

Factors affecting the sustainability of community-based tourism in a Phu Thai village in Northeast Thailand

ปัจจัยที่ทำให้เกิดความยั่งยืนของการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชนในหมู่บ้านชาวผู้ไท ในภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือ

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การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อระบุปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อความยั่งยืนของการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชน พื้นที่ศึกษาได้แก่ หมู่บ้านภู ตำบลบ้านเป้า อำเภอหนองสูง จังหวัดมุกดาหาร เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลโดยการสัมภาษณ์ผู้นำกลุ่มการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชน โดยใช้แบบสัมภาษณ์กับกลุ่มตัวอย่างที่เข้าร่วมในกิจกรรมการท่องเที่ยวเชิงชุมชนและชาวบ้านอื่นๆ ที่ไม่ได้เข้าร่วม และสัมภาษณ์ทางโทรศัพท์กับนักท่องเที่ยวที่เคยมาเที่ยวที่ชุมชน โดยผู้วิจัยอาศัยอยู่ในบ้านพักแบบโฮมสเตย์ในหมู่บ้าน จึงมีโอกาสได้สังเกตกิจกรรมในหมู่บ้านบ่อยครั้งและมีส่วนร่วมในพูดคุยอย่างไม่เป็นทางการเกี่ยวกับการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชนกับชาวบ้านหลายๆ คน โครงสร้างการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชนในหมู่บ้านภูค่อนข้างซับซ้อน โดยมีผู้นำการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชน ผู้ประสานงาน และกลุ่มงาน 7 กลุ่ม แบ่งตามหน้าที่ ได้แก่ 1) กลุ่มบริการ 2) กลุ่มเตรียมอาหาร 3) กลุ่มโฮมสเตย์ 4) กลุ่มดนตรี 5) กลุ่มการแสดงวัฒนธรรม 6) กลุ่มบายศรี และ 7) กลุ่มการศึกษา รวมถึงกลุ่มงานฝีมือในหมู่บ้าน มีปัจจัยหลายประการที่ส่งผลต่อความยั่งยืนของการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชนบ้านภู 1) หมู่บ้านมีความเป็นน้ำหนึ่งใจเดียวกันอย่างเข้มแข็ง ซึ่งเอื้อต่อการทำงานอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพของการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชน 2) ชาวบ้านได้รับผลประโยชน์ทั้งทางเศรษฐกิจและสังคมจากการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชน 3) ความเข้มแข็งของผู้นำ 4) การสนับสนุนจากรัฐบาลสำหรับการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชน 5) คุณภาพของความสัมพันธ์ทางสังคมภายในชุมชน 6) ความแข็งแกร่งของเอกลักษณ์ทางวัฒนธรรมผู้ไทและ 7) ประสบการณ์คุณภาพสูงที่มอบให้กับนักท่องเที่ยว

คำสำคัญ : การท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรม ; การจัดการโดยชุมชน ; การพัฒนาชนบท ; การมีส่วนร่วมของชุมชน ; การท่องเที่ยวโฮมสเตย์

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to identify the factors affecting the sustainability of community-based tourism (CBT) in Phu village, Ban Pao sub-district, Nong Sung district, Mukdahan province. The data was collected by interviewing the leaders of community-based tourism group. The interview form was used with the sampling group who participated the community-based tourism and other villagers who did not participated and tourists who had previously visited the village were interviewed by phone. The researcher had stayed at the homestays in the villages and had an opportunity to frequently observe the village's activities and participated in the informal discussion related to the community-based tourism with many villagers. The structure of CBT in Phu village is quite complex, consisted of a CBT leader, coordinators and seven functional groups divided according to the functions as follows: 1) service group, 2) food preparation group, 3) homestay group, 4) music group, 5) cultural show group, 6) ritual group, and 7) educational group and also the handicraft group in the village. There is a number of factors that affected the sustainability of CBT in Phu village: 1) the village is unanimous and which supports the working efficiency of CBT, 2) the villagers get both economic and social benefits from CBT, 3) the Strength of the leader, 4) the government support for CBT, 5) the quality of social relationships within the community, 6) the endurance of Phu Thai cultural identity, and 7) the high quality of experiences that provide to the tourists.

Keywords : Cultural Tourism ; Community Based Management ; Rural Development ; Community Participation ; Homestay Tourism

Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the major sources of income in Thailand. Thailand has a wide variety of tourism resources, including beautiful seacoasts, mountains, forests, as well as art and culture that attract different types of tourists. Over the years, the government has supported development of different forms of tourism, including community-based tourism (CBT). CBT has often been cited as an alternative to mass tourism and an approach for tourism to become more sustainable. If developed well, CBT can become a poverty alleviation mechanism and a way to access improvements in quality of life, providing empowerment and greater economic benefit to individuals in local communities (Dodds et al., 2018). CBT emerged both directly out of the efforts of local communities themselves as well as being promoted by outside organizations working on behalf of local communities. The aim has been to involve local people in conserving natural resources, preserving local knowledge and cultural identity, and stimulating the economies of rural communities (Sarobol et al, 2003). CBT management means firstly preservation and control of the tourist developing process (Nagy and Segui, 2020). Since it initiated a program to spur rural development by promoting community-based tourism in 2006, the Thai government has provided funding and administrative support to many villages in the kingdom. Results have been decidedly mixed, however, with only a few communities succeeding in developing CBT on a sustainable basis. A survey done in 2019 of 53 villages in Northeast Thailand that were designated by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) as CBT

villages found that only 29 were actually functioning (Choenkwan, 2022). A number of community-based tourism enterprises that were unsuccessful have been documented by previous research because of unfavorable conditions such as a variety of entwined social, cultural, economic, and political factors (Zielinski et al., 2020). The study by Kunjuraman (2022) found that there were internal and external challenges that affected the success of community-based homestay in Malaysia. For example, Lack of capital resources, lack of trained human resources, lack of interest by younger generation in ecotourism and lack of marketing and promotional activities. Dodds (2018) indicated that participatory planning and capacity building, local management, empowerment of community member, assistance from enablers and collaboration and partnerships facilitating links to market are key elements for CBT success.

In order to develop a clearer understanding of factors that influence the success of community-based tourism, this study was focused on Ban Phu (Phu village) in Mukdahan Province, which is one of the most successful examples of community-based tourism in the Isan region. This village is inhabited by members of the Phu Thai ethnic group. It first opened as a tourism destination in 2006 and is still open for service. It is regularly visited by tourists and people who are interested in learning about Phu Thai culture. Because CBT has functioned successfully in this community for such a long time it offers an ideal site to study and understand the community-based tourism system and its management by the Ban Phu community, with emphasis on identifying the factors that affect the sustainability of CBT there. The information generated by this research can be used to promote, develop, and improve sustainable community-based tourism in other rural communities in Thailand. We would like to express sincere thanks to all villagers in Phu village for their kindness and willingness to provide us with the information on which this paper is based. We also would like to thank for the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) and the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) (MRG6180132) for financial support.

Objectives

1. To describe characteristics of Phu village
2. To describe characteristics of the CBT management system in Phu village.
3. To identify factors affecting the sustainability of CBT in Phu village.

Literature review

Community-based Tourism (CBT)

CBT has been defined in different ways by different scholars. For example, Suansri (2003) defined community-based tourism as being determined and managed by the members of the community who also own various resources for tourism in the community. DASTA (Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration, 2017) said CBT is a form of tourism aiming for environmental, social and cultural sustainability, administered by its own community. It particularly involves community participation in planning, managing, supervising, and setting the direction of tourism, with other organizations as supporters. Community members are mainly responsible for delivering tourism activities, services, and tour experiences to tourists. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Accelerator Lab Thailand (2022) said CBT



refers to a tourism management model that puts local communities at the center of the process: tourism by the local communities for the benefit of the local communities themselves. Thus, it can encompass diverse tourism styles from rural tourism to urban tourism, nature tourism, or even luxury tourism. Essentially, CBT is about community empowerment as it is a process in which local people are empowered to uplift their own livelihood. Therefore, community-based tourism is a tourism that is managed by community members themselves, arising from the participation of the villagers. They have the right to manage and control the resources in the village to provide services and experience to tourists. There may be an outside agency that provides support to people in the community. From this perspective, a key purpose of community-based tourism is to allow tourists to learn together with the local community and preserve various resources in the community together. They may learn about local lifestyles and engage in cultural exchanges with the local people. Patanachan (2019) said that the community must receive fair benefits and income from tourism, which should not negatively affect culture and environment. It should also create pride in the community, resulting in preservation and development of community property. For the purposes of this research community-based tourism will be defined as tourism that is managed by the community for the benefit of the community.

Factors Influencing the Success of Community-based Tourism

Kongpet (2020), who studied about the success of community-based tourism in Thaka Floating Market in Samutsongkhram, found the conditions of success of this Floating Market are as follows: management of villager's participation, acceptance of leaderships, community's social capital, and external agents' support. Suansri (2003) presented a somewhat similar set of the elements of CBT management

- 1) Natural and cultural resources: The community has a rich natural resource base. The community also has a unique culture and traditions.
- 2) Community organizations: There are people who have knowledge and skills in various matters. The villagers feel that they have ownership of the development process and willingly participate in it.
- 3) Management: There are rules and regulations for environmental management. The community has working mechanisms to manage culture and tourism and can link tourism with community development. The distribution of benefits and funds is fair and helps the economic and social development of the community.
- 4) Learning: Tourism activities should create awareness and understanding of different lifestyles and cultures. There is a management system for the learning process between villagers and visitors. It should raise awareness about the preservation of natural resources and culture, both for the villagers and visitors.

There are six indicators used to assess the success of community-based tourism that Rojrungsat (2010) compiled from suggestions and opinions of community tourism experts:

- 1) the community must be involved truly and thoroughly;
- 2) The benefits from community tourism must be fairly distributed within the community;
- 3) Community tourism management must be conducted systematically;
- 4) There should be cooperation and support from relevant organizations both inside and outside the community;
- 5) The community must have unique characteristics to attract tourists. These must be managed in a sustainable way for tourism development;
- 6) the need for environmental conservation must be taken into



account. Therefore, it can be concluded that factors influencing the success of community-based tourism are: 1) Participation 2) Benefits 3) Leaderships 4) Government support 5) Social capital in the village and 6) Uniqueness of the village. These factors influencing the success community-based tourism can be used to analyze the factors that make community-based tourism in Phu village sustainable over the long term.

Phu Thai History and Culture

The Phu Thai constitute the second largest ethnic group after the Thai Lao group in Northeast Thailand. The largest group of Phu Thai may be in the Mekong River Basin and the Phu Phan Mountain Range (Kaewsong, 2018). The Phu Thai people had their original settlements in the Sip Song Chu Tai Region, which was a land overlapping in three countries: China, Laos, and Vietnam. Later, some Phu Thai people immigrated to Thailand due to political reasons. Phu Thai people came into Thailand in two waves of migration during the 18th and 19th centuries. The majority of the Phu Thai people immigrated to Thailand during the reign (1824 to 1851) of King Rama III (Huaboonsan, 2019). Most of the people who speak Phu Thai are found in the provinces near the Mekong River. The provinces with the largest populations speaking the Phu Thai language are Sakon Nakhon and Nakhon Phanom. There are also smaller numbers of speakers of the Phu Thai language in Kalasin, Khon Kaen, Chaiyaphum, Buriram, Mukdahan, Yasothon, Roi Et, Sisaket, Nong Bua Lam Phu, Amnat Charoen, Udon Thani and Ubon Ratchathani (Premsrirat et al., 2004).

The Phu Thai people are commonly said to have a peaceful character. They like to live together as a harmonious group which reflects the unity of their ethnic group. When there is a ceremony in a village all of the Phu Thai people will help each other (Huaboonsan, 2019). Phu Thai culture is unique in terms of costumes, language, and beliefs. Most of the information about the history of the Phu Thai people is hearsay from old people. Thus, different villages in each area have their own different histories.

Systems Theory

The word “system” has been defined as “a set of elements standing in interrelation among themselves and with the environment” (Bertalanffy, 1972). Rambo (n.d) explained that a system is always composed of two or more elements or components or parts. The several components making up a system affect one another through mutual interactions or functional relationships. These interactions commonly involve the flow of energy, materials, or information. The interacting components making up a system are organized into a distinctive structure and the system has a boundary which is the border between the system and its environment. Jackson (2018) defined the systems approach as a problem-solving paradigm. The systems approach considers the attributes of an entire system to achieve the objective of a system, which is to solve a problem. The systems approach allows the designer to manage, encapsulate, and anticipate complex behaviors. The systems approach allows the designer to anticipate and design for emergent behaviors. Chuaungo, M. L. (n.d.) mentioned that the systems approach is based on the idea that everything is inter-related and interdependent. Therefore, it can be concluded that a systems approach is the study of individual components of a system to understand the overall structure of the system and each component



of the system have an interactions with each other and interacted with external environments. The value of using a systems approach include: 1) it is a way of thinking that can effectively deal with complex problems. 2) It is a tool to promote people's way of thinking. 3) It is a tool for developing knowledge in various fields of science. 4) It is a tool for management in planning organizations, departments, or policy and others.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research was designed using a system theory approach. Figure 1 presents a schematic view of the conceptual framework for studying the CBT system. At the center of the diagram is the CBT system of Phu village, which includes the management committee, participating villagers, and the tourists. The next ring is the village context, which includes the environmental, social, and cultural dimensions of the community. The outer ring includes external actors, notably government agencies, that influence the community and the CBT system. The interactions among all these components generates the emergent property of sustainability, which is determined by several factors including: 1) Participation of people in the community 2) Benefits received by the community 3) Leadership 4) Government support 5) Social capital 6) Community identity 7) Tourist experience.

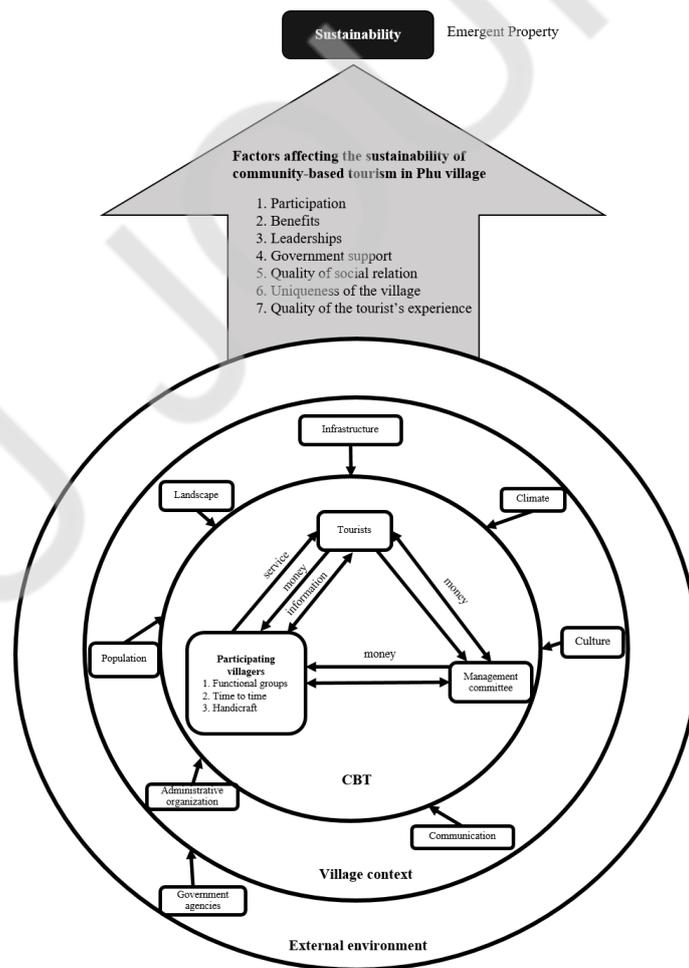


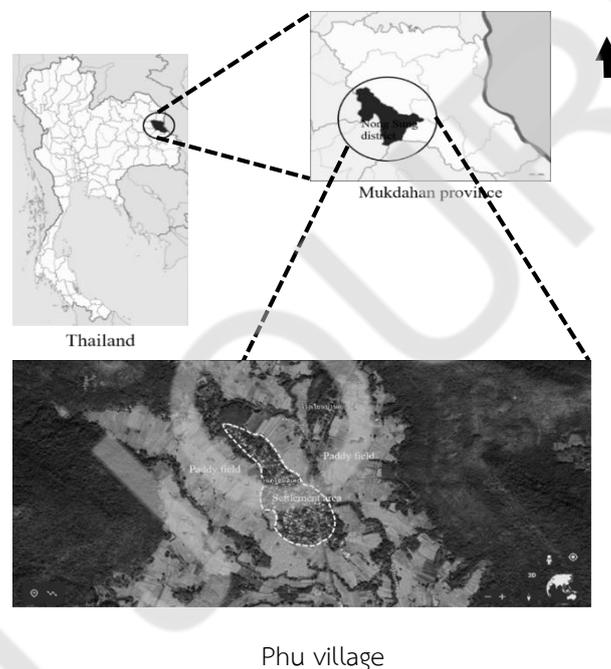
Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Target Population

This research was conducted in Ban Phu (Phu village), Ban Pao sub-district, Nong Sung district, Mukdahan province [16°26'27"N 104°20'03"E] (Figure 2). Data collection was conducted in the village during several one-week visits to the village: July 2019, February 2020, July 2020, December 2021, and April 2022. The research was conducted over such an extended period because fieldwork was interrupted from mid-2020 until the end of 2021 by the Covid pandemic when the village was closed to visitors.

Data were obtained from 64 informants including the village headman, CBT leader, the coordinator, and the leaders of the seven functional groups, 35 participating villagers, 10 non-participating villagers and 3 tourists.



Map scale 1:12,500

Figure 2 Location of the study site

Research Instrument

Data were obtained from several sources using different methods, including obtaining secondary data from government documents and research reports, and collecting primary data through participation-observation, conducting questionnaire surveys, telephone interviews, and semi-structured interviews.

Data Collection

General information about the study area was obtained from documents and research reports. Information was obtained from several different samples of villagers. Sampling was purposive in the case of key informants, who played specific roles in the CBT system. Members of the seven functional groups were



identified by the leaders of these groups. Non-participating villagers were identified using the snowball technique starting with one individual who was known as a non-participant in CBT activities. Detailed qualitative and quantitative data on the CBT system was collected using semi-structured interviews with 10 key informants including the village headman, CBT leader, the coordinator, and the leaders of the seven functional groups. Sub-topics covered in these interviews included the history of CBT in the village, the structure of the CBT committee, the roles of different CBT leaders, and the activities of different functional groups. Qualitative and quantitative information on factors affecting the sustainability of CBT in Phu village was collected using semi-structured interviews with the above listed key informants, excepting the village headman, as well as five members of each functional group and 10 non-participating villagers. Sub-topics covered in these interviews included the benefits, both monetary and non-monetary, gained from participation in CBT, perceptions about leadership, and the extent of external support for CBT. Telephone interviews were conducted with three tourists about their opinion on community-based tourism in Phu village. Six tourists, whose phone numbers were recorded in two homestay guest books were called, but only three answered and agreed to be interviewed. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data about social characteristics and social problems in the village from 20 members of functional groups who were available for interviewing during the period these data were being collected and 10 non-participating villagers who were also interviewed about factors affecting the sustainability of CBT. The respondents were asked to rate the extent to which relations among villagers were friendly and cooperative and assess the seriousness of social problems such as quarreling, gossiping, and drunkenness using a five point scale. Additional information on social relations in the village were obtained through participant observation and non-participant observation.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis for qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with the villagers. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using basic descriptive statistics, including calculating mean values.

Results and Discussion

This section includes three parts: 1) The description of Phu Village 2) The community-based tourism system in Phu village and 3) Factors influencing the sustainability of CBT in Phu village.

1. The description of Phu Village

The village is located approximately 57 km from the provincial capital, 29 km from Nikhom Kham Soi district town and 7 km from Nong Sung district town. The village is located on Road No. 2370, which connects Nong Sung to Nikhom Kham Soi.

Phu village is located on a low hill and surrounded by mountains. The area between the village and the mountains is an agricultural area. The settlement area of the village has an elevation of 230 meters above sea level. The highest summit of the surrounding mountains reaches an elevation of 520 meters. The mountains are mostly covered with natural forest.

According to a Community Development Department survey done in 2019, there were 264 households and 755 people (380 males, 375 females) in residence in the village. Most residents in the village are age 409 or older. Younger villagers are mostly working or studying elsewhere. The majority (73.8%) of villagers are rice farmers, which is a low-income occupation. Working as a government staff is the second most common occupation (14.8%). The villagers prefer to work for the government because this employment provides them with a regular salary and offers other benefits.

2. The community-based tourism system in Phu village

Tourist visits to Phu village are managed by a complex structure. The CBT management committee and its subordinate functional groups, and participating villagers are the main components of the structure of the community-based tourism system in Phu village (Figure 3).

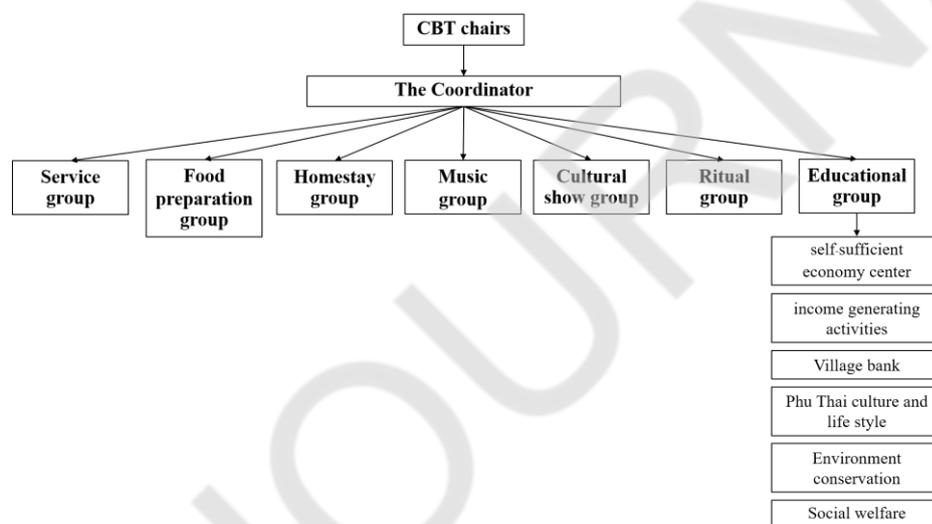


Figure 3 Community-based tourism management structure in Phu village

1) The community-based tourism management committee

The community-based tourism management committee is responsible for organizing and directing activities related to tourism in the village. The committee is composed of the leader, the coordinator, and the heads of the seven functional groups. These include the service group, food group, music group, cultural show group, homestay group, educational group, and ritual group. After the tourists contact to CBT leader, the coordinator will individually contacts the leaders of the functional groups. These group leaders in turn contact the individual members of their groups who are responsible for carrying out various activities and providing different services to the tourists. In addition, the coordinator is responsible for managing money received from the tourists and distributing shares of this income to the functional groups.

2) Participating villagers

Villagers who participate in tourism are divided into three types: 1) those who belong to the functional groups and regularly participate in their activities, 2) those who only join in activities from time to time, and 3) those who belong to handicraft groups producing items to sell to tourists.

3. Factors influencing the sustainability of CBT in Phu village



The objective of this research was to identify factors affecting the sustainability of CBT in Phu village. We found several factors that contribute to the long-term success of CBT in Phu village, including 1) participation, 2) benefits, 3) leadership, 4) government support, 5) quality of social relations, 6) uniqueness of the village, and 7) quality of the tourists' experiences.

1) Participation

Whereas in many CBT villages in Northeast Thailand only a small number of residents take active part in tourism activities, Phu villagers have a very high rate of participation. About 385 persons (approximately 52% of all villagers) from about 200 households (76% of all households) are involved in community-based tourism. These villagers participate in different ways: some belong to the functional groups that interact with the tourists on a regular basis; others only join in activities from time to time; and some villagers produce handicrafts and farm produce that they sell to the tourists as souvenirs. This differentiation in people's involvement is consistent with the findings of Promkan, Pariyattimedhi and Girdwichai (2019) who found in their study Factors Influencing Creative Community-Based Tourism Management found that people in the community participated CBT in different ways, including in activities, coordination, implementation of plans, and exchange of information. In Phu village there are several reasons why villagers do not participate: Some own businesses and work full-time so do not have any free time to take part in tourism activities and some are elderly people who cannot join in the activities. Only one villager said he did not participate because he believed the tourism management system was not transparent about how income distribution to other villagers was done.

2) Benefits

Villagers who participate in tourism activities can receive benefits in several forms, including earning income, gaining new knowledge from interacting with tourists, feeling enjoyment, expressing ethnic pride, and having opportunities for social interaction with other villagers.

2.1) Income

The villagers who are members of functional groups receive income from each visit by groups of tourists. For example, the food preparation group receives 18 baht per tourist; some of the money is used to procure foodstuffs with the remainder divided equally among group members. The ritual group receives 600 baht to perform the *Bai Sri* ceremony. Some of these funds are used to purchase the materials needed to make the centerpiece, with the remainder distributed equally among the members of the group. Members of the music group receive 100 baht per performance. Homestay owners receive 170 baht per tourist with one house accommodating four tourists. The owner uses some of this money to purchase food for the tourists' breakfasts and keeps the remainder. Members of the service group who clean the toilets receive 200 baht, those who clean the cultural learning center receive 100 baht, and those who wash tablecloths are paid five baht per tablecloth. Members of the educational group are paid 50 baht per lecture they present. Members of other groups such as the cultural show group and villagers who only participate in tourist activities from time to time receive task credits. The coordinator records the name of the villagers who participated in each activity. They are paid only after five or six groups of tourists have visited.

The minimum income received from task credits is about 100 baht and the maximum income is about 700 baht per five to six groups of tourists which represents between 20 and 140 baht per group of tourists. Members of handicraft groups who demonstrate their skills to tourists receive task credits and they may also earn income from selling their products to tourists. Other villagers can also bring their own products to sell to tourists.

Figure 4 presents a hypothetical example of the allocation of benefits among various villagers based on a visit to the village by a group of 50 tourists for a one-night stay. The tourists pay 600 baht per person, and their group makes an extra payment of 2,000 baht for the optional educational activities.

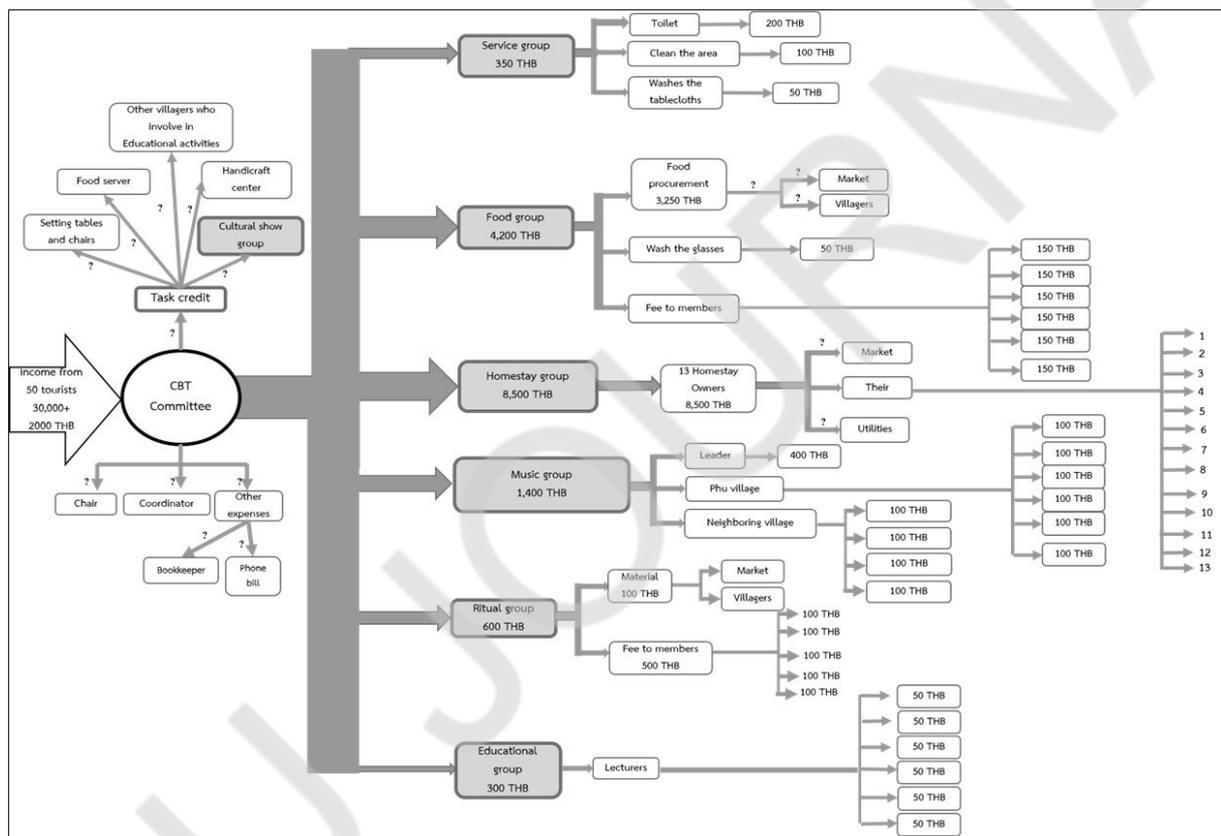


Figure 4 Flow of funds from tourists to the villagers (width of arrows indicates relative size of payments)

The CBT committee will receive a total of 32,000 baht from this group of tourists. Some of these funds will be distributed to the following functional groups: Service group 350 baht, food group 4,200 baht, homestay group 8,500 baht, music group 1,400 baht, ritual group 600 baht, and educational group 300 baht, for a total of 15,350 baht. Some of the remaining money will be distributed among other villagers who participated in tourism-related activities in exchange for task credits and some will be retained by the committee to be employed in the village's future tourism development. The researchers were unable to learn anything about the benefits received by the members of the CBT committee, its chairman, and the coordinator. It is clear that CBT delivers significant extra income to many people in Phu village and also contributes to the overall economic welfare of the community. This finding



is consistent with Suansri (2003) who, in the Community Based Tourism Handbook, asserted that the distribution of benefits and funds is fair and helps the economic and social development of the community is one of the key elements of successful community-based tourism management.

2.2) Enjoyment

Most of the villagers said their participation in tourism activities made them feel happy and that they have fun when they join in activities such as performing in the cultural shows.

2.3) Social interaction

Participating in tourism activities allows villagers to meet and interact with each other. Elderly villagers said they felt happiness at meeting other villagers and tourists. They said it was better than staying at home alone.

Villagers with different types of involvement in community-based tourism (members of functional groups, irregular participants) expressed somewhat different views of the most important benefits they derived from tourism (Table 1). Most members of functional groups (72%) said that earning income was the most important benefit they received, with 36% saying that social interaction was the main benefit they received. Only one individual said that enjoyment was most important. For villagers who participated on an irregular basis, 40% said that income was the most important benefit, while 30% said that enjoyment and another 30% said that social interaction was the most important benefit.

Table 1 Assessment of most important benefit received from tourism activities by different types of participants

Type of participation	Most important benefit		
	Income	Enjoyment	Social interaction
Members of functional groups (n=25)	15	1	9
Only from time to time (n=10)	4	3	3

3) Leadership

CBT in Phu village appears to have benefitted from having had a competent and respected leader. The leader is a 74-year-old man. He has been in his position since community-based tourism was first established in 2006 and is credited by the villagers for creating tourism in the village. In addition to overseeing all community-based tourism activities within the village, he is responsible for managing and coordinating interactions between external agencies and the community. Interviews with 45 villagers about their opinions on the CBT leader revealed that they viewed him as kind, friendly, and helpful because the villagers can talk to him and exchange ideas, or they can ask him for assistance if they have any problems. Most of them willingly cooperate when he asks their assistance. This is consistent with the research of Kongpet (2020) who found that good leadership was an important element in the success of CBT in Thaka Floating Market in Samutsongkhram. There, as is also the case in Phu village, the leader was a long-time resident who had gained the trust of the villagers by taking care of them and paying attention to them.

4) Government support

Community-based tourism in Phu village has received considerable support over the years from various government agencies. The provincial Community Development Department provided technical assistance with planning the cultural learning center and the educational group; a research unit from the Ministry of Culture came to do research on the history of Phu village; and the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC) provided the village with a budget for tourism promotion. The Tourism Authority of Thailand supported promotion of cultural tourism in Phu village. It encouraged villagers to create handicraft products which it displays at events that showcase community arts and culture and thus promote community-based tourism in Phu village. The Ministry of Tourism and Sports is responsible for promoting tourism management, planning, policy, and tourist information. It also assists in the development of homestays in villages, including providing guidance on keeping houses clean and the various items that should be in the houses for use by tourists. It also conducts regular assessments of homestay standards. According to Kongpet (2020), government support aided the successful development of CBT at Thaka Floating Market which received support from many external organizations since its inception in 1998. For example, The Tourism Authority of Thailand improved the road that leads to the community.

5) Quality of social relations

The leader of community-based tourism in Phu village stated that there were three unique aspects of tourism in his village: “good weather, good food, and good mood.” Collectively, these three characteristics make a positive impression on tourists when they come to the village. The villagers themselves largely share the leader’s positive assessment of the good mood that pervades social relations within the community. The 30 villagers who were asked to rate the quality of social relations in the village in terms of the friendliness of its residents and the extent to which they cooperated with each other expressed similarly positive assessments. On a five-point scale, on which 1 was very low and five was very high, the average score for friendliness was 4.5 and for cooperativeness was 4.6. The only villager who ranked friendliness as being at level two said that people were often but not always friendly. In their responses about cooperation, they all said they can work together with other villagers when there are social events in the village, such as wedding, funerals, and merit-making ceremonies. Phu villagers also volunteer to work on projects to improve their community. For example, in 2020, the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives allocated funds to the village to construct a weir and many villagers participated in its construction. Chompoopanya and Rojanatrakul (2022) in their study of the development potential of communities found that factors contributing to successful community-based tourism included the relationship between people in the community.

In addition, in Phu village the same thirty villagers were asked to rate the seriousness of several social problems, gambling, drunkenness, theft, domestic violence, quarrels with neighbors, and gossip, within their community on a five-point scale, in which 5 was very serious and 1 not at all serious. Most problems received an average score of 1, with the exceptions of gambling, drunkenness and gossip, which had average scores of 1.1, 1.6 and 1.3 respectively. This indicates that the villagers do not believe



that their community is afflicted with serious social problems. However, some did express concern that drunkenness was becoming a more serious problem than it had been in the past.

6) Uniqueness of the village

Phu village has several characteristics that make it uniquely attractive to tourists. Phu Thai culture is perceived as exotic by most urban Thai residents and the villagers strive to highlight this. For example, villagers who participate in the tourism activities must dress in colorful Phu Thai traditional costumes. The activities offered to tourists are exemplars of traditional Phu Thai culture, including drum parades, music, and cultural performances. In addition, the food served to tourists is made with local ingredients prepared in the Phu Thai way. Moreover, the village is located in a valley surrounded by forested mountains which offers visitors a beautiful view which only a few other villages in the Northeast can match. The village itself is shady, clean, quiet and suitable for relaxation. For tourists who reside in crowded, noisy, and polluted cities like Bangkok, Phu village must seem like a verdant paradise. This finding is consistent with the research of Mingsiritham and Proyrungroj (2021) who studied CBT in the Mahasawad Canal Community in, Nakhonpathom Province. There the villagers developed a beautiful orchid garden which tourists find very attractive and is a highlight of their visits to the community.

7) Quality of the tourists' experiences

Tourists visiting Phu village come from different parts of the country and have different cultural backgrounds, so, when they spend time in the village and observe the activities of the villagers, they enjoy new and exciting experiences. They can learn something about Phu Thai culture, witness a different way of life, and enjoy friendly interactions with the owners of the homestay houses where they stay. They can try on the local costumes and eat the local food in a party atmosphere. The following comment by a tourist in the guest book kept by a homestay owner typifies the impression that staying in the village makes on visitors:

“Impressed by the excellent service offered to all of us, have a good accommodation and bedding. Breakfast that's both delicious and nutritious. The rural ambiance, village, people, and environment, which was much cleaner than in the city. Thank you to the homestay owner for making us feel welcome. She was friendly and always talked about agriculture. If the opportunity arises, I will return to Phu village.” (09/02/2022)

The researchers were able to contact three tourists by telephone who had previously stayed in Phu village and interview them about their experiences there. Two of them were tourists who came as part of government organized study tours and one was a researcher. They were all very impressed with Phu village including its scenic landscape, ambiance, people, and culture. They all said that, if given the chance, they would like to return to the village. They all noted the friendliness of the Phu villagers. When tourists arrive, villagers will welcome them and engage in friendly conversation with them. These tourists had taken part in a variety of tourism activities, including attending the cultural show and dressing in Phu Thai costumes. Other researchers (e.g., Promkan et al., 2019) have also found that the quality of the tourists' experiences is an important factor influencing the success of CBT of the community



needs to have suitable facilities for tourists such as a restaurant, bathrooms, nice accommodations, convenient transportation, and activities that create happiness for tourists.

Conclusions

Phu village has managed tourism in a systematic fashion which enables the villagers to work together efficiently and harmoniously. The CBT system is divided into 10 main parts: The CBT leader, the coordinator, service group, food preparation group, homestay group, music group, cultural show group, ritual group, educational group, and other villagers who participate in tourism only from time to time. Approximately 51% of all villagers participate in some way in community-based tourism. The members of all the groups can do their assigned tasks effectively. Several factors affecting the sustainability of CBT in Phu village were identified including participation, benefit, leadership, the quality of social relations, uniqueness of the village, government support and quality of the tourists' experiences. However, the multiple benefits the villagers receive from tourism are the most important factor in ensuring the sustainability of the system. This is because the villagers recognize that the benefits, they receive from CBT extend beyond simply income to include the enhanced opportunities for social interactions with other people. This benefit is particularly valued by the many elderly people living in the village. So long as the villagers are content with the benefits that tourism brings them, they will continue to participate in the activities needed to maintain CBT in their community. Finally, an effective leadership is another key factor affecting the sustainability of CBT. The villagers have a good opinion of their CBT leader and most of them willingly comply with his requests to do their assigned tasks in tourist activities.

Contribution

This study presents a systematic look at the processes and functions of community-based tourism and factors affecting the sustainability of CBT in Phu village that may provide useful guidelines for designing projects to develop community-based tourism in other villages, not only in Northeast Thailand but in rural communities in other parts of the world.

Suggestions

This study's findings suggest that CBT can be successfully replicated only in other villages in the Northeast that are endowed with all the assets that contribute to the success of CBT in Phu village, including having the good location, an effective leader, equally benefit distribution, good transportation, strong sense of community solidarity, and a unique culture. Therefore, from this finding it can be suggested to government agencies responsible for promoting CBT that they should focus their efforts on only those villages that have these attributes that contribute to the success of CBT in Phu village. Moreover, the number of potential tourists in Thailand is not infinite. Most of the tourists who come to Phu village are on government-funded study tours to learn about tourism in Phu village, in order that they can establish CBT in their own villages. Some other visitors, also government-funded, are school groups who come to learn about Phu Thai culture. Only a small number of tourists come on privately funded visits. Thus, without government support, even



Phu village would face difficulties in attracting enough tourists for the CBT model to remain viable. It is unlikely that the Thai government budget can support the much greatest number of tourists needed to develop CBT in many more communities in the Northeastern region. It would be desirable to investigate other models of CBT that are not so dependent on government financial support.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is that it was done in only a single community so its findings have limited generalizability. Because the community is quite far from Khon Kaen province it takes a lot of time to travel there and there so the researchers did not have enough time to study other communities for comparative purposes.

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