

Local Community Development through Community-Based Tourism Management: A Case Study of Mae Kampong Village

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Abstract

The growth in tourism sector in Thailand is increasing rapidly over the past decades. Despite the conventional tourism that has reputation globally, another type of tourism is also slowly growing in Thailand. With the assistance from scholars, public and private organizations, the non-governmental agencies, governmental officials and environmentalists, the community-based tourism (CBT) has become an alternative for tourists who would like to experience the local ways of life. Many communities tried to operate the CBT, however they were struggled by the poor management, and failed to be successful. The paper explores the context of the CBT in Thailand, analyzes the CBT management of the case study of the village called Mae Kampong located in Chiang Mai, the province in the Northern part of Thailand, and extracts the important management strategies that made the village successful on the CBT operation. Collecting data, observing the phenomena in the village, and reviewing literatures for information and knowledge on the management of Mae Kampong, this paper argues that the success of Mae Kampong village is based upon the management system, the local participation, and the income distribution system.

Keywords: community development, community management system, community based tourism, local participation, income distribution

1. Introduction

Tourism has played an integral part to the development of communities in Thailand for many years. Previously, many communities suffered from poverty and the lack of access to resources. It seems that tourism can become a function that drive the country and increase income of people which could lead communities in Thailand to the state of sustainability. However, it is obvious that not everyone benefits from tourism. Only small group of people, such as tour agents and travel operators from the conventional tourism sector, seem to enjoy the profits and leave the local people continue to suffer by the unfair income distribution and the decadence in society and culture (Phommavong & Sörensson, 2014), while exploit the local natural resources at the same time (Pettinger, 2014).

In order to solve the income distribution problem, the decadent cultural problem, and natural conservation problem which led to the more serious poverty problem, the emergence of another type of tourism, the community-based tourism (CBT), could become the key. It is believed that the CBT can help people in local communities to overcome these mentioned problems (Lucchetti & Font, 2012) as the CBT is about the way to obtain profits for poor people (Phommavong & Sörensson, 2014). For more than a decade, the CBT in Thailand has been developed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), scholars, and the local communities to help local people in finding a way to overcome the poverty problem, while at the same time provide them opportunity and more access to resources. If communities in Thailand can take advantage of the CBT, then the development of these communities could become fruitful and successful.

In reality, however, not all communities in Thailand succeed and achieve the developmental goals through the CBT. In other words, success seems to be difficult to prove as it depends upon the perspective and perception of each community. If one community call themselves successful as they are well-managed in terms of natural resources, then other communities can also be successful in many other ways such as fair-distributed income or well-established social welfare. However, these communities need to realize that they should consider success in as many perspectives as possible; the wider and more points of view they have, the more success they will become. If a community can accomplish the goals in conserving environment and distributing income fairly, while at the same time establishing the social welfare, then this community will not only be successful in terms of management but they will also be reaching the

goals of the sustainable development where the country should benefit greatly.

This paper will highlight the CBT success of one of the most successful villages, Mae Kampong, located in the Northern part of Thailand. The village is famous for its CBT management. This research aims to gather information regarding the context of Mae Kampong, to analyze the way the village has managed to become successful on the CBT, and to extract the important management strategies that drive the development of Mae Kampong village significantly and sustainably. Mae Kampong village benefits from its location positioned in Chiang Mai, the second largest city in Thailand, where there are 5.5 million tourists who visited the city in 2013 which the proportion of the Thai tourists to foreign tourists are at 3 to 2 (Department of Tourism, 2014).

Even though there are many scholars who study on the CBT in Thailand, only few works address on the way that CBT should be managed. Therefore, this paper emphasizes on the CBT management front to provide the lessons on the way to manage tourism communities, and to reach the goal for community development sustainably. After generalizing the details over the CBT, and describing the methodology for gathering the data, this paper will continue to analyze the management of Mae Kampong village, and extract the strategies and factors that facilitate the development systematically through the concept of the CIPP model for evaluation. Most importantly, it is believed that the success of Mae Kampong village is based upon the management system, the local participation, and the income distribution system.

1.1 CBT: Characteristics, Advantage and Limitation

The idea and knowledge of the CBT in Thailand is formed and based upon the goals of sustainable development. Three aspects of the development consist of the economic development, the social development, and the environmental development (World Bank Development Education Program, 2001; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2013). In practical way, the CBT requires communities and local members to participate in the activities throughout the processes. The local members are responsible to plan, to create tourism activities, to manage resources, and to distribute the profits to the participants (Mountain Institute, 2000; Mitchell & Reid, 2001; Mitchell, 2003; Blackstock, 2005; Suansri & Yeejaw-haw, 2013).

The characteristic of the CBT can be perceived and described from another aspect, the tourist's point of view. The CBT is seen as an adventurous and challenging in terms of experiencing new things such as ways of life, culture and traditions (Putjorn, 2013). To be more specific, tourists can enjoy local meals, have opportunities to understand how local people are living, and travel in any season of each year. More importantly, Tourists can experience the tourism activities that are basically arranged and organized by the community.

Despite understanding the characteristics of the CBT, there are several advantages comparing to the conventional tourism that need to be mentioned. Such advantages in the context of Thailand are as follows: 1) the full ownership of the CBT belongs to the local members, which makes all of the local people the owner of the tourism project, 2) The process of the CBT encourages local members to participate in each activity namely policy-making, planning, tourism activity creating, income generating, and profit distributing, and 3) the implementation of the CBT allows both local people and tourists to understand more on the cultural differences, which tourists may come from all over the world (Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration, 2013).

Although there are several advantages of the CBT, some communities may not be as successful as they expected which is limited by some circumstances. The issues of geographical location, managerial ability, employment status, and public health, may stall the community development (University of Sydney, 2005; Kontogeorgopoulos, Churyen & Duangsaeng, 2014). Many communities in Thailand share the common problem as they are located remotely from the city centers, which most of the communities are difficult to reach to as there is no appropriate road to get into the locale. In this regard, local members are hardly having knowledge and understanding on the CBT, technology, networking, and management. As a consequence, these communities would find the difficulty in finding budget and financial supports, which make them remain undeveloped.

Referring to the knowledge on characteristics, advantages and limitation of the CBT, it provides a deeper understanding for local members in order to arrange, organize and manage their communities. In the process of policy and plan making, the members should have a distinct direction to drive the communities forward. Therefore, it is very important for local community members to have a distinct and clear picture of the CBT, and get on the same page. So, they will have a mutual goal of the communities, which could increase the level of local participation greatly.

1.2 Methodology

The major objective of this research was to extract the strategies for the CBT community management, which the case of

Mae Kampong village was raised to be an example. This study was conducted using qualitative approach in order to obtain the data on the CBT management. It is believed that the qualitative method allows researchers to gather an in-depth scenario including the interpretation of culture and history, and also achieve the participants' perspective (Ryan, 2006; Gray, 2008). Then, the gathered data on the CBT management was analyzed through the concept of the CIPP model that divides the process of the management into four steps, which are the analysis on the context, the inputs, the processes, and the products (Stufflebeam, 1971; Stufflebeam, 1974).

Despite the observations employed by the researchers, the in-depth interviews of this study were conducted by using convenient sampling technique to gather data. The interviewees are purposively selected consisted of four groups namely the village headman, tourism committee, private business operator, and local members. The rationales of the interviewing of these groups of people were to gather necessary information on the Mae Kampong management, and to obtain the opinions and comments regarding the CBT from various points of view. The in-depth interviews were employed based upon the semi-structure set of questions. Several topics were raised during interviews, including the context of village, human and natural resource management, community rules and agreements, management system, income distribution, social welfare, and community development. In addition, other questions related to the information and details were asked simultaneously. The triangulation was also paid attention to validate the information gathered from the data collection process (Boonratana, 2011).

As for the concept of the CIPP model for evaluation, the model was created and widely used for program evaluation in the field of education and administrative organizations (Stufflebeam, 1971). The researchers decided to employ this concept to assess the management of Mae Kampong's CBT. CIPP is an acronym for context, input, process and product (Ho et al., 2011). Firstly, the context evaluation can provide the scenario of the village's position, strengths, weaknesses, and assets (Leahy et al., 2009). It enables the researchers to know the geographical location of the village, the cultural and natural resources available for the CBT management. Secondly, the input evaluation can provide information on what are required to project into the process (Mazur, 2013). In other words, it could identify what the village used as the input to achieve its development goal. Thirdly, the process evaluation helps overview the process of the village (Zhang et al., 2011). Fourthly, the product evaluation indicates the result of the overall operation, which in this case is the CBT management of Mae Kampong village. One of the advantages of the CIPP model for evaluation is that rather than trying to prove something, the CIPP model tries to find a way to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of organizations (Stufflebeam, 1974), which can be used as a tool for further self-assessment as well (Ho et al., 2011).

2. Mae Kampong Analysis

The analysis of Mae Kampong conducted under the concept of CIPP model for evaluation. According to Stufflebeam (1971), the model could provide a better understanding of the village in terms of context which can be used to determine the objectives, the course of actions, and the resources available. Furthermore, the model allows the village management to realize what are required for CBT, and use them as the input to run the overall process in order to achieve the objectives which is considered to be the product. Thus, the following are the analysis of the CBT of Mae Kampong village.

2.1 The context of Mae Kampong village

It is very important to understand the context of the data collection site before investigating more on the management part of Mae Kampong. The village is located on the mountainous area, fifty kilometers from the city of Chiang Mai. The village could be reached traveling from the city towards northeast into Huai Kaew sub-district, Mae On district. The position of the village is approximately 1,000 kilometers above sea level covering nearly 6.22 square kilometers. In the past, the early members of the village migrated from the district nearby, Doi Saket, in order to search for the site for tea cultivation. Later, in 1914, the village became official. According to the statistics of the governmental agency, the Rural Development Information Center (2013), the total population of Mae Kampong village is 333. At the present, even though Mae Kampong is very famous for its CBT operation, the village still lacks of the public transportation which makes it difficult for people to reach to the locale.

Despite having known the geographical location of the village, Mae Kampong is also enriched with natural and cultural resources. For natural resources, one sixth of the area (or approximately 1 square kilometer) is the forest. The diversity of the forest at Mae Kampong is high, where there are several kinds of wild animals, trees, and plants, especially the wild orchid. In addition, this forest is used as a campsite for ecotourism, which is strictly not for timber forest product. Furthermore, the village also has the waterfall, which its origin is from the natural stream. Additionally, the fall can be divided into seven levels, and there is an access trail to reach all of them. Moreover, the village also possesses the stone

cliff, the stone garden, and the rocking stone. These natural resources could become splendid attractions for tourists.

On cultural resources front, Mae Kampong also possesses the unique Thai culture and way of life. People speak the dialect of the Northern Thai, and believe that they are not sharing the same ethnic group with people from the Central part of Thailand, and they have their own traditional customs. The most famous attraction among the others is the fermented-tea production. Another place that is the center of the village is the Khamta Phreksa temple. The place is the one and only temple in Mae Kampong, where ninety-five per cents of the village population who are Buddhism pay respect to (Phuangmala, 2010). Additionally, the village also has seven occupational groups to support the CBT, including the groups of the local guides, the housewives, the traditional music, the traditional massage, the herbal medicine, the blacksmith, and the bamboo weaving. With these cultural resources Mae Kampong possesses, the local members can combine resources with natural resources, and create variety of tourism activities for the CTB.

Not only the village has its handful of both natural and cultural resources, but Mae Kampong village also benefits from the national tourism policy. Back in 2001, the government of Thailand promoted the One Tambon One Product campaign (OTOP) to stimulate tourism of Thailand. That year, Mae Kampong was also obligated to submit the project to participate in the campaign, and the village committee submitted the CBT project. Fortunately, the village received the award in 2001 and also in later year. As a champion from the OTOP campaign, Mae Kampong was known by many people through the advertisement channel of the government (ThaiTambon.com, 2015). Recently, the Thai government declared that the year 2015 is the year for tourism on the Thai way. The government also strengthened the tourism network of organizations that working on the issue to support tourism as much as possible. In this regard, it is expectable that the communities in Thailand to have more distribution, and more access to financial support from the central government (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2015).

Furthermore, Mae Kampong among other communities in Thailand are also having more advantage as another organization that is directly responsible for the matter also have the marketing plan of the year 2015 to help promoting tourism. According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (2015), the special interest tourism including the homestay, which is strength of Mae Kampong village, was stressed and raised to become priority. Through this channel, Mae Kampong would have more channels for advertisement nationally and internationally. Thus, it is become clearer that Mae Kampong village has the supportive context for its CBT management, which enables and drives the village to the extent of success.

2.2 *The important inputs*

Referring to the context of Mae Kampong, the village is handful with tourism resources naturally and culturally. It depends on the member of the village to plan, gather and manage these resources to support the CBT. According to the gathered data, human resources, cultural resources, natural resources, rules and agreements, and budget are considered to be the key inputs for Mae Kampong's CBT management. The first and most important input to be mentioned is human resources. In the past, Mae Kampong was only a village with only few people settled in the mountainous area. So, manpower was the only available resource for developing the community at the time. Members of the village were gathered by the village headman in order to sort out some of the village problems including no roads and forest fire. These members lent their hands helped making trials for transportation, which later were developed into appropriate roads. Furthermore, the members of the village also helped making the forest fire prevention lines using the wood from the forest to build them. Moreover, the village also has the training programs for human resource development in later years. The trainings help local people to have a better understanding and increase the awareness regarding the CBT to support the community development (Armstrong, 2006; Delić & Smajlović, 2014).

Despite the human resources that are available to the village, Mae Kampong also has natural and cultural resources to be used as the input for management. As mentioned in the context of the village, Mae Kampong has several natural resources to be used as tourism attractions, such as waterfall, stone cliff, and stone garden. The cultural resources of the village, likewise, offer several options for the local members. With the famous fermented tea, Mae Kampong could have the unique product to sell. In addition, other products such as tea leaves pillow can also be made to serve markets. Moreover, the occupational groups could serve as stations or visiting spots for tourists. Furthermore, the tourism committee of the village also collaborated with the private sectors to add more tourism activities to the community. Thus, combining all resources and managing them well, Mae Kampong village would have plenty of tourist attractions to offer to tourists.

More importantly, one of the inputs for the successful management that cannot be left out is rules and agreements. Even though national tourism policies have been in favor to Mae Kampong at the present time, the local members still found it was difficult to get their hands on public resources. So, the people of the community had to establish their own rules and agreements to be able to manage themselves. Still, these rules and agreements were not legitimate. Thus, the

village headman needed to establish links with local authorities and governmental organizations in order to legitimize the rules and agreements (Laverack & Thangphet, 2007). As a consequence, Mae Kampong finally secured legitimated rules and agreements that not only granted them the enforcement, but the village also received the accesses to public resources. For example, members of Mae Kampong village had to pay membership fee annually to be collected as a village fund, which could use for supporting and facilitating the village affairs. Another case to be raised is rules and agreements on environment. The local members of Mae Kampong village were serious about the environment conservation, so they limited the use of forest resources at the minimum. There were several levels of punishment, such as warning and fining, for people who violated these rules and agreements. Therefore, all of the mentioned inputs for management of Mae Kampong village are the basic inputs required by a community to begin and drive the CBT process.

2.3 *The driving process*

Since 1994, the headman of Mae Kampong believed that with the available resources in the village, it is very promising for the community to bend direction towards tourism. With the participation of all local members, it was possible to transform an agricultural village into the CBT village. The local members used their houses and facilities to be accommodations for tourists to stay overnights with and experience the local ways of life. Furthermore, each of the occupational groups could be placed as visiting points to provide local wisdom, knowledge and activities for tourists. In addition, natural resources that can be transformed to be tourist attractions can be included into the list. The main services of Mae Kampong were homestay service, a day trip for individual tourists, a day trip with local guide, and an overnight stay. The implementation and essence of the homestay service was that all local members had to enlist themselves to be hosts for tourists. The village headman was the one who assign which house would receive and welcome tourists each group. The assignments will be cross-checked by the local members themselves as everyone was on the list and waiting for their ques. Thus, the people of Mae Kampong agreed to organize the tourism activities based upon their way of life and available natural resources. Moreover, they also added the tourism services including local meals to serve the needs of tourists, who expected to fully understand the local ways. Although the village already had available resources to manage, the members of Mae Kampong still needed to establish the management system that would allow them to survive in the tourism realm sustainably.

Based upon the participatory approach and the social problems of Mae Kampong village in the past, the headman and the local members needed to search for the solution. The problems, such as the lack of occupation, income distribution, village fund, and public health, limited this village from the development. These problems seem to be chained from one to another. To solve these problems strategically, the members of Mae Kampong decided to establish the management system that would be suitable for their village, which is the co-operative management system as they believed that it could provide the local members fair income distribution with transparency, accountability and the prospect of the development (United State Department of Agriculture, 1997). At the initial stage of Mae Kampong CBT operation, the local members decided to set up the tourism committee to serve as the board of director. The committee consisted of nine members, and one of them would be elected as the chairperson. All the actions and decision-making processes of the village must have been agreed on a mutual basis by the committee members before further have a mutual consent in the general meeting. Then, the committee identified the management tools namely accounting system, control reports, and evaluation. All of these tools enabled the tourism committees to manage the CBT of the village systematically. According the tourism committee of Mae Kampong, despite management processes that needed to be followed up and checked by the local members, the systems on accounting, controlling, and evaluating had to be transparent to everyone. In doing so, the committee had to provide and present implementation reports to the local members on a regular basis. Once these processes were established firmly, Mae Kampong was managed towards success by gaining profits from the CBT operation.

Despite having the management resources and the management system, the most important thing that could hold the unity and participation of the local members is the fair income distribution system. Thirty per cents of the profits gained from the CBT operation were taken and added into the village fund account, while another seventy per cents were distributed to local members based upon the list of members who were assigned to accommodate tourists on homestay services. These rates of distribution were also applied to other activities including the income from occupational groups, massaging for example, and other income related to the CBT. Because of this income distribution system, most but not all the local members of Mae Kampong village seemed to be satisfied with the situation. Moreover, the profits distributed to the village fund were used to solve the social problems of the village, which could achieve the objectives of Mae Kampong.

2.4 The management products of Mae Kampong

Despite the mentioned environmental conservation which is one of the development goals of the village, Mae Kampong also benefits from the CBT economically. The CBT management generated income and profits to the village. As stated in the previous section that the local members received the distributed income from the tourism committee. People who had more capitals or invested more, such as having numbers houses for tourist accommodation would have been distributed more comparing to another who had only one house (Untong, Phuangsaichai, Taweelertkunthon, & Tejawaree, 2006). This situation did not please everyone, but it was acceptable as local members still gained their income. In other words, it could be said that the people who invested more would have more returns as well.

Another significant product of the management is that Mae Kampong has developed the community social welfare system. The tourism committee established the village fund of the community, and collected money from local members on a yearly basis including the thirty per cents share obtained from the CBT profits. This fund was used for the purpose of solving the social problems of Mae Kampong. Despite agricultural-related jobs, many occupations such as local guides, accountants, massagers, handicraft makers, musicians, and art performers were created. Moreover, when local people had jobs, they also had income. In addition, the welfare of local members including the supporting money for the newborn children, the injured people and the funeral were distributed to the members.

Furthermore, the village fund also enabled the local members to develop their community. The fund was spent on the local road development, the public toilet, electricity system, the water system, the transportation for tourism service. When the infrastructure of the village was improved, it became easier to people from outside to reach to the village. More supports including budget, knowledge and technology from external organizations either governmental, non-governmental, or private ones could be offered. It was undeniable for the village members benefited from the development of their community even though some of them may not receive high income distribution. But as mentioned earlier, the local members understood that the income distribution rate depends upon the capitals that were invested. If this loop of development was continually successful, then the people of Mae Kampong would be pleased as their life quality was improved. Moreover, the tourism committee also emphasize on the development of the human capital. Parts of the village fund were spent on the training of the local members to increase knowledge on the CBT management, activities and services. Last but not least, not only the village fund that was found at the village, but the Mae Kampong savings and credit group was also found. On the one hand, the purpose of the group was to encourage people to save their money. On the other hand, the savings and credit group enabled people who had limitation on costs and capitals to access to resources.

3. Conclusion

In order to highlight the successful Mae Kampong's CBT operation, the most important reason behind the success was the management. The management of the CBT was the bridge to connect the available resources of Mae Kampong, and the needs of local people. With the strategies employed by the village headman, the tourism committee, and local members, the village chose the co-operative management system to operate the CBT of the community. The co-operative system allowed all members to participate in all CBT processes as they lived in the context of the community, used natural and cultural resources as the inputs, monitored the management process of the tourism committee, and taking profits from the products of management. Profits gained by the CBT were returned to local members both directly as the distributed income, and indirectly as the social welfare and the development of their community. In conjunction with the community development, rules and agreements also played an important role to the management's success as they were used as a controlling method, and the environmental conservation tool. Thus, the coherence, the participation and the collaboration of the local members was bided together with both mutual goals which were the better living environment and social welfare, and with an individual goal which was the income. In other words, the local members of Mae Kampong needed motivation to encourage themselves to participate in the CBT of the community (Duval-Hernández, Fields, & Jakubson, 2015). If Mae Kampong village can maintain the management status quo, then it is possible that the village could be developed towards the sustainability (University of Sydney, 2005).

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