# APPLYING MCKINSEY 7-S MODEL IN COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract** - The McKinsey 7-S Model (7-S) has been used as an approach to strengthen organizational effectiveness particularly in business enterprises to ensure their profitability and sustainability. It thus has been popular in business schools as a framework to investigate internal environment of business organizations to create a platform of competitive advantage. Meanwhile, the tourism industry is one of the sectors in the world economy. However, there is little application of 7-S in the tourism sector, let alone the Community-Based Tourism (CBT) development which is small scale in the tourism contexts. This paper aims to deliver guidance of how to practically apply 7-S in CBT development through a case study of Ban Leam Sawan in the northeast of Thailand. Participatory Action Research (PAR) was adopted with the main objective being to gain an integrative participatory CBT development. In so doing, not only does economic and social development at the grass root level can be achieved but also tourism and business education can be advocated.

**Keywords** - Community-Based Tourism, 7-S McKinsey Model, Thailand

## I. INTRODUCTION

The McKinsey 7-S Model (7-S) is a business management model which has been used to look into the effectiveness of an organization by looking at 7 essential elements; namely, 1) Strategy, 2) Structure, 3) Systems, 4) Superordinate goals (or Shared values), 5) Style, 6) Staff, and 7) Skills [1]. The model helps business organization leaders or managers to understand their organization's current position in terms of strengths and weaknesses, and thus, strategic direction making and strategic implementation can be developed, and strategic evaluation can be executed. In this way, it facilitates firms' attempts to enhance their ability to improve performances in a changing environment [2]. The relationship between elements that are interrelated needs to be aligned in the firm's management process if the firm aims to be successful. Because of this, the model has been famed and widely adopted in business circle and business schools.

The tourism industry is one of the significant economic sectors in the world; it accounts for 10.4% of global GDP and 313 million jobs in 2017 [3]. It can be characterised as a leisure related satellite, including various kinds of business firms (such as transportation services, hospitality services, entertainment venues, and souvenirs sellers) with economic value relations moving in and out of the orbit [4]. This implies that tourism can be seen as an economic system in which the competitiveness of a tourism region plays a role. In this way, the region, particularly its natural and cultural resources, is used productively as a destination to be sold nationally and internationally, supported by marketing strategies to attract tourists. As Ritchie and Crouch indicate [5], a destination's competitiveness is its ability to increase tourism expenditure that enhances the well-being of both present and future residents in that region and, at the same time, to increase the number of tourists while providing them with satisfying and memorable experiences. For this reason, the development of tourism, in any form and in this case Community-Based Tourism (CBT), at each level has been interested among policy makers and practitioners since its growth greatly contributes to job creation, income generation, and hence, well-being of residents. Thus, tourism can be viewed as not only an economic system but also a development tool to stimulate regional economic development [6][7]. As an economic system, competition among regions to attract tourists and thus competitive advantage of the destinations must be taken into account. As a development tool, maximizing positive economic impacts and minimizing negative ecological and socio-cultural impacts must be significantly considered to make tourism more sustainable [8][9][10]. Based on this combined notion, developing a region by applying a management tool, the 7-S in particular, to make a destination more competitive and sustainable is hardly seen in the tourism development context. This paper, therefore, reports on applying the 7-S in the process of tourism development, using the case of Baan Leam Sawan as an exemplar. It broadens perspectives by putting a management model into the tourism field that can be an advocate for tourism and business education. An overview of Baan Leam Sawan is provided, followed by a review of literature on 7-S and CBT. The research method is then proposed. Drawing from the case study, the authors present an adoption of 7-S in tourism development process to propose potential implementation in CBT development practically and academically. Finally, the discussion and conclusion of the paper discuss the merits of 7-S to advance tourism development, accomplishing a better economic and social development at the grass roots level.

## II. THE SETTING

Baan Leam Sawan is a village located close to Sirindhorn Dam's reservoir in Ubon Ratchathani province, which is situated in the Northeast of Thailand (Figure 1). Due to the effect of the dam's construction, villagers were resettled to make way for the dam's reservoir, resulting in changes in both economic and social ways of life. In terms of economic activity, they have altered their occupation from agriculture workers to labourers because of the low incomes which resulted from low-yielding crops, caused by flooding especially in the rainy season. This is because the area of Baan Leam Sawan is geographically surrounded by Sirindhorn Dam for about 5 kilometres. In terms of social issues, because of flooding they sold their farm land to outsiders and now go out from the village for their job opportunity in big cities, leaving behind the old and the young in the village. According to the head of the village (interviewed on April 29, 2014), the majority of villagers have unstable income, with average yearly income for 10,000 – 15,000 baht per household (approx. 1 US dollar = 33 baht). Because of this, he asked for help from university researchers to aid knowledge transfer of CBT development, with an anticipation that CBT might provide an alternative way to deliver economic and social development in the village.

## III. CONCEPTS OF MCKINSEY 7-S MODEL AND CBT

### *3.1 McKinsey 7-S Model*

The McKinsey 7-S Model (7-S) is a business management model developed in the 1980s by McKinsey & Company consultants, namely Bob Waterman, Tom Peters, Julien Phillips, together with Waterman's friend, Tony Athos, and Richard Pascale [11]. It is used to examine organization's internal factors which can be a platform to achieve competitive position because it facilitates the improvement of organization within the context of change [2].

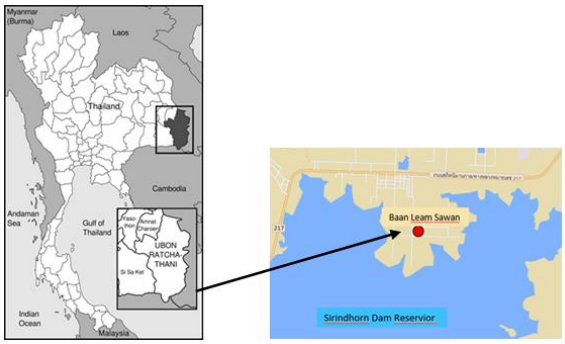



**Figure 1: Map of Thailand, Ubon Ratchathani province, and Baan Leam Sawan**

According to Waterman, Peters and Phillips [1], the central notion of 7-S is that effectiveness of an organization comes from the interconnectedness of 7 elements in which elements align with one another that allow the organization to attain its goals, profitability and sustainability in particular. The framework of 7-S consists of 2 main areas: "Hard S" and "Soft S" as follows:

***1. "Hard S" area***

- Strategy: The direction of the organization seeking to enhance long-term competitiveness.
- Structure: Organization's division of activities, coordination and management mechanisms.
- Systems: Formal and informal procedures of the organization that make the organization go day by day.

***2. "Soft S" area***

- Shared Values (originally Superordinate Goals): A set of values and aspirations that guide organizational staff behaviour.
- Skills: The organization's core competencies and capabilities.
- Staff: Human resources, development, and attitudes.
- Style: The organization's leadership

Although 7-S is a valuable framework providing an organization's current state of the elements that can influence strategic direction and implementation for future improvement, it is widely applied to a sector [12] [13] [14] [15] [16] [17], very few applications of 7-S in tourism are to be found, but all are about destination marketing such as an electronic marketing on the case of Cyprus by [18] and the implementation of destination marketing in the case of Czech Republic by [19].

### *3.2 Concept of CBT*

Community-based tourism (CBT) is a form of tourism development which has been promoted as a means of community development economically, socially, and environmentally for over 30 years [20]. It provides villagers, for example, with income, empowers them with an ability to control community development, and helps to preserve cultural and natural environments. In other words, its concept is to maximize local benefits, to build the capacity of locals, and to minimize negative environmental impacts [10]. Based on previous literature, [21][22][10][23][24][25][26][27][28][29][30], CBT development can be viewed as a comprehensive development process for community in 5 respects. Firstly, it is an economic driver enabling locals to access equal opportunity for bettering their quality of life through diversified local economy (e.g. selling local products, providing local services, etc.). Secondly, it is human-centred development, enhancing social cohesion and promoting active host-guest interaction. Thirdly, it is political development in such a way that community must be involved in the development process and decision making process

and thus democratization can occur. Fourthly, it is about local cultural preservation; and finally, natural resources protection and environmental responsibility must be seriously taken into account. As opposed to mass tourism, CBT can be regarded as an example of the "small is beautiful" mantra, proposed by Schumpeter in 1973 [31], because it shares common characteristics of small-scale enterprise with links to other local economic sectors and is people centred.

## IV. METHODOLOGY

This research was funded by National Research Council of Thailand and it was conducted over a period of three years, during 2015- 2017. Most of the time was spent in the tourism development process through Participatory Action Research (PAR) in which 2 university researchers and 2 student assistants acted as villagers' facilitators. Tools and techniques such as preliminary meeting, observation, in-depth interview, focus groups, site visits and workshops were employed to involve villagers in the CBT development process. Regarding the workshop, experimental trips arranged by the villagers were monitored on two occasions to check whether the designed tour package potentially met tourist tastes and preferences. Therefore, this process is part of an exploratory research process in which in-depth, semi-structured interviews with trip participants and participant observation were the main methods used to collect data [32]. The pilot trips had 21 participants who paid no fee but at the end were asked what their satisfaction level with the trip's quality was, in her light of their experience. The first pilot study trip was done in November 2016: the trip participants included 1 university lecturer and 10 bachelor degree students amongst its members. To measure the potential of the designed package, indicators were formulated as criteria of evaluation in order to improve the quality of future organized trips. Feedback from these trip participants regarding the trip quality were taken into account for improving the quality of the second trip which was held in March 2017, in which 9 city-dwellers and 1 reporter were invited to experience the trip as participants, with an expectation of market development for CBT at Baan Leam Sawan. Through the workshop, the villagers were empowered by means of "learning by doing", from their pilot trip arrangements and feedback from trip participants.

## V. APPLYING 7-S IN CBT DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF BAAN LEAM SAWAN

To develop CBT at Baan Leam Sawan through the PAR process, this study divides the process into four phases: preliminary, preparation, experiment, and evaluation.

### *5.1 Preliminary phase:*

- ***Style: The strategic leadership of the head of Baan Leam Sawan***

Mr. Wannapa Nakoon, a 42-year old man, is the head of a small village named Baan Leam Sawan, established in 1969. Although his physical body is perceived rather small and skinny, he has a big mind with great intentions to develop the village economically and socially. Once, when the principal researcher met him in April 2014, at his rubber farm close to the edge of Sirindhorn Dam, he offered to sail his long-tailed boat to survey the village surroundings in order to see if it was possible to develop tourism. He told us about his life story; that he was born at Baan Phang Lum but he and his family had moved to Baan Leam Sawan, due to the effect of the construction of Sirindhorn Dam in 1968. According to him, all villagers who lived at Baan Phang Lum were resettled by the Thai government to Baan Leam Sawan, where they were compensated with 15 Rai (5.9 acres) for a household to make a living. Previously, they did rice farming. However, the new land was not suited for farming so that many sold their land to outsiders, leaving them with no jobs. Presently, only 30% of the households in the village own the land, while 70% of the households have no land which causes them to look for new ways in which to earn a living outside the village. For this reason he aspires to create jobs in the village through tourism development. He believes that jobs generate income which can potentially draw back young adult villagers to the village. Based on our observation, he is regarded as both a formal and informal leader who guides and leads village development, evidenced by his election victory at the local level for a long term. Besides, he grabbed the chance to get expert help, by asking help from us when he knew our place of work and our expertise. With his ambition, and an eye never to let a chance pass by, he is considered to offer strategic leadership potential, filling a gap between the need for new development possibilities and that for practicality in times of change.

- ***Shared Value: CBT with locally authentic experiences***

After taking us on an excursion around the village, four months later Mr. Wannapa organized a meeting in his village and invited us to attend. He introduced us to the audience, about 30 village members, more than half of whom were rather elderly. The purpose of the meeting was to involve as many villagers as possible in the decision making process of tourism development at Baan Leam Sawan. We asked if they have any ideas (or dreams) about tourism and the answer was that they had an expectation that tourism could create jobs and might bring their family members back to the village. All of them supported the development of tourism in the village. Although they have no idea about CBT development, they desire to have their village be known from tourism development. This paves a way to create a set of

values among villagers in order to guide how they should behave to welcome tourists.

### *5.2 Preparation phase:*

- ***Structure: Structure and restructure***

In the case of Baan Leam Sawan, there are 2 main structuring stages including:

**1)** ***The first structure*****:** 10 villagers voluntarily involved in the PAR process have been divided into 4 groups based on data sets of the community context, in order for them to collect that data. These data include economic data (career, income, organized housewife group or association for career development, etc.), socio-cultural data (demography, religion, cultural and cultural activities/events, local dress, etc.), historical data (history of the village and folk tales), and physical environment data (natural resources and surroundings, infrastructure and facilities).

**2)** ***The second structure:*** Restructuring was done after participating villagers had already visited, observed, as well as learned about tourism practices from a successful CBT village. They understood what to do with their village tourism by adapting observed tourism practices from their experiential trip to their own context in order to deliver satisfying experiences to tourists. This process helps participating villagers to gains insight into why it is so important to reorganize and restructure in terms of division of labour, which is implemented based on one's aptitude and skill, matching with their designed tourism activities. Once they restructured, they learnt how to coordinate and manage their draft (boat) trip. Taking into account, this restructuring went through several iterations when it was applied to the experimental phase.

- ***Skills: Data collection and tourism practices***

The PAR process is aimed to enhance villagers' capabilities to solve their problems individually and collectively. In this skill development process, there are 2 stages as following:

***1) Skills data collection:*** Data and information are considered crucial in tourism assessment resources and tourism storytelling creation. Participating villagers were trained as to where the sources of data are and how to gather data, including: in-depth interviews, focus groups, surveys, and observation. All data were commonly shared among the working groups. This process strengthened their knowledge development regarding a story-line for their village.

***2) Tourism practice skills:*** Tourism skills development began after a site visit, during June 2016, at Sasom Homestay which is regarded as the best CBT development in Ubon Ratchathani Province by the Tourism Development Department, Ministry of Tourism and Sport. Ten villagers participated in this site visit for 1 night and 2 days to learn about tourism tasks through observation and informal interviews (or discussions) with the head of Sasom's CBT team. Knowledge were shared and transferred from a successful CBT team to the initial tourism team of Leam Sawan. What the participating villagers learnt were not only value added tourism resources through Sasom's storytelling but tourism management at the village level as well.

- ***Staff: Division of tasks in CBT***

Lessons learnt from the site visit brought the participating villagers to their draft trip design and division of tourism task, or in other words, restructuring. After restructuring, each team (with the number of members in brackets) were suggested or trained by the researchers to make tourism activities at Baan Leam Sawan as professionally as possible. These included 1) food and drink provision, 2) presentation of storytelling, 3) physical arrangement, and 4) tourism activity arrangement.

- ***Strategy*****:** ***Setting a unique CBT as its competitive advantage***

Once the data were completely collected, the focus group method was employed to discuss and analyze based on SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). SWOT analysis was used to assess the tourism potential of Baan Leam Sawan. Afterward, a TOWS matrix was utilized as a tool to compare and select strategies on what local natural and cultural resources (strengths) should be exploited to be tourist attractions in the period that the Thai government promotes CBT as a mechanism to reduce poverty (opportunity) ; or, how perceived distant villages (threats) and lack of tourism facilities and unhygienic conditions of the village (weaknesses) should be overcome. The analytical results from a focus group gave rise to the idea of a draft boat trip with local food and drink included. The direction of CBT at Baan Leam Sawan is set to be a unique boat trip, a one-day trip package. It is planned to provide tourists with an impressive experience of scenic natural attractions (beautiful scenery around the dam and a tranquil floating chanting hall in the forest temple) combined with authentic local life style (e.g. fishing, fish processing, traditional diving to look for underwater logs, and making pestles). Tourists will be encouraged to be involved in all local activities provided (e.g. feeding fish, making fermented fish, diving to look for underwater logs, and making pestles). Storytelling texts made up from all tourism activities were invented based upon factual stories of local people who suffered from the construction of the dam. Both unexplored attractions in the dam and the special storyline of village history have the potential to make the trip at Baan Leam Sawan interesting, paving a path to gain competitive advantage.

### *5.3 Experimental phase:*

- ***Systems*****:** There are 5 main tasks that drive CBT day by day, as follow:

**1)** ***Storytelling task*****:** geographical and local economic information, and the village historical

background are used as material for local tour guides to draw tourist attention. This task is crucial because it is a key success factor to make the trip meaningful and enjoyable for tourists. Interesting presentations and skilled local tour guides with appropriate verbal and non-verbal gestures partly contribute to tourists' satisfaction and hence their repurchase and word-of-mouth communication to others.

**2)** ***Food and beverage task:*** a lunch menu set from local ingredients, freshwater fish from the dam in particular (grilled fish, fried fish, and fish soup), herbal drinks, and fruits must be arranged in tandem with storytelling presented by local tour guides.

**3)** ***Tourism activity task:*** this includes the provision of aquatic animal food (for tourists to feed fish and turtles), diving log show, making pestles show, and processing fish show. In sum, there must be readiness of men and material for involving tourist into local life activities.

**4)** ***Physical arrangement:*** this task involves the arrangement of amplifiers for tour guides, safety matters when travelling by boat/raft (e.g. carrying capacity, safety life vests, and a briefing), and cleanliness of boats/rafts, public toilets, and attraction surroundings.

**5)** ***Management and coordination***: this task can be the responsibility of either formal authority (the head of the village) or informal authority (a group leader) who can coordinate with all villagers to make sure tasks are aligned with one another, with an aim to increase the quality of CBT development of Baan Leam Sawan. This coordinator deals with arranging a welcoming ceremony, suggesting uniforms, providing souvenirs, managing the timings of the trip, and balancing individual benefits and group interest allocation.

### *5.4 Evaluation phase:*

To gain insight into the potential of experiential CBT, all elements of the "System" are measured internally by villagers themselves and externally by tourists.

**1)** The internal assessment is done through a workshop among the participating villagers themselves, aimed at empowering them to increase individual capability of tourism practices in the village. The experiential boat trip (called System 1) is arranged to let participating villagers understand the role, analyze, and solve problems by themselves. The primary benefit of the internal assessment is the improvement of tourism skills (e.g. hospitality skills, experiences, and self-confidence) of the individuals involved, and thus the transformation of social reality.

**2)** The external assessment proceeded through the involvement of city-dweller tourists who later gave feedback on the quality of the boat trip arranged by participating villagers. This process had as its main purpose that participating villagers should understand the social reality of tourism, in which tourism supply meets tourism demand. Feedback loops were simply applied to enable participating villagers to understand the cause and effect perspective which is a learning mechanism to improve the trip quality and at the same time to satisfy tourists. This continuous improvement process finally gives a clear picture on what Baan Leam Sawan tour package should look like. Practically, pilot experiential one-day trips were arranged twice in order to check whether the "System" set is appropriate from tourist perspectives. The assessment results from tourists were excellent and brought a sense of pride and self-respect to participating villagers.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The McKinsey 7-S model was originally used as a diagnostic framework to investigate an organization's effectiveness, by looking at its current situation in order to bridge to its 'ideal situation'. The focal concept of the 7-S model is that an organization is successful when it successfully integrates or connects the "Hard S" of strategy, structure, and systems and the "Soft S" of shared values, style, staff, and skills. According to Kaplan [33], the 7-S diagram that looks like a spider-web, with each of the "S's" aligned with one another, has no starting point. In business schools and business organizations, the "Hard S" of strategy, structure, and systems are mainly taken into account because they are more measurable and tangible [16][34], while the "Soft S" of shared values, style, staff, and skills are less taken up because they are rather difficult to assess and are less tangible [33]. However, in our case, the development process of CBT crucially needed the "Soft S" factors as a starting point where style and, later, shared values are the most important factors to drive other "S's." Our development process, through PAR, has four steps (viz, preliminary, preparation, experiment, and evaluation) combined with an application of 7-S, to attain a one-day tour package. Based on our study, we argue that the "Soft S's" should be taken into consideration as first priority, when initiating development process especially at the grass root level such as we explored. In this case, it may be inappropriate to try to change structure, strategy, and system if there is a powerful embedded strategic leadership style already in play which other "S's" in the setting are prepared to buy into. In addition, through the research process, staff (participating villagers) involved were strengthened in their resolve to build their capacity and knowledge and skill sets, empowering them to be more confident and proud of their local lifestyle thereby enabling them to be more economically self-reliant, as MacDonald might expect as a result of well enacted action research [35]. This indicates that the "Soft S's" can help to establish effective "Hard S's" especially strategy, structure, and systems in a setting such as developing in a one-day tour package in Baan Leam Sawan.

To conclude, this article presents an application of the McKinsey 7-S in CBT development by using the case of Baan Leam Sawan village as an exemplar. Theoretically, this study is an initial exploration into the possibility of creating a bridge between the 7-S and CBT development and the result suggests that the "Soft S's", particularly style and shared values, are the most important factors in effecting organizational change at the grass roots level. This is because they lead to the establishment of appropriately modified "Hard S's", structure, strategy, and systems in particular.

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