
Community Participation in Agro-tourism Development at Klongplu, Khaokitchakood, Chanthaburi Province

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The objectives of this study were to: 1) explore costs and potential of the community contributing to the managerial administration of community-based agro-tourism; and 3) employ the condition of agro-tourism for the construction of learning process on the management of resources and wisdoms leading to strength of the community. This study employed participatory action research instruments in this study included learning exchange venue, survey, interview, focus group discussion, and experiment on tourism program. Participants in this study consisted of 30 persons who were Chong Moohaeng organic farming group members, teachers, students, community leaders, and housewife group member. Results of the study revealed the following: 1) there was the occurrence of a tourism group; 2) community-based tourism had program, tourism routes, and the system of managerial administration which could be practice in the actual situations; 3) there was the creation of pride of ethnics group; 4) body of knowledge and data obtained from the study could be connected with formal education system; and 5) participants of the study joined community-based tourism networks of Chanthaburi province and eastern region of Thailand.

Keywords: development, agro-tourism, alternative tourism, community participation, participatory action research

Introduction

Agro – tourism is a form of ecotourism which focuses on villager's agricultural styles learning. This includes the utilization of agricultural resources existing in the local areas. It is an automotive tourism which begins to be popular. It is expected that agro tourism will be very popular in 2020 (Braintrust Institute, 2011). The concept of ecotourism results from the world current sustainable development making 3 aspects of tourism development: 1) needs for human development; 2) needs of tourism market on learning; and 3) needs for natural resource and environmental conservation. The 3 aspects of tourism development have an effect on the adaptation of the tourism system which is responsive to needs and

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replacement of traditional tourism. Thus, the presentation of new alternative tourism had diverse names such as green tourism, bio-tourism, responsible tourism, etc. However, ecotourism is the tourism management which is popular most at this moment (Sarobol, *et. al.*, 2012). It is expected that a number of the world tourists will reach 1,561 million persons in 2020. There is a tendency that these tourists want to learn new culture, tradition, community lifestyle, in order to gain knowledge back to their respective homeland (Payakwichian, 2009). As a matter of fact, agro-tourism is consistent with change and the alternative construction of occupation from the farmer to the agricultural entrepreneurs. This is because the popularity current of agro-tourism has been increasing continually. Consequently, it will have an effect on an increase in the agricultural areas having the managerial administration of agricultural resources. Examples water management, yields management in the form of value construction, and creative economy construction which eventually will lead to be tourism industry on the basis of food production of the community. Agriculture will be constructed on the basis of value added and transmitted to the external consumer society by tourism services, food products, and other products. Besides, it may become to be creative agro-entrepreneurship having a specific product group e.g. health food, products, various souvenirs produced by the agricultural community. Klongplu community of Chanthaburi province is a community having Chong ethnic group or indigenous ethnic group in eastern Thailand, particularly in Chanthaburi and Trat provinces. They have unique culture especially their own language. The Chong community is successful in the rehabilitation and conservation of Chong language due to community participation. Meanwhile, most people in Klongplu community are farmers and there is an organic farming group is successful until they receive standard certification from Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives. Nowadays, people in Chong community form a group of community enterprise called "Chong Moohaeng" (Join together) is operating on organic agricultural product production and development. Area potential and possibility of Chong community include the following:

There is a strong educational place on language and culture in the community. There are more than 200 visitors per year on average. Besides, there are Takhianthong, Plu canal, and Sunsai dam which are naturally abundant. Klongplu sub-district is an important source of organic farming production both plants and livestock's in Chanthaburi province such as organic orchard, organic paddy field, and organic egg-laying hens farm. Besides, there are strong leaders well recognized by many agencies. Klongplu sub-district has predominant local wisdoms which have been existing in the community for a long time. That is, Klom Klao mat produced by people in the community for using in daily life activities and responsiveness on smart spirit. People in the community form a group of

community enterprise and produce agricultural products. However, they still have a limitation on the construction of value-added and they lack skills such as processing, and packaging. The community is far away from Phrahahtpluang kill for about 15 kilometers where Buddhist people pay homage to Buddha's footprint for about 500,000 in 2009 and 600,000 people in 2010 (Pluang municipality, 10 October 2011). The community is far away from Khaokitchakood national park for about 13 kilometers where tourists visited in 2009 for about 97,062 and in 2010 for 85,523 persons (National Park Office, 2011). Chanthaburi shares border with Cambodia and there will have an increase in a number of tourists as well as product selling and buying due to the Asean Economic Community (AEC). According to these factors, it makes the Chong community needs for group and community development to be an agro-tourism place. In this respect, their lifestyle and culture will be employed for the managerial administration to be ready for tourists visiting community. The research joined the public hearing process and needs of the community and found their needs. Therefore, if there search process can promote or help people in the community learn how to manage local resources, lifestyle, and creative agricultural production so as to be a tourist place it will be beneficial to value added construction for local resources, products, and wisdoms. Besides, it is the promotion of unique local culture "Chong ethnic group".

Objectives of the Study

1. Explore costs and potential of the community contributing to the management of agro-tourism;

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2. Find an appropriate model for the managerial administration of community-based agro-tourism; and

3. Employ the condition of agro-tourism to construct the learning process for the management of local resources, wisdoms and which will lead to strength of the community.

Research Questions

1. How do we employ costs and potential existing in Klongplu community for the management of community-based tourism?

2. How should appropriate agro-tourism and community participation be?

Scope of the Study

This study aimed to make Klongplu community be the owner of agro-tourism in their area and manage it by them. Thus, this study was in

the form of participatory action research conducted in Klongplu sub-district, Khaokitchakood district, Chanthaburi province and lasted for 12 months.

Research Methodology

Research Activities	Objectives	Research Instrument	Population
1. Holding a venue for constructing mutual understanding with concerned agencies for the development of participatory tourism and finding the community research team	To create project understanding with the community, community leaders and concerned agencies in the area having the project on the development of community –based agro-tourism. To listen to opinions and suggestions of stakeholders in the community. To find front for the project implementation and those who can support budgets for the preparation of tourism in the future.	A venue for learning exchange	Chong Moohaeng organic farming group, teachers and students groups, community leaders group, and housewives group
2. Holding a venue for participatory planning and data collection	To make the project activities have a guideline for clear practice and be successful. To set roles and duties in the operation of the research team	A venue for learning exchange	Chong Moohaeng organic farming group, teachers and students groups, community leaders group, and housewives group
3. Meeting among the community researcher (twice a month)	To follow or monitor the project implementation and perceive data,	A venue for learning exchange	Chong Moohaeng organic farming

Research Activities	Objectives	Research Instrument	Population
	problems and planning on mutual problem solving.		group, teachers and students groups, community leaders group, and housewives group
4.The following data were collected agricultural area, agricultural yields, source of agricultural processing products, a number of agricultural groups producing safe food, the body of knowledge about agriculture, agricultural activities in orchard, paddy field, and crop field.	To find costs and potential of the community contributing to the management of agro-tourism.	Survey, interview, and focus group discussion	Chong Moohaeng organic farming group
5.Investigate concepts and principles of the management of community-based agro-tourism by using documentary review for the formulation in the development and managerial	To employ it as a guideline for the construction of an appropriate model for designing program and managerial administration of tourism	Documentary review	-

Research Activities	Objectives	Research Instrument	Population
administration of tourism.			
6.Data analyses and syntheses for developing tourism programs and the management system	To find an appropriate model for designing programs and managerial administration of tourism	A venue for learning exchange	The researchers and all groups joining the project
7.A training on knowledge about a guide profession, community, and homestay development	To prepare the readiness to be a community guide and the development of homestay	Training	All groups
8.Tourism try-out by tourists and concerned agencies	To prepare the readiness of community-based agro-tourism	Tourism program try-out	All groups
9.Discussion venue on the development and improvement of tourism program after the try-out	To improve tourism programs, places, and rules & regulations of the group on community-based tourism	A venue for learning exchange	All groups
10. Venue for conclusion-making and assessment of the project implementation.	To perceive changes and thinking methods of the community before and after the development of tourism.	A venue for learning exchange	All groups

Results of the Study

Results of the study revealed the following:

1. There was the occurrence of a strong tourism group and the community mutually constructed the system of fundamental managerial administration. This consisted of Chong Klongplu organic farming group, school group, cultural group, etc. Besides, there were internal and external agencies supporting the project e.g. local administrative organization,

educational institute, the research Coordination Center for Northeastern Communities, tourism agency, etc.

2. Costs or potential in tourism management of the community included data on agricultural style costs especially organic orchard, resource costs e.g. water source, canal, forest, mountain, herbal plant, etc., various cultures and traditions such as Chong Language, Chong dance, Chong arrow shooting, Chong kneecap, and unique valuable food such as organic vegetables and fruits, cardamom, Chong chili paste, organic tidbits wrapped in Chinese lettuce leaves, etc.

3. Obtained a community-based tourism model comprising sustainable and creative tourism, safe agricultural resources and environment, rehabilitation of community culture and tradition, and tourism programs/routes with actual managerial administration.

4. People in the community were eager to participate in tourism management more than before. It was the promotion of identity of Chong ethnic group and the creation of pride in Chong ethnic group. Besides, they began to adopt organic farming more than ever.

5. The body of knowledge and data obtained from the study could be connected to the

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formal education system. Also, it was going to be developed leading to the facilitation of basic occupation subject. That was, there was the establishment of Young Farmers group growing vegetables in the school for cooking lunch meal or selling to visitors.

6. Participation in community-based tourism network in Chanthaburi province and eastern Thailand. It was in the form of sustainable tourism management and there were knowledge exchange networks. Besides, there was the extension of results of the study and community public relations to the public.

Discussions

1. Regarding costs and potential development of the community, it was found that Klongplu community have enough costs to create new values and value-added. “Chong Organic Farming Group-Klongplu” has been changing clearly such as improvement of landscape, a clear story teller, broad-minded, systematic thinking, systematic operation, rules and regulations setting e.g. making a loud noise at night is not allowed and liquor drinks is prohibited. The group wants to present values of local resources and lifestyles and they want visitors to gain tourism experience rather than photo taking. Sittijinda (2008) found that the management for sustainable tourism in the community must be clear and stable, not only to generate incomes. The following might be a guideline: 1) taking consideration on the potential to receive a number of tourist; 2) determining

rules and regulations which visitors must follow in order to prevent problems or damages; 3) holding activities promoting realization and respectfulness on values existing in the community; and 4) making community-based tourism be the development of quality of life (healthy community). This conforms to Suansri et.al. (2011) who found that there is an increase in a number of tourists who are interested in community lifestyle learning. They want to experience authentic things, not fake and their visiting must have least impacts on the environment. Also, they hope that the money which they have spent will be part of the promotion of community economy or local development.

2. Construction of an identity of the community in tourism management. Klongplu community offers a walk rally activity in the agricultural garden to add entertaining, not only for learning. Visitors can get fresh vegetables in the garden back home by themselves (friendly price). Besides, Chong culture is presented as one of the tourism programs which connate be seen in other places. This conforms to an idea of Suansri (2005) who indicated components of community-based tourism management. That is, it includes the following: 1) unique natural tourist attractions; 2) cultural and historical sources which concern with the ecology system of those places; 3) emphasis on the importance of the combination between goals of natural and environmental conservation and community adaptation for local development; 4) putting the importance on sustainable development dimension; 5) respectfulness to cultural identity and diversity of various ethnic groups; and 6) local community is proud of their race and culture/tradition which can be explained to tourists.

3. A guideline for community-based tourism management. The community still lacks of experience such as in public relations, quality local guide, construction of clarification and satisfaction to tourist. There is a limitation in group forming power. Besides, they lack of continual development of community-based tourism management. Sittijinda (2008) had conducted a study and found that community-based tourism should be a public policy of the community such as a policy of the local administrative organization, the district cultural council, or the community organization council, etc. this is because it is consistent with the policy on economic promotion at a grass root level or creative economy. This can construct activities or generate incomes continually. It addition, tourism can be a tool for human or community development. Participation this is an important factor. At the initial stage, people in the community are energetic to participate in the project but later on it is fading. This might be because they have inadequate time since they also have other activities for earning a living. In other words, the initial stage of tourism management is in the form of voluntary which cannot see clear benefit. Thongma (2004) suggested that community members and tourists should share the learning process

continually for the occurrence of the development of clear and appropriate community-based tourism operational process.

Suggestions

Suggestions on the development

Community-based tourism should be a public policy of the community such as a policy of local administrative organization, district agriculture/provincial agriculture, or community organization council, etc. This aims to support other various aspects needed by the community. However, supporting agencies must clearly understand the term 'community-based tourism' and be careful in the operation. This is because community-based tourism is entirely different from general tourism. Otherwise, the community will be used as a tool for the management of general tourism which may lead to conflicts within the community. A meeting or training should be held in order to enhance understanding and potential in community-based tourism management.

Suggestions on the research

1. It should have a research on public relations and community-based tourism market. This aims to make tourism management be continual and achieve the goals more than ever. This is because many communities at present prepare themselves to be a tourist attraction but lack of access to tourists, making some communities be unsuccessful. This is because the tourists group interested in learning still be few in Thailand. Thus, it needs academics to help stimulate the operation or research can be a tool for connection.

2. It should have a research enhancing community-based tourism networks to make various tourism communities have power for continual operation.

3. The community should be promoting to further a research regarding problems and concerned issues such as a research on the construction of value-added of bio-resources or a cultural system for the sustainability of tourism management.

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