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The Potentiality Development of Local Guide and Community Based Tourism in Plaklao Community, Amnatcharoen Province, Thailand for Increasing Competitive Capacity in ASEAN Economic Community¹

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Abstract

This research aims to (1) survey and gathering the knowledge of cultural tourism resources and local guides in Plaklao community in Amnatcharoen province, Thailand, (2) examine for the potentiality of local guides and community based tourism management in Plaklao community and (3) propose the policies to develop the local guides potentiality and community based tourism management for increasing competitive capacity in Asian Economic Community through benchmarking with local guides and community based tourism management in Banteay Chhmar community based tourism, Banteay Meanchey Province, the Kingdom of Cambodia as one of the best practice in community based tourism management. The researcher used research instruments comprising of questionnaires, focus group, participatory action research: PAR, benchmarking with the best practices (Banteay Chhmar community based tourism) and pilot tests with community based tourism (CBT) in Plaklao village, Amnatcharoen province.

The results of the research found that the knowledge of cultural tourism resources and local guides in Plaklao community comprised of local museum, local arts and handicraft, including local music and dance, and local architecture. For the local guides in Plaklao community, most of them were good in tourism information and service but they still lacked of touring skill and communicative skill, especially English communication. In terms of the potentiality of local guides, they were good in tourism knowledge. However, for academic skill, transfer in-out, touring, and the role of tourism interpretation, their skills were intermediate level. Therefore, due to the results of SWOT analysis and TOWS matrix, the researcher could draft the development policies to increase potentiality of local guides in Plaklao community for increasing competitive capacity in Asian Economic Community through benchmarking with the best practices (Banteay

Chhmar community based tourism) with 6 policies; (1) to cooperate marketing management with outside government and private organizations, (2) to create and strengthen cultural resources identity and promote as a tourism highlight, (3) to create a local guides training course for young generation, (4) to apply a management information technology for public relations and marketing management, (5) to promote local participation in community based tourism management, and (6) to expand target market to Asian countries. These policies could be implemented through the strategies from SWOT analysis and TOWS matrix.

Keywords: Potential development, Local guide, Plaklao community, Asian Economic Community, Benchmarking, Banteay Chhmar Community, Kingdom of Cambodia

1. Introduction

The important one in tourism development was a local guides development because the local guides were as the “goodwill ambassador” or “cultural ambassador of the country”. The local guides were very important for tourism industry because they played essential roles to stimulate the tourists to visit the tourist destinations. Similarly, local guides also played the important roles for community based tourism management because these local guides had to provide the information about the general information, history, importance, identity, and significances of the tourism resources through any significant values such as architectural, historical, artistic, scientific, social value, and ways of life of local people in community. These could lead the tourists to understand and be aware of the importance of community based tourism resources and the tourism resources could be managed sustainably. Plaklao community in Amnatcharoen province was one community operated community based tourism. There were many cultural resources in this community to support

tourism management such as agricultural and ways of life instruments, architectural heritages, local handicrafts, local traditions and ceremonies, and local music and dances. However, these cultural resources could not be managed properly to the tourists if there were not effective and skillful local guides to interpret the importance and identity of these resources. Furthermore, there were more tourism competitors when ASEAN Economic Community: AEC arrived. Thus, it was necessary to strengthen the local guides and community based tourism management in order to increasing competitive capacity of Plaklao community based tourism in Asian Economic Community (AEC) through benchmarking with Banteay Chhmar community (one of the best practices in community based tourism management), Banteay Meanchey Province, the Kingdom of Cambodia in terms of (1) local guides ability improvement and (2) community based tourism management.

2. Objective of the research

2.1 To survey and collect cultural tourism resources knowledge and local guides in Plaklao Community

2.2 To examine the potentiality of local guides and community based tourism management in Plaklao Community

2.3 To propose the development policies to increase local guides and community based tourism potentiality in Plaklao Community for increasing competitive capacity in Asian Economic Community (AEC) through benchmarking with local guides in Banteay Chhmar community based tourism, Banteay Meanchey Province, the Kingdom of Cambodia

3. Scope of the research

The researcher conducted this research in Plaklao Community because this community was established from the Ministry of Sport and Tourism in 2006 as one of the famous community based tourism in Thailand in terms of ways of life, local handicrafts and local

traditions. For the potentiality development of local guides and community based tourism in order to increase competitive capacity in AEC, the researcher would benchmark the development policies with Banteay Chhmar community based tourism in Cambodia as a one of the best practice for local guides and community based tourism management.

4. Significance of the research

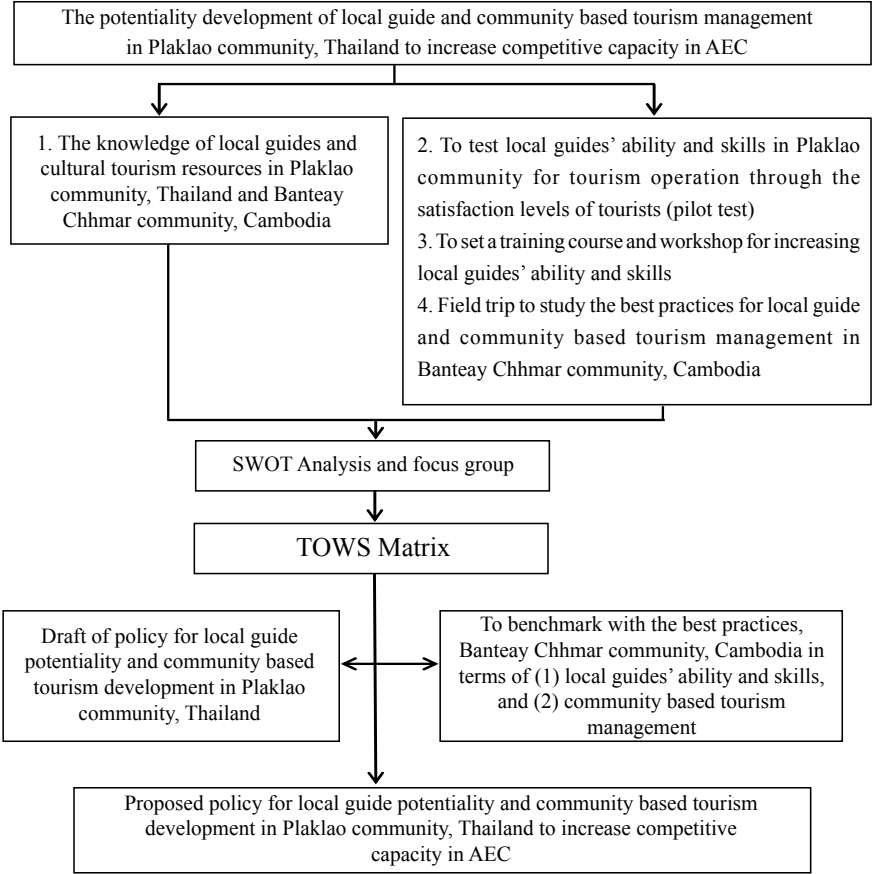
This research could contribute the development policies to increase value added and pricing for tourism products through high qualitative local guides training in Plaklao community. Moreover, the local guides who attended the training course that was one of the research instruments (participatory research) could understand how to train the juniors or young guides in their community (training for being trainer) in terms of foreign language and tourism resources knowledge. The high qualitative local guides who were worth interpreting their tourism resources could lead the tourists to appreciate and be aware of the importance of local cultural resources and ways of life.

5. Research methodology

This research was the quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research was conducted by providing 100 questionnaires to Thai tourists in order to test the tourists' satisfaction levels towards tour operation of local guides in Plaklao community. Moreover, the researcher also tested the local guides' knowledge by using examination in order to measure their attitude and touring ability for pre-post training program. Besides the quantitative research, the researcher used interview, brainstorm, and focused group as the research instruments for qualitative research to collect the data of local guides and cultural tourism resources in Plaklao community and Bantaey Chhmar community as a best practice to benchmark. After taking examination and measuring tourists' satisfaction towards local guides

in Plaklao community, the researcher had set a training course for them due to the limited skill of local guides occurred from the results of examination and questionnaires.

In order to set the development policies to improve the ability of local guides in Plaklao community, the researcher used SWOT analysis and TOWS Matrix as the research instrument including benchmarking concept between Plaklao community and Banteay Chhmar community in Cambodia as the best practice for community based tourism. The benchmarking was conducted in terms of (1) local guides ability improvement and (2) community based tourism management. Therefore, the conceptual framework could be concluded as figure 1; conceptual framework.



6. Results of the research

6.1 General information of Plaklao community

Plaklao community was located in Plaklao sub-district, Muang Amnatcharoen, Amnatcharoen province. The ancestors of this community had immigrated from Nongbualamphu province, the northern part of Isan, Thailand. They decided to establish their community here because of the forfurity of the area such as natural pound, forest, and wild life. The community's name, "Plaklao" was titles from the name of local fish lived in this community's pound. Their scientific name was Wallago attu. There were approximately 600 households and 3,000 people had been living in this community. Their area was approximately 3.5 million meter squares, comprised of 11.92 million meter squares of agricultural field, 0.32 million meter squares for living area, and 1.248 million meter squares for public area (Rienchai Bhotahrin, 2012. interviewed).

In terms of tourism development in Plaklao community, started in 2003 from the encouragement of provincial organization to establish ecotourism and conservation tourism project. There were 38 committee and 40 Plaklao community households to join this project.

In 2004, the members of Plaklao community were trained from the office of tourism development in Amnatcharoen province as being a good host and hospitality.

In 2005, the Faculty of Architecture, Khonkaen University supported the budget for community to train for local heritage conservation techniques especially Vietnamese chapel and local museum establishment.

In 2006, they got the honor as the community for sufficiency economy development and the best community for One Tambon One Product in Amnatchathani province. These caused many mass media in Thailand were interested to produce television programs, tourism journals, magazines including newspapers and National Geography in this community.

In 2007, the Ministry of Tourism had invited Plaklao community to show Isaan music and dances in “Thailand Tourism Festival in 2007” at IMPACT Arena Muang Thong Thani, Bangkok.

In 2010, young band of Isaan music and dances in Plaklao primary school got the winner from the Teacher Councils of Thailand including the winner of Isaan music and dance competition in Amnatcharoen province. Therefore, Plaklao community had been entitled as the community of Isaan music and dance. (Somjit Thonket, 2012. interviewed)

6.2 Cultural tourism resources and local guides in Plaklao community

There were many cultural tourism resources in this community. They could be categorized into agricultural and ways of life instruments, architectural heritages, local handicrafts, local traditions and ceremonies, and local music and dances.

6.2.1 Agricultural and ways of life instruments

There was local museum collected instruments that were related to agriculture and local ways of life. Local people collected these instruments and displayed them to show their cultural resources to the tourists in their temple as could be seen in the picture 1 below.



Figure 1-3: food container for a pig (left), fishing hand net (middle), and hanging food container to protect ant (right)

6.2.2 Architectural heritages

Besides the local museum, there were traditional houses (Isan style) and Vietnamese chapel (Vietnamese and Lao architecture) in this community with 200 years old in picture 4.



Figure 4-6: Vietnamese church (left), traditional house (middle), and vernacular architecture built with the dowel and joint techniques.

6.2.3 Local handicraft

The craftsmen in Plaklao community had produced many handicrafts for the visitors and tourists who visited their community. The tourists could buy these products in community shop. For example, bamboo jugs, fishery tools, sticky rice container, and sticky rice steaming pot, etc.



Figure 7-9: Local handicrafts such as sticky rice containers (left), sticky rice steaming pot (middle), and fishery tools (right)

6.2.4 Local traditions and ceremonies

There were many local traditions and ceremonies in Plaklao community. Most of them were agricultural and religious ceremonies such as god of rice, land, river, rain, and ghost of ancestor ceremonies. The tourists could join these ceremonies that celebrated every months.



Figure 10-11: The celebration for rocket festival in Plaklao community held on May every year

6.2.5 Local music and dances

This community was famous for Isan music and dances (Mor-Lam). There were five categories of Mor-Lam; firstly, Mor-Lam Peun to show the story about the local history and myth, secondly, Mor-Lam Korn to show the story of ways of life, thirdly, Mor-Lam Moo to show a local tale, fourthly, Mor-Lam Singh to show with local dancers, and finally, Local dance with modern music to mix with modern music style (Mala Solawate. 2012. interviewed).



Figure 12-13: Traditional costume for Isan music and dances

6.3 Potentiality of local guides in Plaklao community

There were 5 senior local guides who worked as the permanent guides in community to serve the tourists who visited Plaklao community. These local guides could organize tour effectively. However, for the 15 young local guides, they had limited skills to

work as the local guides when the tourists visited their community. In the study of potentiality of local guides in Plaklao community, the research had tested the satisfaction levels of the tourists who visited this community by using questionnaires. The result was found that the tourists' satisfaction towards tour operation skill of local guides in Plaklao community before training course, stood at the high level for local guides in terms of their human relationship and characteristic. In terms of interpretation skill, communicative skill and touring skill, most tourists had moderate satisfaction levels.

According to the results of the tourists' satisfaction level, it could be concluded that there should be the improvement for local guides in Plaklao community in terms of (1) the knowledge of interpretation (2) communication skill both Thai and foreign language and (3) touring skill. Therefore, in the training course, the researcher had set the content to train the local guides covered above three contents. For example, interpretation knowledge for tourism comprised of tourism resource interpretation techniques, recreation for tourists, how to say greeting, introducing oneself and technical terms for touring and tourist attraction explanation.

6.4 SWOT analysis and TOWS Matrix for development policies for local guides' ability and CBT management in Plaklao community

Strengths

- 1) High local participation in tourism management
- 2) There were unique cultural resources such as local music and dance, museum, architecture, and ways of life
- 3) There were active young guides to inherit and get training as a local guides from senior guides in community
- 4) To inherit and conserve their cultural resource through community based tourism and create local music and dance training program in primary school

Weaknesses

1) Young guides could not perform effectively as the expertized guides during taking a tour because they had not enough experience for their work such as presentation skill, tourism interpretation, answering tourists' questions

2) There was not tourist information center to provide tourism information such as community map, attraction information, interpretation signs, and contacted person etc.

3) There was not suitable presentation method of community identity for tourists especially Isan dance which was a highlight of Plaklao community

4) Lack of continuous local guides training program. Due to almost young guides were the high school students, thus there were not enough local guides to serve the tourists after they graduated.

Opportunities

1) Trends of creative tourism and learning based tourism were still popular for Thai and foreign tourists. This tourism trend could advantage for cultural resource management for tourism in Plaklao community especially Isan dance

2) There were a lot of educational institutions visited this community as a field trip for cultural study including mass media who visited this community for television program production and public relations.

3) Advanced development in information technology such as facebook could increase benefit opportunity for tourism in terms of marketing and public relations

4) Amnatchroen province had set policy to promote Plaklao community as the community of Isan dance to serve AEC

Threats

1) There were not enough budgets from government sectors to support tourism development

2) There was high competition in community based tourism when AEC arrived because many communities in Asian countries has

various cultural resources and identities. These could lead Plaklao community to face with intensive competition in community based tourism in Asian countries

6.5 Alternative strategies for local guides and community based tourism development in Plaklao community

Due to SWOT analysis above, the alternative strategies for local guides and community based tourism development in Plaklao community could be set as following.

6.5.1 Aggressive strategies (SO Strategy)

SO: 1) to develop and promote creative tourism and learning based tourism in Plaklao community with local participation

SO: 2) to promote Isan music and dances as cultural and creative tourism destination in Asian countries

SO: 3) to present community based tourism projects for tourism product development such as Isan music and dances, local museum, and local handicraft in order to get more budget from tourism government organization

6.5.2 Defensive strategies (ST Strategy)

ST: 1) to get support from related government organization to improve community infrastructure and amenity for tourists such as transportation signs, direction signs including tourism interpretation signs, and accessibility

ST: 2) to set up various package tour such as half day, all day, and stay overnight package tours in order to serve many kinds of tourist groups who had different time to visit Plaklao community

6.5.3 Retrenchment strategy (WO Strategy)

WO: 1) to develop community based tourism database through community website or Facebook to communicate and attract more tourists

WO: 2) to increase public relations and marketing communication through social media such as Facebook

and website with encouragement from government and private organizations in order to gain tourists awareness and recognition in community based tourism in Plaklao community

6.5.4 Turnaround strategies (WT Strategy)

WT: 1) to contact with tour companies in Thailand and aboard in order to launch tour packages and public relations

WT: 2) to contact with related government organizations who were responsible for amenity and infrastructure development such as direction signs and tourism interpretation signs for tourists

WT: 3) to educate young guides for improving English and neighboring languages in order to increase their communicative skill to serve foreign language

6.6 Cultural tourism resources in Banteay Chhmar community, Cambodia

Banteay Chhmar Community Based Tourism was located in Banteay Meanchey Province, the North-western part of Cambodia. CBT was initiated in 2007 by Agir Pour Le Cambodge (APLC) for community development and Khmer temple conservation. Banteay Chhmar Temple was one of the 12th centuries Agkor period temple architecture, and several small temples (satellite temples) surrounded this community served as the tourist attractions. Agir Pour Le Cambodge got the trainers to build community's capacity in tourism skill both service operation and management and tried to engage them with tour operator and other network to keep their sustainability. (Sophea SOK. 2010. P.12)

At the end of 2008, APLC finished its fund as well as its activities with Banteay Chhmar community. After that, Global Heritage Fund (GHF) had launched project to continue encouraging community and restored the temple which was the main attraction for Banteay Chhmar Community. GHF had objectives to support community in terms of community based tourism development as following

(Bieng Sruon. 2012): (1) to strengthen CBT as a local community-based organization by raising their capacity as tourism service providers, (2) to gather revenues from tourism, (3) to raise Banteay Chhmar and CBT's profile as an ethical destination for tourism, (4) to achieve self-sufficiency in CBT as an organization, and (5) to empower CBT through GHF's conservation project.

In 2009, Banteay Chhmar community has won the award from USAID as the Hidden Treasure Winner. Then, MSME had strengthen Banteay Chhmar community services quality and engaged them to private tourism business operators such as tour companies in Cambodia and abroad, small scale resort, restaurants, and other tourism businesses and communities. Tourism activities in Banteay Chhmar community comprised of (1) Khmer New Year; a special time for Khmer people to gather with their family and relatives, (2) water festival was dedicated to the Khmer army and navy and their historic battles, (3) Phchum Ben (Religious event); a Buddhist festival dedicated to recently deceased ancestors, (4) rice transplanting and seeding season, (5) harvest season (Rice field), (6) vegetable season (cucumbers, cabbage, lettuce eggplant, tomatoes, long green beans, cauliflower, etc), (7) fruit season (watermelon, mango, sweet apples, etc), (8) cassava planting and harvesting, (9) Dal Ombok (Rice flattening), (10) watching the sunset at Ang Cheung Kros, (11) Silk Craft Center (Soieries du Mekong " SDM"), (12) craftsmen and handicrafts, (13) village tour by walking, cycling, ox - cart or kuyon, (14) temple tour (Banteay Chhmar, Banteay Top and satellite temples), (15) homestays to help you learn about and exchange cultures, (16) traditional music & dance performances in the evening, and (17) learning temple restoration project supported from Global Heritage Fund (Khlot Sopheng. 2012).

6.7 Benchmarking for development policies for Plaklao community and Banteay Chhmar community in terms of local guides' ability and CBT management

According to the results of the study of cultural resources and local guides potentiality in Plaklao community in Thailand and Banteay

Chhmar community in Cambodia (best practice in community based tourism management), it could conclude the similar cultural resources and the characteristic of local guides in order to benchmark and find out the development policies for community based tourism and local guides in the table below.

Table 1: Cultural resources and local guides in Banteay Chhmar community and Plaklao community

Cultural resources	Banteay Chhmar community (Best practices)	Plaklao community
Local architecture	Khmer temple, Cambodia style houses	Vietnamese chapel, Isan style house
Local food	Khmer food	Isan food
Handicraft	Silk center	Silk and bamboo craft production
Local museum	No local museum	Local museum in the temple
Local music and dance	Khmer dance	Isan music and dance
Local guides	There were English and Khmer languages local guides to serve both domestic and international tourists	There were Thai and Isan language local guides to serve domestic tourists
Training course for local guides	There was a training course for young guides in community	There was not a training course for young guides in community

Due to the table 1, SWOT analysis, and the results of the examination to test potentiality of local guides in Plaklao community that indicated they should get improve their skills in terms of (1) tourism interpretation knowledge (2) communicative skill both Thai and foreign language and (3) touring skill, thus the proposed development policies for local guides potentiality and community based tourism management to increase competitive capacity in AEC through competitive benchmarking with Banteay Chhmar community based tourism in terms of tourism products, services, operations, and tourism information could be generated into 6 policies as following.

Policy 1: to cooperate marketing management with outside government and private organizations

Banteay Chhmar community based tourism had succeed their tourism management and there were a lot of foreign tourists to visit

their community because there were many government and private organizations to encourage them for marketing communication to the tourists such as Global Heritage Funds (GHF), The Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia (MOT), Cambodia Community-Based Ecotourism (CCBEN), Travelers' MAP (Korean-based tour operator), Operation Groundswell (youth-oriented tour operator), Sustainable Cambodia, Sahasra Group from Hong Kong, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and tour company in Cambodia. Therefore, important marketing channel for Plaklao community to contact with more tourists should start with marketing encouragement from various government and private organizations. This policy could be conducted under the **first and second WO strategies**; (WO: 1) to develop community based tourism database through community website or Facebook to communicate and attract more tourists, and (WO: 2) to increase public relations and marketing communication through social media such as Facebook and website with encouragement from government and private organizations in order to gain tourists awareness and recognition in community based tourism in Plaklao community. Besides the cooperation with the outside organizations above, the community header could cooperate the community based tourism management with the outside organizations in terms of development budget, and infrastructure and amenity improvement. This development could implement through the **aggressive strategies**; (SO: 3) to present community based tourism projects for tourism product development such as Isaan music and dances, local museum, and local handicraft in order to get more budget from tourism government organization. Moreover, Plaklao community header could implement **defensive strategies**, (ST: 1) to get support from related government organization to improve community infrastructure and amenity for tourists such as transportation signs, direction signs including tourism interpretation signs, and accessibility, and (ST: 2) to set up various package tour such as half day, all day, and stay

overnight package tours in order to serve many kinds of tourist groups who had different time to visit Plaklao community. For the improvement of tourism infrastructure and amenity, the **turnaround strategies**, could be operated through strategy (WT: 2) to contact with related government organizations who were responsible for amenity and infrastructure development such as direction signs and tourism interpretation signs for tourists.

Policy 2: to create and strengthen cultural resources identity and promote as a tourism highlight

Banteay Chhmar community promoted their Khmer temple (Banteay Chhmar temple) as the highlight for tourists and local ways of life such as local music and dance, and silk production center. These highlight and activities could be attractive many tourists to visit this community. Therefore, Plaklao community could promote Isaan music and dances as their tourism highlight and promote their community as the creative and learning based tourism destination in Northeastern Part of Thailand. Thus, the header of Plaklao community could conduct this policy through **aggressive strategies**: (ST: 2) to promote Isan music and dances as cultural and creative tourism destination in Asian countries, and (ST: 3) to present community based tourism projects for tourism product development such as Isan music and dances, local museum, and local handicraft in order to get more budget from tourism government organization.

Policy 3: to create a local guides training course for young generation

In Banteay Chhmar community, there was a training course for young guides who were studying in secondary and high school including local people who were interested in local guides professionally. The training operated in the office of Banteay Chhmar community based tourism and trained by Banteay Chhmar senior guides every weekend in Banteay Chhmar temple history, community history, English communication, and touring skills. Therefore, besides

the Isan music and dances that Plaklao community had trained for their young generation, there should be the local guides training course for young generation in order to increase local guides skills in terms of (1) tourism interpretation knowledge (2) communicative skill both Thai and foreign language and (3) touring skill. This policy related to the **turnaround strategy** of Plaklao community; (WT: 3) to educate young guides for improving English and neighboring languages in order to increase their communicative skill to serve foreign language.

Policy 4: to apply a management information technology for public relations and marketing management

Besides the various connections of Banteay Chhmar community with both government and private organizations in community based tourism encouragement, this community also had their own website and Facebook to contact with domestic and international tourists. There were eight languages in their website for international tourists from Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, Korea, America, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy. This could benefit for international tourists to contact and reserve their booking for package tour in Banteay Chhmar community tourism. Therefore, the header of Plaklao community should aware of the importance of management information technology to support their marketing communication channels with their tourists. If the community header had limitation in using computer, the young guides could help them as the website or Facebook administrator. This policy could be implemented under the **retrenchment strategy**; (WO: 1) to develop community based tourism database through community website or Facebook to communicate and attract more tourists, and (WO: 2) to increase public relations and marketing communication through social media such as Facebook and website with encouragement from government and private organizations in order to gain tourists awareness and recognition in community based tourism in Plaklao community.

Policy 5: to promote local participation in community based tourism management

There were 3,430 families living in Banteay Chhmar community. There were 1,278 families support tourism activities in Banteay Chhmar; 74 families get direct benefit such as providing tourism services (food, home-stay, guiding, committee, etc.) and the rest 1,204 get indirect benefit through tourism development. Banteay Chhmar community has strong commitment to participate in tourism development and open to learn and get feedback to improve their operation and services delivery. Moreover, the goals for CBT management in Banteay Chhmar community were to manage tourism in Banteay Chhmar and help villagers to benefit from it. CBT committee also provided supplementary income for villagers through tourism activities and used a part of tourism benefits to develop the community with community projects (Sophea SOK. 2010. P.12-13). Due to the CBT management of best practice, Plaklao community should gain more local participation to involve in CBT management and provided incomes from CBT management to all members including shared tourism income for community activities. In order to promote local participation in community based tourism management in Plaklao community, the community header could implement the **aggressive strategies.** (SO: 1) to develop and promote creative tourism and learning based tourism in Plaklao community with local participation.

Policy 6: to expand target market to Asian countries

There were many domestic and international tourists visited their community each year. For example, France, Spain, Australia, Japan, Korea, China, and Thailand etc. these tourists visited Banteay Chhmar community due to the reputation of Banteay Chhmar temple, constructed in the reign of King Jayavarman vii of Khmer Kingdom. Besides that reason, the effective communication between Banteay Chhmar community and the tourists through electronic media such as website, electronic newsletter, and Facebook could stimulate the tourists to visit Banteay Chhmar community continuously increasing.

Banteay Chhmar community header had published community news to the tourists when there were any traditions, ceremonies, and community development projects. Therefore, Plaklao community header could benchmark these strength points of Banteay Chhmar community for their community when AEC arrived. They could promote their Isaan music and dances, Vietnamese chapel, and local traditions and ceremonies as the tourism highlight to both domestic and international tourists who were interested in Isaan ways of life. Thus, the strategies that they could implement were **aggressive strategies (SO strategy)**; SO: 2) to promote Isaan music and dances as cultural and creative tourism destination in Asian countries. In addition, they should implement **turnaround strategies (WT strategy)**; (WT: 1) to contact with tour companies in Thailand and abroad in order to launch tour packages and public relations.

According to above policies and strategies, the community header and committee should consider again what policies and strategies should be implemented priority.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

There were many cultural resources in this community to support tourism management such as agricultural and ways of life instruments, architectural heritages, local handicrafts, local traditions and ceremonies, and local music and dances. Therefore, this community was suitable to operate cultural tourism and community based tourism. This related to the concept of cultural tourism of Boonlert Jittangwattana (2005), stated that the community who was interested in tourism development should have significant cultural resources. However, the cultural resources in Plaklao community could not be managed properly to the tourists because there were not effective and skillful local guides to interpret the importance and identity of these resources. Due to the concept of tourist guide's capability and qualifications of Saranya Warakulwit (1995), she said that tourist guides should be skillful in language, academic, touring, hospitality, and solving

problems. Furthermore, there would be more tourism competitors when ASEAN Economic Community: AEC arrived. Thus, it was necessary to strengthen the local guides and community based tourism management in order to increasing competitive capacity of Plaklao community based tourism in Asian Economic Community (AEC) through benchmarking with Banteay Chhmar community (one of the best practices in community based tourism management), Banteay Meanchey Province, Kingdom of Cambodia. Based on above reasons and the research results including the similarity of the cultural resources between Plaklao community and Banteay Chhmar community, for the benchmarking technique, the researcher used the competitive benchmarking from the concept of benchmarking by William M. Lankford (2009; p.57-58) to set the policies and strategies, focused on (1) local guides ability improvement and (2) community based tourism management. There were 6 policies; (1) to cooperate marketing management with outside government and private organizations, (2) to create and strengthen cultural resources identity and promote as a tourism highlight, related to the concept of community based tourism management by Community Based Tourism Institution (2014) stated that the important factor for community based tourism management was to publish the information of local cultural resources to the tourists through the mass media. Moreover, the community should focus on human resource development especially the local guides. They should be aware of and understand their cultural significant values in order to communicate those values to the tourists, (3) to create a local guides training course for young generation, (4) to apply a management information technology for public relations and marketing management, (5) to promote local participation in community based tourism management, and (6) to expand target market to Asian countries. These policies could be implemented through the aggressive, defensive, retrenchment, and turnaround strategies from SWOT analysis and TOWS matrix.

8. Suggestions from research

The suggestions for local guides and community based tourism development in Plaklao community were follows.

8.1) there should be tourism product development as the community highlight. For example, they could promote Isan music and dances for their cultural identity for tourism product as Banteay Chhmar community had promoted Banteay Chhmar temple for community based tourism highlight.

8.2) there should be continuous and modern public relations and marketing communication to communicate to the tourists such as Facebook, website, electronic news with both Thai and foreign languages.

8.3) Infrastructure and tourist amenities were also important for the tourists. There were inadequate infrastructures in Plaklao community such as bumping road surface, limited numbers and modes of public transportation, transportation signs, tourist destination signs, and tourist interpretation signs. The community header and committee should be aware of these factors and to get encouragement from the related government organizations to develop these infrastructures and amenities.

8.4) there were many potential cultural resources in Plaklao community such as traditional houses, Vietnamese chapel, local museum, and Isan music and dances. However, there were not enough effective tourist interpretation tools to provide cultural significant values for the tourists to appreciate those cultural resources. Therefore, there should be effective tourist interpretation tools and story-telling creations for cultural resources.

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