CAPACITY OF COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM IN BAN KHIRI WONGKOT, NA YUNG, UDON THANI THAILAND

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Abstract- The study of the capacity of community-based tourism in Ban Khiri Wongkot, Na Yung, Udon Thani aims to look into the potential of tourism in the community and to increase the number of tourists. This study is survey research collecting the data from focus group and non-participant observation. The findings show that the main tourism factor is activities i.e., rafting on Thai farmer utility trailers and picnicking in local styles in which natural materials are adopted for making plates, blows and cups.

Keyword- Capacity, Tourism, Ban Khiri Wongkot

I. INTRODUCTION

Udon Thani is a province located in northeast Thailand. Its topography is plateau with mountain ranges creating the variety of nature. Most area in Udon Thani is flat area or lowlands called plains. Considered as a natural border, Phu Phan mountain range lies from north to south dividing Udon Thani from other provinces. In addition, Mak Khaeng Stream flows through Amphoe Muang Udon Thani and is far from international natural border i.e., Mekhong River which is located 50 km from Amphoe Muang Udon Thani separates Laos and Thailand and flows through Nong Khai creating natural attractions. Moreover, Ban Chiang has been on the UNESCO world heritage list since 1992. Discovered in 1966, the site attracted enormous publicity due to its attractive red painted pottery. Visitors can see the way humans live in 5,000 BC and a large number of evidence shows wisdom and culture that has been inherited for thousand years. Ban Chiang covers over hundred archeological sites in northeast Thailand where is most densely populated area since thousand years ago. Udon Thani also has dhamma tourism routes e.g., Wat Pa Ban Tat, Wat Phra Phutthabaht Bua Bok and Wat Pa Pu Kon . Obviously, Ban Khiri Wongkot is currently becoming popular community-based tourist places as there is increasing number of the visitors. Ban Khiri Wongkot is located at Na Kae, Na Yung, Udon Thani. It is being supported by local people as a tourist attraction focusing on economy, society, culture and environment. Local resources are carefully utilized with effective management to ensure that there will be no impact on environment and ways of life and people in community share benefits and create the sustainability of tourism.

II. DETAILS EXPERIMENTAL

2.1 Objectives of study

This research aims to study the capacity of community-based tourism in Ban Khiri Wongkot, Na Yung, Udon Thani.

2.2 Literature Review

Community Capacity

There are certain definitions of community capacity. Chuwit Thisasawat (1990) claimed that community capacity is a potential of community that meets with the need of the majority and can assist to solve problem in the community. In addition, it has an influence on creating cooperation in community, offering the way to deal with people outside community and helping coping with problems caused by other community.

Chatthip Nathsupa (1984) noted that community capacity is related with dependency and assistance in the community, for instance, rice transplanting, harvesting and threshing in which people gather to help each other in the field without wages. Other activities that obviously show community capacity include house construction, making a merit, ordination ceremony, wedding ceremony and some festivals.

MR Akin Rapipat (1988) conducted the study on the capacity of villagers at Ban Yok Krabat and found that the community has working process that helps people in the community such as Long Khak in which people gather to help each other in the field without wages.

Community capacity relies on conditions in terms of readiness about time and awareness, strong points, resources and places which reinforce its potential to solve problems and ensure the survival of that community (Eakkawit Na Thalang, 1995).

Moreover, factors outside community are considered as community since they can be utilized to solve problems in community, for instance, government policies, private support, educational institution and current economic situations and trends.

Capacity of Community-Based Tourism

Boonlern Jittangwattana (2006) defined tourism capacity as the potential of tourism management

based on several factors i.e., tourist attractions, convenience and safety in accessing tourist attractions, security in life and belongings of visitors while traveling, facilities (e.g., clean restrooms, gas stations, convenience stores, roads, parking lots, community stores, public transportation, signs guiding directions and popular places), tourism services (e.g., transportation, accommodation, hospitality, catering, entertainment, tourist guides and souvenirs), tourism marketing and cooperation and awareness of people in community to support tourism.

There are several factors that reinforce capacity of community-based tourism and play a crucial role in the success of tourism in that community Mill and Morrison, 1994 cited in Chusit Chuchart 2003 and Sarawut Phuedang, 1980 mentioned to seven factors as follows:

1) Accommodation
2) Accessibility
3) Attractions
4) Activities
5) Amenities in terms of restaurants, souvenir shops, laundry shops and services meeting with basic needs
6) Security
7) Health

Literature review on capacity of community-based tourism showed that potential is related with utilizing knowledge of people in community and spatial context to help find problems, plan activities systematically, make a follow up and evaluate to measure capacity levels of community in supporting tourism.

Thai Volunteer Service Foundation (2001 cited in Sin Surobon et al, 2003) claimed that community-based tourism is an activity directed by people in community to meet with their need and focuses on the importance of environment and culture. Apparently, people in community play a crucial role in running activities and provide cooperation in tourism management and development.

Ponjana Suansri (1999) explained that community-based tourism is derived from the cooperation of people in community and considered as community based sustainable tourism (CBST). Then this type of tourism is conceptualized as community-based tourism in which strength of community plays an important role. Community-based tourism promotes self-esteem and human dignity, improves quality of life to meet standard levels and increases income of people in the community.

Community-based tourism is an activity which encourages people in the community to manage tourism by themselves. They need to prepare and plan activities in which the visitors can learn and enjoy. It is essential that the activities should promote the sustainability of nature and culture, create awareness for people in community to be a good host and encourage them to participate in tourism management that helps enhance the strength of community. In addition, the activities should promote self-reliance, utilize resource in community, create knowledge that can be spread and learned. Also, those activities should provide self-esteem, improve quality of life and offer benefit in terms of economy. Also, community-based tourism emphasizes on the importance of community. (Suchada Nguangchaiyaphum, 2008).

Pojana Suansri (2003) defined community-based tourism as an activity placing an importance on the sustainability of environment, society and culture. The direction of tourism is determined by people in community and managed by people in the community for the community. They play a crucial part in managing and equipping the visitors with knowledge.

Rampaipan Kaewsuriya (2001) claimed that community-based tourism offers opportunities to people in community to manage and develop activities and promotes cooperation among people in the community in terms of planning, investing and being business partners who will equally earn benefit, income and advantage.

In summary, community-based tourism is directed, managed and conceptualized by people in community where area context has an influence. People in community gain and lose benefits and are co-owners of resources e.g., nature, history, culture, tradition, way of life to create the sustainability in community.

2.3 Methodology

This study is survey research in which data are collected from focus group and non-participant observation. The survey is conducted at Ban Khiri Wongkot, Na Kae, Na Yung, Udon Thani. The samples in this study is the locals who are involved with community-based tourism e.g., village head, teachers, government officers and shopkeepers.

III. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Accommodation: There are a total of five homestays in Ban Khiri Wongkot and the sixth one is being constructed to accommodate the visitors.

2. Accessibility: The visitors can travel to Ban Khiri Wongkot by car on two routes i.e., Na Yung route and Nam Som route which are approximately 160 km from Udon Thani.

3. Attractions: The charm of Ban Khiri Wongkot is traditional agriculture ways and magnificent scenery of hills and rivers.

4. Activities: The activities provided to the visitors include rafting on Thai farmer utility trailers and picnicking by using plates, blows and cups made from natural materials

5. Amenities: Convenience stores, restaurants, homestays and mobile phone signal are available for the visitors.

6. Security: the village headman and villagers help protect the visitors.

7. Health: officers from a public health center and a sub-district administrative organization regularly give advice and check sanitation in the community e.g., the way of cooking, the cleanness of toilets and the condition of bedrooms.



Picture 1: Sign guiding to Ban Khiri Wongkot



Picture 2: The stream for rafting on Thai farmer utility trailers



Picture 3: Focus group discussing on community capacity



Picture 4: Plates made from bamboo



Picture 5: Cups made from bamboo



Picture 6: Waterfall in community



Picture 7: Agriculture in community

IV. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

Following the survey on capacity of community-based tourism at Ban Khiri Wongkot, it is found that there are a total of five homestays in Ban Khiri Wongkot and the sixth one is being constructed to accommodate the increasing visitors. In addition, the visitors can travel to Ban Khiri Wongkot by car on two routes i.e., Na Yung route and Nam Som route which are approximately 160 km from Udon Thani. Traditional agriculture ways and magnificent scenery of hills and rivers are considered as the charm of Ban Khiri Wongkot, and rafting on Thai farmer utility trailers and picnicking by using plates, blows and cups made from natural materials are main activities provided to the visitors. Moreover, convenience stores, restaurants, homestays and mobile phone signal are available for the visitors. In terms of security: the village headman and villagers help keep an eye on the wellness of the visitors. Also, officers

from a public health center and a sub-district administrative organization regularly give advice and check sanitation in the community e.g., the way of cooking, the cleanness of toilets and the condition of bedrooms. The findings are consistent with the study carried out by Sin Sarobon and Udon Wongtabtim (2003) showing that community-based tourism is an activity managed by people in the community based on the concept that they are co-owners of resources and gain and lose benefits from tourism. The activities focus on utilizing local resources e.g. nature, history, culture, tradition, ways of life and traditional agriculture as factors or cost in holding tourism activities which offer benefits to community in terms of economy, society and culture and ensure the sustainability of resources to descendant. Moreover, personnel in community are equipped with training to possess capacity and skills in organizing activities and be able to be a part of tourism development in terms of planning, making a decision, evaluating results of projects and gaining benefits. The activities emphasize on the importance of nature. Furthermore, the findings are also compatible with the study conducted by Pojana Saunsri (1999) revealing that community-based tourism is derived from the cooperation of people in community and considered as community based sustainable tourism (CBST). Then this type of tourism is conceptualized as community-based tourism in which strength of community plays an important role. Community-based tourism promotes self-esteem and human dignity, improves quality of life to meet standard levels and increases income of people in the community. The findings are also related with the study of Boonlern Jittangwattana (2006) defining tourism capacity as the potential of tourism management based on several factors i.e., tourist attractions, convenience and safety in accessing tourist attractions, security in life and belongings of the visitors while traveling, facilities (e.g., clean restrooms, gas stations, convenience stores, roads, parking lots, community stores, public transportation, signs guiding directions and popular places), tourism services (e.g., transportation, accommodation, hospitality, catering, entertainment, tourist guides and souvenirs), tourism marketing and cooperation and awareness of people in community to support tourism.

SUGGESTION

1. The capacity of community-based tourism should be developed to support the number of visitors.

2. Government sector should equip people in community with knowledge in managing and improving community-based tourism.

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