

Exploring Suanson Pradipat Golf Course Management and Linkages Towards Sustainable Development by Applying the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy

บทความวิจัย

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Abstract

There is limited academic research in the emerging field of sport for development. However, a growing trend in the past decade recognizes that sport has demonstrated a linkage to sustainable development. This study aims to: measure service quality and evaluate customer's satisfaction of Suanson Pradipat Golf Course by the Royal Thai Army, by using SERVQUAL as a tool; and to determine an approach for Suanson Pradipat golf course on potential changes as an enabler towards sustainable development by applying the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy of the Late King Bhumibol Adulyadej of the Kingdom of Thailand.

Four hundred questionnaires on service quality factors were asked to customers: Tangibles; Reliability; Responsiveness; Assurance; and Empathy. Results from factor analysis demonstrated that 'Tangibles' was the most outstanding factor with Eigenvalues 7.980, compared to other factors at 1.966 to 1.040. Standardized factor loading represented that 'Readiness of staff'-focused on human resources-placed the highest value. Consecutively, the conceptual 'Sustainability Integrated Management (SIM) Approach' for the Suanson Pradipat was proposed. Research findings highlighted that 'People' was the key success factor to both golf course management and the organization's sustainability.

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Research findings concluded that Suanson Pradipat golf courses could adopt the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy while promoting the responsible business practice. People in the local community should be viewed as a stakeholder, and incorporated within the organization policy. The state-owned golf course could represent a good balance in profit, sustainability, good governance, risk mitigation, and social responsibility.

Keywords: Golf Course, SERVQUAL, Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, Sustainable Development

บทคัดย่อ

แม้ว่างานวิจัยด้านการกีฬากับการพัฒนาอย่างคงมีอยู่อย่างจำกัด ทว่าในห่วงสิบปีที่ผ่านมาโลกได้ตระหนักมากขึ้น ถึงความเข้มข้นของมีวัตถุประสงค์ที่จะศึกษาคุณภาพการให้บริการ และประเมินความพึงพอใจของผู้รับบริการ สนามกอล์ฟ สวนสนประดิพัทธ์ ที่บริหารโดยกองทัพบก โดยใช้ SERVQUAL เป็นเครื่องมือ ตลอดจนวิเคราะห์แนวทางการประยุกต์ใช้ แนวทางปรัชญาเศรษฐกิจพอเพียง โดยพระบาทสมเด็จพระบรมชนกาธิเบศร์มหาภูมิพลอดุลยเดชมหาราช บรมนาถบพิตร เข้ากับการบริหารจัดการสนามกอล์ฟของภาครัฐ เพื่อมุ่งสู่ การพัฒนาอย่างยั่งยืน

ภายใต้งานวิจัยนี้ได้สำรวจความเห็นของลูกค้าผู้รับบริการสนามกอล์ฟสวนสนประดิพัทธ์ ผ่านแบบสอบถามกว่า ๔๐๐ ชุด โดยวัดจาก ๕ หลักเกณฑ์ของเครื่องมือ SERVQUAL ผลการวิเคราะห์ Factor Analysis พบว่า ‘มิติคุณค่าการให้บริการเชิงรูปลักษณ์’ อาทิ เลย์เอาท์ของสนามกอล์ฟ ตั้งอยู่ในความต้องการ แสดงผลค่าไオเกนที่ระดับความพึงพอใจสูงสุดที่ ๗.๙๘ เมื่อเทียบกับค่าไอ์เกนของคุณค่า การให้บริการในมิติอื่น ๆ ที่อยู่น้อยกว่าเพียง ๑.๙๖-๑.๐๕

นอกจากนี้ผลวิเคราะห์ Standardize factor loading บ่งชี้ว่า ‘ความพึงพอใจของพนักงาน ในการดูแลลูกค้า’ มีค่าสูงที่สุด ซึ่งแสดงว่าบุคลากรของสนามกอล์ฟถือเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญที่สุดของการให้บริการ جانวน งานวิจัยได้เสนอแนวคิดแบบจำลองการบริหารในลักษณะบูรณาการสู่การพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน หรือ SIM Approach สำหรับสนามกอล์ฟ สวนสนประดิพัทธ์ ผลจากการวิจัยนี้ยืนยันว่า ‘คน’ ถือเป็นปัจจัยแห่งความสำเร็จของทั้งการบริหารสนามกอล์ฟ และพัฒนาองค์กรอย่างยั่งยืน

บทสรุปและข้อเสนอแนะจากการวิจัยพบว่า สนามกอล์ฟสวนสนประดิพัทธ์สามารถนำแนวทางปรัชญาเศรษฐกิจพอเพียงมาประยุกต์ใช้กับการบริหารจัดการ ในขณะเดียวกันควรพัฒนาสนามกอล์ฟควบคู่ไปกับการกำหนดนโยบายที่ตระหนักถึงการพัฒนาชุมชนโดยรอบอย่างเหมาะสม ในลักษณะการพึ่งพาอาศัยซึ่งกันและกัน ซึ่งสนามกอล์ฟภาครัฐสามารถเป็นตัวอย่างที่แสดงถึงการพัฒนาอย่างสมดุล ทั้งในเชิงการพัฒนารายได้ การบริหารตามหลักธรรมาภิบาล การจัดการความเสี่ยง ตลอดจน ความรับผิดชอบต่อสังคม

คำสำคัญ: สนามกอล์ฟ, SERVQUAL, ปรัชญาเศรษฐกิจพอเพียง, การพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน

Introduction

Sport is obviously and repeatedly acknowledged as a human right. However, in the past decade, there is a growing trend recognizing that sport has demonstrated to be an emerging linkage to the sustainable development, as a cost-effective and flexible instrument in promoting development objectives. Considering the role of sport interlinked with sustainable development,

it is therefore motivating to identify the rationale of this research through the introduction of concepts and instruments for practices on the ground.

1. Sport and sustainable development in the world development agenda

The United Nations Summit held in September 2015 in New York convened as a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly, made a Declaration in the Resolution 70/1 entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The world’s development agenda indicates sport’s role and contributions in paragraph 37, as follows: “Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognize the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives” (UNOSDP, 2017; United Nations Sustainable Development Platform, 2017).

2. Role of sport and sustainable development

Sport and Economic Development: The UNOSDP (2017) stated that “sport is a catalyst for economic development. Sport can be an effective stimulus for economic development, especially at the local level. The linkages between the different elements of the sports sector are highly effective when harnessed locally because of existing economies of scale.”

Sport and Social Development:

Effectively designed sport programs can bring numerous values to social development, such as strengthen basic human capabilities, create connections between individuals, and improve social cohesion (UNOSDP, 2017).

Sport and the Environment: All sports activities, events and facilities could pose impacts on the environment, creating an ‘ecological footprint’. Even though sport is normally not a major cause of pollution, but its cumulative impact is significant, which can include pesticides, erosion, waste generation and habitat loss (UNEP and Chernushenko, 2001 cited in UNOSDP, 2017).

3. State-owned Suanson Pradipat Golf Course

Suanson Pradipat Golf Course is under the management of the Royal Thai Army Sports Center Suanson Pradipat, which covers the area of 170 hectares. It is located in Baan Nong Kae Sub-District, Muang Hua Hin Municipality, Prachuab Kirikhan Province, Thailand. It was originally developed as a welfare accommodation retreat for serving soldiers, veterans and their families. In 1995, the RTA Sports Center opened the Golf Course and the Seapine Hotel, while extended services to customers apart from serving soldiers. Suanson Pradipat is a unique beachfront and a standard 18-hole golf course (RTA Sports Center Suanson Pradipat, 2017). The local communities surrounded are in Nong Kae Subdistrict, Muang Hua Hin Municipality, with its population 13,376 people and 9,819 households (Hua Hin Municipality, 2017).

4. SERVQUAL as an instrument to measure service quality

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985, 1988) created SERVQUAL's five dimensions framework of service quality as a "comprehensive measurement instrument named SERVQUAL, which has been most widely adopted as an instrument to measure the perceptions of service quality." The service quality tool "SERVQUAL" therefore involves the calculation of the differences between expectations and perceptions on five service quality dimensions in service and retailing organizations.

5. The 'Sufficiency Economy Philosophy'

Sufficiency Economy Philosophy is expressed by H.M. the King Bhumibol Adulyadej of the Kingdom of Thailand for more than thirty years ago. The Royal Thai Government firmly supports the application of the SEP into practice, while encourages people and organizations at all levels to apply the SEP into their practice as a vehicle towards sustainable development. The concept of SEP was presented in the United Nations and other international development forum occasionally (Office of the Prime Minister, 2016). The SEP could be interpreted as follows:

1) Framework: Based on traditional Thai way of life, the SEP provides guidance on how to pursue a livelihood on the basis of sustainable development in the changing world.

2) Attributes: Focusing on the middle path and step-by-step development, the SEP can be adopted by the populace at all levels.

3) Definition:

(1) **Moderation** Moderate and reasonable consumption

(2) **Reasonableness** Rational course of action

(3) **Self-immunity/Prudence** Ability to cope with internal and external shock

4) Requirements:

(1) **Knowledge** being careful in applying knowledge and the implementation

(2) **Ethics/Morality/Virtues** possessing honesty and integrity, conducting one's life with perseverance, prudence, and generosity.

6. Application of the 'Sufficiency Economy Philosophy'

1) Siam Cement Group: The SCG is the oldest public company in Thailand. During the economic crisis, the SCG faced a great pressure. As a consequence, the firm adopted the SEP as its guiding principle for its business. The SCG restructured and refocused its activities on its core business, where it has strong competitiveness, and put more emphasis on risk management to build greater resiliency (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2017).

2) Sampran Riverside and the "Sampran Model": Sampran Riverside is an eco cultural hotel located by the Thachin River in Nakorn Pathom Province. The Sampran Model was created and aimed to promote farmers' understanding the benefits of organic farming. Many farmers want to stop using toxic farm

chemicals, but they need initial assistance with organic fertilizer and pest control. The model introduces the principle of self-help and mutual help to overcome the overwhelmed pollution from conventional chemical-based farming (CAI, Kasetsart University, n.d.; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2017).

Additionally, there are “23 Royal Working Principles” that well respected majors who worked and observed the working doctrines by His Majesty. This research is deemed to innovatively explore the state-owned golf course management model in Thailand to move towards sustainable development by applying the ‘Sufficiency Economy Philosophy’ and linking the ‘Royal Working Principles’ within.

Research Objectives and Methodology

1. Research objectives

1) To measure service quality and evaluate customer’s satisfaction of Suanson Pradipat Golf Course by the RTA, by using SERVQUAL as a tool; and

2) To determine an approach for Suanson Pradipat golf course on potential changes as an enabler towards sustainable development by applying the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) of the King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand in sport business management.

2. Research methodology

The researcher sets research methodology for data collection procedure, which are:

1) Quantitative Research Data Collection

Procedure Research variable are Service Quality (SERVQUAL). The researcher uses Purposive Sampling Method by selecting correspondents from customers (golfers) who visit and use services at the Royal Thai Army Sport Center Suanson Pradipat. In terms of trustworthiness, the Index of Consistency (IOC) is used in this research. The IOC has a score level for the experts and professionals to check if questions are clear and consistent with the objectives of this research. Selected experts and professionals for the IOC include: Vice Chairman of the Sub-committee, the Royal Thai Air Forces Golf Course; Deputy Governor for Administration, the Sport Authority of Thailand; and the owner of Cascata Golf Club, which is the private golf course. The researcher conducts the Field Test to check the validity of the questionnaire-with 30 samples of customers/golfers at the Royal Thai Air Forces Golf Course. The Royal Thai Air Forces Golf Course is the state-owned golf course, and viewed as the closest circumstance to the actual targeted samples of the Suanson Pradipat Golf Course. For the data collection, the researcher manually collects data from 400 customers who visit and use services provided by the Royal Thai Army Sport Center Suanson Pradipat, for example, golf course, kiosk, clubhouse, pro-shop, accommodation and other facilities provided. This research uses Descriptive Statistics which are: Percentage, Frequency and Standard Deviation for analyzing

demographic information; and links to behavior of the customers who visit Suanson Pradipat Golf Course. After the data collection is completed, the questionnaires were analyzed by **Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)**, following by **Confirmation Factor Analysis (CFA)**.

2) Qualitative Research Data Collection

Procedure Qualitative research population are the Royal Thai Army Sport Center Suanson Pradipat management and the community outside, which include: Executive Level Management of the Royal Thai Army Sport Center Suanson Pradipat; Mid-level Management officers; Staff Level-working level staff on duty; and Communities or villagers in Baan Hua Don Villages, Hua Hin District, Prachuap Kirikhan Province, Thailand. Researcher used a Purposive Sampling Method that considered the probability by target only the key informant who are: the Executive, Mid-level Management, and Staff level at Suanson Pradipat; and Communities in Baan Hua Don Villages. For the Executive, Mid-level Management, and Staff level, the researcher uses the one-on-one In-depth Interview. Guideline interview questionnaire was developed as a research tool in order to get detailed information as a primary. For Villagers at Baan Hua Don Community, the researcher uses a Focus Group Interview. Guideline interview questionnaire was developed as a research tool in order to get detailed information, with the

open-ended questions for the target group to freely give opinions. In terms of trustworthiness, the researcher tests the interview guide in order to check the content validity by presenting the guideline question to the expert to verify the content validity and the consistence of the content and question. The expert is the professional who has worked in the sustainable development policy-related, and Executive at the organization under Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Royal Thai Government. Moreover, the researcher arranged an interview with Professor Dr.Sooksan Kantabutra at Mahidol University-who is an expert that has been working in the field of leadership and His Majesty's sufficiency economy philosophy for more than ten years. In order to analyze the management of Suanson Pradipat and service quality by using SERVQUAL, the researcher uses the Inferential Statistics by factor analysis of the relationship of variables. After the data was collected, the researcher further analyzes and provide research results and discussions of the research results.

Results

1. Research findings of the state-owned golf course management with SERVQUAL

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) of 5 factors using for state-owned golf course management service quality is as shown in **Figure 1**.

Suanson Pradipat Golt Course Management by using SERVQUAL

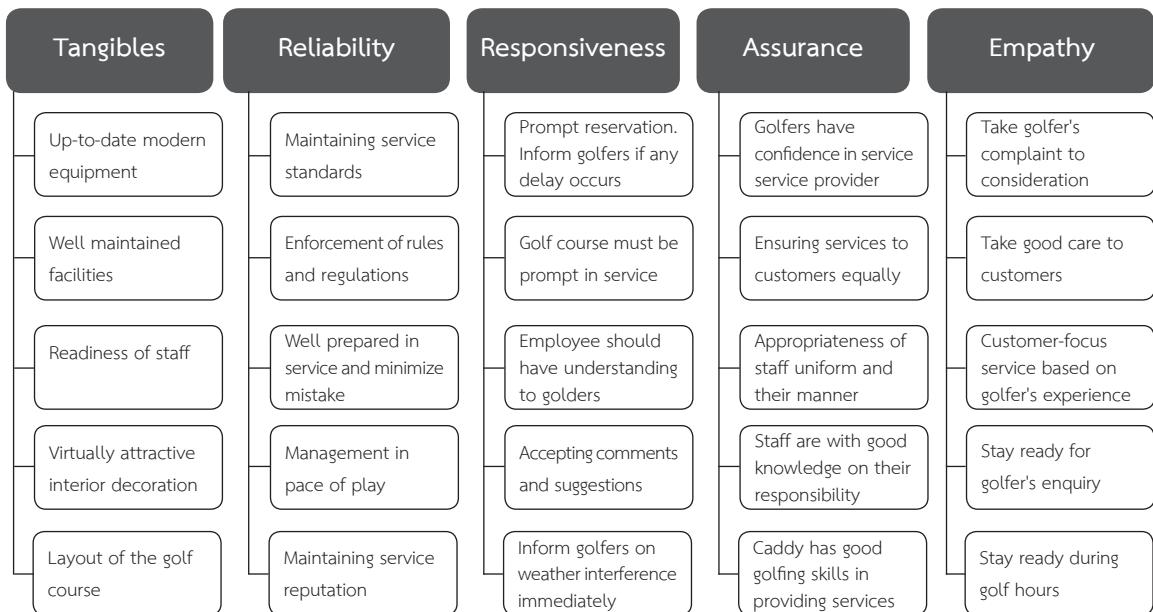


Figure 1 Factor of State-owned golf course service quality

Results from factor analysis demonstrate that 'Tangibles' is the most outstanding factor with Eigenvalues 7.980, compared to other factors at 1.966 to 1.040. Standardized factor loading indicates that 'Readiness of staff', focused on human resources was the highest.

1) Tangibles: Physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel. It was found the highest value in overall. When considering individual aspects, all aspects were found highest too. The first one was "Readiness of staff".

2) Reliability: Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. It was found the highest in overall. When considering individual aspects; all aspects were found the highest, too. The first one was "Maintaining service standard".

3) Responsiveness: Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. It was found the highest in overall, and in individual aspects, all aspects were found the highest, too. "Inform golfers on weather interference immediately, compensation rule (rain check) should be clearly explained".

4) Assurance: Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. It was found the highest in overall. Considering individual aspects; all aspects were found the highest too. "Caddy has good golfing skill in providing service to golfers" was the first one.

5) Empathy: Caring, individualized attention the firm provides to its customers was found the highest in overall. Considering individual aspects, all aspects were found the highest with "Take good care of golfers" came first.

According to construct the validity check by Confirmed Factor Analysis, or CFA, with the SPSS, the researcher compared comparative fit between the construct validity model and the empirical data, i.e., $\chi^2 = 370.718$, df = 74, p-value = .000, Relative $\chi^2 = 1.301$, GFI = .919, AGFI = .893, RMR = .027, RMSEA = .032, NFI = .926, IFI = .982, and CFI = .981.

2. Findings of Suanson Pradipat applying the SEP towards Sustainable Development

At present, Suanson Pradipat applies SEP and the Royal Working Principles into practices. The proposed conceptual sustainability integrated approach could provide some thoughts in a practical way for Suanson Pradipat to move towards sustainable development.

1) Sustainability thinking, the long term perspective should be focused. Set a long term direction in a comprehensive, sustainable development, and sufficiency thinking; subsequently, setting goals, target, planning, and strategies to move forward to it;

2) Continuously improving service quality. Human resource capacity development, innovation and technology development should be considered. Comprehensive and regular monitoring and assessment on service quality are also important.

3) People centered management. People is the key success factor for most of the services provided, due to they are in touch with the customers. The organization will need to

have good, qualified and skilled staff to provide services to customers to meet their satisfaction and compete in the business.

4) Sustainable Leadership. Avery & Bergsteiner (2016) reflected that the application of the SEP's sufficiency thinking on building organization's resilience (or self-immunity) perspective is important, while 'sustainable leadership' is apparently a significant part of the sustainable decision making process.

5) Local stakeholders are important and should be incorporated with the organization's activities. Development for the revenue of the business should be along with the social responsibility approaches, and thinking of mutual development of the organization and the local community. Create a sharing culture within the organization and extend to stakeholders could strengthen a good relationship among people inbound and outbound areas of Suanson Pradipat.

Conceptual “Sustainability Integrated Management (SIM) Approach”

The conceptual approach of “Sustainability Integrated Management (SIM)” is based on the SEP that should be able to stimulate sustainable development and responsive to the needs of, and generate mutual benefit for local community surrounded at the same time. Suanson Pradipat Golf Course could apply SEP towards sustainable development through three tiers of the organization's decision making process, as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1 Suanson Pradipat to Apply the SEP Towards Sustainable Development

Application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) into Practice		
SEP and Sustainable Development Dimensions	Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service & Income: Improve service quality in response to customer satisfaction Resources Utilization: Efficient and maximized utilize resources Investment: Invest in the high co-benefits product and technology i.e. using environmentally friendly product
Key message: Development in a balanced manner	Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green Policy: Organization determines for adopting policy i.e. Support and purchase the environmentally friendly products in their green procurement Green Service & Consumption: Support local farmers i.e. buying fruit & vegetables from nearby community/ farmers
	Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People Capacity Development: Capacity building programs for staff at all level will lead to better improvement of their service deliverables. Care & Shared with the Local People: Generate mutual benefits with the locals while continue to develop the organization
	Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong Policy and Values in Ethics: Organization puts ethics in a high value Cultural Activities: Organization supports cultural and festive activities can result in a relationship between the organization, and the local people
SEP Values for Decision Making	Moderation (Self-focused)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in People and the Organization: Promote people capacity from within and seek cooperation Adopt Long Term Perspective: Vision and leadership on sustainability thinking should be focused People Well Being: Concern employee's well-being and welfare Leadership: CEO works as a team leader Appropriate Technology: Focus on not-too-costly technology, but yet effective, to support and enhance service quality i.e. digital/IT technology Local Wisdom: Adopt the use of appropriate local wisdom, which could be inexpensive, but effective
Key message: Emphasis on people-centered management	Reasonable-ness (Others-focused)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmentally & Social Responsible: Put environmentally and social responsible high on the agenda and the organization values. Shared: Construct and foster the 'share' culture. Employment Creation: Employment creation and support income generation for the local stakeholders

Table 1 Suanson Pradipat to Apply the SEP Towards Sustainable Development (ต่อ)

Application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) into Practice		
	Self-Immunity (Change-focused)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Risk Assessment & Management: Minimize risks and readiness preparation to respond to environmental change ● Anticipate Future Trends and Changes: Researching and planning on future trends and changes i.e. Policy change; Technology disruption
SEP Primary Requirements	Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Acquire Knowledge: Attain knowledge broadly, from internal and external sources, with knowledge management programs for organization development ● Cultivate new knowledge and innovation throughout the entire organization ● Sharing knowledge with people in & outside the organization
	Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adopt Good Moral & Ethical Behavior: Good morality and ethics should be adopted in the organization's Code of Ethics, with trainings to staff ● Regard Virtues as a high organization's value, and put into practice at all levels i.e. Adherence to fairness and morality; Concern for social responsibility

At present, Suanson Pradipat applies SEP and the Royal Working Principles into practices in some aspects. However, several focuses suggested are as follows:

1) Sustainability thinking, the long term perspective should be focused. Set a long term direction in a comprehensive, sustainable development, and sufficiency thinking;

2) Continuously improving service quality. Personnel capacity development, innovation and technology development should be considered. Comprehensive and regular monitoring and assessment on service quality are also important.

3) People centered management. People is the key success factor for most of the services provided, due to they are in touch with the customers. The organization will need to have good, qualified and skilled staff to provide services to customers to meet their satisfaction and compete in the business.

4) Sustainable Leadership. To support the argument on the sufficiency thinking, the SEP and practices for enhancing resilience and performance, Avery & Bergsteiner (2016) reflected the role of sustainable leadership that: "It embraces aspects of humanistic management in that it

includes valuing people and considering the firm as a contributor to societal well-being and happiness. The individual practices of sustainable leadership are not new: Peter Drucker (2006) wanted managers to promote change and allow innovations to come from all over the organization, thereby enabling ordinary people to make extraordinary things happen. What is new is the understanding that these practices form a self-reinforcing system that enhances the performance of an enterprise and its prospects for resilience and surviving difficult times" (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2016). Sustainable leadership is apparently a significant part of the sustainable decision making process.

5) Local stakeholders are important and should be incorporated with the organization's activities. Development for the revenue of the business and the organization purely is fine, but it will be far better to embrace the social responsibility approaches, and thinking of mutual development (of the organization and local community). Create a sharing culture within the organization and extend to stakeholders could strengthen a good relationship among people inbound and outbound areas of Suanson Pradipat.

The sport business and organization management with the local people or community development concerns could generate a positive way to build trust and supportive relationship with people in the local community, hence this could enhance self-immunity, or resilience for

the organization subsequently. However, there could be a fragmented stakeholder relationship with a dilemma, or a confrontation in some areas. Ryan and Wayuparb (2004) explain that to be truly effective, the local stakeholder participation should have precluded an unproductive confrontation and ensure that the economics of sustainability are understood. Participation must not alienate planning and management agencies, government servicing organizations and private sector developers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

State-owned Suanson Pradipat Golf Course Management could apply the SEP towards sustainable development. Research findings highlighted that 'People' is a key success factor to golf course management and the organization's sustainability. In applying the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, the important values for decision making are to concern on Moderation; Reasonableness; and Self-Immunity/Resilience.

Research findings suggested that a concern of people in the local community, as a stakeholder, should be incorporated within the organization policy. Suanson Pradipat golf course should represent a good balance in profit, sustainability, good governance, risk mitigation, and social responsibility. The long term policy and planning process, target setting, implementing the plan, monitoring and evaluating the action plan will

be recommended. Corporate Social Responsibility could be created, namely: (a) 'Sport Day' for the local youth and senior people, as Suanson Pradipat has a strength on sport management. Offering opportunities for the local people will be able to strengthen a good relationship with the local community; and (b) 'Job/Income Generation' for recruiting, employing local people to work at Suanson Pradipat. Income generation to contribute to the local economy development is one of the highlighted opinions by the villagers.

For improving service quality, the training programs for organization people are strongly

recommended. Indicative capacity building areas are for example: Enhancing occupational skills; Foreign languages improvement-necessity for staff to communicate with foreign customers, or a training for staff to use digital technology for language translation; Knowledge on digital technology; new business trends and management knowledge.

Furthermore, follow-up studies are recommended to identify the linkages and corporate application in the fields of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, Sustainability Leadership, and Corporate Shared Value (CSV).

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