RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR ECO-TOURISM WITH PARTICIPATION OF COMMUNITY IN THAILAND

Dr. Patthira Phon-ngam
Associate Professor, Chairman of Doctoral Degree Program
Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Loei Rajabhat University Thailand
E-mail: p-patthira@hotmail.com Phone : 66 83 2817564

ABSTRACT

Thailand has become one of the world ranked tourist destination. Tourism industry is one of major sources of Thai national incomes. Apart from its national properties, impression of tourists can highly affect tourist figures. The purposes of this research were to study: 1) To study problems of local eco-tourism. 2) To develop participation management model of tourism in the local areas in the communities. The methods of this study are mixed methods of research. The qualitative research is a major method and quantitative research method is a supplementary. In terms of qualitative research a Participatory Action Research (PAR) was employed by blending of quality such as focus group discussion (FGD), and the technical meeting of brainstorm (AIC-Appreciation Influence Control). The quantitative research tool is questionnaire.

The results of the research were as follows:

1. The study of management problems in local tourism

Problems of entrepreneurs: lacking of communication skills, especially English, the hosts are not able to communicate and understand. The tourists are not impressed and did not come back again in the near future

Environmental problems: No system of waste management-particularly in tourism vicinity- has been installed to cope with the garbage collection.

Problem of management personnel: The committee is not strong enough. They lack of knowledge and skills in tourism management and lack of communication skills with foreign tourists.

Issues of community participation: They lack of participation in all stages of operation. Each one runs as personal style. There is no gathering as the Board of Directors.

2. The results of development of a tourism management by the community.

In this section, brainstorming is implemented for participation meeting. The development model of tourism management in the following 4 models:
1) A management model for tourism in the area
2) Model of tourism management in natural resources and environmental tourism
3) Model of tourism management and travel activities
4) Model of tourism management on the participation of the community

KEY WORDS: eco-tourism, participation management, community participation, Management Model.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a leisure activity for every human who needs to move away from their daily-life environment to heel fatigue, recharge battery, and refresh minds in order to return to energetic and productive normal life; an eye opening experimental event which broadens and deepens international, regional, national, local understanding of and appreciation to difference and diversity of human beings, life styles, cultures, civilizations, histories, natures, and heritages, which would contribute not only mutual understanding and respect, but also reorienting life style, philosophy and values of life for better and meaningful lives to live.

Thai people name their county as the land of smiles. Most Thai people have been known as those who are friendly and kind. Because of it richness of unique cultures, friendly people, long historical background and colorful natural resources, Thailand has been ranked as one of the foremost tourism growth destination. Tourism and its related industries can distribute both negative and positive impact to the country, but such practices always bring good national incomes. Tourism has played an important part in Thailand business. According to The Association of Thai Travel Agents (ATTA)' s service coupon 2005, international tourists in Thailand had been increasing dramatically from 1997-2002, it went from 1,630,060 in 1997 to 2,269,294 in 2002, and went up and down from 2003-2005. The figures were 2,177,814 in 2003, 2688,455 in 2004, and then 1748,103 in 2005. The decreasing number of tourists in those periods was affected from Natural disaster, and disease.

The Thai tourism industry, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), is presently ranked 18th in the world level, and the 5th in the Asian region, behind China, Hong Kong, Macao, and Malaysia. There are high numbers of both local and inbound tourists visiting Thailand all year round. However, according to TAT, based on facts and figures from World Tourism Organization, WTO (2010), it was estimated that the average growth of international tourists in 2010 would be 5.5% with 808 million international tourists. This figure was lower than those numbers in 2004, when the growth of world tourism experienced a 10% expansion. The region which was expected to grow at a higher rate was the Asia Pacific (+10%) owing to the fact that tourists paid more attention to finding new attractions in this region, especially in Cambodia, Vietnam, India and China, where there was high growth in the number of visitors. For the situation of tourism in Thailand, the tsunami disaster and disturbance in the 3 southern provinces, as well as the increased market competition in new destinations (Vietnam, China, India) and tourism product creation (Japan, Hong Kong, and Korea) were key factors of Thailand’s
steady tourism growth in 2010, with 11.52 million inbound visitors, a 1.15% decrease from the previous year. However, that slowdown has become increased. Attempts of the public and private sectors to stimulate markets and recover the attractions affected by the disaster as fast as possible have been planned to help the situation, including the enhancing of the positive attitudes and good impression of visitors towards visiting Thailand.

Ecotourism is a form of tourism in various countries currently providing a key movement towards sustainable development of the country and many nations. According to the Universal Declaration on the environmentally sustainable development, tourism will stress on priority to the educating or learning. Or it focuses on the conservation of the environment rather than serving the satisfaction of the tourists only. In contrast to traditional tourism, eco-tourism will be responsible for nature attraction. There will be managing of environment and educating visitors as a whole.

Community tourism in Thailand as in many areas have no management model of local tourism in the clear systems of many aspects such as the tourism area, environmental management, activities in tourism sites and the participation of the community- especially the waste disposal and the environment. It was found that tourists threw litter. Uncontrolled waste disposal matters in the near future could lead to the destruction of environment and area degradation. Therefore, it is necessary to seek ways to develop a model of tourism resources in the local community participation. To be able to effectively, manage benefits locally and distributes an income in the areas. Raising the quality of life and the returning to resume maintenance and tourism management will bring about ultimate development of local sustainability.

OBJECTIVES

1) To study problems of local eco-tourism.

2) To develop participation management model of tourism in the local areas in the community.

SCOPE OF STUDY

The scopes of this study are as the followings.

1. A scope of content: Determination of tourism management has been classified into four areas: tourism areas, environmental management area, activities in tourism and the participation of the community.

2. A scope of the population and sample groups: They consisted of travel operators, community members, community leaders, local administration organization official as well as tourists visiting the attraction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ecotourism is responsible travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strive to be low impact and (often) small scale (as an alternative to mass tourism). Its purpose is to educate the traveler; provide funds for ecological conservation; directly benefit the economic development and political...
empowerment of local communities; and foster respect for different cultures and for human rights. Since the 1980s ecotourism has been considered a critical endeavor by environmentalists, so that future generations may experience destinations relatively untouched by human intervention (Honey, 2008). Several university programs use this description as the working definition of ecotourism. (Untamed, 2009).

Generally, ecotourism focuses on volunteering, or voluntourism, personal growth and environmental responsibility. Ecotourism typically involves travel to destinations where flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the primary attractions. One of the goals of ecotourism is to offer tourists insight into the impact of human beings on the environment, and to foster a greater appreciation of our natural habitats.

Responsible ecotourism includes programs that minimize the negative aspects of conventional tourism on the environment and enhance the cultural integrity of local people. Therefore, in addition to evaluating environmental and cultural factors, an integral part of ecotourism is the promotion of recycling, energy efficiency, water conservation, and creation of economic opportunities for local communities. For these reasons, ecotourism often appeals to environmental and social responsibility advocates.

Eco-tourism is currently a buzzword in the Thai tourism scene. It has consistently gained in popularity in recent years in response to the worldwide trend of preserving the natural environment. The concept of eco-tourism has yet to be properly defined, however. Several activities fall under the heading of nature-based tourism.

Thanks to the abundance and variety of natural resources, Thailand has become a favored destination for adventure seekers and eco-tourists. The Tourism Authority of Thailand as well as the private sector has been quick to respond to the fast-changing demand for back-to-nature activities.

During the past decade, activities like mountain biking, whitewater rafting, trekking and camping, bird watching, scuba diving and rock climbing have sprung up in many natural tourist areas. They are now becoming increasingly popular as mainstream travelers pay more attention to off-the-beaten-track destinations.

Such eco activities are now available in every region of Thailand, more outstandingly in the mountainous areas of the north, west, and the south of Thailand. Leading the way are trekking, mountain biking, bird watching and scuba diving.

Most of Thailand's national parks are under the control of the Royal Forest Department. Most national parks provide trekking trails for nature explorers. There are also camping sites for those who want to overnight in the parks. Trekking and camping are available in the mountainous areas all over Thailand such as Doi Luang Chiang Dao in Chiang Mai, Phu Soi Dao in Uttaradit, Thung Salaeng Luang in Phetchabun and Phitsanulok, Phu Kradung in Loei and Khao Luang in Nakhon Si Thammarat, to name but a few.
Actually, trekking and camping are not new tourist activities in Thailand. But they are better managed today than ever before. Apart from trekking along the marked trails, you may also hire a local guide to take a tour deeper into a forest to explore off-the-beaten-track routes. Organized elephant trekking is another popular activity for anyone who isn't too adventurous.

Mountain biking trips are organized by a number of specialist travel agents. The TAT has promoted mountain biking activities in tourist areas such as the Sukhothai Historical Park. A favorite activity for a small group of people, bird watching is increasingly popular along with other activities catering to niche travelers. The establishment of the Bird Preservation Society of Thailand has helped.

Research Methodology

The methods of this study are mixed methods of research. The qualitative research is a major method and quantitative research method is a supplementary. In terms of qualitative research a Participatory Action Research (PAR) was employed by blending of quality such as focus group discussion (FGD), and the technical meeting of brainstorm (AIC-Appreciation Influence Control). The quantitative research tool

RESULTS

The study of management problems in local eco-tourism

Results from the depth interviews showed that there are problems in the management of eco-tourism as follows.

Problems of entrepreneurs: There are problems in terms of services, for examples, lacking of communication skills, especially English. When tourists visit, the hosts are not able to communicate and understand. The tourists are not impressed and did not come back again in the near future.

Environmental problems: No system of waste management-particularly in tourism vicinity- has been installed to cope with the garbage collection. The problem of environmental waste is a left behind problem in many communities.

Problem of management personnel: The committee is not strong enough. They lack of knowledge and skills in tourism management and lack of communication skills with foreign tourists.

Area problem: There are no problems concerning area.

Activity problem: There is only one activity. That one is rafting.

Issues of community participation: They lack of participation in all stages of operation. Each one runs as personal style. There is no gathering as the Board of Directors.

2. The results of development of management model for eco-tourism with participation of communities

In this section, brainstorming is implemented for participation meeting. The format has been identified within the framework of ecotourism into 4 areas: tourism area, environmental management
area, activities in tourism and the participation of the community. The 4 models were introduced into the four forms of action for 3 months.

The development model of tourism management in the following 4 formats:

1) **A management model for tourism in the area**

The area development has been done as tourist attractions as the followings.

1) Signs, direction and development of roads and pavement
2) Parks, gardens and flower garden plants
3) Sum rest with the bench table
4) Develop viewpoint for a rest and views, as well as tourists who take pictures

2) **Forms of tourism management in natural resources and environmental tourism**

The problems about natural resources are concerned with waste and the environment, so developments are as follows.

1) The project of a recycling bank in the community to recycle waste to benefit the next was introduced.
2) Project Steering Committee established a recycling bank in the community.
3) Determining of regulatory environment as not to pick flowers in tourism

3) **Forms of tourism management and travel activities**

Determine to have tourist activities in the vicinity as follows.

1) Activities for health consist of the following items.
   1. The health walks, cycling around the area
   2. Massage
   3. Drying herb
   4. Tara Spa Therapy

2) Activities in the annual festival consist of these.
   1. Festivals of eating fish during the month of April every year
   2. Contest of car decoration-beautiful blossoms

4) **Types of tourism management on the participation of the community**

The study of community participation in tourism management in this section the data were collected by questionnaire. The results presented in Table 1.
Table 1: Participation in an overall and in an item

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Level of Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the planning - analyzing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. You are involved in the planning of tourism management in the community.</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. You are involved in commenting on tourism management.</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. You are involved in setting rules for travel.</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. You are involved in the analysis of the problems caused by tourism in the community.</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. You participated in village meetings about tourism in the community.</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the operation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. You are involved in the tourism management in the community.</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. You are involved in selling products such as fruits and vegetables in tourist destinations.</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. You are involved in the tourism environment in the community.</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. You are involved in solving problems arising from tourism in the community.</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. You are involved in promoting tourism.</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. You are involved in the process of earning from tourism in the community.</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 You are people who involved in working for money in tourism areas.</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 You are persons who have benefited in other forms such as public services.</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 You are people who have received appreciation from the outside on having a beautiful tourist destination.</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. You get more convenient, more comfortable when there are tourism attractions such as electricity, water and roads, etc..</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participation as a whole: 0.7 Low

From Table 1, it was found that participation in an overall and in an item is at a low level. Therefore, the development in terms of participation is as follows:

1. Involvement in providing tourist services, including food, accommodation and attractions.

2. Participation in the production of raw materials used in cooking such as raising chicken, fish and various vegetable crops and fruits in season.

3. Participation in the sale of souvenirs and agricultural products.

4. Participation in the group to get the car - sending tourists to tourism in the community.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Policy recommendations

These results made us know about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threat of tourism in this area. The result of this study was to define a policy on tourism as follows:

1.1 A result of the study note that the level of participation of the community. We also see a clear picture of the lack of participation. Therefore, there should be Board of Directors, community members, community leaders and local administrators established a policy of tourism management in the community.
1.2 Sub-district Administration Organization is responsible for tourism. Then they should set regulations as concretely and clearly for the sake of environment for entrepreneurs and tourists and penalties on violation of regulations should be enforced.

2. Suggestions on the results of research to real practice

Findings from this research reflect the strategic importance of tourism management with participation of local communities. The application of research results will be like these.

2.1 A supervised group or committee should be set up to oversee the tourism community. The information from the data collection makes us know that people in the community would like to have the group to be responsible for taking care of the community tourism here.

2.2 Project preparation workshop to develop the potential of entrepreneurs in areas such as service quality, basic English communication skills, etc. should be launched to improve the knowledge and skills needed to manage tourism in the community which will create confidence among service providers, which can lead to the satisfaction of tourists.

2.3 Organizing projects which relates to the tourism budget presented to the relevant agencies including the Provincial Administration Organization and Tourism Authority of Thailand, etc. to get the budget to support the development of various aspects. This point is a weakness in tourism management.

2.4 Brochures and posters should be published to advertise of tourism sites or to make mechanism in the market.

3. Recommendations for future researches

This study is a study of tourism management with participation of the community which should have the opportunity to further study the issues as follows.

3.1 Evaluation research should be done in order to evaluate the effectiveness of tourism management.

3.2 Researches should be created a research strategy for tourism development with participation of the community to use as a way to drive the operations of tourism in each community.

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