

Construction and Application of Sustainable Tourism Theory: A Case Study of Ban Mae Kampong, Huay Kaew Sub-district, Mae On District, Chiang Mai Province

การประกอบสร้างและประยุกต์ใช้ทฤษฎีการท่องเที่ยวอย่างยั่งยืน:กรณีศึกษา บ้านแม่กำปอง ตำบลห้วยแก้ว อำเภอแม่ออน จังหวัดเชียงใหม่

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Abstract

Thailand' alternative tourism has been criticized both in terms of paradigm and process. People believed that it is not the way to develop the tourism to become the sustainable and genuine one. The purpose of this research is to construct a new theory to be applied to alternative tourism. This theory will be a logical offer to the thinking and practical methods. Globalization and local capitals have to be considered. Some other theories are also applied in this study. The Participation Action Research Process (PAR) and the knowledge integration is used. Ban Mae Kampong is the sample of the study.

The study reveals that according to the theory, it is important to make the local capitals strong by to find virtue of the local capitals these are tourism resources (includes the natural resources, the social and cultural ones). The local capitals connect people to the tourism businesses. So, they need to be revitalization first. Then their virtue will turn into value in the form of tourism packages. In order to produce tourism packages, creativity will play an important role to increase the benefit of the virtue and the value. The knowledge management from both the local area and the outside community. The local people will have to adopt entrepreneurship in order to access, control and have an ownership of their resources. This includes that the local people's participation in the market management and the public relations. The final outcome will be the sustainable and genuine tourism.

Keywords: Construction and Application, Sustainable Tourism Theory, Ban Mae Kampong

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Introduction

Thailand is one of countries in the world that has various tourism resources with beauty and distinction of natural resources, fineness of cultures that were old, original and historically valuable including unique lifestyle of local people in every region along with Thai people who are generous, friendly and helpful. These made Thailand one of destinations in world tourism that has been thoroughly mentioned, admired and interested as we could see from world tourist attraction ranking that Thailand was in top rank related to tourist attractions in terms of value of money, authenticity and treasure, friendly locals and considered as Most Likely Destination etc.

Therefore, for past 5 decades since Thailand started opening and promoting tourism seriously from 1960 to present days, it was found that mainstream tourism industry of Thailand quickly grew with confirmation and indicator of quantity and figure showing continually increasing rate of tourists and income from tourism. It was found that from 1960, there were 81,340 foreign tourists and brought income for the nation for 196 million Baht and in 2008, the number of tourists increased up to 14.58 million people with income for the nation for 574,521 million Baht. This made tourism industry become the source of income and important economic activities of the nation. Tourism was one of major strategies for country development on 2 main foundations which were 1) Tourism was the source of foreign currency that could stimulate economic growth and 2) Tourism was industry that mainly required labors, therefore, tourism was the way to distribute income to labor section and help reduce poverty in household with low income (Wattanakuljaras, 2007)

However, actually, both domestic and international empirical data, documents of research including articles indicated in the same way that although tourism industry could bring about high value of economic result and be beneficial but on the other hand, it was found that mainstream tourism had direct and indirect impact with 3 issues as below

1) Tourism caused deterioration and ruined beauty and magnificence of natural resources and environment including biodiversity and ecosystem without measures or guidelines for conservation, recovery and monitor including calculating the capital from those important tourism resource foundation.

2) Tourism had an impact and caused the change of lifestyle, tradition, cultures and social value of local community and it resulted local uniqueness and locality which were tourism resource disappear. Some places were revived but devalued cultures to be only products for tourism.

3) Although tourism was activities that distributed income to labor section but in reality, it was found that the income distribution was unfair and benefit for the poor and unskillful labors was so little and income distribution might not cover causing benefit snatch between entrepreneurs in and out of the local community and between locality. Importantly, tremendous income was concentrated and collected with capital group, benefit group and connection of tourism business from both the nation and foreign countries. (Picard (1996), Choochad (2001), Kaosa-ard and Untong (2007), Leepreecha (2008) etc.)

From such impacts, there were many attempts from organizations, institutes and government agents including private sector development organization along with academicians trying to solve the problem and diminishing the possible impacts but it was found that previously, the problem could only be slightly solved as a result that tourism industry had special quality which was different from other economic activities. That is to say,

A) Tourism Industry did not need capital or production factors such as land, factories and physical buildings or even the environmental capital under the condition or measures to evaluate environmental and ecosystem impact, social impact or health impact like any other industries as tourism industry did not need commodity but tourism resources were transformed to be products. Therefore, structure, shape did not appear and there was no new production.

B) Although tourism industry may have effect on terms but we had to accept that previously, tourism industry played a major role to develop economy of the nation and it was business that needed little capital compared to gained returns. Tourism industry emphasized on using local labors therefore, it could make people have job and earn income including community and it also easily supported entrepreneurs in business cycle, every Baht belongs to the nation with development concept and strategy including intense marketing promotion from the government and it had quantitative growth rate as the indicator and accomplishment of major target.

C) From the result of B) it became “Tourism discourse” with illusion to hide or mitigate problems and impacts of tourism and other than that, this work resulted in many deeper questions as tourism industry also made 1) regulations, rule or legal measures in society not covered or lack of efficiency to mitigate the possible impact on environment and ecosystem 2) social and cultural right infringement including right of humanity and 3) caused the monopoly and economic advantages and for all these matters, there were not any

academic works that performed connected analysis. (Pawakapan (2007), Adam and Kaosa-ard (2008), Mowforth and Munt (2009) etc.)

Furthermore, special quality of tourism industry opened the way for minor entrepreneurs to do business through various markets and could make income but they had to rely on mainstream tourism industry. Although there were some researches discovering economic cycle of such small business but they could not explain instability of small businesses under the conditions of 1) trend of world tourism which always changes and 2) creating monopoly system of big tourism business which had influence on small tourism businesses.

However, although the tourism industry of the world starts becoming the age of sustainable tourism development with 3 issues 1) trend of natural resource and environment conservation 2) trend of tourism in term of learning and education and 3) trend of man development which caused adaptation of mainstream tourism to seek for new ways of alternative tourism that could respond the needs and replace mainstream tourism. Therefore, it was found that to present alternative tourism could be in various ways such as ecotourism, cultural tourism and community based tourism etc.

Therefore, when reconsidering the term of alternative tourism in Thailand, although there was serious attempt in previous decade so as to originate alternative tourism, but finally, it was found that previous tourism was not authentic or it was not real alternative tourism because for ecotourism, cultural tourism and community based tourism, Thai people mainly focused on only definition or wide explanation and that would not be concretely practical.

But the actions with alternative tourism mainly emphasized on minor components without realizing the key of tourism such as Home stay management, temporary service and at last, both academic and policy development were in “conceptual gap” that focused on competition and increasing capacity in terms of tourism competition according to mainstream tourism development, focused on developing infrastructure, transportation, marketing development and intense public relation. While community based tourism seemed to be the solution or expectation of alternative tourism but it was found that people neglected to see importance toward influence and connection of big tourism business and ignored searching local capitals available in the locality to build up “negotiation power” with tourism business group from outside as the important thing was that if there were processes that made people to understand regime of tourism and could manage the capitals well enough, they would adapt themselves with mainstream tourism due to the fact that capitals in the local (cultural

and natural resources) had special characteristics that were necessary to be adhered to people and spaces which mainstream tourism neglected and it caused unsustainable tourism. (Prabudhanitisarn (2015), Paipeng (2017))

From such situations mentioned above for tourism of Thailand, it was essential to fill up the gap so that tourism would be sustainable and authentic along with mainstream tourism by evaluating and synthesizing to create and apply new theory of sustainable tourism management with cooperation including proving the result by connecting theory with practices in real area by selecting the area or community that were accepted that they have prominent bio-tourism and cultural tourism management. However, it was found that there were some researches showing that although they were really outstanding but the level of community cooperation was not high including benefit distribution and income that still were not covered and fair enough. This study selected the target area which was Baan Mae Kampong, Huay Kaew Sub-district, Mae-on District, Chiang Mai. Previously, although tourism condition of Ban Mae Kampong was successful but actually, it was found that benefit from tourism could not be distributed to people in community thoroughly and land was sold for the external corporations including adventure-type tourism by multinational corporations that made profit in the area. The result of operation following Area Base Cooperation (ABC) in 2011 was found that tourism in Ban Mae Kampong, apart from, home stay activities and beauty of nature, also included (Prabudhanitisarn, 2014)

1) Miracle between “villagers-forest-meang” that were related to lifestyle, people and nature harmoniously and nobody was interested in remove or searched

2) external knowledge was found that 1) operation among “villagers-forest-meang” in Mae Kampong area had more important activity which was called “ Natural Therapy”

General researches of Mae Kampong Area were to explain manifestations superficially which was not sufficient. This study would inspect deeper and that was why Mae Kampong Area could not bring prominence and miracle of tourism resources to manage tourism in area sustainably and it needed to use new knowledge or theory to mix with knowledge in area that searched and valuated tourism resource from the core including creating method that the area could turn value of tourism resource to be the value that was negotiable with connection of tourism business to make tourism truly belong to the area and result in authentic sustainability. All of these were backgrounds and significance including objectives of this study.

Assumption or Question of the study

From reviewing relevant literary matters and documents, it was found that the study related to Mae Kampong generally explained manifestations of tourism superficially which was not enough to bring about sustainable tourism and fill up the previous gap. It is necessary to look deeper which were

- The reason why Mae Kampong could not bring prominence and miracle of essential tourism resources to have sustainable tourism management.
- Examine influence of mainstream tourism toward community tourism or local tourism
- Use new knowledge or theory merged with local knowledge that was search to valuate tourism resource as the key point.
- Create methods that could transform the worth of tourism resources to value that could be negotiated with tourism business network of the authentic area for sustainability.

Objective of the study

1) To evaluate, synthesize and apply new theory for sustainable tourism management with cooperation that is in compliance with area level and conditional context of each community.

2) To bring the result in 1) to practice in real area to prove the result of sustainable tourism management that is concrete and the result can be seen in step of real operation.

Synthesis to the theory for the management of sustainable tourism

However, most of knowledge about sustainable tourism has just definitions, for example. "The emphasis on tourism with the balance of the natural resources and the environment, the culture with its uniqueness and special identity and management in which distribute income fairly, community / area where is the location of tourist resources to participate significantly "etc., and some of body of knowledge starts digging deeper on building the value of tourism resources which can be natural resources or cultural resources. If we obtain such a value, sustainable tourism will happen or it requires the use of community-based tourism or creative tourism as well as the concept of tourism process is a part of touristification which its knowledge in this way is ideal and sometimes too careless. Some knowledge is just a critique of tourism which bring tourism resources that has a value in itself to be a product or commodification in order to operate the tourism business which benefits the capitalists by using branding of ecotourism of cultural tourism as a selling point. Then it

destroys the society and culture of the area without the way out. This might be called the "gaps" of knowledge about sustainable tourism unquestionably.

In the opinion of the researcher, there are only a definition, recommendation to use the virtue of tourism resources , or criticism without a solution are important, but it is not enough to cause sustainable tourism in the actual practice and that is why the sustainable tourism is developed inconsistently in the present time.

This research has newly established the theoretical concepts that can be used in the development and management of sustainable tourism. The scope of the description (Scope Conditions) is focus on (a) cultural tourism, (b) in an area or areas of tourism resources about culture are unique and / or natural resources or both (c) in the custody or ownership of any community or several communities which relate with each other, and (d) community or organization, that relates or owns the tourism resources, which has potential (an empowerment community) in certain level. (Prabudhanitisarn, 2014 and 2015)

Sustainable tourism according to the definitions and / or ideal will be achieved in practice particularly, it need to have 5 components, 2 factors, and 1 process as a following.

Component is an important part of sustainable tourism. It consists of five components. The linkages of 5 components are as the following diagram.

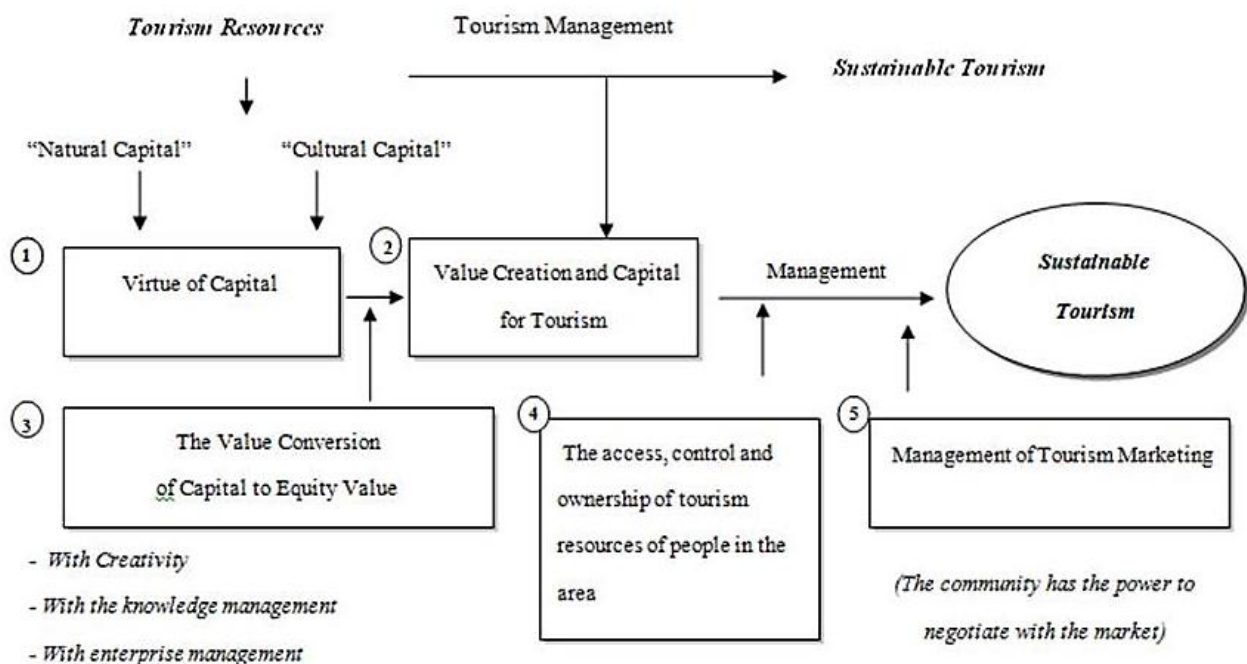


Figure 1: Construction of Sustainable Tourism Theory

1st Component: for example "virtue" of "capital" which is the tourism resources of the area, capital of natural resources and / or cultural capital that is unique or distinctive and it has uniqueness and amazing by itself. For instance; the virtue of capital of natural resources shows the relationships that are deeply interconnected and complex, so it has a specialty and amazing of ecosystems between the soil, water, forests, climate, biodiversity, and the link between people who are with natural resources. In terms of co-existence, the utilizations and management are in balanced and in harmony, which are reasonably complex as well. The cultural capital such as heritage objects, history, art, and tradition as well as lifestyle, their uniqueness and amazing which have value, have an accumulation of the set of ideas together with people's operation which is complex, rational, divisible, and adjustable to the context and time that reflect through the operations of idea, beliefs, ideals and the sense of community in the area where it has accumulated and has a deeper link which weaves and ties or connects the relationships of the people in the area together harmoniously.

Virtue of Capital: Such tourism has been mentioned for some time in the movement of sustainable tourism. However, it has not been searched, put together, supplemented, or revitalized (All can be called Revitalization) by people who live with it and own it. When it has been promoted as a selling point of tourism, the problems have been occurred all the sudden. Tourists focus on only the touch of a form of "capital" that is special, remarkable, or amazing. It is just only on the outside. The owners have not even described and controlled. It is even worse, if the capital of culture is made as a product or cultural commoditization, so the adverse effects will occur. There are evidences from several studies in the past.

Virtue of Capital: If such tourism has 'Revitalization', it can extend to create a concrete form in order (1) to make tourism as a part of culture or "Touristification" in terms of focusing on the importance and cultural application for binding of people in real society (2) to be a main component of sustainable tourism. It is not only a selling point of tourism, but it is unique and lively for outside to appreciate or appreciation. However, anything with virtue is diminished its virtue to be just a product or it is not used in the period of globalization and capitalism, virtue is slowly terminated. In the concrete picture people want careers and incomes. If a sustainable tourism is used as a tool, it is required to bring the economic dimension into the mix. For example; the virtue must be converted to value for tourism because every society cannot be free from capitalism. The issue is how to earn money fairly and sustainably in the market today and under influence of mainstream tourism which

“capitalism” is in control of all factors of tourism, including "tourism resources" of the people in the area.

2nd Component: For example; "Creating value for tourism" must occur, if the value of tourism resources (according to 1st component) is revitalized only because tourism in the past had seen natural and cultural resources as "capital" which had value in the economy. Therefore it is brought to create value for tourism and ignore giving the importance to the value of tourism resources. Creating value for tourism is a reproduction in order to meet the demand for goods and services in capitalism system (Commoditization) which reduce the previous virtue and create a new meaning to “consumption of signs” which is a work of discourse under capitalism that the consumption and demand are not ended and are subject to change at any time.

Conversely, creating value for “capital” that only the owners in area will understand the uniqueness and amazing of tourism thru “Revitalization” which is not easy to do and not straightforward, or to do carelessly. On the other hand, it must create a tourism package by owners of capital as a full circle and all is linked to the value that is provided. For example; Program that provides learning and appreciation, not only with what they see or do, but they will also enjoy the complex relationships (values) of it (and the owner only who can bring tourists to enjoy it. The outside guide will not be able to do it), including activities, services, public relations, and marketing. All will need to consist of the 3rd component.

3rd Component: is to convert “virtue” to “value” and can obtain a real core in term of the virtue of “capital” which is a truly tourism resources and a tourism management by community with a sustainable approach which needs and applies the concepts and supplemented operation in three major parts.

3.1 Creativity is to find the strength or the results which obtain from “Revitalization” in the 1st component to top the social marketing using creativity. This requires the integration of research and practice to create plans or tour activities which are creative and sustainable. Learning and experiencing with community is to appreciate the real essence of what is so-called “Virtue”, not “Value” from tourism. This will create a tourist attraction, especially without focusing on the numbers of tourists. This will help and bring money into the country and reduce the negative effects caused by tourism industry. In some cases or multiple cases it needs global knowledge to support.

3.2 Knowledge Management is a community needs to gather the body of knowledge and the knowledge management of community from both the local knowledge combined with the integration of knowledge from outside, the innovation technology through participatory learning, field trip, and lessons from experiences in order to get the body of knowledge to be applied to match the area. And it can be linked to the tourism management by community that has potential and a strong sense of sustainable community.

3.3 Enterprise Management: Tourism is to achieve balanced and sustainable in terms of the fairness of the income distribution to create jobs and careers and benefit belongs to the community or people who are involved in tourism activities fairly. One approach that is suitable for tourism activities by the community is an enterprise management that is placed on the basis of participatory process by people who own the "capital" of the tourism and who are hosts or main operators. There is a tourism management that has a systematic and comprehensive links. The people who own administration in the area and use the principles of an applied enterprise management together with local knowledge from upstream to downstream of the tourism business. For downstream communities may not be able to manage it all, so it needs to link with the tourism business, but the community / region has more bargaining power.

4th Component: The implementation of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd component are brought to create the value of tourism. However, it finds out that it cannot be driven concretely to achieve sustainable tourism (In the dimension of participation and equity of income distribution) without marketing management for tourism because it cannot deny the fact that the existence of "value" in the cultural capital and capital resources cannot sustain the "Virtue" in itself because the community has to accept that the community cannot resist the invasion of capitalism in the community. Globalization and processes make everything to be products or "Commoditization" and create a new consumption of signs. Therefore, it needs to make capital to be used or utilization which is converted to a value in the economy or generate revenue for the community. But it needs to search or decode "virtue" to the capital of tourism resources first and then it can create value. Moreover, the operation of business tourism, the community cannot deny the interaction with the outside world, especially, the marketing management of tourism and capital group or business group that relate to tourism. However, the interactions that occur will be used as a link between tourists and communities.

Thus it needs the community to access, control, and own tourism resources or it should provide the community with a sense of ownership (Though it is not de jure, it is de facto) that will lead to successful result in the above guidelines. When community has an access to control and own tourism resources, then it will cause the power to bargain with capital group and group of tourism business from outside enormously because in terms of theoretical concept under capitalism production, whoever can possess or access more resources will be a gainer. Therefore, the access to control the resource of the community will create bargaining power with the outsiders. This issue might be an academic issue to give an answer or solution of the benefit distribution from tourism in reality.

5th Component: "Marketing Management for Tourism" as mentioned, the community cannot deny the dependence on external markets. But when the community access, control, and own tourism resources which is the heart of sustainable tourism management then it will result the tourism management effectively because on one side the community is connected to the outside by itself via the communication channels and new technologies to deliver the "value" of the tourism resources of their own to the people all over the world. On the other side of the community it will be able to negotiate with the capital group and tourism business from outside in order to spread the benefits of tourism more and more. The heart of the marketing management of the owners and whoever owns the "capital" of tourism is a result of the creation of virtue to access to control and own "capital" first. Hence, there will be creative management, marketing, and enterprise management by the owners of "capital" and that "capital" is unique and amazing and then the funds will attract the market by itself.

Those five components are some of the components that will lead to an operation of sustainable tourism in reality.

Conditions: In addition to five components, the conditions of sustainable tourism consist of two conditions, 1 mechanism, and 2 important management systems as followings;

In terms of mechanism consist of the followings;

1) Community mechanism is as an ownership of tourism resource that will be operated in the form of board of committee who come from leaders 'group. The leaders of the community can manage and control as an owner of tourism resource.

2) Mechanism that support academic. For example; scholars and academic institutions that will be the core to drive the operations through participatory action research to create the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd components.

3) Mechanism that support business and market. For example; Sub-district Administrative Organization, organizations, government agencies from both the government and private sectors, includes the business sector to promote marketing, advertising, and public relations which link to tourism market at various levels.

In terms of the system, it also requires a management system and the interactions between different mechanisms at least two major systems as followings.

The 1st system: To understand correspondingly between the mechanisms in the 1st and the 2nd part in term of thinking method, practices, objectives, processes of operation. The successful results will be substantially from a step-by-step operation in details according to conceptual framework, theory, and operation guideline of tourism that will lead to balance and sustainability by the community mechanism that will be a main core for the operation. Also there will be an academic mechanism to support the process of participatory action research as a tool to drive the operation in each step.

The 2nd systems: The interaction that will cause the link system between the mechanisms in the 1st, the 2nd part, and the 3rd part need to use a connection and have them to participate as stakeholders or people who involve in the operation of tourism activities in community both in terms of mission and responsibility or a spatial unit. It might come as one of the team or a collaboration of the tourism support team together with community mechanism and mechanism that support academic. Therefore, it will create mechanism and system which is efficient and can drive the operation effectively.

Processes: The processes of operation that will lead to sustainable tourism will need to have a procedure as follows.

Step 1 will need to aim at the "capital" of the tourism resources of each area in both natural resources and cultural capital for searching or "decoding" of "virtue" which has a deeply relationship with natural resources and cultural capital. It makes those two capitals unique and amazing which reflect thinking method, virtue system, ideology, and meaning that weave and link the relationship of people in the community harmoniously. There might be international knowledge / science to support.

Step 2: When searching and decoding in the "virtue" of the tourism resources, the capital, the next step it needs to take "obtained virtue" to "creation of value" for tourism. It must be operated together between community and academic mechanism, and supporting mechanism through the interpretation and virtue that will lead to value for balanced and sustainable tourism as follows.

2.1 It will need to bring those values to develop or further the ideas by using creativity, the integration of body of knowledge, technology, and innovations for capitals of natural resources and culture. The customized patterns and creative tourism activities are for tourists to immerse the virtue of those capitals truly through the experience of living with people, learning and deeply understanding the stories that have been told proudly from people in the community as owners of cultural and natural resources capital that are filled with value and meaning which link relationship of people, life style, culture, soil, water, and forest together harmoniously and seamlessly

2.2 When the customized patterns and creative tourism activities have been done, community needs to have knowledge management of the community, body of knowledge which is a local wisdom with new knowledge from the outside. The community will need to create a participatory learning process with the community from an actual operation in each step, from thinking, analyzing, planning, implementing, and operating to lesson interpretation and co-experiences in sustainable tourism management. Field trip in the model area and learning exchange with external communities can adjust and apply the body of knowledge to match the context of the area, situation, and nearby context.

2.3 Implementation of tourism business in the community because tourism by communities which is operated and aims to generate income and distribute benefits fairly and thoroughly to people in the community as the owner of tourism resources capital of the community together. It does not belong to any party solely. Therefore, the guidelines of the management that is appropriate and effective in the form of business management by the community. It should be in the form of community enterprises which place on the condition of the participation of the community in the full circle of business management and link from upstream to downstream. Benefits are allocated fairly and thoroughly with knowledge management and learning processes to achieve sustainable business management.

Therefore, in the operation step, the important tool relies on a participatory action research process, the integration of knowledge from both inside and outside, the interaction between the three key mechanisms (Community mechanism, academic mechanism, and support mechanisms) to achieve sustainable tourism development and management in the five key components. The overall goal is to find the value of the capital which is a capital of tourism resource, both cultural and natural resources which are unique and amazing. It needs to decode what hides in the value which has a deeply correlation. When it can be decoded, it must revive the value for the community to create the awareness and understanding in its

virtue. Also it creates a sense of pride and ownership, and then it leads to the creation of value for tourism. The interpretation of value needs added implementations in three parts: creative thinking, integration of knowledge management of community, and tourism management in form of the enterprise management. The community can truly access, control, and own the tourism resource in order to create the power of bargaining with outside interaction for tourism market management. All will lead to sustainable tourism management

Results

Several agencies such as TAT, Cooperative Promotion Department, TRF, NGOs in conjunction with community leaders were, later on, successful of making Mae Kampong a very popular eco-tourism attraction. Mae Kampong, now is well known as one of the best eco-tourism destinations in Northern Thailand and recipient of several tourism awards.

Mae Kampong utilizes its unique resources from beautiful forest, clean running water, all-year-round coolness, plus some of its supplementary products from Meang and coffee to attract tourists. It also develops very good facilities having modern home-stays, convenient transportation within less than an hour from the city, and joyful hospitalities to accommodate and entertain tourists from domestic and oversea.

While Mae Kampong enjoys its reputation, some problems emerge. From a number complains and findings of research works, people are evident about increase pollutants, loss of biodiversity in the ecology, poor distribution of income, decline in numbers of tourists, and some villagers begin to sell their lands to outsiders. (Chotigo (2006), Puangmala (2009), Yangarm (2010), Thitijamrueporn (2011) etc.) This is eventually not a sustainable tourism as it was promoted and made to be.

To cope with these problems, some initiatives and tourism activities have been added. The most influencing one is the Flight of the Gibbon that has been operating since 2009 drawing a lot of tourists to appreciate nature and adventure. (Treetopasia, 2013) Substantive proportion of income goes to the company and leaving pollutants to the village and ecology. This is definitely a mainstream tourism coexists with but jeopardizes the supposed to be "eco-tourism" of Mae Kampong.

Another effort to improve eco-tourism is the eco-health tourism at Mae Kampong starting in 2012. The Lanna Health Hub with collaboration from Ministry of Public Health, TAT, Lanna Traditional Medicine Association, and Faculty of Humanity, Chiang Mai University introduced health spa and traditional massage hoping that more income will be raised utilizing community's social capital.

In 2011, when the new concept and approach of developing the real eco-cultural tourism (as mentioned earlier) was introduced, the Thailand Research Fund has adopted and supported the Faculty of Social Science, Chiang Mai University to implement it through collaborative efforts from leaders of Mae Kampong, local government, and some concerned provincial offices. The biggest difference from what have been in operation either the "eco-tourism", "eco-health tourism", the "Flight of the Gibbon" or facility and pollution management is searching for the most powerful uniqueness of tourist resources of Mae Kampong that attract tourists, and that being owned, accessed, and controlled only by the community. The identified uniqueness of such tourist resources would then be creatively revitalized as a package containing what domestic and overseas quality tourists have long been looking for. Then management will be in the hands of community with more powerful negotiation with outside tourism business. If successful, it will result in more equitable distribution of income and better preservation of tourist resources. It is a sustainable tourism in general or eco-cultural tourism in particular.

After one and a half years of launching the new concept and approach, stakeholders discovered that meang collection and production of the villagers, which has been the main economic and livelihoods for decades, is perfectly the most fascinating uniqueness. It is perfect in multiple dimensions as follows. Firstly, the forest ecology of Mae Kampong is in perfect conditions not only for tourists to appreciate but also for sustainability of wild meang. Secondly, collection of wild meang leaf has been a perfect match between indigenous knowledge of the people about sustainability of the meang and biophysical ecology of the gardens and their vicinity. Thirdly, collection and production of meang mean more than income generation but also include food security and community reciprocity. And finally, all in all, life expectancy of villagers is considerably longer than average. After investigating further both in-depth and in broad relations of each and all dimensions, the preliminary uniqueness is the interdependence among "forest" and "meang" and "villagers" which is quite an interesting virtue of what is supposed to be the heart of tourism attraction. In addition, after incorporating exogenous knowledge plus some creativity to the meang collection, something most fascinating is unveiled. Meang collectors climbing up the hill to their meang gardens early in the morning for 30 minutes and more everyday accelerate their heartbeats and lung functioning. At the garden covered with morning mist, air, and sunshine makes perfect and purest oxygen. While collecting meang leaf collectors absorb such good aromatic extracts from meang as catechin polyphenol, tannin, theanine, etc which are useful for their health.

This is certainly the "Natural Therapy". This is one of the factors extending villagers' live expectancy. And this is what urban people, suffering from unhealthy conditions caused by urban environment and livelihoods, would love to spend a vacation here at Mae Kampong. (Higdon & Frei (2003), Kerdchoocheng (2012), Tea Institute (2012), Pengsung (2013), Prabudhanitisarn (2014), Tepkorn (2014) etc.)

To make this heart of tourist resource at Mae Kampong marketable, the new package now is under design. It contains activities focusing on natural therapy or "health recharging" for quality tourists. While staying they will escort meang collectors every morning to collect meang leafs. They can recharge their health. They can appreciate beautiful forest ecology as well as understand what the real and fascinating culture and livelihoods of Mae Kampong's villagers are. Other already existing activities, being homestays, health spa, cultural performances, or even the flight of the gibbon are just complementary. Moreover, with this core package, Mae Kampong villagers are better able to control, manage, and negotiate with outside tourism business in a more equitable manner, including implementing cultural and ecological preservation measures more effectively.

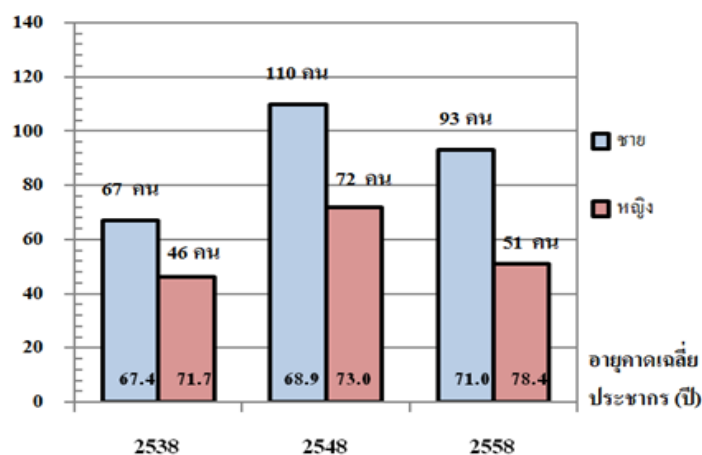


Figure 2: The elderly population of Huay Kaew Sub-district, Mae On District, Chiang Mai Province Older than the average years 1995, 2005 and 2015

The new Mae Kampong's tourism package includes (a) exposure to amazing interdependence among "forest" and "meang" and "villagers", (b) health recharging through "natural therapy" escorting the meang collectors each morning, (c) appreciation of authentic local cuisines made from collected nutritious and organic meang leafs, forest herbs and foods, (d) participating other already existing activities. The package suggests tourists, in order to obtain full benefits, to stay at least 1 week. The cost is approximately ฿ 1,500 a day for one

person covering everything including meals and homestay accommodations. This amount of money will be charged to internet-walk-in or company organized quality tourists once entering the village.



Figure 3: New Tourism Program of Ban Mae Kampong
“Back to the Nature: Recovery Health Recharge Your Battery Life”

If this new revitalization of eco-tourism at Mae Kampong is in full operation, it is expected that 38.88 percent of more income will be generated at the village from one tourist staying for one day. And this figure will be larger in terms of percentage and total revenues when tourists stay longer than what it is at the present. Income distribution as well as ecological preservation will also be better managed.

This new approach guided by the new concept of sustainable tourism has been carried on quite well at Mae Kampong. It is planned that the details of the package will be completed by 2019, then other necessary marketing and managing procedures will follow accordingly.

Conclusion & Discussion

“The Conceptualizing Sustainable tourism: From Virtue to Value of Tourist Resources”

Sustainable Tourism in any form being ecotourism, cultural tourism, or community based tourism to result in sustainable use of ecology and culture, with active participation and operation from owners of the tourist resources, and hence providing equitable distribution of incomes and benefits among stakeholders and local people, requires more than simple

concepts and actions. It needs certain concepts to guide practices for actors to realize activities leading to real and practical sustainable tourism.

From extensive and critical evaluation of concepts, theories, and practices of sustainable tourism, it is well concluded that key concepts to realize true and practical sustainable tourism as follows are crucial, and without them there will be sustainable tourism only by definition.

The first concept is the "virtue" of the tourist resources that by themselves are very attractive to visitors. Ecotourism that fails to meet the requirements and expectations of effectively creating and equitably distributing and sharing the incomes as well as preserving natural ecology and culture of locals, is the one that always commoditizes the uniqueness of natural resources/ecology and culture to serve the demands of outside tourists and markets. Under the situation of market/tourist driven ecotourism, important tourist resources are largely accessed and controlled by the businesses, leaving no room for local people who, in fact, own or live with these tourist resources to negotiate or make an effort to preserve their valuable capitals. Applying the concept of local capitals, it is well recognized that uniqueness and attractiveness of natural/ecological resources in any particular tourist location as well as the amazing culture have, by themselves, a long and meaningful integration of complex ecological components or accumulation of values, beliefs, through practical events in the livelihood of local people. Local people have through generations been living with and utilizing these local capital as part of their livelihood by the virtue of their local capital. The virtue of ecological or cultural resources attractive to outside tourists is now the most important element for sustainable tourism. If it is revitalized by the local people with academic support from outside, it will become not only a powerful force to unify community-ness, but also add more attractiveness to quality tourists who need authenticity and amazing-ness of ecology or culture they visit. Only through the virtue of these capitals, local people can access and control the commoditization of the resource.

The second connecting concept is the "value" of ecological or cultural tourist resources. Instead of making economic value by commoditization to be always the case, the virtue of these tourist attractive resources can be transformed by local people and make economic value out of them. No outsider, just local people comprehend the uniqueness and amazing-ness of these tourist resources. Making and explaining the virtue as well as taking tourists to participate as a part of livelihood while staying and visiting and to appreciate the

virtue can be the most powerful marketing strategy. This is, in fact, making economic value of the resources by the local people.

How, in practice, to transform the virtue to value of the tourist resources? We need to incorporate another set of concepts. They include creativity, knowledge management, and entrepreneurship. In essence, local people with knowledge and managerial support from outside assistance can undertake participatory action research. The mission is searching and analyzing appropriate knowledge coupled with new ideas and practical ways of managing tourist resources in such a way that the virtue and authenticity of resources can become the heart of the attractiveness.

The last concept for enhancing the bargaining power of local people when dealing with the powerful tourist businesses, who control the markets, in order to share economic benefits equitably, is the concept of access, control, and ownership over tourist resources of the local people. It is only appropriate that the one who accesses, owns, and controls the heart of economic commodity should have more bargaining power. If local people possess it, while the tourist businesses control outside markets, then opportunity for better income distribution, more equitable share of benefits and responsibility for conservation of the resources will be created.

Finally, tourism management can become a division of functions between locals who takes care of their value and virtue of their resources and hospitality, and outside tourist businesses who manage markets and transportation. Under this scheme, sustainable tourism in general or eco/cultural tourism in particular can be truly realized that will be required to set up some good ecotourism operations And more detailed description of how the government can support would also help.

The above-presented conceptualization, despite its being new, unconventional and challenging, has now gained more attentions to scholars and sustainable tourism stakeholders. Thailand Research Fund in cooperation with researchers, government and local authorities, and in particular, local people and leaders of the tourism destinations has tested and launched some of the eco-cultural tourism applying this concept, with accumulating positive results. The case of Mae Kampong eco-tourism, Mae On District, Chiang Mai Province, one of the concept testing sites can be illustrated very well.

The community of Mae Kampong is situated in the mountainous area with limited farmland but plentiful forest, sufficient water and all-year cool weather. Settlers migrated to the area several decades ago making a living by producing traditional fermented meang collected from the wild meang in the forest. About a decade ago, meang demand dropped drastically forcing the villagers to reduce their supply and seek for alternative sources of income, and tourism was very promising.

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