

STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BASED ON BIODIVERSITY IN NANG PHAYA SUB-DISTRICT, THAPLA DISTRICT, UTTARADIT PROVINCE

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Abstract

As the trend of natural tourism is becoming popular, there are more and more visitors to the area of Nang Phaya Sub-district, which is a tourist area with biodiversity. The objectives of this study were to study tourism strategies based on tourism biodiversity by collecting data via in-depth discussions and group discussions among local leaders, sages, and administrative officials in Nang Phaya Sub-district, Uttaradit Province, and stakeholders. The study found that the strategies to be adapted to develop the community's tourism based on its biodiversity are the strategy on tourism and environmental resource management, the strategy on the participation of local people, the strategy on tourist service and provision of infrastructure, and the strategy of marketing promotion and tour guide service. These strategies are to be used in the sustainable planning and development of the community tourism of Nang Phaya based on its biodiversity.

Keywords: Tourism Development Strategy; Community tourism; Biodiversity

Introduction

In Thailand, natural resources and environment have been used as factors of production for a very long time in order to develop the economy and create jobs and income for the citizen. Tourism is a process that has been used as activities to develop the country in many aspects such as economy, society and culture, and nature and environment. Tourism based on natural resources is a part of the strategy on service industry that has been supported and promoted by the government and organizations related to tourism and thus it generates enormous income to Thailand (Ministry of Energy, Energy Policy and Planning Office 2011). However, the actual conditions of Thailand's tourism seem to lack good and continuous care required from the stakeholders and related sectors with natural resources and environment. The natural resources and environment are being spoilt, and there are conflicts among people who benefit from natural resources and the environment by organizing tourist activities.

As the trend of natural tourism is becoming popular, there are more and more visitors to Nang Phaya Sub-district, and that brings tourist activities to Nang Phaya. The popularity of the community can be recognized from a Facebook fan page named สักกะนางพญา (Love Nang Phaya) with more than ten thousand subscribers and a number of online check-ins and shares. However, those activities are solely personal activities made by visitors such as camping, trekking, and biking. The activities spoil the environment there for the visitor's litter, cut wood for their cooking fuel and campfire, hunt animals for recreation, and collect plants such as orchids or ferns as souvenirs. The problems also include noisy or disturbing activities especially at nighttime and much more frequently in the cold season when many tourists come to Nang Phraya for sightseeing and to see the sea of fog over Sirikit Dam. Those activities are undertaken without supervision and thus spoil natural resources and local lives.

Nang Phraya Sub-district is a community with rich biodiversity and unique culture and wisdom. With effective planning on resource management and development by tourism stakeholders, it will become a great opportunity for the community to create additional value to productions and service sectors of the community from the biodiversity. Tourism will significantly affect in vast areas of Nang Phraya including but not limited to resource and environment management, service and production sectors, and preservation of wisdom, cultures, and traditions of the community. Therefore, any plans made should consider the actual conditions and changes that could possibly occur. Natural

resources and the environment with biodiversity and local wisdom and culture are advantages of Nang Phraya Sub-district and they are the substantial foundation of the development and life of local people, who will be affected by ineffective planning for growing tourism in the community. If the plans and strategies for tourism development based on tourism biodiversity are not created and implemented explicitly and appropriately, the foundation of the resources will be spoilt and weakened and may become limitations of the community. It is essential to prevent and resolve problems that are occurring from community tourism, so there needs to be a study of the contexts and potentiality of tourism biodiversity in order to establish the development strategies for the community tourism.

Literature Reviews

Biodiversity of Thailand Biodiversity or biological diversity means the state of having different kinds of organisms in an area of ecosystem. That is to say, there are various species, genes, and ecosystems in this world. Biodiversity is an advantage of Thailand. It involves ways of life, cultures, and local wisdom. It is considered as a living capital which links to all other resources. It implies fertility and is the most important part of the ecology. The contexts of changes from the outside including biotechnology advancement, elderly society, health trend, and nature lovers are becoming opportunities to develop an additional value for production and service sectors, and they can also be essential materials to create more valuable innovations. While international commitments and certain bilateral and multilateral free trade area agreements widely affect many things including environmental resource management, intellectual property, and commercial; production; and service sectors, it is necessary to consider setting clear standpoints and strategies to conserve national benefits, resource, and environmental security, and community right and local wisdom for long-term welfare of the people. It has been found from the evaluation of national resource and environmental capital that the fertility of national resources and environment, which was an advantage of Thailand, is being affected by the development plans that mainly aim to support the country's economic growth. The situation results in neglectful overuse of resources. The expansion of economic sectors and the relocation of high-pollution industries resulted from free trade and investment, consumption behaviors, and materialism have increased pollution and wastes which affect welfare of people and cause natural resources and environment to

become uneasy for people to live their lives and also obstruct sustainable development (The Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan 2550-2554 BE)

Community Tourism Community Tourism is a new option of tourism which also focuses on development as well as traditional and cultural conservation and natural resource and environmental preservation. It is also tourism that emphasizes the role of local people in tourism management in tourist areas; that is why it is called community tourism. It is founded by the idea that local people are responsible for tourism resources, so the community ought to participate and play its role in defining its directions to the development, the conservation and preservation, the resource management, and also the benefits from the tourism. Community tourism has to cause no negative effects on the community and natural resources both at the attractions and nearby areas; it has to ensure sustainability in both tourism resources and utilization of tourism. Local people should earnestly associate with the process of planning, conduct, and evaluation of community tourism. It is to generate and distribute income to the members of the community. Therefore, it needs to give not only memorable recreation experiences to tourists but also conscience about good tourism; tourists will be able to acknowledge and understand the reason why the community has to be in charge of tourism activities that are conducted in the area.

The Development and Management of Community Tourism The community in the area has to be responsible for tourism management, environmental preservation, merchandise distribution, and service provision. Therefore, the participation of people in the community is essential. The elements of the participants are the readiness of tourism resources, people's interest, and interaction in tourism management. Participation can be done with direct or indirect interest, community or group interest, or joint venture with other organization. The followings are the composition of community tourism management (Saksiri Nantasuk, 2006)

1. **Community readiness** The community readiness includes the availability of tourism resources related to ecosystem, a community organization and its members that are willing to take part in the development and share the benefit justly.

2. **Roles and relation** The community in the area possesses an opportunity to merchandise their products and services to tourists. The community needs to

have a good management system for the preservation of the environment and conditions to establish relationship and understanding with the outsiders. Its local administrative organization is responsible for the environment preservation and the development of its potentiality to promote community tourism.

3. **Participation of the community at all levels** The community benefits directly from the provision of tourist activities and services. It can cooperate with other organizations in tourism management and investment.

4. **Community and its sustainable tourism development** This is to increase employment and distribute income to the community by developing the quality of the tourist sites, promoting tourism activities according to local tradition and resources, improving the quality of services and tourist safety, encouraging the community participation in tourism management, establishing cautiousness; knowledge; and understandings, and supporting local products.

Nang Phaya sub-district is located 31 kilometers away from Thapla District Office. It is a community that survives the flooding effect from the building of Sirikit Dam. Eighty percent of the area is mountainous and 20% is highland, where people do their living. Phu Phaya Pho Mountain is the highest spot of Nang Phaya with its height of 1,350 meters above sea level, and it is also the boundary that borders Uttaradit Province and Phrae Province. There is a scenic point where you can see views of mountains, forest, and the reservoir. The area is surrounded by natural forest which is the water source of Sirikit Dam. It is composed of dry dipterocarp forest, evergreen forest, and mixed forest with national economic plants and plenty of wildlife. There are trekking routes to Natong and Namman, and also various tourist activities and attractions such as waterfalls, Sirikit Dam, fishing, rafting, natural study, and sighting. Tourists can come here for recreation all year round. There are also agroforestry fruit orchards which depend themselves on nature. They are integrated fruit orchards where durians, mangoes, mangosteens, rambutans, and etc. are grown together. People also grow local economic plants such as coffee and Pulliam. Its agriculture yields all the year. For art and culture, there is Wat Namphra Temple which is more than 200 years old. Nang Phaya is a Lanna community and people continue Lanna culture, tradition, and wisdom and speak Lanna and Lan Chang dialects.

There are already tourist activities in Nang Phaya but they are private activities made by visitors. Nang Phaya Sub-district is a community with rich biodiversity and unique culture and wisdom that can go along with tourism with effective planning on resource management and development. This is a great opportunity for the community to create additional value to productions and service sectors in

Nang Phaya. Tourism will significantly affect in vast areas of the community so there is a need to consider the actual conditions and changes that could possibly occur. The plans and strategies for tourism development based on tourism biodiversity should be created and implemented explicitly and appropriately to avoid any harms to the resources so that it could not become limitations of the community.

Research Methodology

Strategies for community tourism based on biodiversity in Nang Phaya Sub-District have been carried off by studying tourism biodiversity and patterns of tourism activities in the community. The data collection process was conducted from January 2016 to December 2016 using in-depth interview and group discussions with community representatives, academics, local leaders, sages, administrative officials in Nang Phaya Sub-district, and private sectors and government officials whose work is related to tourism in Uttaradit Province. Tourism entrepreneurs also gave suggestions to develop the community tourism and tourism activities in Nang Phaya at the civil society forum to establish strategies for community tourism based on biodiversity.

For the population and sampling procedures, the area of the study includes the population of Thapla Sub-district which are 2,592 people, 1,343 of them are male and 1,249 are female. The population has been divided into 2 groups. The first group consists of 50 representatives in different aspect such as local group leaders, administrative leaders, career group leaders, and youth leaders. The other group consists of 50 tourism information providers who are academics, governmental and private staff who are responsible for tourism in Uttaradit, tourist business entrepreneurs. They are people to provide advice and suggestions to tourism situations and activities in Nang Phaya.

Research Result

The community of Nang Phaya Sub-district is rich in tourism biodiversity which can be categorized into 5 aspects: 1) environmental aspect, 2) cultural and traditional aspect, ways of lives and wisdom aspect, 4) local foods aspect, and 5) medicinal and cures aspect. It is a community with unique cultures and wisdom. All of the mentioned aspects can be used to develop tourism in the area and attract tourists. The principle of sustainable tourism by Shirley Eber has been applied to the condition of the community as follow;

1. Use resources sustainably There need to be measured to manage actual resources, both environmental and cultural resources, to make use of them sufficient and effective by considering its natural, cultural, and wisdom quality and value. The preservation of tourism resources means to preserve the quality. The community of Nang Phaya Sub-district is rich in tourism biodiversity which can be categorized into 5 aspects: 1) environmental aspect, 2) cultural and traditional aspect, ways of lives and wisdom aspect, 4) local foods aspect, and 5) medicinal and cures aspect. It is a community with unique cultures and wisdom. All of the mentioned aspects can be used to develop tourism in the area and attract tourists.

The principle of the resources, to use the resources worthily, to improve and maintain for their sustainability, to enhance and develop the resource to be sufficient for the living. The improvement and maintenance made to the resources should cause the least negative effects. An appropriate combination of local wisdom and modern technology will prolong the tourism business.

2. Maintain and support a diversity of nature, society, and culture It is needed to expand the foundation of tourism by maintaining and support the diversity in the tourism area which are existing natural and cultural tourist attractions. It can be conducted by improving the value and service standard to make tourists spend more time and increase repetitive tourism.

3. Integrate tourism into planning Related sectors have to coordinate in development planning such as in local, provincial, and regional planning; including planning in higher levels such as the ministry planning; to improve the potential in the same tourist area.

4. Support local economy The tourist area has to coordinate with local administration organization, governmental sectors, and private sectors related to tourism promotion. Public relations in distinctive resources has to be promoted for more tourist visits to increase income for local entrepreneurs.

5. Involve local communities Cooperation by participation approach with local organizations as-a-whole is important. There should be participation in events held by other organizations as a cooperator such as in activities for public interests, as a co-analyst, and cooperation in tourism promotion. There's also a need to coordinate local and organizational networks to improve the quality of local tourism management.

6. Consult stakeholders and the public The community, local administrative organizations, entrepreneurs, academic institutes, religious

institutes, and responsible governmental sectors should cooperate and meet regularly to improve tourism potentials, evaluate the impacts, resolve environmental and marketing problems together. This help reduces conflicts of interests and establishes harmony in the practice.

The strategies to develop community tourism plan based on biodiversity can be set out into four strategies: the strategy on tourism and environmental resource management, the strategy on the participation of local people, the strategy on tourist service and provision of infrastructure, and the strategy of marketing promotion and tour guide service. These strategies will bring significant opportunities to the community to deploy its richness in tourism biodiversity as an essential material and a foundation of additional value in the production and service sectors. The outcome of the implementation of the strategies will impact many things including resource and environment management, service and production sectors, and preservation of wisdom, cultures, and traditions of the community. Natural resources and the environment with biodiversity, local wisdom and culture are existing capital that gives advantages of Nang Phraya Sub-district and they are the substantial foundation of the development and life of local people and their society.

The strategy on Tourism and Environmental Resource Management

The community of Nang Phaya is surrounded by the nature and environment among mountainous geography with a cool climate. The community needs strategies and measures to preserve the richness of natural and environmental resources, and the production process for tourism depends on and use natural resources sustainably. It can be done in many ways such as the establishment of environmental preservation network, the development of body of knowledge in the management; preservation; and restoration of natural and environmental resources, and the campaign to raise conscience and awareness of natural and environmental resource preservation and conservation; in order to preserve, conserve, restore, and administer the resources in the ecological system. Tourism resources also have to be administered to prevent and reduce the cause of pollutants. The community, including the entrepreneurs; tourists; institutions; civil organizations, and local people need to cooperate in the preservation and conservation of natural and environmental resources and not to destroy or cause any damage to natural and environmental resources. And traditional beliefs and

rituals; local wisdom; and traditions can be used as tourism resources and should be conserved and continued.

The Strategy on Participation of the People of the Community As of now, people in Nang Phaya have not joined together as a group to take care of and manage tourism there. There should be the promotion of sheer community participation especially in the process of initiative and creative idea and in-group decision making in the development process. Local people can express their potential in finding the resolution to the problem on their own for the sake of them and their community, so that will best answer their questions to the decentralized development. The future of development will focus on strengthening each community so that it can be self-reliant with stable community economy which leads to and raise its level of income and quality of life. Local people should be encouraged to participate more in the processes of community tourism supervision and control, so they live their lives with dignity. The community should also be encouraged to play its role as a middleman or coordinator between the community and other governmental organization and between the community and private sectors related to tourism in order to accomplish various tasks such as the establishment of different selling points which include accommodations, homestays, restaurants, tour guide, trekking activities, and community museum. In addition, there should be training sessions provided to local people for their understanding of the basic principle, needs, means, and benefits of the development of community tourism. Young people ought to become a part of the development to foster conscience and awareness in them, to create their participation, and to train them with skills and expertise as they are future development mechanism of the community.

The Strategy on Tourist service and Provision of Infrastructures in the Community The landscape of the community has to be beautiful and neat, and there should be signs that tell the story, background, and history of the community for a better understanding to visitors. The signs include those that give directions to and descriptions of tourist attractions and landmarks that show the identity of the community and those that remind visitors of natural and social environment preservation and conservation. The development of infrastructure must not affect tourism resources and biodiversity; it has to assimilate into the

environment. Such infrastructure includes ways to the attractions or for trekking, homestay services, food services, and recreation activities.

The Strategy of Marketing Promotion and Tour Guide Service in the Community has to set up a group in order to conduct public relations and marketing both publicly and specifically with the community's target groups. Marketing and target tourist should be studied and link with travel agencies, hotels and accommodations, and study visit groups. Local products should be developed and upgraded to become community souvenirs. The tourism capability has to be balanced with the number of tourists since community tourist attractions and biodiversity are so essentially sensitive that they can be affected by overpopulated tourists. The community should emphasize the quality of tourism, not the number of tourists. Tour guide services should be provided to give tourists knowledge and information and supervise tourists' behaviors and activities to ensure they are in accordance with the framework of community tourism.

Conclusion and Discussion

The community of Nang Phaya Sub-district is an area with tourism potential, fertile tourism biodiversity which can be strategized according to the principle of sustainable tourism. There are four strategies to develop community tourism plan in Nang Phaya based on its biodiversity: the strategy on tourism and environmental resource management, the strategy on the participation of local people, the strategy on tourist service and provision of infrastructure, and the strategy of marketing promotion and tour guide service. The strategies can be used in the community of Nang Phaya Sub-district which is an area with high tourism biodiversity of nature, environment, art and culture, tradition, and wisdom. Community tourism will sustainably develop and best benefit local people and visitors when it is founded on 'the participation' of all stakeholders, who are local people and others who gain benefit from the use of area and tourism of the community. More importantly, local people need take part in the determination of how the community tourism will be developed via the systematic planning and other developmental strategies such as the definition of tourism capacity, training made for local people, and community tourism marketing.

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