learning in real situations and practice; 4) Cultivating consciousness and attitude; 5) Working as a team, by combining many nationalities; 6) Excursions in neighboring countries, etc.

**Keyword :** ASEAN Community, ASEAN Identity, ASEAN

### Background and importance of the problem

The ASEAN Community is the result of the 9th ASEAN Summit in Indonesia in 2003, with ASEAN leaders agreed to establish the ASEAN Community. Three major pillars of a single ASEAN community were originally established: ASEAN Security Community (ASC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). Particularly, the ASEAN Social and Cultural Community, or ASCC, envisions to be an ASEAN Community that is people-centered, and build a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and harmonious where the unity, unified feeling, having a sense of being an ASEAN citizen, well-being,

---

\*ผู้ประสานงานหลัก (Corresponding Author)  
Email : varinton\_varin@hotmail.com

livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced as well as promoting the sustainable use of natural resources both internal Members and external parties.

It was also during the 13th ASEAN Summit in Singapore that the member governments of ASEAN adopted the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint (ASCC), which serves as a master plan guiding the establishment of the community. Among its 6 focus areas are: human development, social welfare and protection, social justice and rights, ensuring environmental sustainability, building the ASEAN identity, and narrowing the development gap. Especially, focusing on the importance of creating the ASEAN identity would be the basis for the benefits of Southeast Asia by being the sharing identity, tradition, values and beliefs, as well as the aspiration as an ASEAN community, which has set strategic goals including creating a sense of ownership and unity among diversity, and promoting a better understanding between ASEAN member countries on culture, history, religion, and civilization. Also, the various operational measures have been defined as follows; 1) review and development of new public relations plans both regional and national in ASEAN Member States to support ASEAN identity and efforts to raise awareness about ASEAN; 2) supporting the cooperation framework for various branches and enhancing the efforts to promote ASEAN identity and awareness of a regional identity and the sense of "ASEAN-ness" among member states, as well as strengthening the role of senior officials and promoting the senior staff meetings on culture and art, the ASEAN committee meeting on culture and information; and 3) conducting the production of publications, broadcast equipment and multimedia media about ASEAN, to allow public relations agencies of the state and private agencies in each country to produce and disseminate among the ASEAN community by starting in 2009.

However, one of the challenges of becoming an ASEAN social and cultural community, especially in promoting ASEAN identity would be the process of defining common identity and creating cultural consciousness of ASEAN which is based on cultural diversity, and affecting it difficult to define the cultural co-characteristics. Furthermore, some identities would also have common characteristics in only countries with historical similarities or even joint geographic characteristics. Be that as it may, it does not cover all countries in the ASEAN region, which sometimes leads to the questions whether the ASEAN identity would be existing or not. And apart from establishing the common identity of ASEAN on an existing culture base, we may also have to consider in defining new values or identities for ASEAN. Even though Thailand has cultural cooperation with ASEAN countries through the cooperation mechanism of the ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information or ASEAN-COCI with the significant contributions to the dissemination of knowledge and understanding to the general public about ASEAN culture, but still cannot provide an overview of the culture that represents ASEAN culture.

Hence, the research team aims to study and collect knowledge about the cultural identity of ASEAN in the overall for the purpose of determining the development and awareness of ASEAN identity and the sense of being an ASEAN community in the future with

the emphasis on studying common values or coexistence by creating unity among various differences in all classes of ASEAN society with peacefully.

### **Objectives of the study**

- 1) To study and review the knowledge about the cultural identity of ASEAN countries.
- 2) To develop guidelines for enhancing awareness and recognition in ASEAN identity.

### **Scope of study**

This research aimed to study the cultural identity of ASEAN countries to develop guidelines for enhancing awareness and recognition in ASEAN identity. The research methods were selected from documentation collection which has collected from various types of documents, such as books, articles, statistical data and related research from various sources such as Nakhon Si Thammarat Central Library, school libraries, related websites, and using questionnaires. A questionnaire was applied as a research instrument for data collection from local people. An interview is also used to collect data which obtained from the Entrepreneurs and government officials.

### **Research Methodology**

This research was the qualitative research methods, which the research methodologies contained 1) documentary research; 2) in-depth interview; the details were as follows;

1) Documentary research was conducted according to the research methodology by using qualitative research methods from studying and analyzing data from documents or documentary research, which has reviewed the concepts, theories and literature that related to the cultural identity of the country ASEAN including guidelines for enhancing awareness in ASEAN identity.

2) In-depth interview, the question articles were designed to unstructured interview by using keywords to be used, which stated that the open-ended questions with important words along with the characteristics of flexible questions were drafted. In order to get the diverse data in various dimensions, qualified academics, as well as those who have the important role or involved in the process in all sectors, whether government sectors, private sectors including the public have involved all. Selection of samples in this study have been picked out from purposive random sampling and Snowball sampling.

### **Conclusions**

The Study and Extensive Review of Cultural Identity of the ASEAN Countries leading to Development Guidelines and Enhancing the Awareness in ASEAN Identity as a research methodology in according to the study and review project that Thailand is one of the five countries who established the ASEAN Association, and have always played a strong role from pushing the ASEAN Association to change the structure and implementation to be consistent with the conditions and the situation of reality and facts on economic, political, in both regional and global. With the aim of progressing, stability and persistence of the ASEAN

community as a priority, due to Thailand is the center of the ASEAN social and cultural community which has been promoted Thailand as a leading country in education and human resource development of ASEAN, it is considered as a good idea to establish such a community for the quality of the life of the people. Establishing cooperation in protection and social welfare in ASEAN would be the creation of a community that having human resource development together by emphasizing the recognition of identity, and being a citizen of the ASEAN community. It is absolutely necessary to proceed in the 3 major issues, namely promoting public relations via TV, internet, radio, with the media presenting programs on cultural heritage and ASEAN arts, ASEAN music, and ASEAN symbols, as well as campaigning to distribute information about ASEAN in print media or multimedia and promoting sports in ASEAN which is consistent with the study of Sirimitr Prapanthurakit (2008), who have studied the identity of Laos through the Thai-Lao relations in the Thai entertainment media, and also found that the selection of critical cultural studies, which has the foundation of ideas from Marxism, is considered that the media as a source of discourse production in this modern society and also in accordance with the concept of Gramm turner (1988), claimed that the Bureau of Culture studies have paid attention to the daily lifestyle of people through the entertainment media. These media in the daily life of human beings have created awareness. Establishing an identity is required to use the media in today's society to create identity according to social processes. Raising awareness of national interests in the economy, especially in terms of creating economic competition under mutual benefit to protect intellectual property rights and strengthen consumer protection in ASEAN, which must be carried out under the framework of its priority.

It could be said that under the ASEAN community, the interests should be balanced both the country itself and national interests, and have lasting cooperation. So that, the researcher inferred that the domestic context of member states in the aspect of communication, and creating an understanding of the benefits that will be gained from the ASEAN cooperation framework to the people of the nation to know as an important thing to help promote the cooperation process in the other direction.

The notable thing is the success of the ASEAN community which would be given priority in creating mechanisms and measures, that able to deal with issues affecting cooperation in various sectors, such as creating a clear economic management mechanism, creating human rights processes, and creating mechanisms to deal with ethnic differences. The key is how to create the awareness mechanism for being an ASEAN citizen to people in member countries, that would be getting benefit of being the ASEAN community together with the highest quality and long lasting as well as reducing the most inequality with the utmost ability.

According to the study of the documents mentioned above, the researchers observed that the identity of Southeast Asia has been known for a long time. Whether local people, people in the region, and outside people as an independent region would have its own

unique characteristics which consist of countries with differences and religious diversity, cultures and ethnicities. So, it is quite difficult to fully understand the identity of Southeast Asia.

If to start to understand the identity of both national and local (ethnic minority communities), it would take time as a region with its own unique characteristics, caused the identity is created in a society which showing the identity of people or social groups that are different from others. The group could create a new one or be changed according to the context in which it is related, with the benefit of the group that will be created. Therefore, the identity that has been created by the social processes, as it has the crystallization of thought, then there may be stability or even changing the pattern depends on the social relationship. Connectivity of individual roles and responsibilities for the existence of that identity, which have to require both the public and private sectors in promoting and support ways to raise awareness about ASEAN identity in accordance with the interests of each nation from being a member of this community in order to build the concretion and stability across the ASEAN region.

### Discussions

1. Knowledge about the cultural identity of ASEAN countries is needed to find effective management methods by cultivating people to be aware of them.
2. Raising awareness about ASEAN identity must be built by starting from the family level, educational institution, and social institutions through belief and faith in the community for sustainable development in both economic and quality of life of people in ASEAN countries.
3. The existence of identity is required the cooperation from all sectors related to promote and support the awareness of ASEAN identity.

### Recommendations

#### Suggestions for further research

1. There should be a study of awareness in the identity of each country, not only the countries in ASEAN, to study how the guidelines for strengthening the identity of each country are, and then it would be used to further strengthen the ASEAN identity.
2. There should be a study of guidelines to strengthen the ASEAN identity through features that reflecting the ASEAN identity according to the process framework for ASEAN citizens, how ASEAN looks and how to reinforce the characteristics of the identity process.

#### Suggestions to relevant agencies

1. The university should cooperate with international organizations in drafting the ASEAN citizen curriculum together.

### References

Public Relations Department, Prime Minister's Office. (2009). *Thailand and ASEAN*. Bangkok: Paper House. (In Thai)

- Department of ASEAN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2009). *ASEAN Travel Records*. Bangkok: Witita Animation.(In Thai)
- Department of ASEAN 3, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2011). *Master Plan on ASEAN Interconnection*. Bangkok: Carmedia Media. (In Thai)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (2010). "*Schedule of Strategic Management under the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Establishment Plan of Government and Social Responsibility Agencies*". Retrieved 2012, from <http://www.mfa.go.th>.
- Thamphodol, D. (2013). *Research report on "Strategic plan of Ministry of Culture in the Preparation for Being Member of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community"* Bangkok: Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (In Thai)

## Authors

### Supakarn Chairerg

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University  
1 Moo 4 Tambon Tha Ngio, Mueang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat 80280  
e-mail : varinton\_varin@hotmail.com

### Krittakorn Thongnok

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University  
1 Moo 4 Tambon Tha Ngio, Mueang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat 80280  
e-mail : krittakorn15@hotmail.co.th

### Sompong Raksatham

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University  
1 Moo 4 Tambon Tha Ngio, Mueang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat 80280  
e-mail : sompong\_rak@nstru.ac.th