

# THE POTENTIAL FOR KEY SUCCESS OF COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY: CASE STUDY BAAN RIM KLONG HOMESTAY, SAMUT SONGKRAM, THAILAND

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## Abstract

Globalization has affected the behavior of visitors, changing from an entertainment-focus to the seeking of new touristic experiences. Community-based tourism is linked to the local community through the economy. This research used a qualitative approach to meet the objectives, to study the potential for key success in community-based tourism in Baan Rim Klong Homestay, Samut Songkram, Thailand. The study was carried out via survey research, collecting data from in-depth interviews with the leader and members of the community-based tourism program, as well as observations of participants and non-participants during tourism activities at Baan Rim Klong Homestay. The respondents in this research consisted of 30 people from the group called Baan Rim Klong Homestay, selected using a purposive random sampling method. The results showed that there is potential for community-based tourism in the Baan Rim Klong Homestay area as it demonstrates a self-reliant economy and community, with knowledgeable tourism activities such as giving alms to the monks, making Thai dessert, producing handmade crafts, making coconut sugar, firefly sightseeing cruise, and mangrove forest planting. The main purpose of Baan Rim Klong Homestay is to preserve the original lifestyle of the riverside community, including its culture, nature, and environment. The main factors which lead to the success of Baan Rim Klong Homestay include leadership, tourism management, community participation, and a tourism network.

**Keywords:** Potential, Community-based Tourism, Sustainability

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is highly important for the progression of the service industry in Thailand. It brings income, creates job opportunities, and distributes revenue to the provincial state (Somboonpol, 2015). This has led to a big change alongside globalization in the present day; there have been developments of communication technology that have changed tourist behavior from an entertainment aim to a more explorer based experience with a hedonistic orientation, where tourists are attracted to activities that are new, have broad vision, or conserve natural resources or culture, including tourists interested in ancient civilizations (Sittanon & Prajagnad, 2017). Following this, new kinds of tourism have been created in response to the needs of the modern tourist such as ecotourism, adventure travel, and heritage tourism.

In the early 1980's community-based tourism (CBT) was called the sine qua non of alternative tourism. CBT planning uses a community-based grassroots level approach, coming from the community, as an alternative to a top-down approach. However, the successful development of CBT largely depends on understanding the existing situation of the destination, community, and other underlying factors that can allow such an initiative to take place within the community with a true sense (Nuzhar, 2016). Therefore, community-based tourism is tourism which emphasizes the community lifestyle, cultural beliefs and community activities (Ongoagthanasan, 2008). If the community is able to drive community-

based tourism in its locality, this creates an economic flow into the community, thus it is thought that community-based tourism is a form of sustainable tourism which can create more opportunities for the country (Pongsakornrunsilp, 2014; Kampetch & Jitpakdee, 2017).

In Samut Songkram, Baan Rim-Klong home stay is run by the villagers of that area, who see the value of their natural resources and the river side lifestyle, and who have opened up the opportunity for tourists to experience activities in the community, in order to share their village identity; activities are run through the palm sugar conservation group, sustainable organic agriculture group, and Thai dessert group, among others. Baan Rim-Klong community enterprise is a local enterprise group that operates their community as a community learning center in its entirety, providing knowledge, accommodation, places to satisfy tourists, and also being a center to inform others, distributing the local lifestyle and culture of the community to those who are interested. The community success was proven by receiving the home stay standard award in 2009 and the best community tourism award (Kinnari reward) from the Tourism Authority of Thailand in 2013, making it the prototype for community tourism. It aims to make culture an economic commodity and for natural resources to be efficiently and sustainably managed in the community, to ensure that community operations do not adversely affect the environment and lifestyle of the people in the community, while revenues are shared to ensure the community's sustainability (Tourism

Authority of Thailand, 2017). At this point, it is interesting to study the efficiency factors which drive the success of community tourism.

Therefore, there is interest for an in-depth study of the potential for key success of community tourism in Baan Rim Klong Homestay, Samut Songkram, to extend its use as a prototype model which can be applied to other communities who want to use community-based tourism for community development.

## **OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

This research aims to study the potential success factors of community-based tourism in Baan Rim Klong Homestay, Samut Songkram, Thailand.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Community-based tourism is based on the assumption that the local community owns its resources and is responsible for the development of social, cultural, economic, environmental and political development. This type of tourism utilizes local community resources, such as the available landscape (nature), history, culture, traditions, and the way of life of the community (Suansri, 2003). Local community resources are used as a factor or asset in providing appropriate tourism services. The real development base must come from the community or the people in the community. By utilizing the resource base and/or community assets, such as natural resources, social, and cultural factors,

local wisdom and knowledge can lead to higher quality of life in the community (Sarobon & Wongtabtim, 2003). Fennell (1999) described community-based tourism as a non-competitive, environmentally-friendly form of tourism, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of the local people, as far as possible using only the technology in the community. It is important for tourism to be planned and developed collectively with the people in the community. Fennell supported tourism that teaches visitors to respect biodiversity and the culture that occurs in society, not considering who is better or inferior. The key issue of community-based tourism, is community marketing management. Many people have the potential to travel, but visitors are easily turned away due to ineffective marketing. The intention of community tourism is to use tourism as a tool for community development and environmental conservation. The Thailand Community-based tourism Institute Foundation (2012) has defined four key elements that contribute to successful community-based tourism: natural resources and culture, community organization, management, and learning.

UNWTO (2005) has defined sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and the host community”. Therefore, sustainable tourism development leads to enhancing the local socio-economic impacts of tourism.

Pongsakornrungrasit (2014) proposed that there are four important components for sustainable tourism management. Firstly, there should be a high potential for tourism in areas such as abundant natural resources to support a variety of activities, and the availability of local guides who can support tourism through the transfer of knowledge and understanding of their communities. Secondly, a sustainable mindset. There should be sharing of resources and sharing of knowledge between members of the community in order to create understanding among members. Thirdly, a tourism network. The tourism network and integration will help to reduce conflicts between communities and remove the problem of competition for tourists. The fourth component is leadership; there must be strong community-group leaders, able to create understanding for members and people in the community, and who can coordinate to gain support from external agencies.

Therefore, community-based tourism is a tool that helps to drive and develop the community to a better quality of life. Kampetch & Jitpakdee (2017) identified the key success factors for community-based tourism, with internal factors including leadership, participation, conservation, and management, and external factors consisting of the tourism network and information technology. Developing community-based tourism is beneficial for all.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative research and the intensive literature review aim to understand and discover the key success factors affecting innovation and creativity in community-based tourism in Thailand. Baan Rim Klong Homestay is a unique community, receiving an award in the 10th Thailand Tourism Awards from the Tourism Authority of Thailand. Qualitative methods in this research consisted of documentary research and individual in-depth interviews, conducted in order to gain detailed factual and insightful information (Cresswell, 2003; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). The research process sequence started with collection of secondary data from books, academic papers, research papers and academic articles sourced through various publication databases (i.e. Emerald, Ixee, ResearchGate, Google Scholars, Science Direct SAGE). All documents had a publication date within the last 10 years. However, as should be expected, some common standard points, and critical idea references from older literature are also important to provide the classic concepts and theories. For the literature review, keywords and snowball selection were used to search for publications related to community-based tourism, management, creativity, and innovation.

## **Data Collection**

In order to gain trustworthiness in the research, thirteen participants were identified and interviewed from the total thirty participants, consisting of those with a managerial background and selected through purposive sampling. Buasonte (2011), suggested that interviews with key informants should be conducted with 5-30 persons. The sample of 13 interviewees consisted of 3 community leaders, 2 home stay owners, 3 farmers and 5 community members. An in-depth semi-structured interview approach was used to conduct the qualitative research with approximately thirty minutes to one hour of open-ended questions. The questions for data collection included general information regarding tourism in the community, thoughts of the importance of community tourism to the community, thoughts of the community before tourism in the community, thoughts regarding what factors result in successful community tourism in the community, and how community-based tourism should be developed for the community. Member checking, probing, triangulation and tape recording accompanied the interviews, however it reached saturation after the first ten participants.

## **Data Analysis**

A data analysis of the interview results was completed to gain understanding, and condensed using a phenomenology methodology. Permission was sought from each participant for collecting a tape recording and transcript for each interview, which was in turn coded line-by-line to ultimately determine the categories and factors. For the literature review, a content analysis was conducted in order to ascertain and consolidate the variables and concepts that should be incorporated for innovation, creativity and the key success factors of community-based tourism.

## **RESULTS**

Baan Rim Klong Homestay is a community with a self-sufficient economy, and knowledgeable tourism activities such as giving alms to the monks, making Thai dessert, basketwork, making coconut sugar, firefly sight-seeing cruise, mangrove forest planting and even scattering ashes in the sea, as well as other activities. Tourists can join these activities to learn about the lifestyle of Baan Rim Klong community. Community-based tourism must create activities for visitors to participate in. In 2017, Baan Rim Klong Homestay received more than 5,000 tourists annually.



Figure 1. Tourism activities at Baan Rim Klong Homestay

This study aimed to discover the potential success factors of community-based tourism in Baan Rim Klong Homestay, Samut Songkram, Thailand. From the analyzed data, four main factors emerged.

### Factors 1: Leadership Factors

Leaders have a key role in introducing sustainable development into their organization. Thus, leadership is said to be the main force behind new changes. Men (2012) pointed out that the presence of a credible leader led to confidence and higher employee engagement in organizational improvements or changes. Mrs. Tirada is the leader of Baan Rim Klong Homestay, a recognized member of the group, with broad vision, good communication skills, and creativity. She motivates members to be able to negotiate

for resources and other support to achieve their goals. Furthermore, she is able to seek outsource support for the community's needs.

Another relating perspective of leadership management was derived from the interview of Participant 12, who stated that:

*“We are grouped tightly, like we are harmonious siblings. Although the chairman is sick, he still comes to us and does not leave. When there is a lot of work to be done, he always gives an extra tip for us. He always informs us that this budget is for maintenance or something else. He does not cheat. The ledger is held by him, only him. He can inform us or not. Moreover, he has a personal treasurer, but she knows nothing about the budget if he does not tell her. So, that's why we love him. We live unitedly and receive money equally.”*

This perception of leadership has led to a positive view of the community; participant 2 also supported that growth affects the leader, saying:

*“We create a participatory mechanism of community-based tourism. The government helps to promote and support us through actions such as landscaping, or building roads or infrastructure for the community.”*  
(Participant 2)



Figure 2. Leader at Baan rim klong Homestay

## **Factors 2: Organizational Management Factors**

Management is a process of work or activity by individuals in the organization. Individuals must work together to achieve common objectives in an effective manner. The management process consists of setting goals, planning, controlling, and leading the execution of all activities.

Baan Rim Klong Homestay formed a group in 2003, becoming a community organization in 2005, with a total of 30 members. This organization was conducted under the Baan Rim Klong

Homestay Tourism Board with an ecotourism style. Tourists are treated by tourism members of Baan Rim Klong Homestay. The purpose is to collaborate for preservation of the original lifestyle of the riverside community, including the culture of the community, nature, and environment.

*“Our sufficient economy is not only growing vegetables along the gates, but it is also involved in the occupations, including companies and organizations. Sufficiency Economy is the main idea of Baan Rim Khlong’s practices and guidelines; all should be made from small to large. But the base is wider, we do not make it high. Because a wider-base cannot break down like a high-base when we spread this idea of economy.”*  
(Participant 9)

*“Tourism business is done in connection with community business, 50 percent is for tourism and the rest is for the community, therefore, tourism will be counted on by the community, and the community is counted on by tourism too.”*  
(Participant 13)

*“Our management is not separated, because we (previously) were contractors. This one was [a contractor] (I’m an outsource member). You know what? Why do people who are in charge of a big project always break up? Just money. Every problem occurs in the project when the money comes in. Just greed. For example, Auntie Lek gets 50,000 baht for this contractor but, you know, 70 percent of that is expenditure.”*  
(Participant 10)

In Baan Rim Klong Homestay, there is an overall positive perception of tourism management. Everyone believes that they are empowered to manage in order to affect the change in their own lives or in the community.

### **Factors 3: Community Participation factors**

Many researchers, including Wang and Tong (2009) state that for the successful implementation of CBT, the capacity of the community must be assessed based on perceptions, collaboration, and communication. Public participation plays an important role in driving community-based tourism. It is essential, for the development of the community to achieve its intended purpose, by giving citizens the opportunity to determine the problems and needs of the people (Cohen and Uphoff, 1980). The capacity for resource management can be strengthened by empowering people. Core involvement must come from within the community as long-term community members have the best understanding of each other and of the community itself. Attention and opportunities must be given to the local people through participation in tourism related activities. In addition, Baan Rim Klong Homestay allowed locals to realize how tourism supports the community, avoiding protests from local people.

*“Alone cannot give us our goals but together can.”* (Participant 12)

In this case, the community can earn benefits from tourism directly and indirectly. Baan Rim Klong Homestay shows how tourism is beneficial to the local community. The success of community-based tourism is largely dependent on the involvement of all stakeholders among which decision-making is shared (Haywood, 1988). This participation relieves conflict for community members. Participant 13 stated:

*“In the monthly meeting, income and expenses will be discussed. We know about the budget, where it comes from and what we have spent. Chairman, vice chairman, treasurer and agriculturists discuss together for the budget and wages.”*

In addition, participant 2 seems to support this statement by saying:

*“Tourism is an intermediary made for sharing the benefits of the community.”*

Participation in the community was perceived to be very positive overall by the local people. It was clearly seen to have provided the community with many benefits in relation to the environment, society, and the economy through direct participation. Halstead (2003) implied that development of community-based tourism provides a firm foundation for a successful and sustainable enterprise, in terms of profitability, environmental sustainability, and social development.





Figure 3. Kanorm-Tom making (Thai dessert)

#### **Factors 4: Tourism Network factors**

Networking plays an important role in capacity building and optimization. Individuals in the network affect information and resource turnover by exchanging information in the network, and thus data sharing occurs. This is an effective method of communication based on the complexity of the data. Through networking, the network is always connected and all participants in the group are kept abreast of any decisions. Baan Rim Klong Homestay can benefit from many networks that bring tourists to enjoy outstanding places, such as Baan Bang Phat community, and Suan Luang community. This is an important factor of sustainable tourism, which helps to avoid conflict and competition.

*“Some resorts will call the monks to receive alms by boat, while some row the boats to the monks. Because we have boats and scatter ashes over the sea.”*  
(Participant 11)

*“The sugar makers receive 4,000 Baht as salary. He must climb just 8 coconut trees to demonstrate the activity to tourists. So, they can be comfortable with 4,000 Baht here.”* (Participant 12)

The key success of the community-based tourism comes from the tourism network which provides support, forming links among local people, and leading to benefits in the community. Taylor (1995) implied that along with other tourism elements, community-based tourism is largely dependent on the interrelations and interaction between the community and visitors, as it enhances community empowerment and ownership, social and economic development, conservation of natural and cultural resources, and helps to provide a high quality visitor experience.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

At present, forms of tourism are diverse in order to provide tourists with new and different tourist resources. The concept of sustainability in community-based tourism is the most responsible concept for all aspects of the community, such as nature, culture and socio-economic status. The study's findings mostly confirm our initial assumption regarding the developmental model of the key success factor of sustainability for community-based tourism. Thus, the main factors which lead to success include participation, the tourism network, tourism management, and leadership. It is important to make successful community-based tourism

sustainable. However, if the community wants to use tourism as a tool for community development, the community members should improve their skills, knowledge, and understanding of management effectively in order to gain mutual benefit.

Community-based tourism (CBT) is not a solution or problem-solving method for all difficulties. If CBT is properly managed, it can provide a range of development benefits to communities, especially in poor and disadvantaged areas. CBT has its own characteristics, which, if properly facilitated, can be of incremental help in the livelihoods of poor people. This paper suggests the key success factors for community-based tourism, in the case study of Baan Rim Klong, Samut Songkram, so that CBT can serve community developments. Therefore, this research has shown that leaders, community participation, organizational management and the tourism network are the main factors for the success of community-based tourism development in Thailand. Thongchin (2015) studied the management of tourism cooperation by the communities in Koh Lanta, Krabi Province determining five important elements of community-based tourism management, namely the potential of the people, potential of the area, management, community participation, and the impact of tourism on the community. There were a number of issues that the Lanta community needed to address, including the potential of the people, participation in management, and the ability to deal with the impacts of growing tourism in that

area. Lack of strong leaders and professional management in Koh Lanta has driven down the collaboration and participation among community members, as judged by the uncooperative response of Koh Lanta's community. Villagers in the community were seen to not cooperate in the tourism initiatives. Sawangpanapan (2012) studied the potential for sustainable tourism at Tan Tanod, Phetchaburi province, Thailand, determining that the most important issues facing the community were environmental problems.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

The concept of community-based tourism includes components such as natural resources and culture, community organization, management, and learning. This concept entails development of the community in 3 dimensions (economy, society and environment). The results of the study lead to three suggestions.

Firstly, most local community members are elderly. Therefore, the knowledge gained by the community may disappear. It is necessary for local community members to focus on the transfer of knowledge through community tourism activities, for youth to develop deeper knowledge and understanding and to conserve the culture of the community.

Secondly, safety for tourists is of utmost importance, as this factor affects the decisions of tourists before traveling, and also their satisfaction during their trip. Therefore, Baan Klong Rim Homestay should pay special attention to safety on

the river walkway by building safety signs and proper curbs along the river.

Finally, institutional support must be provided, both from government agencies and the private sector, established through either formal or informal contexts. This support should be provided in both the planning and implementation stages, helping to work towards the goal of sustainable community development. It is the role of the government to provide a budget for community development, while the private sector can help to extend the market activities of the community and promote marketing, such as in product development, designing activities for tourists, and consulting with local community members. Academics should focus on creating knowledge for the community.

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