

Community Empowerment to Enhance Community-based Tourism Potential

Chariyaporn Pitathasang¹

Lecturer in the Social Development Section,
Buriram Rajabhat University, Thailand
chariyaporn.pt@bru.ac.th

Kakanang Chorchoo²

Lecturer in the Social Development Section, Buriram
Rajabhat University, Thailand

Arunrussamee Sangsila³

Lecturer in the General Science Section, Buriram
Rajabhat University, Thailand

Jatupat Samappito⁴

Lecturer in the Food Innovation and Processing
Section, Buriram Rajabhat University, Thailand

Pianpan Supakot⁵

Lecturer in the Food Innovation and Processing
Section, Buriram Rajabhat University, Thailand

Abstract

Community-based tourism can help strengthen communities as people take part in setting development direction, managing resources, and gaining benefits from tourism. This study aimed to examine community potential and empower communities to enhance tourism potential. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed with an emphasis on participation, and the study was conducted in six communities around the volcanic areas in Thailand. The findings revealed that before joining the research project, the communities had different levels of tourism potential, ranging from fair to excellent. In addition, the research project helped empower the communities by 1) establishing community tourism groups through the process of community participation, 2) educating people on tourism resources by experts, 3) improving tourism management with the help of mentoring communities, 4) improving tourism activities based on local wisdom and culture, and 5) building tourism community networks to promote community empowerment. Having taken part in the empowerment activities, five out of six communities had better assessment results and were ready to serve as tourism communities in the future.

Keywords

Community Potential, Community Empowerment, Tourism, Volcano

To cite this article: Pitathasang C, Chorchoo K, Sangsila A, Samappito J, and Supakot P. (2021). Community Empowerment to Enhance Community-based Tourism Potential. Review of International Geographical Education (RIGEO), 11(12), 203-213. Doi: 10.48047/rigeo.11.12.20

Submitted: 09-11-2020 • **Revised:** 15-02-2021 • **Accepted:** 15-03-2021

Introduction

Due to the global crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic since December 2019, it has brought worldwide tourism to a halt. This is evident in a decrease in the number of international tourists by 22.7% compared with the same month in 2018, and such trend continued until April 2020, with a decrease in the number of tourists by 97% compared with the same month in 2019. At the end of 2020, the number of tourists declined by 70%, which reached a record low in the past 30 years (UNWTO, 2020). The intense spread of the COVID-19 virus forced the governments of many countries to impose a lockdown measure to regulate international travel, resulting in a decrease in the number of foreign tourists to Thailand in the first quarter of 2020 by 38.01%, and a decrease in the number of Thai tourists by 30.77% (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2020). The Thai tourism industry is facing an unprecedented crisis. The impact of the severe COVID-19 pandemic is likely to last longer, so the tourism sector needs to adapt to the changing situation. Regulations on international travel require the government to better promote domestic tourism policies. However, the recovery of the tourism sector may take a long time as this crisis has affected the economy, leading to a decrease in purchasing power. Travel demand, which is considered a luxury, still needs time to recover. Tourism business establishments may need to develop the existing tourist attractions instead of creating new tourist attractions to reduce costs (Lunkham & Liangchan, 2021). However, this situation gives an opportunity for the tourism sector to connect with community-based tourism that has existing tourism resources to carry out tourism activities under the New Normal in response to changing tourism behavior. It was found that after the Covid-19 crisis, tourists prefer to travel in small groups by private cars, and go to places which consist of few people and have outdoor activities, and tourist attractions where they can witness people's way of life and be exposed to nature. (Faikhoksung et al., 2021) Community-based tourism (CBT) is an alternative tourism creatively managed by communities and with standards that lead to learning to bring about sustainability of the environment, local cultures, and good quality of life (National Tourism Policy Committee, 2016). In the past, the international tourism industry caused environmental impacts, especially greenhouse gas emissions in the aviation, transportation, and accommodation businesses, leading to the promotion of low-carbon tourism (Jermstittiparsert & Chankoson, 2019). As a result, at present, the Thai government has pushed community-based tourism as the main policy aiming to encourage communities to participate and benefit from the tourism sector so as to distribute income, reduce inequality, and drive the economy within communities to overcome all obstacles, including the Covid-19 pandemic (Bangkok Biz News, 2021). Community-based tourism is therefore an alternative to tourism activities under the New Normal. Communities can apply local resources, including nature, buildings, places, culture, traditions, and way of life in proper tourism management taking into account sustainability of the environment, society, community culture, and hygiene and safety to educate visitors. Buriram Province, Thailand, is a secondary city of tourism with a continuous growth of tourism revenue and was the 3rd ranking province in the country with the highest number of visitors in 2019 (Buriram Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports, 2020). Buriram is famous for sports and tourism from the founding of Buriram United Football Club in 2010 and the emergence of the world-class motorsport circuit, the Chang International Circuit, in 2014. Its good reputation from sports and tourism also has a positive impact on the community-based tourism trend. The attractions that should be developed as new important tourism products are six volcanoes, consisting of Khao Kradong Volcano, Khao Phanom Rung Volcano, Khao Angkhan Volcano, Khao Lup Volcano, Khao Plai Bat Volcano, and Khao Khok Volcano. These volcanoes have an average age of about one million years, but their craters remain clearly visible. They are also the places where important ancient sites and tourist attractions of the province are located. For example, Khao Kradong Volcano is the location of Phra Phuttha Suphattharabopit, the symbolic Buddha image of Buriram Province; Khao Phanom Rung Volcano is the location of Prasat Phanom Rung, the most famous temple of Khmer civilization; Khao Plai Bat Volcano is the location of Prasat Khao Plai Bat; Khao Angkhan Volcano is the location of Wat Khao Angkhan; Khao Lup Volcano is the location of Wat Khao Lup and is also the place where the inscription of Prasat Khao Dum was discovered (Pattaramoon, 2005). However, the six communities have different experiences in community-based tourism management. Therefore, the research project should serve to empower all these communities in order to strengthen and prepare the communities for effective community-based tourism management. Community empowerment is to create opportunities for communities to solve their own problems. The key to the community empowerment process is giving the community a sense of belonging, the ability to control various factors on their own, the promotion

of potential of human resources and material resources available in the community for self-development and supporting each other through participation of people in the community in driving the joint development, which will allow them to learn from doing. Thus, tourism community development initiatives require a variety of empowerment mechanisms that are appropriate for the community. Tiangthum (2015) presents 4 stages of community empowerment: 1) looking for target groups, 2) enhancing capacity to create changes, 3) promoting community's confidence in their own abilities, and 4) using the existing power for further development. Ultimately, it can empower communities and bring about changes and sustainable community development. In many communities, it was found that various localities with tourism resources have started to do self-management supported mainly by research studies. For example, the agro-tourism community in Bang Pla Kot Sub-district, Nakhon Nayok Province has strengthened the development of agricultural learning bases, developed the activity of passing on agricultural knowledge to give good experiences to tourists, carried out training for local guides, developed agro-tourism routes, local accommodations and tourism public relations (Srithong, Suthitakon, & Karnjanakit, 2019). However, factors affecting the success of community-based tourism include participation in the decision-making process, sense of self-belonging, joint responsibility, resource sharing, leadership, management abilities, and distinctive identity of tourist destinations (Nitikasetsoontorn, 2015). This research therefore mainly aimed to prepare the six communities surrounding the volcanic biosphere to serve as volcanic tourism destinations according to the community-based tourism standards using a 3-phase research process. The first phase was community potential identification for the communities to know and understand themselves better, and appropriately analyze their own potential. In the second phase, the process of driving community empowerment through participation processes was used to give the communities the opportunity to learn together, fix weaknesses, enhance strengths, and perform self-management as volcano tourism communities. The last phase was to assess and synthesize the appropriate community empowerment forms of activities, which would lead to proposals for the development of new tourism products to make Buri Ram volcanos able to compete in the tourism market and to truly meet the needs of tourists visiting Buri Ram Province. The research objectives are as follows:

1. To study the tourism potential of communities surrounding the biosphere of the 6 volcanoes in Buri Ram Province
2. To empower communities to enhance tourism potential through the process of community participation

Research Methodology

This study is a mix-method research -- qualitative research emphasizing participatory processes and quantitative research with the details as follows:

Informants

In this research, data were collected from three target groups using a purposive sampling method in order to obtain informants with good knowledge, expertise and experience in the issues according to research objectives, consisting of 1) scholars in geography, history and archeology, and tourism, totaling three persons, 2) operators or officers related to tourism in the government sector, private sector, and tour operators, totaling 12 persons, and 3) community informants, including community leaders, group representatives and community organizations, community tour operators, members of tourism groups, and people in six communities, totaling 72 persons. Data collection is divided into three phases as follows:

Potential Identification Phase

The community tourism data were collected using interviews and geo-social mapping survey. Then, community potential in tourism was assessed by asking communities and researchers to jointly perform self-assessment according to the "criteria for the development of community-based tourism in Thailand" by the Designated Area for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA). Giving the communities the opportunity to perform self-assessment helped them to understand the assessment criteria. The results of the assessment would inform the communities of their

potential and limitations and lead to further development.

Empowerment Phase

The researchers organized a forum for scholars, tourism practitioners, government agencies, private sector, tour operators and community leaders to design an approach to empower the volcanic tourism communities. After that, a participatory workshop was held to promote community empowerment through 5 types of activities. These include 1) a forum for establishing community tourism groups by creating a process of participation in four communities, 2) providing knowledge about Buri Ram volcanos and volcanic forests by scholars and experts; 3) developing community-based tourism management with the help of mentoring communities, 4) developing tourism activities based on local wisdom and culture, and 5) creating a mechanism of volcanic tourism community network to empower the communities.

Activity Assessment and Synthesizing Phase

After carrying out activities to drive community empowerment, the researchers and communities jointly re-assessed the tourism potential of the communities using the “criteria for the development of community-based tourism in Thailand” (Post empowerment assessment). After that, a workshop was conducted to appropriately synthesize the activities for empowering tourism communities in volcanic biosphere.

Data Collection

Analysis of tourism community potential data is a quantitative data analysis according to the criteria for the development of community-based tourism in Thailand by the Designated Area for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA), which consists of 5 aspects as follows: 1) community-based tourism management, 2) economic, social, and quality of life management, 3) conservation and promotion of community cultural heritage, 4) systematic and sustainable management of natural resources or the environment, and 5) community-based tourism service quality. The interpretation of the results was in accordance with the criteria with a full score of 4 (National Tourism Policy Committee. 2016). For the qualitative data analysis, content analysis was employed, where data were processed, summarized, and interpreted descriptively from surveys, observations, focus group discussions, and workshops throughout the research project. Moreover, the data were validated in the “Giving Data Back to Communities” forum.

Results

Potential of communities surrounding the biosphere of six volcanoes in Buri Ram Province

Communities surrounding the biosphere of six volcanoes in Buri Ram Province had tourism potential according to the criteria for the development of community-based tourism in Thailand. There are three different levels -- Khok Mueang and Charoen Suk Communities were at an excellent level (scores of 3.47 and 3.61, respectively); Khok Yai and Bu Communities were at a good level (scores of 2.01 and 2.12, respectively); Thawon and the Khao Khok Communities were at a fair level (scores of 1.22 and 1.44, respectively), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Assessment of the potential of six volcanic tourism communities in Buri Ram Province before joining the research project

Community name/ Items of assessment	(1) Community-based tourism management	(2) Economic, social, and quality of life management	(3) Conservation and promotion of community cultural heritage	(4) Systematic and sustainable management of natural resources and environment	(5) Community-based tourism service quality	Overall assessment results in all aspects
Ban Khok Yai	2.00 Fair	1.75 Fair	2.00 Fair	2.20 Good	2.12 Good	2.01 Good
Ban Bu	2.00 Fair	1.75 Fair	2.66 Good	2.20 Good	2.00 Fair	2.12 Good
Ban Khao Khok	0.55 Need improvement	1.25 Fair	2.33 Good	2.20 Good	0.87 Need improvement	1.44 Fair
Ban Thawon	0.66 Need improvement	1.50 Fair	2.00 Fair	2.20 Good	1.00 Need improvement	1.22 Fair
Ban Khok Mueang	3.55 Excellent	3.25 Excellent	3.66 Excellent	3.20 Excellent	3.72 Excellent	3.47 Excellent
Ban Charoen Suk	3.66 Excellent	3.50 Excellent	3.66 Excellent	3.40 Excellent	3.87 Excellent	3.61 Excellent

From Table 1, there are details that can be further explained as follows: Ban Khok Yai, the location of Khao Kradong Volcano, is a community with tourist service point readily available because it is a tourist service point under the supervision of a government agency that allows opportunities for people in the community to participate in tourism activities, such as sellers of products in cooperative stores, car rental operators, etc. People in the community have an urban lifestyle and tourism activities are carried out only by community leaders. The overall result of the assessment of community potential in the five aspects is at a good level. The community has the potential in systematic and sustainable management of natural resources and environment and community-based tourism service quality. As for the aspects with fair potential which should further be developed are community-based tourism management, economic, social, and quality of life management, and conservation and promotion of community cultural heritage. Ban Bu, the location of Khao Phanom Rung Volcano, is a Thai-Khmer community with outstanding South Northeastern culture, including food, folk music, and community products. Bu Community is a community near Prasat Khao Phanom Rung where some members produce souvenirs for sale to tourists at Prasat Phanom Rung. The overall result of the assessment of community potential in the 5 aspects is at a good level. The community has the potential in conservation and promotion of community cultural heritage and systematic and sustainable management of natural resources and environment. Things that need to be developed include community-based tourism management, economic, social, and quality of life management, and community-based tourism service quality. Ban Khao Khok, the location of Khao Kok Volcano, is a Thai-Khmer community that is outstanding in community history, Thai-Khmer traditional traditions, beliefs, and rich natural resources. In addition, the crater of Khao Khok Volcano and Khao Khok Community Forest are suitable to be developed as an attractive tourist attraction. Volcanic organic rice can also generate more income. The overall result of the assessment of the community potential in the five aspects is at a fair level because this village is not yet a tourist community. However, the community has the potential to develop into a tourism community because there are abundant natural resources, an easily accessible crater, and people in the community who are ready to develop the place into a tourism community. Ban Thawon, the location of Khao Lup Volcano, is a Thai-Lao community that is unique in its traditional cultural traditions according to Heet 12 Kong 14. The important ones are Rocket Festival, Wax Castle Festival, Silk Weaving Group, and performance of the famous Mo Lam folk band. There are also a variety of learning resources on organic agriculture and there are natural resources suitable for tourism, forests, waterfalls, as well

as basalt columns in nearby communities. The current Thawon Community is ready to develop into a tourism community. The overall result of the assessment of community potential in the five aspects is at a fair level because this village is not yet a tourist community. However, the community has the potential and opportunity to develop as a tourism community, therefore, a tourism promotion group should be established. Ban Khok Muang, the location of Khao Plai Bat Volcano, is a community with extended experience in community-based tourism management. Even though at present, the community has quality tourist attractions and attracts tourists to visit the community continuously, the community has constantly developed new tourism products and activities. Therefore, it is a community that can be a good role model for other tourism communities to learn. The overall result of the assessment of community potential in the five aspects is at an excellent level. The aspects that can be developed include preparation for the environmental impact caused by tourism. Ban Charoen Suk, the location of Khao Angkhan Volcano, is a tourism community of "Phu Akkhani Fabrics" that have been successful from the application of local wisdom and community resources of existing volcanoes. As it is supported by both government and private agencies, Charoen Suk Community is a successful tourism community and can be a good role model for other communities. The overall result of the assessment of community potential in the five aspects is at an excellent level. The aspect that can be further developed is new products or activities to attract both new and existing tourists to come back and revisit the community.

Community empowerment in promoting tourism service quality through the process of community participation

This research carried out various activities to drive community empowerment through the process of community participation as follows:

Establishing a community tourism group through a process of community participation

For this activity, the research team played a role in making the communities recognize the importance of being a volcanic tourism community, leading to the establishment of a community tourism group by using the process of participation at both the community leadership and village community levels. The implementation of this activity helped the new tourism villages, namely Ban Khao Khok and Ban Thawon, to have a community-based tourism promotion group. As for Khok Yai and Bu Communities that already have their own group, the research team participated in activities to update the committee structure to be current. Having a community-based tourism promotion group is an important starting point for community-based tourism activities both in terms of management within the group and benefits in coordinating with external agencies, partners and tourism networks.



Giving education about Buri Ram volcanos and volcanic forests by scholars and experts

This activity is to educate the volcanic tourism communities by scholars and experts, with an aim to enable the volcanic tourism communities to develop a correct body of knowledge about Buri Ram volcanos among the leaders of the six community tourism promotion groups. Through this activity, collection of data and databases of volcanoes and volcanic forest ecosystems for community tourism were carried out. The community's volcanic narratives and stories were developed as well as storytellers. Miss Rata Mukda, a youth from Ban Bu said "I've just seen the crater for the first time. When I go back home, I will tell my friends how a crater looks like and I will bring my knowledge about trees in the forests to tell my "Young Guide" friends."

Development of tourism management with the help of mentoring communities

It is the transfer of knowledge and experience in tourism management and the development of service quality supported by mentoring tourism communities with excellent potential, including Khok Mueang and Charoen Suk communities. The speakers from both communities gave knowledge about the quality of community-based tourism services on homestay management, organizing food menus for tourists, learning base for community tourism, organizing travel programs, community tourism routes, travel product pricing, being a quality communicator, measuring the level of satisfaction in community-based tourism services, principles for providing information to tourists, helping tourists in emergencies, and project proposals for external support. From participating in this empowerment activity, Mrs. Buapha Phoompraman, the Chairman of the Thawon Sub-district Community Tourism Group, said, "Today we don't have to find our way. There is a mentor who has had previous experience to tell us the way forward of our community. This is very good. The documents provided will be used for collecting tourist information. If members help each other, soon we will have standards like Khok Mueang. Thank you very much.

Development of tourism activities based on local wisdom and culture

In this activity, the researchers aim to create awareness about the value of local wisdom and culture of the communities by allowing the communities to select valuable wisdom to apply as a tourism product. These include wild rice and local food or Phanom Krol of Khao Khok Community, local food of Bu Community, bases of Bai Sri to pay respect to Phra Suphattharabophit of Khok Yai Community, bases for cobweb flags (Thung) and molded wax flowers by Thawon Community youths, Ma Noi Loi Lava Jelly Dessert of Thawon Community, volcanic ice cream and volcanic jelly of Khok Mueang Community, and little rocket bases of Charoen Suk Community.



Building a mechanism for volcanic tourism community networks for community empowerment

It is an activity for volcanic tourism community development by building a cooperation mechanism to promote the activities of the volcanic tourism communities to be continuous and sustainable. The Buriram Volcanic Tourism Community Network has been established through the cooperation of the parties involved in the government sector, private sector and communities. There are volunteers who take charge of the network and encourage the Buriram volcanic tourism communities to continue their tourism activities. Mrs. Samruay Srimaruang, who was chosen to be the Chairman of the Buriram Volcano Tourism Community Network, said, "From now on, our volcanic communities are not alone. We have 6 communities, and everyone here is willing to help develop our network. Thank you all for trusting me to be the leader of the network. We have mentors in the local, government and business sectors, and our network will begin to move forward together. Wherever you get stuck, let's help each other." Therefore, the volcanic tourism community network is a source of wisdom and exchange of learning and resources.

Results of Community Empowerment

Participating in activities to empower the volcanic tourism communities has brought about tangible changes. The results of the assessment of the potential of the volcanic tourism communities after participating in the activities have increased as follows: Khok Mueang and Charoen Suk Communities were at an excellent level (scores of 3.50 and 3.61, respectively); Khok Yai and Bu Communities were at a good level (scores of 2.42 and 2.54, respectively); Thawon and Khao Khok Communities were at a good level (scores of 2.06 and 2.13, respectively), as shown in

Table 2.

Table 2

Assessment of the potential of six volcanic tourism communities in Buriram Province after participating in community empowerment activities

Community name/ Items of assessment	(1) Community-based tourism management	(2) Economic, social, and quality of life management	(3) Conservation and promotion of community cultural heritage	(4) Systematic and sustainable management of natural resources and environment	(5) Community-based tourism service quality	Overall assessment results in all aspects
Ban Khok Yai	2.77 Good	2.00 Good	2.33 Good	2.40 Good	2.62 Good	2.42 Good
Ban Bu	3.11 Excellent	2.25 Good	2.66 Good	2.20 Good	2.50 Good	2.54 Good
Ban Khao Khok	2.00 Good	1.75 Fair	2.66 Good	2.40 Good	1.87 Fair	2.13 Good
Ban Thawon	2.00 Good	1.50 Fair	2.33 Good	2.60 Good	1.87 Fair	2.06 Good
Ban Khok Mueang	3.55 Excellent	3.25 Excellent	3.66 Excellent	3.20 Excellent	3.87 Excellent	3.50 Excellent
Ban Charoen Suk	3.66 Excellent	3.50 Excellent	3.66 Excellent	3.40 Excellent	3.87 Excellent	3.61 Excellent

In addition to the output generated from the quantitative assessment, the communities also experienced changing outcomes directly related to the activities undertaken by the research project. In other words, new tourism communities have started to manage themselves to become volcanic tourism communities, for example: Khao Khok Community organized activities to develop the area around the crater of Khao Khok Volcano to create a new awareness for the community about the Ta-Yor Pond, which is a crater; Khao Khok Sub-district Municipality had a project to create a signboard for the Khao Khok crater in fiscal year 2022, and Ban Khao Khok School planned to implement the Khao Khok Forest Exploration by Youths Project in the academic year 2021. Thawon Community created a short clip on "Worship the God of Khao Lup," introduced the attractions of Ban Thawon, promoted the festival called "Welcoming New Year and Paying Respect to the God of Khao Lup" (later the activity was canceled due to preventive measures against the spread of COVID-19), organized activities for Ban Thawon antique market, decorated cobweb flags at learning bases and houses in the community to attract and accommodate tourists. Bu Community revised the tourism promotion committee structure to be up-to-date, carried out activities to welcome tourists, improved the landscape around the community hall to welcome tourists, produced storytellers or little guides, and developed youth performances to impress tourists. Khok Yai Community revised the tourism promotion committee structure to be up-to-date, had the community history screened and examined by community elders, selected a learning base for new tourism, which is the chedi within the Phra Phutthabat Khao Kradong Temple, and organized activities to produce storytellers at Ban Khok Yai by allowing children and youths to participate.

Conclusions and Discussion

The six communities surrounding the volcanic biosphere had three different levels of tourism potential before joining the project. Khok Mueang and Charoen Suk Communities were at an excellent level; Khok Yai and Bu Communities were at a good level; Thawon and Khao Khok Communities were at a fair level. The research project was carried out to drive community empowerment to enhance tourism potential in five activities, namely 1) establishing a community tourism group through the process of community participation, 2) providing knowledge about Buriram volcanos and volcanic forests by scholars and experts; 3) developing community-based tourism management with the help of mentoring communities, 4) developing tourism activities

based on local wisdom and culture, and 5) creating a mechanism of volcanic tourism community network to empower the communities. After the volcanic tourism communities participated in the five forms of empowerment activities, they had higher self-assessment scores as follows: Khok Mueang and Charoen Suk Communities were at an excellent level; Khok Yai, Bu, Thawon, and Khao Khok Communities were at a good level. A set of knowledge on the potential of the six volcanic tourism communities in Buriram Province

Existing community potential

All of the communities surrounding the biosphere of 6 volcanoes in Buri Ram Province basically had the potential for systematic and sustainable management of natural resources and environment because they are near the crater and volcanic forests. The communities have taken advantage of the forests and have experiences in managing volcanic forest resources and environment. This is followed by the potential for conservation and promotion of cultural heritage of the community. Every community has a unique and ancient cultural heritage that can best be developed into creative tourism activities. The same results were found in a study by Pattaramoon (2005) that described the cultural heritage of the Ban Thawon Community. From the inscription of Prasat Khao Dum found in Wat Khao Lup, Ban Thawon is a valuable heritage. It is a social and cultural capital that will be used to connect and tell the story of Ban Thawon Community, and it can be developed into a tourism community linked to other dimensions. Srithong, Suthitakon, and Karnjanakit (2019) also discussed valuable community resources, such as the agricultural way of life of Bang Pla Kot Sub-district, Nakhon Nayok Province, which is full of potential in using the participatory development process to help develop a quality agricultural tourism destination. Community potential that needs to be developed which is considered essential or important for developing volcanic tourism in the six communities to have more potential includes development of community-based tourism management especially the creation and development of strong community-based tourism leaders, building awareness of one's own abilities so that leaders and the people in the communities are able to manage the quality of community-based tourism services to support tourists, and setting the final goal of community-based tourism management to achieve good economic, social and quality of life management. The same results were also found in the work of Onwan et al. (2013), who conducted a study on strengthening communities in the highlands by using community-based tourism as a tool. It was a case study of Galyani Vadhana District, Chiang Mai Province, which explained that the villagers still lacked knowledge, confidence and personnel who were ready, so they didn't know how to start managing community-based tourism. To prevent negative impacts on the launch of community-based tourism that is not yet ready, raising awareness of the community is therefore important.

Appropriate forms of volcanic tourism community empowerment

The research team carried out activities to drive and empower the tourism communities through five forms of community participation.

- 1) Establishment of community tourism groups through the process of community participation: A new tourism community needs to have a tourism promotion group committee to lead the operation, learn about community-based tourism management, coordinate with external agencies, and provide services directly to tourists.
- 2) Providing knowledge about Buri Ram volcanos and volcanic forests by scholars and experts: It is a special empowering activity that is different from other types of tourism communities because people in the community must have a scientifically correct understanding of volcanoes and volcanic forest ecosystems. Therefore, scholars and experts are required to provide knowledge through lectures and surveys in real space to build confidence in storytellers and create pride among community owners.
- 3) Developing community-based tourism management with the help of mentoring communities: It is the transfer of knowledge, experience in tourism management, and development of service quality. The leaders of the tourism community with excellent assessment results shared their over-10-year experiences, enabling the new tourism community to adapt it to suit their own community activities.
- 4) Developing tourism activities based on local wisdom and culture: It is empowerment by allowing

the communities to choose their own wisdom as an identity tourism activity. It encourages the communities to see the value of culture and local wisdom that can be applied to attractive tourism activities. This form of empowerment drives every tourism community to have creative new tourism activities, which clearly increases the results of the potential assessment after joining the project. This kind of activity can be seen from the work of Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA) (Manager Online, 2019), which organized activities to develop community potential and design products to promote tourism, Phu Akkhani fabrics of Buri Ram Province. Since Ban Charoen Suk Community specializes in producing Phu Akkhani fabrics, the DASTA in charge of the area has applied the knowledge of product design to add value to tourism promotion products that can be sold at a higher price and expand the market. The work of Somchan (2019) also points out that the important factor making tourists buy souvenirs from tourist attractions is the quality of the products and the beautiful image of the products. Therefore, the goods or products of the communities must focus on such issues in order to be able to generate more income from tourists.

5) Creating a mechanism of volcanic tourism community network to empower the communities: This activity is to double empowerment by connecting people within the volcanic communities, between communities, local governments and related external allied agencies to increase the capacity to perform tasks or activities successfully. The network is responsible for supporting tourism in six volcanic communities and developing volcanic community tourism products to be known widely. The network participates in planning, carrying out activities, receiving fair benefits, exchanging information, and doing activities together. At the same time, each group remains independent to continue its activities. This pattern is consistent with the work by Srithong, Suthitakon, and Karnjanakit (2019) on community participatory agricultural tourism development initiative, which has created a network of communities and related agencies.

The above form of empowerment is in line with the findings of Art-Am (2011) on the empowerment of farmer communities and outcomes through a new research paradigm, from the experience of Khukhan District, Si Sa Ket Province, which indicates that inputting various forms of power -- physical, mental, knowledge, individual, corporate, family; correct process; building awareness at the level of consciousness; enabling mutual empowerment in the right direction; converting positive energy into collective action or synergy will lead to solutions to the problems being faced. The five forms of community empowerment are suitable for volcanic tourism communities and are necessary to promote and develop the tourism communities to have the potential according to the criteria for the development of community-based tourism in Thailand (DASTA). Each activity can be applied in the development of the tourism communities under different social, cultural, and spatial contexts.

Recommendations

1. Community-based tourism is an alternative to tourism promotion under the current COVID-19 crisis and other environmental crises that may happen in the future. In the future, therefore, there should be support or empowerment of communities that have the potential to be a tourist destination to be able to manage themselves as a quality tourism community while ensuring the hygiene and safety of tourists so that community-based tourism can create economic value for the country, promote good quality of life for people in the community, and lead to sustainable tourism in the future.

2. To develop the potential of community-based tourism management, the capacity of the leaders of community tourism promotion groups should be developed through training and visits to study community-based tourism management every year. In addition, the training workshops should be carried out to educate the members of the tourism group as well as general public in order to be ready to accommodate tourists all year round.

Acknowledgement

The research team would like to extend our thanks to the Program Management Unit for Competitiveness (PMUC) for funding the research under contract no. C10F630090.

References

- Department of Tourism) 2018 .(Community-based Tourism Standards .Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Printing House .
- Bangkok Biz News) .2021(. A Look at 12 Models of New Normal Community-based Tourism: Driving the Local Economy against COVID-19. (online). Retrieved from: <https://www.bangkokbiznews.com/news/915916>.
- Ministry of Tourism and Sports .(2020). Global Tourism Situations in Tourism Economic Review .Year 1(4), 3-14.
- National Tourism Policy Committee) .2016 .(Criteria for Community-based Tourism Development in Thailand. Bangkok: Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration.
- Onwan, D) .2013 .(Strengthening Highland Communities with the Use of Community-based Tourism: A Case Study of Galyani Vadhana District, Chiang Mai Province. Bangkok: The Thailand Research Fund.
- Buriram Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports) .2020(. The Tourism and Sports Minister Witnessing the MOU Signing Ceremony.) online.(Retrieved from :<https://www.mots.go.th/News-view.php?nid=12273>.
- Pattaramoon, N.)2005). Inscription of Prasat Khao Dum .in Thailand's Inscription Database Project . Bangkok : Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre (Public Organisation).
- Faikhoksung, P. et al. (2021). Creative Tourism Products Development in the Biosphere of 6 Volcanos in Buri Ram Province, Extended from Sport Tourism. Bangkok: Program Management Unit for Competitiveness.
- Manager Online) .2019) .DASTA Promoting Community Potential through Design of Phu Akkhani Fabrics, Buri Ram Province.)online(. Retrieved from <https://mgronline.com/politics/detail/9620000077649>
- Lunkham, P. & Liangchan, R. (2021) .Tourism and Hotel Businesses after COVID-19 in Krungsi Research. Bangkok: Bank of Ayudhya Co., Ltd.
- Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization) DASTA) .2015(. Manual of the Criteria for Community-based Tourism Management (2015 ed.). Bangkok : Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization) DASTA.
- Art-am, O.) 2011 .(Empowering Farmer Communities and Outcomes through a new Research Paradigm: The Case of Khukhan District, Si Sa Ket Province .Research Report .Mahidol University, Institution for Population and Social Research, Children and Youth Development Policy and Plan Development Subcommittee .
- Jermstittiparsert, K. & Chankoson, T. (2019). Behavior of Tourism Industry under the Situation of Environmental Threats and Carbon Emission: Time Series Analysis from Thailand. International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy, 9(6), 366-372.
- Somchan, S. (2019). The Guideline for Shopping Tourism Development to Promote Tourism in Phayao, Thailand. PSAKU International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research, 8(1), 163-178.
- Srithong, S., Suthitakon, N., & Karnjanakit, S. (2019). Participatory Community-based Agrotourism: A Case Study of Bangplakod Community, Nakhonnayok Province, Thailand. PSAKU International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research, 8(1), 212-220.
- Suthamma, N) .2015(. The Success Factors of Community-Based Tourism in Thailand. NIDA Development Journal, 55 (2), 24-58.
- Tiangthum, V. (2015). Community Capacity Building: Concept and Applications. Bangkok: Danex Inter Corporation.
- UNWTO. (2020). UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, 18 (7), 1-35.