

Guidelines for Sustainable Community-Based Tourism Management in Bang Phli Community, Samut Prakan Province

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the guidelines for community-based tourism management with a focus on sustainability, assess the level of participation, and propose ways to enhance the potential of community-based tourism management in the Bang Phli community in Samut Prakan province. The qualitative phase of the research involved 10 key informants, while the quantitative phase included a sample of 400 community members. The findings of quantitative study show that the Bang Phli community has strengths and opportunities for sustainable tourism development. Resident participation was moderate overall (avg. 3.05), with the highest engagement in benefiting from tourism, followed by monitoring, evaluation, and identifying issues. The lowest participation was in recognizing challenges in tourist attractions. The qualitative results propose guidelines for enhancing the potential of community-based tourism management for sustainability in the Bang Phli community as follows: 1. Development of infrastructure and a tourism management model; 2. Development and restoration of tourist attractions to ensure sustainability; 3. Enhancement of tourism-related products, services, and supporting factors; and 4. Provision of tourism-related knowledge to the community. The research outcomes provide guidelines for community-based tourism management that emphasize participation, thereby enabling the community to harness benefits and ensuring the effectiveness of community-based tourism initiatives for the residents.

Keywords: Sustainability; Community-Based Tourism Management; Tourism Management;
Bang Phli Community

Introduction

Thailand's diverse attractions draw both local and international tourists, making tourism a vital economic sector. Its sustained growth stems from geographic advantages, rich resources, and unique cultural elements like art, heritage, and hospitality (Tipataporn & Pruek, 2022). However, tourism also impacts local communities, leading to resource depletion, cultural imitation, and site deterioration due to ineffective management. In terms of community organizations, tourism stimulates local economies by creating jobs and income opportunities for community members. It

also encourages skill development due to gaps in tourism management planning (Sanphuwa, Jaikorn, & Phuangok, 2023). Despite that, benefits often concentrate among private operators, while communities receive limited gains. Additionally, a lack of local cooperation in managing tourism resources exacerbates negative impacts (Yangnok, Nillakan, & Lertgri, 2023).

In the 21st-century development prioritizes sustainability across social, economic, and environmental sectors, requiring the tourism industry to adapt globally. This has driven sustainable tourism initiatives, including Thailand's community-based tourism model, which emphasizes local ownership, participation, and sustainability (Chatkaewnapanon & Lee, 2022). Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it supports global collaboration on sustainable development targets (Pradhan, Costa, Rybski, Lucht, & Kropp, 2017). Thus, participatory tourism management remains key to advancing sustainability.

Bang Phli, a historic community in Samut Prakan, once thrived as a transport hub and remains rich in cultural traditions like the ancient "Rabbua" festival. However, community participation in management decisions remains limited. Despite this, local leaders and residents seek to develop sustainable tourism to generate income (Penams Sripraseart, Somnuk, Kuenuei, and Thingpun, 2021). Therefore, Bang Phli has the potential to develop into a distinctive community-based tourism destination, benefiting its economy, society, and environment. This study explores participatory tourism management in Bang Phli to propose an approach that maximizes local benefits. It aims to enhance community awareness, engagement, and conservation of tourism resources for sustainable development.

Objective of Research

1. To examine the management of community-based tourism for sustainability: A case study of the Bang Phli community, Bang Phli district, Samut Prakan province.
2. To analyze the level of participation in community-based tourism management for sustainability within the Bang Phli community, Bang Phli district, Samut Prakan province.
3. To explore guidelines for enhancing the potential of community-based tourism management for sustainability in the Bang Phli community, Bang Phli district, Samut Prakan province.

Conceptual Framework

This research investigates the guidelines for community-based tourism management aimed at sustainability, specifically focusing on the case of the Bang Phli community of Samut Prakan province. The objective of this study is to identify methods for area development that incorporate community participation to foster sustainability within the community. The researcher examined existing literature on community participation in area development, drawing from theoretical concepts and related studies. The conceptual framework is depicted in Figure 1.

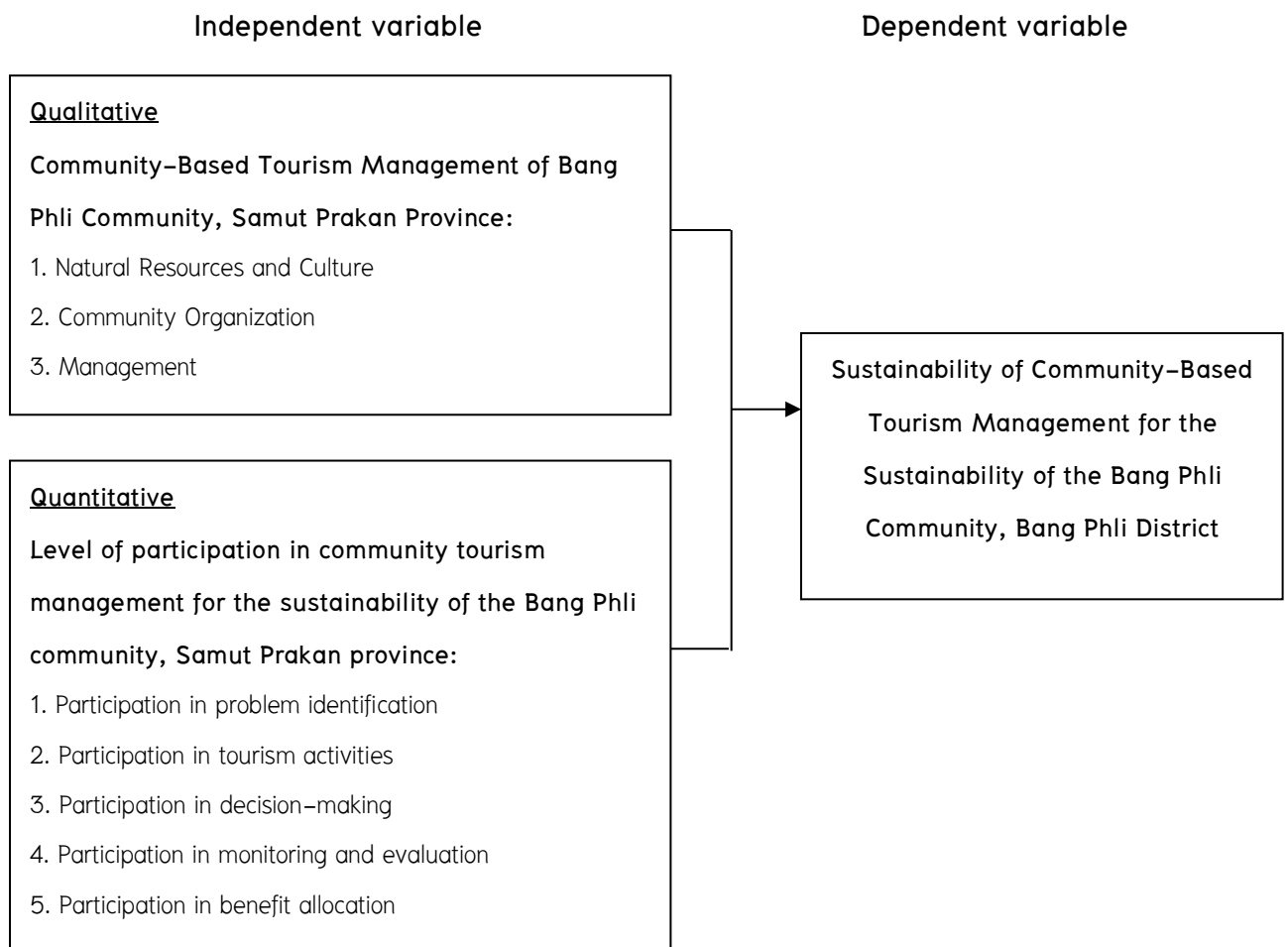


Figure 1: The conceptual framework

Concepts, Theories, and Related Research

1. Sustainable Community Tourism Management

Sustainable tourism requires operating within natural, cultural, and social limits, understanding tourism's impact, fostering public participation, and balancing economic, social, and environmental needs (Mowforth & Munt, 2015). Community-based tourism aligns with these principles by prioritizing local management, sustainable resource use, and economic benefits. When communities control tourism resources, they can alleviate poverty, preserve culture, and protect the environment (Blackstock, 2005). This approach fosters mutual learning, integrates tourism with community development, and empowers residents through participatory management. Effective planning involves addressing local issues while considering broader impacts (Okazaki, 2008). Community collaboration in decision-making, planning, and evaluation ensures sustainability, with revenues reinvested in local development (Fennell & Weaver, 2005).

Disparities in tourism management have disrupted traditions and limited benefits, necessitating greater community participation (Seeoutsuk, Leelaprasertsil, Sirikulpipat, & Thananpitak, 2024). Community-based tourism comprises four key elements: sustainable use of natural resources and culture, strong social structures, tourism management promoting cultural awareness, and education on conservation. It fosters development through ownership, decision-making participation, cultural preservation, and equitable benefits (Jantowas, Phuangkon, Klinsumalee, & Jansuri, 2023).

2. The Concept of Community Participation in Tourism Management

Community participation is crucial for tourism development, encompassing problem-solving, planning, decision-making, implementation, and benefit-sharing (Ruppayoon & Leepai, 2023). This aligns with participation models by Cohen and Uphoff and Fornaroff (1980), which emphasize defining objectives, committing resources, and evaluating outcomes. Based on these models, a comprehensive five-step participation framework is proposed: Problem Identification – Community members collaboratively recognize issues, prioritize concerns, analyze root causes, and establish strategies to enhance local tourism. Activity Participation – Members collectively execute plans, share responsibilities, and contribute resources to achieve common goals. Decision-Making – Equitable access to tourism resources and benefits ensures fairness and justice in management.

Monitoring and Evaluation – Continuous assessment allows for identifying issues, sharing feedback, and refining strategies. Benefit Realization – Maintaining tourism resources prevents deterioration and sustains long-term benefits.

Limited community involvement in tourism management often hinders development. Encouraging local participation fosters problem-solving, equitable resource distribution, and economic opportunities, instilling a sense of pride (Chulvanich & Wattanapradite, 2023). However, effective participation requires collaboration with government and private organizations, ensuring community engagement throughout the process to strengthen networks and enhance sustainable tourism management (Sotwitee, Potipat, & Tagong, 2022).

3. Bang Phli Community

The Bang Phli Ancient Market Community, located in Samut Prakan Province, has over 150 years of historical significance. To community and features attractions like Bang Phli Yai Day and the Bang Phli Ancient Market. Despite its past vibrancy, the community now faces a decline in tourist visits. To address this, community administrators are exploring revitalization strategies, but effective development requires active participation from locals in management and processes. A gap in knowledge and involvement exists in areas such as problem-solving, tourism activities, decision-making, and benefit distribution, highlighting the need for collaboration with government bodies. The Bang Phli Community, with its unique identity, offers potential for development that can bring economic, social, and environmental benefits, improving residents' quality of life.

Research Methodology

The study employs a mixed research methodology that integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The research procedures are divided into two distinct steps, as follows:

Step 1: An examination of community-based tourism management practices within the Bang Phli Community, including an analysis of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. This step also identifying guidelines to enhance the potential of community-based tourism management for sustainability within the community.

Population and Sample: The qualitative study employed purposive sampling, selecting individuals residing in the Bang Phli Community for at least 20 years and actively participating in market management activities. The sample included 10 key informants: 1 community leader,

2 committee members, 2 government representatives, 2 entrepreneurs, and 3 community members.

Research Instrument: A semi-structured interview form with open-ended questions, and keywords served as guiding prompts for the discussions. The format of the interview questions was developed through a synthesis of existing literature and evaluated by three experts to ensure the quality of the interview.

Data Collection: Both primary and secondary data were collected in this study.

Primary Data: Semi-structured interviews with key informants were conducted to gather insights on community tourism management, potential improvements, and challenges.

Secondary Data: Secondary data was obtained from existing literatures and documentary analyses related to community tourism management.

Data Analysis: Content analysis was employed to refine the development of a questionnaire aimed at assessing the level of participation in community tourism management for sustainability within the Bang Phli community.

Step 2: Examination of Participation Levels in Community Tourism Management for Sustainability in Bang Phli Community, Bang Phli District, Samut Prakan Province.

Population and Sample Group: the study population consists of 176,362 residents of Bang Phli District, Samut Prakan Province (Samut Prakan Provincial Statistical Report, 2023). For quantitative research, a sample was drawn using a 0.05 significance level and a 95% confidence level, yielding a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$. Using Taro Yamane's formula, the required sample size was calculated as 400. Probability sampling was employed, specifically a systematic sampling approach, which entails selecting sample units with equal intervals. The researcher systematically selected 10 adjacent households, omitted the subsequent 10, ensuring that selected participants had resided in Bang Phli District for a minimum of 1 year, until the sample size of 400 was achieved.

– Data Collection Instrument: the primary data collection tool was a validated questionnaire designed to enhance community-based tourism sustainability in Bang Phli. It included demographic, closed-ended, and open-ended questions on participation in tourism management. Content validity, assessed by three experts, showed Index of Consistency (IOC) values from 0.75 to 0.85, all above the 0.5 threshold. Reliability testing via Cronbach's Alpha on a non-sample group yielded values from 0.80 to 0.90, confirming the questionnaire's reliability for data collection.

Data Collection Procedure: The researcher conducted a household count within Bang Phli District and collected data from a total of 423 respondents, obtaining 400 completed with quality-assured questionnaires.

Data Analysis: The collected questionnaire data were analyzed using statistical software for efficient examination. Descriptive statistics were applied to summarize the data and presenting the results in terms of percentages, means, and standard deviations.

Research Results

1. Based on objective 1, the researcher conducted a qualitative study examining the management of community-based tourism for sustainability in the Bang Phli Community and found that:

Natural resources and culture: the Bang Phli Community possesses a tourism resource base that is predominantly man-made, including sites such as Bang Phli Floating Market, Bang Phli Yai Nai Temple, and Bang Phli Yai Klang Temple. This community's lifestyle is closely tied to the riverside market, which is connected to the Samrong Canal, and it relies on and utilizes natural resources in a sustainable manner. The community continues to use boats for transportation, reflecting their lifestyle alongside Luang Pho to of Bang Phli Yai Temple as a central spiritual support. Annual celebrations honoring Luang Pho To, along with various traditional merit-making events, including the ritual of receiving lotus, highlight the community's commitment to its cultural practices.

Community organizations: Bang Phli Community operates within a social system characterized by mutual understanding. Local experts in mixed agriculture share knowledge and skills in various areas, including the preparation of traditional Thai desserts, such as lotus stem dessert, made with locally sourced ingredients. Efforts by government agencies to foster a sense of ownership and participation among community members in the development process have not been yet significantly successful.

Management domain: community leaders and committees formulate regulations concerning environmental, cultural, and tourism management. However, issues persist with the implementation and clarity of operational plans. Nonetheless, there is a mechanism for creating careers through tourism, facilitating income generation for community members and enhancing the connection between tourism and community development by distributing benefits more equitably within the community.

Learning opportunities: tourism activities are designed to enhance awareness and understanding of the diverse lifestyles and cultures within the community. Initiatives such as boat tours and the establishment of a museum to showcase local ways of life aim to foster a reciprocal learning process between villagers and visitors, as well as promote the conservation of tourism resources for the sustained preservation and promotion of local culture and lifestyles.

Overall, stakeholders express a desire to develop Bang Phli Community into a model for community-based tourism and sustainability. However, challenges remain in coordinating between governmental entities and the community, particularly regarding community members' understanding of their role in management, anticipated benefits, and opportunities for participation in tourism activities

2. Based on objective 2, the quantitative study conducted to analyze the participatory levels in community tourism management for sustainability within the Bang Phli community and found them to be moderate overall. A detailed analysis revealed that each aspect of participation also fell within the moderate range.

Evaluating participation in identifying issues related to local tourist attractions: most respondents showed moderate engagement. The highest levels of participation were observed in activities such as addressing problems at tourist sites in the Bang Phli community (24.5%) and attending relevant management meetings (23.8%)

Planning and promoting tourism: respondents showed moderate involvement. Top three activities included supporting resources and financial contributions for the development of tourist sites in the Bang Phli community (25.5%), participating in decision-making about these sites (25.0%), and providing materials and equipment for tourism activities (23.8%).

Tourism operations: community participation remained moderate, with the highest engagement levels in fostering positive interactions among tourists, community members, and officials at tourist attractions (26.5%), promoting tourist activities (25.3%), and enhancing the quality of life for residents in tourist areas (25.0%).

Benefits derived from tourism, participation in receiving such benefits was reported at a moderate level. Top three forms included improved living conditions through involvement in environmental management at tourist sites (27.3%), income generation from tourism activities in Bang Phli (27.0%), and receiving benefits from tourist visitation (25.3%).

Monitoring and evaluation of tourism: moderate participation was reported. Key aspects included the opportunity to suggest improvements for tourism in Bang Phli community (24.7%), maintaining cleanliness at tourist sites (23.0%), and collaborating with government entities for tourism development oversight (22.8%). The findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the level of participation in community tourism management for sustainability in Bang Phli community, Samut Prakan Province.

Community Participation.	Statistics		
	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Participation in identifying issues in community tourist attractions	2.92	1.40	Moderate
Participation in the planning and promotion of tourism	3.05	1.41	Moderate
Participation in the execution of tourism initiatives	3.09	1.40	Moderate
Participation in the receipt of benefits derived from tourism	3.12	1.39	Moderate
Participation in monitoring and evaluation processes	3.11	1.40	Moderate
Overview	3.05		Moderate

From Table 1, the level of participation in community tourism management for the sustainability of the Bang Phli community is generally moderate among the respondents (average 3.05). When analyzed by individual aspects, most respondents engaged in benefit reception from tourism (average 3.12), monitoring and evaluation (average 3.11), tourism operations (average 3.09), planning and promoting tourism (average 3.05), and identifying problems related to the community's tourist attractions (average 2.92).

3. Based on objective 3, the researcher conducted a qualitative study to propose guidelines for enhancing the potential of community-based tourism management through participation for the sustainability, the researcher extracted four focal aspects:

Infrastructure development and tourism management models: efforts should focus on addressing weaknesses while strengthening community assets. This includes road access to tourist attractions in Bang Phli District to facilitate faster, safer, cleaner, and more convenient travel that meets international standards. Improvements should extend to facilities such as landscaping, parking areas, interpretive signage, ramps, tourist information centres, restrooms, and accessibility for individuals with disabilities and the elderly.

Development and restoration of tourist attractions for sustainability: the expansion of tourism should prioritize not just increasing visitor numbers or generating income but also preserving natural resources. Developing and rehabilitating attractions must protect their unique identity and promote conservation awareness among tourists and residents. Updating regulations and guidelines, such as creating new attractions options is crucial for value creation, environmental preservation, and maintaining local architectural integrity of local lifestyle.

Development of products and services: tourism offerings must be continuously improved to meet established standards, with expanded infrastructure, including quality hotels and spas. The creative economy plays a crucial role in advancing tourism, requiring new activities that match tourist preferences. Initiatives should also promote environmental awareness, encourage investment in new ventures like health services and OTOP products, and support annual festivals, such as the lotus reception tradition, to gain international recognition.

Community knowledge in tourism: it is crucial for enhancing residents' skills and awareness by emphasizing local values, traditions, and Thainess. Training programs for youth aspiring to become tour guides can create income opportunities and foster a sense of ownership. This awareness encourages participation in community initiatives, ensuring income for residents while promoting sustainable tourism and environmental stewardship.

Discussion

The summary of the research findings indicates that:

1. The investigation into community tourism management in the Bang Phli community revealed that tourism plays a vital role in holistic community development. The community's tourism and resource capital are closely linked, especially through cultural and social elements that foster relationships both internally and with external entities. The unique lifestyle and expertise in mixed farming contribute to a sense of ownership among community members, encouraging their involvement in development efforts. Tourism management emphasizes raising awareness and enhancing understanding of sustainable practices. This approach aligns with the findings of Thampramuan and Tekhanmag (2021) research on cultural community tourism management, which highlights the importance of mutual learning across five key components: observation, reflection, planning, implementation, and knowledge exchange.

2. The highest levels of resident participation in sustainable tourism management within the Bang Phli Community were observed in the following areas: 1) Identifying issues: most residents participated in identifying problems and developing solutions for local tourist attractions. 2) Planning and promotion: a significant number contributed assets and finances to enhance attractions, participated in decision-making, provided materials, engaged in resource management, organized activities, and formed operational committees. 3) Tourism operations: residents fostered positive interactions among tourists, community members, and officials, promoting tourism activities and improving local living standards while increasing awareness of Bang Phli's attractions. 4) Benefits from tourism: participation improved quality of life through environmental management, income from tourism, and involvement in strategic planning for tourism development, enhancing career opportunities and community welfare. And 5) Monitoring and evaluation: community participation included proposing recommendations for tourism improvement, maintaining cleanliness, and collaborating with government entities to assess tourism development progress. Supporting by Ootsahkarn and Thummachote (2023) identified three factors influencing participation: (1) Governmental factors that provide opportunities for involvement; (2) Knowledge-based factors fostering awareness and responsibility; and (3) Attitudinal factors promoting community ownership of conservation efforts.

3. Recommendations for enhancing community tourism management with participatory sustainability in Bang Phli are: 1) Infrastructure development and designing a tourism management model, such as improving road access to tourist attractions and providing international-standard facilities. 2) Developing and restoring tourist attractions sustainably, focusing on conservation efforts that protect natural resources, culture, and identity. This includes educating locals and tourists on conservation measures, preventing over-exploitation, and restoring deteriorated sites while preserving environmental and architectural integrity. 3) Develop products, services, and support systems that align with visitors' interests, such as health services, adventure, religious, and agricultural tourism, while catering to families, the elderly, and honeymooners. Promote OTOP products, souvenirs, and establish annual festivals like “Rabbua” festival to gain international recognition. 4) Enhance community knowledge on tourism by improving skills and understanding, including fostering cultural awareness, training youth as local guides, and leveraging hospitality to generate income. This supports community revenue and mutual benefits, as in Jussapalo (2021) study on community tourism management in Ban Tha Hin, where government support and community involvement were key to success.

Suggestions

1. Suggestion from Research

1) Government agencies may utilize this research as a framework to develop tourism personnel, emphasizing the enhancement of their capabilities to effectively manage local tourist attractions. This approach aims to maximize community benefits by identifying strategies to strengthen assets, address weaknesses, and leverage opportunities to transform the community into a viable tourist destination.

2) Government agencies and community stakeholders can engage in marketing initiatives to promote the community, ensuring recognition across diverse tourist demographics rather than focusing solely on a single group of tourists.

2. Suggestion for Future Research

1) Subsequent research may adopt a participatory action research methodology to emphasize the involvement of all stakeholders in community tourism.

2) Future research should investigate the capacity to accommodate tourists at attractions within the Bang Phli District to enhance tourist accommodation capabilities.

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