TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY- BASED TOURISM: A CASE OF HOMESTAY IN SURATTHANI PROVINCE, THAILAND

1ANURAK BINNU, 2NINTHANA IAMSA-ARD
1Management Studies Department, University of Exeter, United Kingdom
2Business AdministrationDepartment, Surathani Rajabhat University, Thailand
E-mail: 'a.binnui@gmail.com, 'ninthana@yahoo.com

Abstract- Despite the homestay business is currently a proliferating important sector in Thailand, unfortunately it remains disregarded especially in the domestic market, and also fails to meet the customers’ expectation of both domestic and foreign tourists. Moreover, from the pilot study survey, we found that the group members need a standard business management model for their community tourism to both meeting the requirement of provincial strategy and making the business sustainable. Thus this paper aims to explore the implications of the current homestay business management through emphasize the significant of homestay capability building towards sustain the community-based tourism by developing the causal chain from community resource accumulation to sustain the business in the long term development. The research methods are: in-depth interview with the village headman, the head of homestay founders, semi-structured interview with 5 homestay members, group discussion with 10 volunteer residents and questionnaire surveys with 27 domestic and foreign tourists to indicate the satisfaction. The result of this research also highlighted that the key-based factors to sustain the homestay business, 3 factors of tourism destination capability, 5 factors of sustainable homestay management and tourist satisfaction which are all considerably important in different aspects.

Keywords- Community-Based Tourism, Homestay, Sustainable.

I. INTRODUCTION

Currently, Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has become popular worldwide; as well the tourism sector in Thailand is defined as one of the most important industries for the Thai economy with the highest earning in foreign currencies, thus promoting the homestay business is considerably important. However, it has been found in the findings of the prior research, the homestay is simply known as unreliable and fails to meet the expectations of tourists[1] and also remains a disregarded and unrecognized story [2], moreover the homestay business in the form of CBT in Thailand is given a complex and confusing definition [3]. Thus this gap probably leads to a negative performance of business. In generally, communities have access to cultural and natural resources that have been used to attract the tourists. They have also accumulated wealth of resources accumulation. Thus each local community can have a variety of resources that the rural or local residents can utilize for their tourism industries. As consequences, this research focuses on homestay business that has been managed by the local residents, so the term of “CBT” will be used in the research. In Thailand, there are several community destinations offer tourism in the form of CBT, homestay is the one of destinations was reported to have a successfully assisted local communities [4] and where community has substantial involved in and managed as a major proportion benefits within their own community. The idea behind this research is to create the potential and empowering community-based tourism and improving their involvement in the decision-making on their business and to make sure that they will participate in an incentive that come from the community itself. Thus we started to explore by examining their capability building from their resources for the homestay tourism in community. Then study the way of the operation within their own services, following by searching on the satisfaction from tourists after participating the tour. Finally we can answer what the key-based factor that can enhance the business by creating the causal chain from the resource accumulation till business sustainability.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Background of Community-Based Tourism (CBT)

Tourism sector has long been defined as a temporary movement of residents to a destination outside of residents and creating particular activities at the tourism destination which can fulfill their needs [5-7]. However, we have found in the current interesting points in many studies which examined both positive and negative impacts which come from tourism industry. On the one hand, it created enormous benefits to the economic system such as employment and wealth creation, especially gaining greater income for local residents. On the other hand, there are also the cause of pollution and the conflict in community. As the opposed impacts from tourism, sustainable tourism is declared as a strategy for the country.

2.2. The definition of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and Homestay

There are several definitions for CBT and homestay business in various term that given by scholars. For
example, Ashley [8] describes the phenomenon of CBT as a type of small tourism enterprise which owned by group of residents with aiming to both economic and social development. The Responsible Ecological Social Tours (REST) define CBT as “...Tourism which emphasizes the sustainability of the environment and society. Decisions are made by the community and programs are managed by the community for the community, so that the communities are the owners of the program and have rights over the way it is managed, with the purpose of encouraging sustainability and enabling learning among visitors to the community.” [9]. While Rozemeijer [10] sees that CBT is a business is owned by one or more partnerships as a joint venture with private sector with participate in the community equitable by using natural resources in sustainable manner to improve the standard of living in the economically way. Thus the definition of CBT which is the most correlated to this research is defined by Boonratana [3, p286], she defined the CBT as “economically, environmentally, socially, and culturally responsible visitation to local/indigenous communities to enjoy and appreciate their cultural and natural heritage, whose tourism resources, products, and services are developed and managed with their active participation, and whose benefits from tourism, tangible or otherwise, are collectively enjoyed by the communities”. Moreover, she has distinguished homestays from other accommodations as the following table. [3, p288]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Room or space within the private homes of community members</td>
<td>Means that host families are members of the local/indigenous community, and that they will provide basic, but clean, beddings to visitors in a corner or a room within their homes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offered to guests for a nominal fee</td>
<td>Means that host families would be reasonably compensated (rather than earn an income) for allowing unfamiliar guests a place to board and lodge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who expects to experience simple rural living or traditional lifestyles and to interact and have cultural exchanges with the host family</td>
<td>Means that guests have the opportunity to experience simple traditional lifestyles, and learn local culture and traditions through close interactions and exchanges with the host family, and by partaking in some of the host family’s daily activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therefore providing a meaningful learning experience for both host and visitors</td>
<td>Means that both host and visitors benefit from the interactions and exchanges. The host is likely to gain awareness and understanding of their visitors and their diverse cultures, and possibly acquire some foreign language skills. The visitors are very likely to gain awareness and understanding of local culture, traditions, and simple rural lifestyles. In addition, they are likely to acquire respect for local wisdom, and acquire new skills such as cooking local food and producing handicrafts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Explanation of the homestay re-definition by Boonratana


2.3. Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Model of Homestay Management

Nowadays, it is broadly accepted that there is a relationship among community-based resources, participation and tourism satisfactory. This paper synthesizes the 3 theories which have been developed to explain the causal chain of process management brought about by homestay owners can deliver more sustainable to benefit the local and rural economies. The key elements of the core theoretical perspective on the management process and measurement of sustainable are derived from the core theories on homestay business of many disciplines. (see Fig.1)

2.3.1 The Theory of Community development

The concept of community development theory is closely associated with social capital and community capacity. Social capital is often viewed as a component of social cohesion [11]. Community-based development can lead to sustainable development as it originates from the local to the regional level [12]. Normally, the tourism aspects are known as vehicles to preserve the cultural and natural heritage of a community, while representing special
features to visitors’ enjoyment. Moreover, tourists can learn the local cultures by participating in cultural activities, at the same time, other the benefit of this activity is to promote economically profitable and environmentally sustainable activities that generate modern employment opportunities. So, the major advantage of tourist destinations should not be the tourists or the developers, but the members of the community.

2.3.2 The Theory of Community Participation

Regarding to McIntyre [13] quoted in Farsari and Prastacos [14], says that community participation in tourism can lead positive impacts. While, Fennell [15] noted the participation is ability of local communities to support the outcome of tourism development projects that have impact on them. Community participation in tourism planning can also influence the knowledge, insights and capabilities among the different members with the potential of the sharing of ideas among them resulting in a richer understanding of issues and possibly more innovative policies and practices [16].

2.3.3 The theory of Tourist Satisfaction

Sudjai [17] defined satisfaction theory as the feeling or attitude of person towards other things. She said that attitude might impact to the person feeling might in both positive and negative aspects. In the same consensus by Sawake [18], it is the effect to somethings that probably response to the need in either positive or negative ways, however if that person receive a positive outcome, it will lead to the positive feeling, on the other hand, if that person have got the opposed feedback, it appear to produce a negative attitude in their personal feeling. Thus if we receive the pleasant response, the positive attitude for that outcome will be immediately reflected.

2.4 Conceptual Framework of the Model

With regard to the crucial based factors of Homestay management and sustainability, we consider the content that homestay management process factors are associated with sustainable CBT. The model examines the relationship among different levels and configurations of the supportive inputs from the related organizations through tourism resources accumulation, capacity and satisfaction with cooperated from the community-based participation. Figure 2 establishes how the homestay business embarks on the path that leads from resource inputs to the sustainable of CBT in the form of process management for the quality outcome of both tourists and homestay services.

![Fig. 2: Conceptual Framework](image)

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The central case for this paper is the village of Nai Bang Klong Roi Sai Homestay, located in Suratthani province, southern Thailand. The research utilizes both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect research data. Walle [19] stated that tourism sector is a multidisciplinary field; the researcher should use a variety of tools and techniques because all methods complementing to each other. Thus both research methods are appropriate for this research. This research began with review the literature and relevant documents which involved in the background to the case study. The research process was divided into 2 phases. The first phase of qualitative approach; in-depth interview with the main players of homestay business management with the key information and observation were employed. Second Phase was quantitative approach, questionnaires survey with satisfaction by using the Likert scale based on standard of homestay in Thailand was indicated in 10 sections (the Home Stay Standard Certificate issued by the OTD). Then the questionnaires, in-depth interviews and small group meetings were analyzed by descriptive analysis and descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, man and standard deviation.

To gather the data, we tried to understand the general characteristics, tourism capability of rural community and tourist satisfaction by applying the various techniques of qualitative and quantitative approach as the following figure:

**The illustration of research process**

1. In-depth interview is used to interview the Village Headman and Head of Homestay group. This interview is a qualitative efficiency to receive the
people to people to talk about their personal feelings, opinions and experiences. Specifically, primary in-depth interview can help researcher to provide much more detailed information than other data collection methods, such as the survey, as well as providing a more relaxed atmosphere to collect information [20].

In this research we use this tool for interviewing the Village Headman, Head of Homestay group and 5 Homestay Owners. Interviews covered a range of topics, including community characteristics, the limitation of homestay tourism capacity on the opinions of economics, social and environmental impacts of tourism.

2. Direct Observation of people in their own homestay location. It can indicate how people behave within the real situations with showing their interests; it is a common utility method of collecting information [21] and to see the real place of homestay. Moreover, to record of observations and informal while discussing situation, a recorder was used. For ethicalreasons, the researcher informed the informants before recording.

3. Participant observation can help the researchers to see the perspectives of participants by their experiences in their own environment as well as their day-to-day experiences [22]. So, it is very helpful for gaining an understanding of the physical, cultural, social, and economic issues in their daily live, the relationships among others, contexts, ideas, norms and events, and people’s behaviors and activities [23].

The triangulation technique was employed in this study as it limits personal and methodological biases and enhances a study’s trustworthiness [24] and commonly used in tourism research [25] as can be seen in the above figure, the different data collection methods were used, including in-depth interview, observation, participant observation and document analysis. It is clear that this research closed to triangulation such as a group meeting which including the Village Headman and Head of homestay group. All 5 homestay members including 10 volunteers from the village residents are invited to participate the meeting for sharing their experiences and ideas. Furthermore, we also followed the group of 27 tourists from both domestic and foreign countries throughout tour visits; we observed and attended all activities which provided by homestay services.

4. Questionnaire, in-depth interviews were conducted; generalizations about the results usually cannot be made because small samples are chosen and random sampling methods are not used [20]. Thus, a survey was used in this study to providesupplementary information. Data in the quantitative part was gathered from both Village Headman and the Head of homestay group who were chosen as the sample population for this study becausethey could represent ‘the voice of the people of concern’ [26, p. 207].These people are able to speak for the community as they have special knowledge of the community because of their roles in the community. The questionnaire was structured around the Likert scale, while nominal measurement was also used for some factors. The Likert scale is the most commonly used because it is easy for the
researcher to construct as well as for respondents to understand. Aref [25] also recommended the use of a Likert scale in tourism research due to its high validity.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When it comes to describing the data collection gained, there are various issues worth mentioning as this following illustration.

1. The results of the study on the Homestay tourism capacity is described in differences issues:
   1.1 Transportation: the visitors can go to Nai Bang KlongRoi Sai Homestay, Suratthani province by car and boat, moreover the community tourism activities are provided entire the day and night.
   1.2. Tourism capacity: the homestay is located nearby the city of Suratthani Province. Thus the village residents can utilize the normal conditions here for the local resources accumulation for their daily consumption and producing the natural products, artificial handicraft and cultural heritage for their regular tourism activities.
   1.3. Topography: Nai Bang Homestay is covered by tropical evergreen forest along the natural lowland coastal ecosystems, and the wetlands are impacted by both freshwater and seawater. This village is characterized by beautiful cinnamon and clear water, mangrove forest at estuary of a river.
   2. The results of the study on management of homestay services showed that the community residents have established their own homestay with offering various tourism activities.
   2.1 Standard regulation and tourism guidelines were established for the business services with offering the nice place for tourists to experience the rural cultures and cultural identity in the Southern part of Thailand such as cooking food with local ingredients, and learn cultures through participating in tourism activities.
   2.2 Market development and public relations management, by using business networks and tourist agencies and offer a standard price of 250 baht per head, advertisement campaign via brochures or giving business cards, attending exhibitions and creating websites.
   2.3. Environmental management, covering both the natural care and to preserve the unique local norms and traditional cultures such as the coastal resources restoration and protection, including mangrove forests, breeding grounds for aquatic animals by giving information to all village residents and visitors and carrying out surveillance to prevent resources from destruction by sing the group’s patrol boat.
   2.4. Financial allocation and management, all homestay members can serve the visitors by housing rotation management system.
   3. The feedback of tourists’ satisfaction, it find the higher level of all aspects such as accommodation, food, services, security, environment and tourism activities. All aspects are important for leading the homestay to become a sustainable business.
   4. The small group meetings, agreed to develop the sustainable Homestay Business management model for the community.
   4.1. Administrative management, a committee member will be selected based on the term of homestay management conditions and agreement from the meeting.
   4.2. Product management, tourism activities could be improved by offering more local hospitality such as cultural performance which performs by the local children to welcome the tourists.
   4.3. Public relations, the group members shall be created and presented a formal marketing plan by themselves.
   4.4. Environmental management, the village residents will be encouraged to reserve the natural environment, for example, planting tree activities and cleaning all religious places which can be stimulated the tourists to realize on the environmental reservation.
   4.5 Finally, financial management, the members must be recorded all income and expenses on their own which is easier for a daily checking and planning for an annual budget. This is the way for managing the financial resources which is easier to calculate and delegate income in different purposes for their homestay business.

As we can see the earlier explanation of the findings, it has been found that the homestay should continually improve their business to encourage and support the tourism business in Suratthani Province. While the result from the tourists’ feedback, they satisfied with what the homestay owners provided, thus to run the business in the long term development, the external organizations both public and private sectors should be more supported and participated in the activities for the long-term run of homestay business.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was supported by Suratthani Rajabhat University’s grant.

REFERENCES

Towards Sustainable Community-Based Tourism: A Case Of Homestay In Suratthani Province, Thailand


