

# THE STUDY OF BAN NA TONG COMMUNITY TOURISM MANAGEMENT, PHRAE PROVINCE TO DEVELOP INTO A CREATIVE COMMUNITY ATTRACTION

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## ABSTRACT

The values generated for the community and the area encompass various dimensions: social and cultural aspects, environmental aspects, economic aspects, and community knowledge. There is a process of exchanging knowledge and experiences with external groups or communities that engage in educational tourism within the community. This also includes assistance and support in various aspects to promote development in an appropriate manner. The success of community operations, stemming from its potential and the continuity of processes, will lead the community to become a creative community, born out of genuine participation.

This approach embodies integrated ecotourism, which includes conservation of nature, culture, and the environment, and is responsible towards society, ultimately leading to sustainable tourism. The development guidelines involve the exploration and research of various information, resulting in the community developing self-awareness, self-reliance, critical thinking, teamwork, a commitment to learning and development, and participation in monitoring and evaluating the overall system. This fosters mutual understanding, and the creation of project plans aligned with their mission, which also supports the overall tourism development at all levels.

**Keywords:** Community Tourism Management, Ban Na Tong, Creative Community

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## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a significant industry for the global economy, including the economy of Thailand. The tourism sector is a crucial economic driver that generates substantial revenue for the country. According to the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021), Thailand's tourism goals were set to achieve no less than 3 trillion baht in revenue, with the country ranking no lower than 30th in the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2017).

The continuous changes in tourism development at all levels due to globalization and shifting tourist behaviors have led various industries to adapt and evolve in order to meet market demands. The global tourism industry has also experienced ongoing growth and evolution. Analysis indicates that the tourism industry is essential to the global economy in two main aspects: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and tourism revenue (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2016).

Given the importance of tourism, the development strategies at all levels have prioritized tourism. The Thailand 4.0 concept aims to transition the economy towards innovation-driven growth by focusing on creative culture and high-value services, enhancing service efficiency (Service Enhancing). The 20-year strategic framework outlines tourism development linked to various strategic aspects, including competitiveness enhancement, economic capability development, promoting trade and investment, and sustainable agriculture, among others (Thailand 4.0, 2018).

The strategy also includes supporting SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) to strengthen their productivity and sustainability. It emphasizes the development of creative tourism products and services, particularly in Northern Thailand, which is highlighted as a creative economy base. The unique Lanna culture and wisdom are to be developed into creative tourism products (Northern Thailand Development Project, 2018).

The government's policy also includes enhancing the capabilities of SMEs to effectively operate and compete, with an emphasis on process improvement, product development, and management efficiency (Government of Thailand, 2018). Strategic integration across different dimensions, from area needs to university and ministry strategies, is encouraged to ensure comprehensive development and support for all levels of tourism.

This project aims to establish a model for community-based tourism development to connect Northern Thailand's tourism under an integrated strengthening and sustainability plan. The project, funded by the 2018 fiscal year budget, highlights the importance of successful management models in tourism, especially community-based tourism. Despite the growing interest in experiencing local lifestyles, some areas have not achieved the expected success due to various factors (Community-Based Tourism Project, 2018).

The key to successful community-based tourism management lies in the collaboration between local communities and relevant agencies. Experience-sharing between successful tourism communities is essential for creating new tourism opportunities, leading to sustainable development. The project's activities cover all dimensions of development, ensuring continuity and sustainability (Tourism Management Report, 2018).

### Objectives of the Research

- 1) To study the context, potential, and readiness of the community in preparation for developing creative community-based tourism.
- 2) To extract the knowledge and process of community tourism management to prepare and develop towards becoming a creative community-based tourism model.
- 3) To identify guidelines for developing a model community-based tourism.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

The concept of community-based tourism management emphasizes the importance of local community involvement in managing and developing tourism. This approach allows communities to utilize their natural and cultural resources to generate economic benefits while preserving their traditions and environment. Community-based tourism is often a response to the negative impacts of mass tourism, aiming to provide a more sustainable and inclusive alternative (Mowforth & Munt, 2016).

Several studies have explored the factors contributing to the success of community-based tourism. For example, research by Nitcharee et al. (2018) identified key factors such as strong community leadership, effective collaboration among stakeholders, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances as critical to successful tourism management. These factors contribute to the long-term sustainability of tourism activities and the overall development of the community.

Furthermore, Chareonsuk et al. (2017) highlighted the role of cultural preservation in community-based tourism. They found that communities that actively engage in preserving their cultural heritage are more likely to attract tourists seeking authentic experiences. This, in turn, leads to greater economic benefits and enhanced community pride (Harrison & Schipani, 2007).

Another important aspect of community-based tourism is the involvement of local residents in decision-making processes. This participatory approach ensures that tourism development aligns with the community's needs and values, leading to more equitable distribution of benefits. Phanurat et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of building local capacity and empowering communities to take charge of their tourism activities (Fischer, 2014).

In summary, the literature suggests that successful community-based tourism relies on strong community involvement, effective collaboration, cultural preservation, and capacity building. These elements contribute to the sustainability and resilience of tourism activities, ensuring that they benefit both the community and the visitors.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study involved a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The primary data collection methods included interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys conducted with community members, local leaders, and stakeholders involved in tourism. The study also included a review of secondary data sources, such as government reports, academic articles, and case studies on community-based tourism.

The research process was divided into the following steps:

**Context Analysis:** This involved studying the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental context of the community to understand its potential for tourism development.

**Stakeholder Engagement:** Meetings and discussions were held with key stakeholders, including community leaders, local businesses, and government officials, to gather their perspectives on tourism development.

**Tourism Potential Assessment:** The research team conducted an assessment of the community's tourism resources, such as natural attractions, cultural sites, and traditional practices, to identify opportunities for tourism development.

**Community Readiness Evaluation:** Surveys and interviews were used to evaluate the community's readiness for tourism, including their attitudes towards tourism, skills, and infrastructure.

**Model Development:** Based on the findings, a model for community-based tourism was developed, which included guidelines for tourism management, product development, and marketing strategies.

The research was conducted over a period of one year, from January to December 2019, and involved extensive fieldwork in the community of Ban Na Tong, Phrae Province.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Respondents' Profiles and Studied Variables

The findings from the study are presented in several key areas: the context and potential of Ban Na Tong for tourism, community readiness, and the development of a model for community-based tourism.

#### 1) Context and Potential of Ban Na Tong Geographical and Cultural Context:

Ban Na Tong is located in Phrae Province, in Northern Thailand. The community is surrounded by natural beauty, including forests, mountains, and rivers, which makes it an ideal location for nature-based tourism. The village is rich in cultural heritage, with traditional practices and a strong sense of community that have been preserved over generations.

##### 1.1) Tourism Resources:

The study identified several potential attractions in Ban Na Tong, including:

**Natural Attractions:** The village is surrounded by scenic landscapes, including waterfalls, caves, and hiking trails. These natural sites are well-suited for ecotourism and adventure tourism.

**Cultural Attractions:** The community maintains traditional Lanna customs, including local crafts, traditional dance, and ceremonies. These cultural assets provide a unique experience for tourists interested in learning about local traditions.

**Agricultural Activities:** The village's agricultural practices, such as rice farming and organic gardening, offer opportunities for agritourism. Visitors can participate in farming activities and learn about sustainable agricultural practices.

##### 1.2) Infrastructure and Facilities:

Ban Na Tong has basic infrastructure to support tourism, including homestays, local restaurants, and transportation services. However, the study found that there is a need for improvement in certain areas, such as accommodation quality, signage, and visitor information services.

#### 2) Community Readiness

##### 2.1) Attitudes toward Tourism:

The community members of Ban Na Tong generally have a positive attitude towards tourism. They recognize the potential benefits of tourism, such as increased income and job opportunities. However, there are also concerns about the possible negative impacts, such as environmental degradation and cultural erosion.

##### 2.2) Skills and Capacity:

The study found that while the community has a strong foundation in traditional skills and knowledge, there is a need for further training in areas such as hospitality, marketing, and foreign languages. Enhancing these skills is crucial for the community to effectively manage and benefit from tourism.

##### 2.3) Community Engagement:

The research highlighted the importance of involving the entire community in the planning and development of tourism. There is a high level of interest in participating in tourism activities, but the study identified the need for better coordination and leadership to ensure that tourism development is inclusive and benefits all members of the community.

#### 3) Development of the Community-Based Tourism Model

Based on the findings, a model for community-based tourism was developed for Ban Na Tong. The model includes the following components:

##### 3.1) Tourism Management Structure:

Establish a community tourism committee responsible for coordinating tourism activities, managing resources, and representing the community in dealings with external stakeholders. Develop clear guidelines for tourism management that prioritize sustainability, cultural preservation, and community benefits.

### 3.2) Product Development:

Create tourism products that highlight the unique cultural and natural assets of Ban Na Tong. This includes developing guided tours, cultural workshops, and nature-based activities that are led by local community members.

Promote local crafts and agricultural products as part of the tourism experience, providing additional income streams for the community.

### 3.3) Marketing and Promotion:

Develop a marketing strategy that targets niche markets, such as ecotourism, cultural tourism, and agritourism. The strategy should leverage online platforms and social media to reach potential visitors. Collaborate with regional and national tourism organizations to promote Ban Na Tong as a unique and authentic destination. Capacity Building: Implement training programs in hospitality, customer service, and foreign languages to improve the quality of the tourism experience. Provide training in business management and financial planning to help community members manage tourism-related businesses effectively. Sustainability and Monitoring: Develop a system for monitoring the impacts of tourism on the environment and the community. This includes regular assessments of visitor numbers, waste management, and cultural impacts. Establish a feedback mechanism where tourists can provide suggestions and community members can voice concerns, ensuring continuous improvement in tourism management.

Based on the research on community-based tourism management to develop it into a model community tourism, the researchers outlined three main areas for summarizing lessons learned in community tourism management. These areas include: Community potential and starting points. The values created for the community and areas, including social, cultural, environmental, economic dimensions, and community knowledge. Development models to lead to a model community tourism. From the research findings, the results are discussed as follows: Values Created for the Community and Areas: Social and Cultural Dimensions: The community of Ban Natong has learned to sustain and develop by relying on unity, collaboration, and the gradual process of local people. This is achieved through knowledge management processes initiated from the everyday life of the Natong people, which includes unique practices like turtle conservation, tea planting, and nature-based tourism. This is consistent with the research by Pompibulrat (2004), which studied the community and ecotourism resources in Ban Natong. It was found that community participation involves meetings, consultations, and joint decision-making to solve problems related to community rights in local resource management according to constitutional laws. Although villagers were initially unaware of the laws, their experiences facilitated smooth operations. Tourism has enhanced local livelihoods, improved standards of living and education, and fostered cultural awareness among tourists.

Community Empowerment and Organizational Knowledge: The study by Pongpinyoi (2002) found that the key process is the formation of groups with common objectives and the establishment of community committees to manage internal community affairs, welfare, and community businesses. Unity and mutual support in the community strengthen group operations and benefit the community in economic, social, and cultural aspects, leading to community empowerment. This contrasts with the research by Visuthichanan (2015), which highlighted the transmission of traditional wisdom through ancestors and family members. However, modern technology has impacted some traditional knowledge, necessitating the creation of conservation groups and cooperation from communities, educational institutions,

government agencies, and religious institutions to preserve and promote this knowledge. Environmental Dimension: After implementing various forms of tourism such as ecotourism, health tourism, and nature-based tourism, effective participatory management led to community learning and problem-solving. The successes are reflected in two key aspects: Direct Successes: Demonstrated by the community's unique practice of making wet and dry Homs (traditional herbal drinks) and the abundance of forest resources in the village. Indirect Successes: As seen in the success of the homestay tourism (standard homestay) in the community, which has effectively promoted tourism at the national level and is adapting for international recognition. This aligns with Kongprasert's (2008) research on sustainable tourism development in Koh Phangan, Surat Thani, which emphasized conservation awareness, world-class marine tourism development, and the promotion of community strength through organic and sustainable agriculture. Economic Dimension: The community-based tourism in Ban Natong has led to systematic income generation and distribution, creating jobs and opportunities for self-development. This success in the community represents increased quality of life and economic benefits. This is consistent with Kamolprateungkor's (2016) research on community management following Buddhist principles, which showed that strong communities often do not rely on state institutions but on internal community strength. This reduces the state's burden and enhances community relationships and governance. Community Knowledge Dimension: There is a process of exchanging knowledge and experiences with external communities and organizations that come for educational tourism. The development of community tourism models that can be a reference for other communities is consistent with Walai Pornpibulrat's (2004) findings on the participatory approach in community resource management in Ban Natong. In conclusion, community-based tourism in Ban Natong integrates conservation of nature, culture, and the environment into a responsible and sustainable tourism model. The community's self-reliance, willingness to learn, and development efforts, supported by government, private sectors, and educational institutions, contribute to a model that benefits both the local and global community. This aligns with the findings of various studies on community-based tourism development, emphasizing the importance of integrated planning, local participation, and the use of traditional and modern knowledge for sustainable development.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The study on the development of Ban Na Tong as a community-based tourism destination revealed several key insights crucial for the successful implementation of tourism activities in the community. The findings highlighted the village's rich natural and cultural resources, which form a strong foundation for developing sustainable tourism. The study also emphasized the community's readiness to embrace tourism, though it identified areas that require further development, such as infrastructure, skill enhancement, and capacity building (Tosun, 2000; Bramwell & Lane, 2011).

The research concluded that community-based tourism in Ban Na Tong has the potential to significantly contribute to the local economy while preserving the community's cultural heritage and natural environment (Scheyvens, 2002). However, the success of tourism development depends on the active participation of all community members, effective management, and a commitment to sustainability. The study underscored the importance of a well-structured tourism management model that aligns with the community's values and goals (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009).

In line with the findings, the literature suggests that successful community-based tourism requires addressing infrastructure needs, enhancing local skills, and building community capacity (Ashley, 2000; Mowforth & Munt, 2016). Engaging local stakeholders in decision-making processes and ensuring that tourism development reflects community values are

essential for achieving long-term sustainability and economic benefits (Harrison & Schipani, 2007).

### **Recommendations**

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed to support the sustainable development of community-based tourism in Ban Na Tong:

#### **Strengthen Community Involvement:**

Encourage active participation from all community members in tourism planning and decision-making processes to ensure that tourism development reflects the community's values and aspirations.

Establish a formal tourism committee that includes representatives from different sectors of the community to oversee and coordinate tourism activities.

#### **Enhance Infrastructure and Facilities:**

Invest in improving infrastructure, such as accommodation, transportation, and signage, to provide a better experience for tourists while maintaining the community's traditional charm.

Develop visitor information centers to provide tourists with comprehensive information about attractions, activities, and cultural practices in Ban Na Tong.

#### **Focus on Capacity Building:**

Implement training programs in hospitality, customer service, and foreign languages to enhance the skills of community members involved in tourism.

Provide business management and financial planning workshops to help local entrepreneurs manage tourism-related businesses effectively.

#### **Develop and Promote Unique Tourism Products:**

Create tourism products that highlight Ban Na Tong's unique cultural and natural assets, such as guided nature tours, cultural workshops, and hands-on agricultural experiences.

Promote local crafts and agricultural products as part of the tourism experience, ensuring that the economic benefits are distributed throughout the community.

#### **Implement Sustainable Tourism Practices:**

Develop guidelines for sustainable tourism that prioritize environmental conservation and cultural preservation, ensuring that tourism activities do not negatively impact the community.

Establish a system for monitoring the impacts of tourism on the environment and the community, with regular assessments and adjustments as needed.

#### **Collaborate with External Stakeholders:**

Partner with regional and national tourism organizations to enhance the visibility of Ban Na Tong as a tourism destination.

Seek support from government agencies and NGOs for funding, training, and infrastructure development to support sustainable tourism initiatives.

#### **Promote Ban Na Tong Through Strategic Marketing:**

Develop a marketing strategy that targets niche markets, such as ecotourism, cultural tourism, and agritourism, to attract tourists interested in authentic and sustainable experiences.

Utilize online platforms and social media to promote Ban Na Tong, showcasing the community's unique attractions and the authentic experiences it offers.

### **Future Research**

The study also identified areas for future research to further support the development of community-based tourism in Ban Na Tong: Long-term Impact Assessment: Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impacts of tourism on the community's economy, culture, and environment. Monitor changes in the community's quality of life and social dynamics as tourism develops. Comparative Studies: Compare Ban Na Tong's tourism development with other similar communities in Northern Thailand or other regions to identify best practices and lessons learned. Explore the effectiveness of different tourism management models in similar rural communities to refine and improve the proposed model.

Visitor Satisfaction and Experience: Study visitor satisfaction and experiences in Ban Na Tong to identify areas for improvement and to better tailor tourism products to meet tourist expectations. Explore the potential for expanding tourism offerings based on visitor feedback and emerging tourism trends.

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