Management of Community Based Tourism in Thailand

A case study at Ban Prasat village

Dr. Chuanchen Bi, Nithkarn Sanoamuang, Benjamin Carron, Dr. Michael Hudson, Kyle Craven, Robert Bell, Dr. Dylan Eugene Southard, Papassara Supthanon

Khon Kaen University International College, Khon Kaen, Thailand

Abstract

Tourism has long been recognized for its major contribution to Thailand’s economic growth, Thailand government believes that tourism as a fast track heading into economy growth and requires less investment than the other industries. In ASEAN, Thailand is one of the most attracted countries for the travelers. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is mainly recognized for the rural communities who also want to get involved into the tourism. CBT mainly focuses on the involvement of native community, the tourism activities should happen within the community, also the major benefits will also remains within the community. CBT is not only benefiting the local community and its community members, but also the indispensable branches of tourism industry in Thailand. Based on this, the main purpose of this paper is trying to explore the management of CBT in Thailand. Specifically, this paper will divide into three themes. First theme will introduce the background of the CBT in Thailand, the secondary data will be used to show the history of the CBT and its trends in the future, since this paper mainly focus on the management of CBT, so the second themes will set Ban Prasat village as the case study, the original mapping, primary data will be used to show the background of Ban Prasat village, the operation of CBT in Ban Prasat village will be mainly focused, the benefit of involvement into CBT will also shown in this theme. The last theme will discuss about the future plan for CBT in Ban Prasat to make more benefit to the local community.

Keywords: Community-Based Tourism, Ban Prasat Village, Case Study

Introduction

Tourism has long been recognized for its major contribution to Thailand’s economic growth, Thailand government believes that tourism as a fast track heading into economy growth and requires less

---

^1 nithsa@kku.ac.th
investment than the other industries. Based on the Thailand Development Research Institute, the number of tourist arrivals was increasing from 700 million in 2002 to 1,600 million by the end of 2020, which will make more benefit to the central government.

In other words, to make balance between conservation and tourism gains, recent efforts have been developed for the concept of the sustainable tourism development in the community level. Tourism more increasingly to the socio-economic benefits for the host of communities (Murphy, 2005). Tourism and sustainable development linked in many forms using different terms to describe the points, including Community-Based Tourism. Community based tourism (CBT), focuses on the involvement of local community in the development process and ensures that a major share of tourism benefits remains within the community, which recognized as the one of the most important branches of the tourism played an important role on it. Through the active participation from the stakeholders, CBT could help to strengthen the community capacity and development (Suchada, 2012).

Ban Prasat, is an ordinary community located at Nakhon Ratchasima Province, which build the CBT based on the Archeological Sites. The CBT in Ban Prasat community has four groups to operate the CBT which are home-stay group, food group, handicraft group and tour guide group, the operation in which has been managed for over 20 years, the good services has been recognized and accepted by the travelers. This paper mainly focuses on the management of the CBT in Ban Prasat community, trying to introduce how they operate the CBT in Ban Prasat. In order to make a better understanding of this paper, the interview and observation methods will be used in this paper to explore the management of CBT in Ban Prasat community.

Theoretical Framework

Tourism in Community or well-known as TiC as the basic development for the rural communities in tourism sector. TiC have been promoted in a community as a result to promote raising income and conserve the culture and identity for tourism in rural area. However, TiC with community participation could promote sustainable development tourism which called as Community Based Tourism (CBT). The community development could improve the social life, economic, politics and maintain the environment. This is how the tourism in Thailand works (see Graphic 1).
Result (case study)

Ban Prasat is a village located at Non Sung district, about 45 km from Nakhon Ratcahsima Province, which is combined with three sub-communities named mu 7, mu 17, and mu 8. One river separate the mu 7, 17 with mu 8. Three sub-communities share one Buddhist temple where is located in the mu 7, and also share one primary school in the northeast of the Ban Prasat community. This is one national high way passing this community which could offer the convenient transportation. Ban Prasat community has 213 households with a population of 1,185 consisting of 582 males and 603 females (Ngunghaiyapoom, 2012). The villagers are mostly engaged in agriculture, mainly wet-rice cultivation, in addition to raising animals and growing vegetables. When it is not the rice-growing season, villagers earn their living from making local handicrafts products from natural materials such as reed plants, palm leaves and stalks. According to an exploration by the Division of Archeology back in 1977, Ban Prasat is an enclosed site of an irregular shape with surrounding moat and mound measuring 350 x 450 meters. The area slopes southwards with its highest point rising some 5 meters from the surrounding rice fields, palm trees and
vegetable patches. Towards the north, there is a natural Than Prasat stream as well as artificial reservoirs constructed to supply water for villagers throughout the year (Nguangchaiyapoom, 2012). Ban Prasat village is the home of an ancient settlement once inhabited by a prehistory to early history community. The discovery of human skeletons and many pottery pieces from the excavation sites are the evidence of human evolution, community beliefs and culture in this area, dating back some 2,500-3,000 years ago. There are 3 main Archeological Site were found in Ban Prasat community, all of the Archeological Sites were located in mu 7 and mu 17. Because of the greatest found in Ban Prasat community, the local villagers trying to develop their tourism based on their own community. Since the location of the Archeological Sites, mu 7 and mu 17 all took part in the community based tourism, the Archeological Site museum was build in the center of the mu 7 and 17. While mu 8 still focuses on the traditional way of life, farming will be their priority job to handle. With the development of the local community based tourism, the local villagers trying to make the better community facility, so they build the new road in mu 7 and mu 17, while mu 8 still maintained the old road.

Map of Ban Prasat community, made by author
Suchada (2012) described the development periods of CBT in Ban Prasat which divided in to three development periods. First period was in the 1955 – 1982 as the early stage of development to an award-winning village. In the early of the stage, the village were develop their basic infrastructure and finally won the award as ‘best village award’ by the government. Later on and still on the same year, an extensive number of ancient objects were found in the village. Furthermore, the second stage of the development of CBT was start on 1983 to 1990. The discovery of the ancient object which dating back some 2,500 – 3,000 years ago, promote TAT launched Ban Prasat to be ‘Village Development Project’ to promote as a major stop on tourism route of the Northeast region. Afterwards, improving the infrastructure provisions and facilities, such as roads, transportation, water supply, electricity, tourist information center and parking space were held as the collaboration between various government agencies, Fine Arts Departments and some of the local authorities as well as community members. TAT held training for the tourism improvement sector and help community to earn extra income. The third stages period was start on 1991 to 2008 when it is as the beginning of management administration for the CBT management in Ban Prasat. In this stage, the ‘homestay’ program was introduced including with the career group, such as local handicraft, cooking and local guides group. The management rules and regulation were set up including training program for tourist. Afterwards, the sustainable CBT management is develop until recently. CBT or tourist sector give an extra income for the villagers.

Recently, CBT in Ban Prasat village still divided in to 4 groups. However, the implementation structure of Homestay and Guide groups is lead by one person, He is Tiyan. Since Tiyan also as the leader of the Mu 7, he is recognized and called as Puyay Tiyan. Puyay is the appellation for leader of Mu (see picture 1). The cluster area for the CBT are only in Mu 7 and 17.
Picture 1. Homestay Group Member and Room

The homestay criteria was already set up in accordance with the requirements from TAT, there are: willing to have tourist in their house; greet-able; clean area; have the social interaction; good and acceptable as a homestay. The monitoring for each homestay done by Puyay Tiyam before the tourists came to stay overnight in to their village. Since 2008, CBT in Ban Prasat already sustainable to develop and moreover, the community member also have future plan to make floating market in the river inside of the village. It is plan to attract the visitors to come, stay and be part of Ban Prasat villagers for a while. Recently, the homestay group accept domestic and international travellers who stayed in their house, the amount of the member for the homestay are 25 homestay. However, only 4-5 homestay could accept the foreigners in their house. The obstacles that they had were the communication for the foreigner guest. Nevertheless, most of the travellers were came from Thailand and mostly were students who want to study more about the way of life and archeology in Ban Prasat village.

Researchers was made an participatory observation for the CBT management in Ban Prasat for introducing the culture of Thailand for travelers from Japan. They usually held the welcoming ceremony in the parking car in first pit of archeology, or in the temple, or in the school. In this occasion, they held the welcoming ceremony in the primary school of Ban Prasat village. Herewith the stage for operating the travel welcoming activities in Ban Prasat as CBT management:

1. Preparation of Community members of CBT Management in Ban Prasat
The preparation stage usually done by the community member through one time meeting before the due date. In the due date, in the early morning, the cooking group was prepare the traditional snack and the utensils to serve the snack and drink for the guests or visitors. Meanwhile, one member of group prepare PanBay Sii tray for the welcoming ceremony. Only certain person could prepare the PanBay Sii tray. Each of the members prepare the flower necklace from the flower that grow in their own house.

2. Welcoming and greetings to guest travellers

In this part, they prepared themselves in front of the location of welcoming ceremony before the guest travellers from Japan arrived in Ban Prasat. The interesting was the villagers stand with their flower necklace in their hands and prepare to drapping to the guest neck. If the guests want to stay in the homestay of Ban Prasat village, the flower necklace means the symbol for the guests who want to stay in their homestay. The owner of the homestay gave the flower necklace to the guest means that the guest could stay in her house for the homestay facilities. However, the guest traveller from Japan were not stayed on the Ban Prasat, so the flower necklaces were not meaning to the distributed to the homestay. Afterwards, the picture session was made to make it as the guest’s souvenir.

3. Welcoming snack and speech

While the guests were welcome by Puyay Tiyam to have seat in the chair that already set, all the cooking group were prepare the snack and drink. It happens automatically and all the member works based on their duties, including the preparation was made in international standard, which was had wet and dry tissue inside of it. It was one of the training management of the CBT to done the preparation and welcoming guests based on the duties of the group.

Toilet
Picture 2. The Location Map of Welcoming Party

After all the guest already seat, Puyay Tiyam open the ceremony and also the cooking group start to distribute the snack and hot drink for the guest. The welcoming speech was not only deliver by Puyay Tiyam, but also by the leader of the guest. In this part, Puyay also explained about the way of life, the culture, economics activities and the archaeology pit which is located in Mu 7 and Mu 17. Usually, the members would like to get the guest sight seeing arround, but since they came in very late time, the member could not bring them around.

4. Blessing to guest travellers

The main session of welcoming party for the guest is the good blessing from the host to the guest. Ban Paysii tray was set in the stage and a person who is pointed as the elder to give pray in Ban Paysii. In the Ban Paysii tray, there were lots of white-strings hanging and after having the praying words for around 10 minutes, the members automatically came to the tray and take the white-strings. The white-strings was distributed by hang to the guests’ hand and saying the good words as pray, ‘wish you to have joy, success safe this trip until you arrive in your home, and erase the bad things and left it all behind’. This sentence as pray was said from the village member to the guests.

5. Welcoming dance

Afterwards, the welcoming dance by the students of the primary school of Ban Prasat was held in approximately 10 minutes. It’s part of the introducing the art and culture of Thailand to the foreigners guest. Moreover, after the dancing, Puyay Tiyam also describe the meaning of the dancing to the guest. Meanwhile, the cooking group start to clean all the glass including all the trash and start to repackage the utensils.

6. Closing speech and dancing

The last session for the welcoming party was the closing speech by the Puyay Tiyam and also the leader of the guest’ group. The closing speech was held in very brief. To make it closer between the guest and community members, they set dancing together with traditional dance of Thailand. Afterwards, the community members deliver the guest to their bus.

7. Cleansing stage
After all the welcoming party was done, all the community members collect all the chair and the utensils that they use. The most interest for the researchers were that it only tooks several minutes to clean and repackage all the things. Furthermore, all the community members were done it together and there were no one went back first after all the things already clean and package in to the first time they came. The cooperation between one member to other, and one group with other group could promote the very efficient and effectively working.

Discussion and Conclusion

Ban Prasat village is one of the example case for the success CBT in Thailand. Community member participation increase the level of standar for the CBT in each year. Moreover, even when the researchers ask to the villagers to choose which income could support more, they could not answer and they explain that farming and tourist are part of their life. Tourists excited to learn more the way of their life in Ban Prasat, which is famous as I-San\(^2\) community.

The implementation of CBT becoming more sustainable because it bring positive impact for the community. Furthermore, the local government could achieve more advantages from this. However, the collaboration between government who support the infrastructure facilities and community participation who support the attractive and sustainable tourism part produce the high impact for the area. The Archeology findings help attract more for the tourist to come in Ban Prasat village. The maintainance for the archeology also become both part responsibility and it is done until now. The last thing that need to underline that tourism could sustain if the community support it, and it's not the government program, otherwise, it's mostly community participation based.

References


---

\(^2\) ISAN is the northeastern region of Thailand. It is located on the Korat Plateau, bordered by the Mekong River (along the border with Laos) to the north and east, by Cambodia to the southeast and the Phrae, Phatthalung mountains south of Nakhon Ratchasima. To the west it is separated from Northern and Central Thailand by the Phetchabun mountain range.