



## HOMESTAY : A CASE STUDY AT BAN HAAD SONG KWAI HOME STAY IN UTTARADIT; PHU NAM NAO IN PHETCHABUN; BAN DON MOON IN NAN AND BAN KHWANG BUK HOMESTAY IN PHRAE

### บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาค้นคว้าครั้งนี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์ เพื่อศึกษาสภาพและปัญหาการดำเนินงานธุรกิจ โฮมสเตย์ ผู้วิจัยได้เลือกโฮมสเตย์ เพื่อเป็นกรณีศึกษาค้นคว้า โดยพิจารณาจากการได้รับเลือกให้เป็นโฮมสเตย์ มาตรฐานจากสำนักงานพัฒนาธุรกิจการท่องเที่ยว (Department of Tourism Business Development) และ คัดเลือกจากที่ตั้ง ในเขตภาคเหนือตอนล่าง 2 แห่ง และในเขตภาคเหนือตอนบน 2 แห่ง

ผู้วิจัยใช้ระยะเวลาระหว่างมกราคม 2552 - มีนาคม 2552 เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลโดยการเข้าพักในโฮมสเตย์ทั้งสี่แห่ง ใช้วิธีการสังเกตสภาพของโฮมสเตย์ การสัมภาษณ์ผู้ดำเนินการ และใช้แบบสอบถาม ถามผู้ดำเนินการ ผลการศึกษาพบว่า สภาพของโฮมสเตย์ทั้ง 4 แห่งนี้ มีลักษณะ รูปแบบการบริหารจัดการ และจุดขายที่เป็นเอกลักษณ์ของตน กล่าวคือบ้านหาดสองแคว จังหวัดอุตรดิตถ์จัดเป็นแหล่งท่องเที่ยวที่เน้นวัฒนธรรมลาวเวียงจันทร์และธรรมชาติ ภูน้ำหนาวโฮมสเตย์ จังหวัดเพชรบูรณ์จัดเป็นโฮมสเตย์ที่เน้นอากาศที่หนาวเย็น และการเกษตร บ้านแควบุตโฮมสเตย์ จังหวัดแพร่ เป็นแหล่งสมุนไพรธรรมชาติและความเป็นชนบท บ้านดอนมูล จังหวัดน่าน เป็นแหล่งท่องเที่ยวที่เป็นวัฒนธรรมของไทยลื้อ มีโฮมสเตย์ 3 แห่งในจำนวน 4 แห่งนี้จัดได้สอดคล้องกับนิยามของ โฮมสเตย์ของสำนักงานพัฒนาธุรกิจการท่องเที่ยว คือเจ้าของบ้านพักได้อาศัยอยู่อย่างถาวรในที่พำนักนั้น ทั้ง 4 แห่ง รายงานว่า ได้รับการสนับสนุนจาก องค์การบริหารส่วนตำบลในเรื่องบริการสาธารณะพื้นฐาน สมาชิกของโฮมสเตย์ แต่ละแห่งมีรูปแบบการรวมกลุ่มที่ต่างกัน เช่นบางแห่งจัดเป็นกลุ่มปิด และบางแห่งเปิดโอกาสให้ทุกบ้านมาร่วมบริการ และบางแห่งจัดในรูปคณะกรรมการ แต่บางแห่งก็เพียงมีการรวมตัวกันชั่วคราว ทุกแห่งต่างเห็นว่ารายได้จากโฮมสเตย์เป็นเพียงรายได้เสริมเท่านั้น มีนักท่องเที่ยวเข้ามาเฉพาะช่วง ตุลาคม-มีนาคม การประชาสัมพันธ์ จึงอาศัยเพียงเว็บไซต์ของ ทางทางเท่านั้น ส่วนปัญหาของการจัดการโฮมสเตย์ ทุกแห่งรายงานว่ามีปัญหา อาจมีเพียง ผู้มาพักบางรายไม่เข้าใจคำว่า โฮมสเตย์ จึงมักคาดหวัง ที่จะได้รับความสะดวกสบายเหมือนกับที่บ้านของตน และอีกปัญหาหนึ่งคือการสื่อสารกับชาวต่างชาติ อย่างไรก็ตาม พบว่าชาวต่างชาติที่ต้องการศึกษาอย่างลุ่มลึก มักจะมีเพื่อนคนไทยมาด้วย

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine, as case studies, the conditions and problem of four homestay business which have been certified by the Department of Tourism Business Development as having met the homestay standards, two of which are located in the upper North, and the other two are in the lower North.

The data were collected by observation through site visits, by interview of homestay operators, and by questionnaire. The findings revealed each homestay had its own unique characteristics both in its form of management and its selling point. Ban Haad Song Kwai in Uttaradit had as its selling point the ethnic Lao Wiang Chan culture and natural beauty; Phu Nam Nao homestay in Phetchabun, agrotourism and climate; Ban Khuang Buk in Phrae, rural tourism and medicinal herb garden; Ban Don Moon in Nan, its Tai Lue culture.

It was also found that three of the four homestay establishments in this study fitted the definition of homestay in which visitors stay in the home of the host located in a village or community. The other homestay was a coffee field with two visitor accommodation structures. The operator lived in a village which was 10 kilometers away. All four homestays report that they were supported by the Tambon Administration Authority in providing the infrastructure facilities. The four homestays were also found to have been managed differently. In some homestays, membership was closed and limited while others membership was open to all members in the community to participate in the operation. Some homestays were managed by a standing committee; some are loosely run by an ad hoc committee, especially when a cultural show was to be staged for a large number of visitors to the community. All homestay operators considered the income from the homestay business as supplementary as they already had their main income from other sources, and the homestay season lasted only 5 months-- from October to March. Because of this, they depended only on the TAT and the provincial websites to advertise and promote their homestay businesses. In terms of management, there were no problems. The only major problem encountered operators in all four homestays was with the visitors not understanding the homestay



concept. They expected to enjoy all the conveniences they had at home. Another minor problem was the communication with foreign visitors. However, the number of foreign visitors was negligible and if they wanted to have an in-depth understanding of the community, they always brought Thai friends with them.

## Background

“Homestay” is basically an offshoot of ecotourism, cultural tourism, and agro-tourism, which caters to tourists who “wish to escape from their modern urban and suburban environments, and visit simpler, less developed areas”. In fact, it is a form of community-based business run by the hosts in the local communities. In joining these kinds of tourism, tourists are given an opportunity to stay in the homes of the hosts in the local community during their trip.

As a form of community-based tourism, homestay is based on the concepts of environmental protection; respects for the customs, traditional and religious practices, local taboos, beliefs and behavior of the host communities, and sacred sites; preservation of artistic, archaeological and cultural treasures, and the protection of wildlife and other natural resources; the fostering of understanding and friendly relations among the tourists and the local people. Besides, homestay encompasses all the characteristics of rural tourism which include: closeness to nature, quietness, absence of crowds, a non-mechanized environment, personal contact, a sense of stability, and retention of individual identity.

In Thailand, the idea of homestay has been introduced to Thailand since the early 1960s. At first, it was not very successful since the idea was rather new; only a few Thai tourists made use of the facilities. Later, when jungle-trekking and adventure tourism were in vogue and patronized by international tourists, these tourists stayed with villagers along their jungle trails and trekking routes, especially in ethnic communities.

To bring benefit financially and socially to local communities the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) encouraged the people to provide homestay facilities for these special interest



tourists. The campaign and encouragement of the TAT was so successful that homestays have sprouted up in many different parts of the country. In order to ensure that the tourists receive the best service and quality experience of homestay, together with the uniformity of homestay operations, the TAT has established the homestay standards. Those that meet these standards will be given a certificate to let the visitor know that the homestays have been certified by the TAT. These standards include cleanliness of accommodation and food, safety, and accessibility to the site of the homestay. Teams of inspectors from the Ministry of Tourism and Sports visit the homestays to assess whether they meet the standards or not.

As reported by the Office of Tourism Business, from 2004 – 2007, only 80 homestay establishments were certified as having met the standard requirements of the Office of Tourism Business Development. Of the 80 establishments, 15 were located in the central region; 33, in the Northeast; 7, in the South; 23, in the north. Of the 23, only 2 are in the lower northern region—one in Uttaradit and the other one is in Phetchabun. A team of researchers from Chiangmai University who studied 61 homestays in 31 provinces in five regions of the country, all of which were considered to have met the TAT standards revealed also found that the people who have access to the natural resources for homestay were the people who were the leaders of the community, the people who had experience and knowledge. These people were those who set the standards which excluded the middle class or the people at the bottom rung of the society to have an opportunity for the society to participate in the activity. The leaders of the community did not support one another to improve and develop homestay businesses in their community. For example if the village headmen and the Kamnan (sub-district heads) started the homestay business, the Local Administration Authority (LAA) would not provide any support, but if the operators were teachers, they would readily lend support to them. The findings also revealed that the income from homestay was minimal, that most of the tourists were Thai, and that only a few people in the community benefited from homestay businesses. In some communities, it was found that the people were able to solve



the problem of poverty to a certain extent since in the homestay communities, stores, souvenir shops, and other related businesses sprang up. Furthermore, homestays contributed the growth of natural resources. However, when the community was well-known, people from outside the community would come in to buy the land and this pushed the price of the land up to an extraordinarily high level. Some communities allowed visitors to come beyond its carrying capacity, such as during the Songkran festival, which in turn, caused problems to the communities both in terms of waste, congestions, and damage to the environment.

After four decades of implementation, the researcher wanted to know the status of homestay businesses. What are the conditions of homestays business? Are they in lines with the standards set down by the TAT? What are their problems? How are they managed?

**Objectives** Specifically, the objectives of this study were as follows

1. To examine the present conditions of homestay business operations in the lower northern region, particularly in the following areas
2. To identify the problems faced by homestay operators in the lower northern region, particularly the problems of seasonality, marketing, quality of the tourist experience, and the standards of the establishments.

In this study, four homestay establishments which have been certified to meet the standard requirements of the Department of Tourism Business were studied. These homestay establishments include Ban Haad Song Kwai Homestay, in Uttaradit, Phu Nam Nao Homestay, in Phetchabun, and Ban Khwang Buk Homestay in Phrae; and Ban Don Moon, in Nan. The researcher was interested in examining the conditions of homestay operation and the problems these four establishments have faced.



## Scope of the Study

The study was limited to four homestays, all of which were certified by the TAT to have met the Homestay Standards. They included:

- a. Ban Haad Song Khwai Homestay in Uttaradit,
- b. Phu Nam Nao Homestay in Phetchabun,
- c. Ban Khwang Buk Homestay in Phrae,
- d. Ban Don Moon in Nan.

The researcher chose these four homestay establishments because two were in the lower northern region and the other two were in the Upper North.

## Definition

**Homestay** is referred to as the managing of lodging by villager who act as a host who is willing to let to the tourists to stay in his/ her home. The lodging facilities must have a room or a space and other amenities for the comfort of the tourists, and the tourists will pay for the accommodation and food provided by the host. During their stay, the tourists may engage in the cultural exchange and participated in local way of life of the host community.

**Core products.** Core products are dominant intangible products such as natural beauty, weather, environment, food, etc. which provide benefit or satisfaction to a customer and which a customer expects from a good or service he or she buys.

**Augmented products** are additional products which are added to the core products which generate multiple revenue streams such as local arts and crafts, traditional costumes or attire, or festivals and events, etc.

**Conditions.** Conditions refers to the general characteristics of homestay operations which include such things as form of management, financial management, physical characteristics, attractions, cleanliness of the accommodation, access to the homestay establishments, hospitality of the local people, prices for accommodation and meals.



**Problems.** Problems refer to the obstacles which prevent effective operations of homestay establishment. This may include lack of attractions, poor management, misunderstanding of homestay concept, conflicts among operators and/or among non-operators.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### History of Homestay

Homestay first emerged in Europe after WW II or about 50 years ago. People sought to take their vacation in far-away places from the urban centers, especially places with tranquility and natural beauty. With this trend, there arose a new kind of accommodation and businesses such as bed & breakfast, farmhouses, guest houses, and homestay establishments. Though the names of accommodation business establishments were different, they operated under the same concept in that the people who came to stay in the establishment were the guests, not just tourists. This kind of tourism was then known as rural tourism.

### Homestay in Thailand

According to Homestay Thai.org, homestay businesses in Thailand take a variety of form and can be divided into 3 phases—the initial stage (2503 – 2505), the middle stage (2526 – 2536) and the present stage (2537 – present.)

### From 1960-1982

During this period, homestay was popular among students who participated in the rural development activities. These students wanted to learn about the way of life and the problems of the rural people so that they could find the solutions to those problems.

As for the foreign tourists, they liked to trek the jungle, especially in the northern provinces. These tourists would stay in the home of hill tribe people and their living quarters would be those that were located along their route.



### From 1982 – 1993

Jungle tour and trekking was becoming more and more popular among foreign tourists. Homestay establishments had spread widely to other hill tribe villages. Homestay at this time had caused many problems to the country such as drugs, prostitution, robbing, stealing, and murdering in order to take the victim's valuables.

### From 1994 – the present

During this period, environmental conservation was the trend all over the world and tourism tended to focus on conservation of nature. During 1994 -1996, Thai tourists took up the trend and lived in a homestay establishment on their trip. The pilot groups were activist tourists—both old and young, and the areas where homestay establishment mushroomed were located in such areas where the Thai private organization development s had spearheaded and build the homestay establishments such as those in Koh Yo Island, in Phang Nga (Coastal fishing group / trawl and floating seine groups). After Koh Yo island, other homestay businesses were established, such as Kiriwong village, in Nakhon Sri Thammarat; Ban Mae Ta in Chiang Mai (Alternative Agriculture Groups), Ban Phu Yai (Village Headman) Wiboon Chey Chalerm ( Sustainable agriculture).

Since 1996, tourism entrepreneurs and operators have combined adventure ecotourism and homestay together as the new tourism product. When Thailand designated the year 1998-1999 as the Amazing Thailand, all segments in both the government and private sectors had launched several tourism activity campaigns throughout the country. These campaigns spread through the local communities and resulted in an increase in home stay activities in several villages such as the Phu Thai Culture Village of Kok Kong in Kusinray, in Kalasin province, the Thai traditional house village in Plai Pong Pang village in Ampawa in Smut Sakhon, and in other areas occupied by the minorities and hill tribe groups.

According to some people, the Plai Pong Pang Village, initiated by Mr. Thawan Boon Pad, was the first successful homestay business. The homestay has been in business since 1997, (but





formally registered in 2001). The distinctive feature of the Plai Pong Pang Village was the old style Thai houses, which accounted for more than 100 houses. The operators used this feature as their selling point and marketing strategy. About 28 households participated in the project. The tourists were taken along the river, and canals to see the way of life of the people who lived in the area. At night, they were taken to see hundreds and hundreds of fly flies under the Lumphu trees, and these tourists were treated with the foods the indigenous people eat in their daily lives. The tourists were provided with sleeping facilities in the houses of the people dotted along the rivers and canals. Because of its short distance from Bangkok, Plai Pong Pang has been becoming popular more rapidly with the tourists from Bang Kong and its vicinities. To conveniently accommodate the tourists and to keep the maximum carrying capacity of the area, only 100 tourist are admitted to the area per day. The cost for staying in the Plai Pong Pang is about 700 baht, per person, and this include accommodation, food, and boat trip). About 80% of the tourists visiting the place are Thai and the rest are foreigners.

Today, ecotourism is the trend, and more and more Thai tourists and foreign tourists are engaged in this type of tourism. Tourists like to travel in the local community to learn about the way of life, culture, local arts and crafts by staying in the local community. Because of this, homestay means more than "accommodation", but it is a form of tourism with accommodation as focal point supplemented by other activities to suit the needs of the tourists

### Research Studies on Ecotourism and Homestay

In her study of the needs and opinions and comments of Thai tourists visiting Phuket and its neighboring area, Kulwara Suwanpimon (1998) found that the tourist attractions that most tourists wanted to visit the most were natural tourism resources, followed by places selling and buying local goods and souvenirs. The average length of stay was about 5-6 days although they indicated that they would like to spend about 7-8 days. The researcher also found that the



backgrounds of the tourists were related to the selection of the types of accommodation and travel agencies.

Wittaya Kiattiwat (2000), in his study on "The Behavior of Thai Tourists as Ecotourists: A Case Study of Umphang District, Tak Province", found that Thai tourists exhibited an ecotourism behavior, knowledge about ecotourism, and conducted themselves as eco-tourists at an average level. The length of stay, the expenses during the tour, the enjoyment of ecotourism activities, access to information, participation in environmental activities, and experiences on nature tourism influenced their being ecotourism. Furthermore, the place from which the tourists came, transportation, the groups accompanying the tourists, the accommodation, and the previous experience of having visited Umphang District had an influence on the tourists becoming eco-tourists with no significant differences.

In 2001, Panitta Singkra undertook a study on the community potential in managing an ecotourism in the form of homestay at Ban Huay Hee village, Tamon Puling, Muang district, Mae Hong Son Province and found that Homestay was a kind of ecotourism where the tourist stayed in the community as if they were members of the community in order to learn about the way of life, exchanged experiences, and learned about the culture of this community. Such natural resources, culture, way of life had been conserved and preserved under the community tourism management.

Wilaiporn Jirawattanaset (2001) in her study on "Folk Medias as Cultural Capital to promote cultural tourism (homestay): A case Sstudy of Ban Prasat, Nakhon Rajasima", found that cultural tourism or homestay was one of the alternative of tourism activities in Thailand. This kind of tourism was appropriate with tourists who wanted to study or learn and exchange their culture, tradition, and the way of life with host of the local people. At Ban Prasat village, the tourism resources which were the valuable assets were its local culture and tradition, together with the hospitality of the local people. Because of this, the villagers had turned these cultural assets to become their cultural capital to promote cultural tourism in their village.



Somsak Techaarawan (2001). conducted a study on “Managing homestay business with community participation: A case study of Ban Mae Kampong, Mae On Subdistrict, Chiangmai” and found that the potential and readiness of Ban Mae Kampong village in ecotourism in terms of its tourist attractions, infrastructure facilities, and access existed at a high level. However there was a limitation on its carrying capacity—it could not accommodate a large number of tourists. Its potentials and readiness in the areas of community participation, infrastructure facilities, service provision, safety, and marketing existed at a level where the operators could cater to the needs of the tourists quite well.

Natchamon Suwittayapan, conducted a study on “The openness to receiving information, knowledge, attitude and behavioral trends toward ecotourism in the form of homestay of Thai tourists” revealed that:

1. There was a low level for Thai tourists in their openness to receive information about ecotourism homestay, but their knowledge about ecotourism homestay existed at an average level. They had a positive attitude toward homestay, and exhibited a behavior toward ecotourism or homestay at a high level.

2. Tourists with different ages had different openness in receiving information about ecotourism or homestay from the mass media, personal media, and specialized media. Tourists with different occupations or careers, had different openness in receiving information about homestay from specialized media, but there were no significant differences in their openness in receiving information from the mass media and personal media. Tourists with different sex, marital status, education, and income had no significant difference in their openness in receiving information about homestay from the mass media, personal media, and specialized media.

3. The tourists' openness to receive information about homestay from the mass media, personal media, and specialized media that a negative relationship with their knowledge about homestay ecotourism type.



4. The openness to receive information about homestay ecotourism type from specialized media had a positive relationship with their attitude toward homestay ecotourism type.

5. The tourists' knowledge about homestay ecotourism type had a positive relationship with the attitude and trends in homestay ecotourism behavior.

6. The tourists' attitude toward home-stay ecotourism had a positive relation with the trends in their homestay ecotourism behavior.

Sayamon Chairatodomkul (2001), who conducted a study to look into the Thai tourist's knowledge and understanding about ecotourism in Chiangmai, found that the majority of Thai tourists had an understanding about ecotourism at a high level. The variables which affected their knowledge and understanding included their level of education, occupation, and frequency of trip taking. Moreover, the variables which affected the majority of Thai tourists' awareness of ecotourism included sex, educational level, and frequency of trip taking.

In her study of the factors affecting Thai tourists' preferences to joining homestay activities, Nongluck Youyendee (2003), using 402 subjects from five homestay establishments, classified the homestay establishments into two categories—homestay establishments with distinctive natural resources and homestay establishments with distinctive cultural resources. The findings revealed that the demographic factors which influenced their preferences in joining homestay activities in both categories were age, occupation, income, and domicile. However sex and the level of education had no influence on the tourists' preferences in joining the homestay activities.

Regarding the motivation which drew the tourists to both the natural and cultural resource areas, Nonngluck Yooyendee (2003) also found the following to be the motivating factors—convenient access to tourist attraction sites, the desire to learn about the local culture, tradition, and way of life, folk games and play, natural scenery, and relaxation, and hospitality of the hosts.



Nitidej Cherdput (2006) examined the potentials and development model of management of homestay establishments at Ban Fong Tai, Tambon Wang Kwang, Nam Nao District, Phetchabun and found that there existed a low potential and management of homestay establishments in Ban Fong Tai. However, Ban Fong Tai has a great variety of natural and built tourist resources, which could be developed to become a homestay business and meet the homestay standards and indexes issued by the Office of Tourism Development and Services. In a focus group activities, the villagers expressed the desire to implement a participative management of homestay model in their local community. They would mobilize funds from the people in their own village.

#### Collection of Data

To collect the data, the researcher visited the sites, interviewed with the homestay operators. The researcher spent at least one night at each homestay, and visited attractions in its neighboring vicinity. Interviews were recorded and notes were taken.

#### The Findings

##### Condition

The findings revealed that each homestay was different—one had its own cultural characteristics as its own selling point; one was a mix between culture and natural beauty; one was like an agro-tourism or farm tourism, with cold weather as a main attraction for the tourists, and the last one has a mixture of medicinal garden and jungle trekking as the main activities to draw visitors to visit the place. By and large, the following were observed from the data presented above:

1. Three of the four homestay establishments in this study fitted the definition of homestay in which the visitors stay in the home of the host located in a village or community. Phu Nam Nao Homestay did not fit in with this definition because the shelter for the visitors were built in either a coffee plantation or fruit tree orchards away from the local village where the homes of the homestay



operators were located. The host would come to the orchard or plantation only when there were visitors staying in their accommodation in their orchards or plantations.

Except at Ban Donmoon, in Nan Province, the number of homestay operators were small and quite limited. In some homestays such as Phu Nam Nao, and Ban Haad Songkhwai, membership was closed and limited to those who had close ties to the Tambon Administration Authority, or to the person who had good connection with the district officials. At Ban Kwang Buk, membership was also limited even though more people would like to join the homestay operation. At Ban Donmoon, the whole members of the village were involved though only 10 homestays were certified. Another 10 homestays would have met the Thai Homestay Standards if they wished to be inspected and certified. At Ban Donmoon, there was little leakage and the multiplier effect was high.

2. The homestay operators considered running the business as an activity to supplement their income. Each had already had their own occupation which supported their livelihood; the money earned from homestay operation was an extra income. Because of this they were not serious whether there were visitors or not.

3. The homestay season began in October to March when the weather was cool enough; the operation was closed during the rainy season.

The average length of stay was two nights and three days, and the average accommodation fees ranged from 150 baht to 550 baht per person per night and the meal per person was about 70 – 80 baht.

The rate of stay varied from place to place. The most expensive was at Phu Nam Nao where the accommodation fees cost 550 baht and 80 bath for each meal per person. At other places the accommodation fees ranged from 150 to 250 baht and the food cost about 70 to 80 per meal per person.

4. For the waste disposal, running water, and the upkeep of physical environment were no



problems since the homestay were located under the jurisdiction of the Tambon Administration Authority which looked after cleanliness, running water, and sanitation under its jurisdiction.

5. Most visitors were either students or young people who came in small groups of three-five people. Large groups of visitors were homestay operators from other provinces who paid a return visit, or members of the Agricultural Bank of Cooperatives who visited other cooperatives in the nearby areas. This findings were similar to those found by Wongwipark (2002) , who found that the visitors coming to stay at Lao Song Ban Khao Yoi, Phetchaburi, came in small groups of 2- 3 persons and most of them were teenagers, employed young people, researchers, and students. Large groups (10 – 70 people) were members of cooperatives from other provinces.

6. All the four homestays depended on the TAT and the provincial websites to advertise their homestay businesses. Some such as Ban Haad SongKhwai also had their own brochures and fliers to advertise their homestays.

7. The core products for Phu Nam Nao were the old weather and fresh air; for Ban Haad Songkhwai, Vientiane or Wiang Chan culture, shown through language and traditional attire, and natural beauty along the Nan river; for Ban Khwang Buk, medicinal plant garden, and jungle treks; for Ban Donmoon, Tai Lu culture, such as language, attire, and rituals and rites, and their community resources management.

Augmenting products include either economic activities done in the community such as OTOP products or attractions in nearby communities, which can be temples, waterfalls, or national parks.

#### **Problem**

1. There was no problem about management. The homestays operators were able to run their own business well, but there seemed to be some problems about income distribution since not all the members of the people in the community were members of the homestay operators and there were very few tourism-related businesses in the communities.



2. All homestay operators interviewed voiced their concern that the visitors did not understand the concept of homestay. They expected to enjoy all the conveniences they had at home. For example, they expected the home to have air conditioners, a shower, and water heater. They did not expect to sleep in a mosquito net, but in a bed with metal net on the windows to prevent the mosquitoes and other insects from entering the houses. In all four homestay establishments there were no air conditioners and no bed; some provide mosquito nets for the visitors and the visitors slept on the mattresses placed over the floor of the houses.

3. Some home-stay operators had problems communicating with foreign tourists and had to rely on using a non-verbal language. They some government agencies to send teachers to teach them English. They were willing to study it at night after dinner.

4. The number of visitors was small, but the homestay operator did not complain since they considered homestay to be an activity that brought in extra income. They had their regular occupation already.

## Discussions

Three of the four homestay establishments in this study fitted the definition of homestay in which the visitors stay in the home of the host located in a village or community. Phu Nam Nao Homestay did not fit in with this definition because the shelter for the visitors were built in either a coffee plantation or fruit tree orchards away from the local village located. The host would come to the orchard or plantation only when there were visitors staying in their accommodation in their orchards or plantations.

This did not fit in with the concept of the homestay where the visitors stayed in the home of the hosts, help the host in preparing foods, perform things that the host normally do in their daily lives. Talking with the Chairperson of the Phu Nam Nao Homestay, the district chief and officials were anxious to have homestays in their own district, so they overlooked some of the requirements or standards and certified the place with Thailand Homestay Standards. For example, along the





main road to the establishment, there were no road signs indicating how far the establishment was or where it was located. The host and the visitors did not share the same roof—the hosts lived in the village which is about 10 kilometers away.

At Ban Khuang Buk, the homestay operators depended on one leader—the head of the public health station—to organize the activities. The homestay operators and villagers did not have the knowledge to explain the attractions they had in their community. These findings were similarly voiced by Eajongprasit (2007), which stated that many homestay operators had no knowledge or no experience in running a homestay business. They had not been trained in how to provide quality services and quality experience to their guests, nor were they trained in how to keep the establishments clean and safe, as well as to be hospitable to the visitors who stay in their home. They needed to be educated with the knowledge of medicinal plants and other knowledge. They had to be able to interpret the assets their community had to the visitors. If they had to depend on one person, and if that person moved away, the villagers would be in a lame duck situation, and their homestay business would lose their own attraction.

In terms of financial management, the four homestay establishments were supported by the Tambon Administration Authority in building the infrastructure and the income was given to the homestay operators in whose house the tourists stayed; however, when the activities involve the whole community, the revenue was allocated according to the agreed-upon rules set by the villagers themselves. These findings were similarly found by Surachate Boonpongmanee (2007).

Except at Ban Donmoon, in Nan Province, the number of homestay operators were small and quite limited. In some homestays such as Phu Nam Noa, and Ban Haadsongkhwai, membership was closed and limited to those who had close ties to the Tambon Administration Authority, or to the person who had good connection with the district officials. At Ban Kwang Buk, membership was also limited even though more people would like to join the homestay operation. At Ban Donmoon, the whole members of the village were involved though only 10 homestays were



certified. Another 10 homestays would have met the Thai Homestay Standards if they wished to be inspected and certified. At Ban Donmoon, there was little leakage and the multiplier effect was high.

At Phu Nam Noa Homestay, in spite of the operators informing the researcher that they had persuaded the other people to join them, the people refused because some of them felt uncomfortable sharing living quarters with strangers or visitors. However, this might be true to some extent, the main problem might be that they would have to make a heavy investment building the accommodation in their orchard or plantation in the vicinity where the other five homestay establishments were located. The people there did not have much money since they depended on field crops, especially maize whose price fluctuated/ Making such investment might not be profitable to them since the tourism season lasted about 5 to 6 months in a year. And there were no guarantee that they would receive the guest regularly. Their homes were too far from where the tourists liked to stay.

In Ban Haad Song Khaew Homestay, the Tambon Administration Authority wanted to keep it small to only five operators. Because of this, there was some resentment from some of the people who did not benefit from such operation. When the Tambon Administration Authority allocated the budget to buy the sleeping materials to these five operators, many people voiced their opposition.

The same was true with Ban Khuang Buk Homestay in Phrae. Many people wanted to join and they had their house built and renovated to accommodate the visitors since they see homestay business as a way to earn an extra income for them. However, the Homestay Committee still did not have those homes certified with the Thailand Homestay Standards.

These findings were in with those reported by the Matichon Newspaper that the Local Administration Authority tended to support the people whose economic status was better such as



teachers, and tended to ignore the homestays run by village headmen or Kamnan (head to the subdistrict head), or ordinary people (2008).

One explanation might be that each year a number of visitors to the place were small, and too much accommodation in one place would not be beneficial to the operators. Besides, the visitors triggered in; they did not come in a large number in one time. However, if membership was limited to a certain group of people, sooner or later there might be a rift among the people in the community.

The homestay operators considered running the business as an activity to supplement their income. Each had already had their own occupation which supported their livelihood; the money earned from homestay operation was an extra income. Because of this they were not serious whether there were visitors or not.

In one way, this was good as there were no pressure on the villagers or homestay operators to aggressively advertise and attract the clients to come to their village. When no clients came, the people would carry on their daily lives doing their own household business and farming. In another way, the operators would not be creative in improving their communities to be more attractive to the visitors. They would not think of new activities to add to the existing one to make community more attractive. For example, they could restore the lost or long forgotten cultural practices that were rare and unique to their own villages, or the traditional ways of doing things that had been replaced by modern technology and change.

All the four homestays depended on the TAT and the provincial websites to advertise their homestay businesses. Some such as Ban Haad Songkhwai also had their own brochures and fliers to advertise their homestays. Again, this was in line with what Eajongprasit (2006) said that homestay operators had no systematic marketing (73)

It seemed that the channels of advertisement campaigns were limited. More aggressive campaigns were needed. Each homestay establishment should have done more advertising by



participating travel mart events, through poster presentations, or other cultural activities in cultural events organized in other provinces. In economic lean time, more campaigns should be targeted at local or domestic visitors to visit these places. However, according to the homestay operators, they got most of their visitors through word of mouth. This was in line with the findings of the study conducted by Yutthana Somla (2007). That means, the visitors would have to be treated well so that they had memorable experience of the place in order for them to recommend others to visit the places. That is, their stay must have been worth the money they spent; the hospitality of the host would play the most important things; the attractions would meet the visitors' expectation. The homestay operations and those involved had to be informed and educated.

Each homestay establishment had its own core and augmenting products. For example, for Phu Nam Nao were the old weather and fresh air; for Ban Haadsongkhwai, Vientiane or Wiang Chan culture, shown through language and traditional attire, and natural beauty along the Nan river; for Ban Khwang Buk, medicinal plant garden, and jungle treks; for Ban Donmoon, Tai Lu culture, such as language, attire, and rituals and rites, and their community resources management. These core and augmenting products would need to be retained and had to be kept in good conditions in order for the homestay to be attractive.

Augmenting products include either economic activities done in the community such as OTOP products or attractions in nearby communities, which can be temples, waterfalls, or national parks.

One interesting Homestay, Ban Donmoon, was interesting. All the villagers were proud of their own Tai Lu culture. They would try to promote their culture whenever the occasion called for. They would volunteer to join in the fairs and events organized both by the organizers at District, the Provincial, or regional and even national levels. They formed alliances with Tai Lu in other districts in Nan, and in other provinces such as Phayao, Chiangrai and Chiangmai. They also had



connection with the Tai Lu in Sib Song Panna in southern China. They would invite the representatives of the Tai Lu from these places to join their ceremonies, rituals, and rite.

Almost all the homestay operators said that they had formed friendship with visitors and vice versa. The tourists would come and visit them year after year, and they also visited the tourists if possible. They would send fruits, farm produce, and other items as gifts to the tourists, and the tourists would do the same thing. Furthermore, they form a connection with other homestay operators in other provinces. They would organize a tour to visit and stay in the homestay establishments of other operators in other provinces, and in return, the operators from those places also organized a tour to visit their homestays. Doing this, they learned from one another to improve their homestay businesses.

### **The Problems**

In terms of management, there were no problems, They could manage the business operation well. In terms of income distribution, they seemed to be some problems since not all the members of the people in the community were members of the homestay operators.

However, the operators in all four homestay establishments voiced the same problems—the visitors did not understand the concept of homestay. They expected to enjoy all the conveniences they had at home. For example, they expected the home to have an air conditioners, a shower, and a water heater. They did not expect to sleep on the mattress on the floor with a mosquito net, but in a bed with wire net mounted on the windows to prevent the mosquitoes and other insects from entering the houses. In all four homestay establishments there were no air conditioners and no bed; some provide mosquito nets for the visitors and the visitors slept on the mattresses placed over the floor of the houses.

These problems could be solved through tourism education. The media,—printed, digital, and visual—must provide an articles explaining what homestay tourism is. Also the website of each homestay establishment had to provide in more detail the facilities available, what kind of sleeping



items were provided, what were not provide, what were available, and what were not available to the tourists.

The second problem is that when foreign visitors came, they could not communicate with them, and they had to rely on the body language to convey what they want to say to them. They needed some government agencies to send teachers to teach them English. They were willing to study it at night after dinner. Though there were very few foreign visitors opted to homestay tourism, the need for communication was important. If these tourists were satisfied, they would related their experience to their friends and relatives to come to the place. Training the villagers or homestay operators to be able to converse in English, at least in a rudimentary level, would be a plus. The TAT or the Provincial Administration Authority should work with an educational organization in the area to train these people.

## Conclusion

Each homestay establishment had its own unique characteristics, which drew the tourists to come in the first place. There were no problem in terms of management, including waste management. Most homestays were operated in the form of committee basis, and each homestay, except Ban Donmoon, was supported by the Tambon Administration Authority which looks after the sanitation and environment of each Tambon or sub-district. Each member was assigned specific functions. They might be weak in term of advertising, but the operators did not feel that it was a problem since they considered running homestays not their fundamental income generator; running a homestay business gave them an opportunity to earn extra income and to make friends with the tourists. Some visitors came to visit their hosts every year, and sometimes they also sent gifts and souvenirs to the hosts and vice versa. The operators thought friendship and connections were more important than money.



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