

Guidelines for Community-Based Tourism Management of Loang-Him-Kow Community, San Klang Subdistrict, San Kamphaeng District, Chiang Mai Province

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Abstract

This research aims to study the tourism contexts of the Loang-Him-Kow Community, San Klang Subdistrict, San Kamphaeng District, Chiang Mai Province, and subsequently propose guidelines for community-based tourism development. Qualitative research was applied to understand the community's tourism contexts for development and promotion. Purposive sampling was used, and as a result, 15 informants were interviewed. Content analysis was then conducted. Regarding the tourism contexts, the physical aspects of the Loang-Him-Kow Community consist of natural and cultural resources, including traditions, local wisdom, and crafts. For administrative management, a board of committee members was selected to prepare community rules and regulations. In terms of tourist activities, craft learning processes and workshops were designed for visitors. For the management of tourism development and promotion, it was found that guidelines should be established, encompassing tourism management, site accessibility, facilities, community-based tourism activities, and tourism marketing.

Keyword: Management; Community-based tourism; Chiang Mai

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Introduction

The 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027) has prepared aspects and guidelines on what Thailand should focus on in the next five years. This plan, along with the 20-Year National Strategy (2018-2037), applies the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, which is compatible with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as principles to drive, plan, and develop the country to be “stable, wealthy, and sustainable” in the long term (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2021). The tourism industry has played an important role in the Thai economic system as it generates income, especially through employment. Tourism promotion has been emphasized to serve tourists, and community-based tourism has been focused on and developed as it forms a basis for tourism development in Thailand (Committee of Tourism Policies, 2019). Community-based tourism can enhance community potential and local economic status through job creation, which will improve the quality of life. Creative tourism, ecotourism, and cultural tourism, including local products and hospitality focusing on local wisdom, have also been promoted as they lead to high-value hospitality, which brings better income to the locals. Community-based tourism provides local experiences to tourists who can learn history and cultures. In other words, a sense of place will be stimulated through relationships between tourists and hosts. Finally, the conservation of both natural and cultural resources is also emphasized, and, moreover, a sense of belonging and pride in local identity will be stimulated (Ministry of Tourism and Sports and Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization), 2016).

Chiang Mai Province, located in the North of Thailand, is one of five upper Northern provinces designated as Lanna civilization tourism development areas, comprising Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lampang, Lamphun, and Phayao (Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017). This means that the unique Lanna civilization, especially its culture and local wisdom, are key factors in developing products for creative tourism and hospitality to achieve quality and sustainability (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2016). Chiang Mai emphasizes tourism development, focusing on natural and cultural resources, along with creative tourism that gives roles to cultures and local wisdom. These aspects are essential for enhancing the value of products and services and for community-based tourism development (Chiang Mai Provincial Office, 2021). Chiang

Mai is a province with a history of more than 720 years, so its cultural heritage and local wisdom indicate cultural prosperity. Various communities, with their historic values, arts, and lifestyles, attract tourists well. In addition, crafts and folk arts are cultural assets that generate income for communities, while conservation and creativity are also realized (Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University, 2019).

Loang-Him-Kow Community is located along the Kow stream, San Klang Subdistrict, San Kamphaeng District, Chiang Mai Province. Its name derives from its geographic aspects, specifically the terrain along the Kow stream (Sujchaya, 2022). The locals originated from Kengtung, Myanmar, during the reign of King Kawila, after Chiang Mai had been governed by Myanmar for more than 200 years. The locals agreed to conserve their nature and culture, including their housing, lifestyles, crafts, and local wisdom related to contemporary Lanna culture. At present, Loang-Him-Kow Community possesses strong Lanna cultural concepts; they have been living compatibly with their culture, so cultural assets are still reflected through products. Examples include Huan Poeng Jai shop, which sells cotton clothes and handmade embroidery; Andaman shop, which sells natural tie-and-dye clothes; and Lan Fai Ngam shop, which sells woven clothes with Lua style, transferred from their ancestors (Uawittaya, 2021). In addition, traditions have been conserved and, moreover, attract tourists, such as the “Yee Peng” festival, when a local market is prepared for tourists to experience local activities and traditions. There is also a weekend market for tourists to visit and buy local foods and souvenirs (Lanna Foundation, 2019). There have been problems in tourism management and development for Loang-Him-Kow Community; for example, there should be a continual number of visitors, with increasing interest in the value of crafts and folk arts through learning activities which lead to support for community products (Thongdeelert, 2022).

As a result, the importance of community-based tourism and the problems of the Loang-Him-Kow Community lead to research questions concerning community-based tourism in the community and management guidelines. This will allow tourism activities to be developed while the locals play roles in managing such activities and resources, simultaneously conserving traditions, cultures, and unique lifestyles, which are their significant resources. Furthermore, the youth in the community will realize their valuable cultures and traditions, fostering a sense of belonging and awareness. In addition, income from tourism activities will be generated,

resulting in economic sustainability while visitors gain new experiences. This finally leads the community to sustainability.

Literature Review

Concepts and Theories Related to Community-based Tourism

Community-based tourism derived from concepts of sustainable development, which leads to sustainable tourism development guidelines (Dangi & Jamal, 2016). As a result, community-based tourism is one type of tourism with an emphasis on cultural, social, and environmental sustainability (Krittayaruangroj et al., 2023). Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization, 2016) defined community-based tourism as a type of tourism managed by the community with creativity and standards to enhance learning, which then led to sustainability in terms of environment, culture, and good quality of life. Community-based tourism did not solely aim at benefits for the locals; rather, it was meant to bring creativity, which would be the main tool for tourism activities in the community. These activities are managed by the locals, who play the most important roles as hosts, giving them rights to manage resources that bring about learning and experiences to visitors, with concern for environmental and cultural sustainability (Suansri, 2003). Community-based tourism becomes an important tool to promote sustainable tourism; moreover, it can generate income for the locals and conserve both the nature and culture of the community (Henama et al., 2019; Kokkhangplu & Kaewnuch, 2018).

The locals must be willing to manage and participate in activities, and income must be distributed fairly for sustainability in economic and environmental aspects to occur. However, understanding within communities must be fostered, and visitors' impressions must be considered, as word-of-mouth is the best marketing tool; however, each community has its own proper practices (Rocharungsat, 2010). In addition, community-based management was meant to strengthen the locals' pride, which could lead to better living conditions; however, the locals must plan, make decisions, and participate in the activities they prepared. The locals themselves could learn and share experiences and differences, and respect each other. Moreover, income and benefits would be distributed, ensuring the sustainability of the environment and local identity (Department of Tourism, 2007). Therefore, tourism development must be based on local needs, with positive attitudes that bring about satisfaction and,

finally, repeat visits (Pham Hong et al., 2021). To sum up, community-based tourism needs participation from the locals, who will gain fair income, and the conservation of nature and culture, which are tourism resources, must be considered, along with proper management guidelines. The locals must be ready to share bodies of knowledge in order to strengthen their communities and encourage visitors to realize the roles and importance of community-based tourism, as it will finally bring about sustainability.

Concepts and Theories Related to Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism consists of the following aspects: 1) Attractions, which can include historic and archaeological sites, museums, architectural heritage, remnants, sculptures, paintings, religious practices and traditions, music, performances, films, languages, clothing, foods, manners, and festivals; 2) Tourism marketing, which concerns quality tourists who would gain satisfaction, learning, and experiences through activities, with a focus on the conservation of nature and culture; 3) Local participation, which concerns management by the locals who would develop tourism activities and gain income and benefits for better living conditions; 4) Awareness, which would be stimulated by tourism activities with knowledge and bring about a correct understanding, especially of nature and culture (Jittangwattana & Sriksampha, 2014); 5) Learning through activities; and 6) Conservation, revitalization, and value (Phookpu et al., 2021). Cultural tourism development is about the beliefs and common values of a group, which will then be transferred to following generations. It is about the acceptance of the past into the present; in other words, identity will be transferred and a bond will, at the same time, occur (Boonlae et al., 2021). This can be concluded as cultural tourism focusing on cultures and new experiences through related factors in the sites, with local identity, such as historical and architectural value, ancient sites, artifacts, lifestyles, languages, clothing, foods, beliefs, etc. However, participation from stakeholders is important to raise awareness, pride, and a sense of belonging. Moreover, income will be generated for the locals, while tourists gain satisfaction, new knowledge, and experiences, all while respecting differences.

Theories Related to Tourism Composition

There are five main aspects directly related to tourism: 1) Attractions, including natural, cultural, and man-made ones such as theme parks and MICE business; 2) Activities, concerning the impression and interest provided to tourists during their stay, such as trekking, bird watching, and light and sound shows; 3) Accessibility, referring to convenience and

comfort for tourists to reach the destination; however, obstacles and traffic conditions need to be considered as well; 4) Amenities, including basic infrastructure at the site, such as accommodation, restaurants, entertainment, electricity, healthcare units, security guards, interpretation signs, souvenir shops, and other necessary services, as these are factors to be prepared and assessed; and 5) Accommodation, which must be prepared sufficiently, and should not be located too far from attractions, with choices such as hotels, resorts, bungalows, and guesthouses (Dickman, 1996 as cited in Koatcharee, 2012). Furthermore, (Jittangwattana, 2006) added three aspects for tourism: 1) Attraction is considered the first factor for tourists to travel, and this should bring them an impression, which can vary depending on each individual tourist. Attractions can be natural areas, lifestyles of each community, traditions, festivals, rest areas, and activities. 2) Accessibility is an important factor that will lead tourists to the destination, with convenience and safety. 3) Amenity will create an impression on tourists and can affect the length of their stay or their decision to revisit, such as an information center, service center, restaurants, lighting system, water, waste management, public toilets, safety and security system, and interpretation signs. In conclusion, this study was conducted considering important compositions and bases essential for tourism management of the Loang-Him-Kow Community in San Klang Subdistrict, San Kamphaeng District, Chiang Mai Province, comprising: 1) Attraction; 2) Accessibility; 3) Amenities; and 4) Activities.

Research Methodology

This qualitative research was conducted to study the tourism contexts of the Loang-Him-Kow Community, and then to propose tourism development guidelines for community-based tourism, with details as follows

Samples

The participants of this research were locals in the Loang-Him-Kow Community and stakeholders in community-based tourism of Loang-Him-Kow Community, San Klang Subdistrict, San Kamphaeng District, Chiang Mai Province, selected by purposive sampling. The criteria for selection included stakeholders involved in tourism development and managing tourism-related businesses in the Loang-Him-Kow Community. There were 15 informants, consisting of six residents, seven persons who own accommodation businesses, restaurants, souvenir shops, and related

services, one person from a governmental office, and one main informant who is the Head of Loang-Him-Kow Community.

Research Tools

1. A semi-structured interview was used as a guideline for interviewing on tourism contexts in three areas: 1) the area, which consisted of tourism resources or attractions, accessibility, and amenities to support tourism; 2) management, which included the structure of community-based tourism with benefit distribution; and 3) activities, which comprised activity preparation for tourists.

2. Interviews and a focus group discussion were conducted for community-based tourism management guidelines for the community

Data Collection

1. Observation of the general conditions of the community and adjacent areas, including the activities and occupations of the locals, along with verification of secondary data from documents from libraries, the internet, and related research.

2. Semi-structured interviews for tourism contexts in terms of areas, management, and activities.

3. Focus group discussion with the target participants, including locals, entrepreneurs, and government officials, along with interviews and focus group discussions to collect data that will be useful for community-based guidelines management.

Data Analysis

This research aims to study the tourism contexts of the Loang-Him-Kow Community, covering aspects of community-based tourism, which are: 1) area; 2) management; and 3) activities. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews. All data was verified before the analysis process. According to Bodhisita (2011), content analysis was based on categorized data from interviews and group discussions, leading to a conclusion of the community contexts and the development of guidelines.

Results

According to the study of community-based tourism contexts of Loang-Him-Kow Community, it was found as follows:

Community-based Tourism Contexts of Loang-Him-Kow Community

In terms of area, the community is located along the Kow stream, with an abundance of natural resources, especially large trees like rain trees, banyan trees, olive trees, and Siamese rough bush; moreover, the locals value natural conservation. For cultural resources, strong traditions, local wisdom, and crafts have still been preserved. There is a cultural route with handicraft shops owned by the locals, selling items such as clothes, foods, and souvenirs. A local market has been organized during the Yee Peng Festival since 2015, with different themes, allowing not only locals but also tourists to participate. In terms of accessibility, tourists can visit the community by personal cars or taxi. There are facilities such as toilets, shops, restaurants, accommodations, and a tourist information center. Interpretation tools are available for tourists to gain the information they need. In terms of management, representatives are selected by the locals, consisting of a President, Vice President, secretary, treasurer, and four committee members. There is also another group of committees responsible for complaints from locals and vendors. A community fund has been organized, and 300 baht is collected from every household to be spent on related matters such as waste management and cleaning.

There are rules and regulations for members to follow, which cover: 1) conserving natural resources; 2) preserving traditions and craftsmanship; 3) cooperating and helping other members and neighbors; 4) maintaining the identity of local products and crafts; 5) organizing annual events during Yee Peng Festivals; 6) allowing similar types of products for the weekend market; 7) permitting activities to be held, but only those compatible with the village atmosphere and that do not disturb other members; 8) requiring land and property sales to be informed to members first; 9) holding regular meetings, with all members obliged to follow the rules; and 10) allowing all problems to be reported to the committee in order to find mutual solutions. Furthermore, learning activities have been prepared for tourists, such as workshops at some shops during the weekend market.

Development Guidelines for Community-based Tourism for Loang-Him-Kow Community

There were factors that should be considered to develop and promote community-based tourism in the area, which were tourist attractions, accessibility, amenities, community-based tourism activities, and marketing.

1. Tourist attractions: Learning and understanding of roles in both natural and cultural conservation should be stimulated. All members of the community should play roles and be responsible for the value of cultural heritage and the value of nature. However, they should participate in all conservation activities, with cooperation from related tourism offices. Moreover, the locals should have a chance to visit other community-based tourism sites in order to learn and develop their products and activities.

2. Accessibility: Roads and routes inside the community needed to be managed in order to provide convenience and safety for tourists. At present, the cultural route is narrow with insufficient interpretation tools. There needs to be cooperation and budget support from the government and stakeholders.

3. Amenities: Existing amenities in the community need to be improved, such as the number of clean toilets, parking lots, direction signs, wheelchairs for the disabled and elderly, first-aid kits, a tourist information center, waste bins, and other related issues.

4. Community-based tourism activities: More creative activities for tourists should be prepared so that tourists can participate and learn, then understand the cultural assets and heritage of the community. Examples include embroidery workshops, nature-based activities, or craft workshops with new designs, along with shopping opportunities.

5. Marketing: Community-based tourism information and activities should be promoted via online platforms to attract tourists. However, printed media are also necessary, and this could be supported by government offices.

Conclusion and Discussion

According to the research results, the discussion can be as follows:

1. In terms of tourist attractions, learning and understanding roles in natural and cultural conservation, including traditions and local wisdom, should be supported, along with awareness and responsibility in such activities. This supported the research done by (Phookpu et al., 2021) that cultural heritage and local resource management were parts of

the process to stimulate understanding in value, love, and pride in their local wisdom. Collected data of cultural heritage should be systematically managed for conservation later. It also supported principles of community-based tourism management by the Department of Tourism, 2007) that community needed to be supported with tourism activities that provoked learning and perception in their roles towards natural and environmental conservation.

2. In terms of attraction access, routes inside the community should be managed for more convenience and safety as, at present, they are narrow, complicated, and lack interpretation signs, and this supports the research done by (Deepholphon and Boonsiri, 2022) in Phai Hu Chang Community in Bang Len District, Nakhon Pathom Province that many more routes to community should be provided with proper signs to reduce confusion.

3. In terms of amenities, they were important and needed to be improved, such as sufficient toilets, parking lots, wheelchairs for the elderly, first-aid kits, fire alarm, tourist information center, waste bins, and CCTV for security reasons. This supported the study by (Boondej, 2018) that amenities must be prepared, such as information signs, parking lots, information center, and more shops.

4. In terms of tourism activities, more creative tourism activities should be designed so that tourists could participate and learn to understand the local wisdom through experiences, and this supported the research done by (Wongkham, 2019) that activities could simulate understanding of the locals themselves, then sense of belonging will be strengthened, and activities could be, for instance, natural resource survey, meeting, and site visit for more understanding in community-based tourism.

5. In terms of tourism marketing, many more platforms and channels for public relations needed to be concerned, especially the online ones, to attract more tourists, and this supported the study in Baan Nam Chieo, Trat Province by (Thamrujee, 2021) that marketing communication, especially online media, helped stimulate perception in community-based tourism, then tourists decided to visit the community. This also supported the research by (Ongkhrutraksa, 2018) that modern marketing communication could lead to trust in the product, then buying decision will be made, and creative economy emphasized the content that enhanced learning, remembering, and interest in products, and spread of information was also essential. This supported the study by (Udomsilp, 2013) in guidelines for sustainable

ecotourism of Khlongn Khoan, Samut Songkhram Province, that public relations must be promoted as it affected number of tourists, and provincial offices must support this.

Conclusion: Community-based tourism is regarded as a tool that helps community development. Cooperation among the locals and stakeholders led to pride and sense of belonging and resource conservation, for example their cultures and traditions. Community-based tourism also led to learning and exchanging cultures, leading to new experiences. However, the locals must play important roles in management of all aspects, including social, cultural, economic, and environmental ones, then the community could be sustainable with less negative impacts.

Recommendations for Communities and the Locals

There should be promotion and creation of creative activities that support local traditions and lifestyles, so that pride and a sense of belonging will be stimulated. Unique tourism activities with cooperation from the younger locals are essential, as they need to absorb the local wisdom and bodies of knowledge. In addition, local products, especially crafts, should be supported and promoted, as they will generate more income. However, marketing and public relations via digital media, social media, and related applications need to be considered. The content should be able to convey the identity of the communities with unique tourist activities. Furthermore, up-to-date and user-friendly channels and platforms for public relations need to be focused on. Strategic plans and policies to support community-based tourism must be implemented continuously, with ongoing assessment, so the locals will be able to improve and develop activities for tourists by themselves.

Recommendations for Further Studies

There should be studies of other communities that share some aspects in common, in order to promote and develop tourism routes that can connect to other communities. This can lead to opportunities and benefits for communities while tourists gain more experience.

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