

Pha Wai Community's Tourism Evolution in Puan Pu Sub-District, Nonghin District, Loei Province.

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Abstract

This study aimed at examining the tourism development of Pha Wai community, Puan Pu sub-district, Nonghin district, Loei province. Data were collected through in-depth interview and a focus group with 3 groups of informants: tourism-related government officers, community leaders and tourism leaders from conservative tourism group, and members of the conservative tourism group. The tourism development of Pha Wai community could be divided into 6 periods chronologically comparing to human life cycle. Stage 1: newborn (2007 – 2012) was the period where the area and the community were initially prepared and developed to cater tourists. Stage2: crawling (2012 – 2013) was the beginning of tourism where tourists first came to visit in December, 2013. Stage 3: standing (2014) was the start of the conservative tourism group aimed at promoting tourism in the area. Stage 4: balancing (2015) was the time when the conservative tourism group was licensed as a club and various agencies organized trainings towards community-based tourism development such as Loei Rajabhat University, Loei Provincial Tourism and Sports Bureau, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Loei Office, and Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization) Area

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5. Stage 5: toddler (2016) was the initial phase of managing tourism systematically where administrative structure was officially set up with supports from tourism related organizations. Finally, stage 6: walking (2017) was the time when tourism in this area was fully managed by community.

Keywords: 1. Tourism development 2. Community tourism 3. Tourism interpretation

Introduction

Community-based development is a form of tourism management putting the importance on sustainability of the community's tourism resources. In other words, it can be said that it is an awareness of social capital value contributing to tourism resource management. This is because tourism activities create massive benefits to the Thai social and economic system. This includes income generating, job opportunity, increased product or goods production and tourism services. However, it must be based on appropriate resource utilization. Prachanan et al. (2007: 132) revealed that the development of cultural tourist attraction takes part in the promotion of relationships in the community and hospitality of the pride of their tourism product values which results in the expansion of tourism.

Conveyance of meaning in tourist places helps tourists gain knowledge and understanding history and arts/culture in tourist places plays important roles in the direct enhancement of impression and travelling experience of tourists. Not only this, it helps increase an opportunity for tourists to revisit. It also plays important roles in consciousness construction of tourists to be aware of values of natural resources, history, and arts/culture of the local community. This will create a positive attitude towards the participation in conservation and development of tourism resources for sustainability (Tourism Department, 2015: 8-11). The conveyance of meaning to increase values of tourism products in the community mainly aims to develop local people to gain knowledge and understanding about tourism products and a sense of belonging in tourism resources in their community. The process of tourism development should be on the basis of participation, learning, and pride of natural or tourism resources. In fact, community-based tourism management can result in a strong community and resource sustainability of the community.

Furthermore, conveyance of meaning about tourism products helps strengthen the community. Also, it can make people in the community have a sense of belonging and pride of tourism attractions, culture, traditional way of life and tradition of their community. This

meaning conveyance can create understanding, impression, and respectfulness to local culture. Hence, it has an effect on good attitudes and good relationships between people in the community and visitors. Also, meaning conveyance helps tourists gain knowledge and understanding in value and importance of natural resource, history, and arts/culture in each tourism attraction. All of these as mentioned establish a positive attitude of tourists about the conservation and development of tourism resources to be sustainable (Tourism Department, 2015: 8-11).

A study on Pha Wai community's tourism development in Puan Pu sub-district, Nonghin district, Loei province is aimed to be a tool informing local people, interested persons, and tourists visiting there to perceive community-based tourism development and impress with tourism activities there. In this matter, Pha Wai community and concerned agencies will be able to use results of the study as a basis of community-based tourism development. In other words, it can be a guideline for the implementation of tourism promotion together with the development of tourism potential in the area.

Objective

Specifically, this study aimed to explore community-based tourism development in Pha Wai community, Puan Pu sub-district, Nonghin district, Loei province.

Research Methodology

The researcher applied the qualitative research by using the participatory action research (PAR). The instruments used in this research were the checklist for community study, health tourism resources audit, the in-depth interview, the focus group, the triangulation, and the content analysis.

1. Research area

Pha Wai community, Puan Pu sub-district, Nonghin district, Loei province was the area in this research. This was because it had diverse tourism resources such as natural and cultural tourism resources, unique way of life, and working group for tourism management to cope with increased numbers of tourists there.

2. Key informants

The key informants in this study consisted of 3 groups as follows:

2.1 Personnel in government organizations concerning the development of meaning conveyance forms to increase values of tourism products of Pha Wai community i.e

Loei Provincial Tourism and Sports Bureau, Tourism Authority of Thailand (Loei Office), Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization) Area 5. and Puan Pu Local Administrative Organization.

2.2 Community leaders and various clubs in the community concerning the development of meaning conveyance for adding tourism product value of Pha Wai community. In other words, they were head of the village, local scholars and head of Community Tourism Club.

2.3 Members of Eco-Tourism Club in Pha Wai community. This comprised the following:

- Public hired car group (E-tack car) in the area
- Food shop and souvenir shop entrepreneur group
- Local tour guide group
- Homestay group
- Protection volunteer group

3. Content

Content in this study involved concepts, theories, and related literature. This included general context of Pha Wai community and concepts about tourism i.e. tourism and community-based tourism, tourism product and interpretation in tourist attractions.

4. Operational definition of terms

Context and evolution of tourism refers to environmental contributing to be tourist spots of Pha Wai community. In this respect, components of tourist spots are attraction, culture, community way of life, and process of tourism management in Pha Wai community.

Pha Wai community tourism refers to tourism which Pha Wai community determines direction process and their form of tourism. Tourism products are natural tourist attractions, history, culture, tradition, way of life and tourism activities of Pha Wai community.

Literature Reviews

Concepts on Tourism and Community-Based Tourism

The principle of community-based tourism in relations to the villagers' awareness of community ownership, pride on self-identities, local cultural identities, as well as tourism resources sustainability supported for intercultural perception is guided for the researcher's implications for the development of interpretation model of valued tourism products in Pha Wai village; moreover, the villagers' participation in setting up its goals and making their final

decision on effective tourism management is supported for community residents' economic benefits. Thus, both internal and external factors on community-based tourism management depended on the community leaders', community residents', and club members' eco-tourism preservation of Phu Pa Pao in Pha Wai village, their awareness of community-based participatory tourism development on valued tourism products in Pha Wai village, as well as networking collaborations with other different involved organizations.

Concepts on Tourism Products

The major detailed elements of tourism products cited in previous studies were different from some other sub-elements, which were all reviewed from Pha Wai community's information. In addition to fieldworks, interviews with the targeted group, as well as group discussions, it showed that tourism products found in Pha Wai community were sorted into five major aspects: 1) In terms of its attractions, different tourist sites with its unique local identities, nature, history, culture, and ways of life found in Pha wai community were attracted on tourists' visit; 2) In terms of its accessibilities, transport services together with additional numbers of buses and roads were all facilitated for tourists' visit; 3) In terms of its amenities, community facilities and infrastructural services such as waterworks, lights, telephones, toilets, restaurants, hospitals, banks, post offices, etc. were all provided for tourists' amenities; 4) In terms of its accommodations, nearer accommodations and the adequate numbers of rooms with its various prices and service minds were all facilitated for tourists' visit, and 5) In terms of its tourism activities, different tourism activities in Pha Wai community were all served for tourists' travelling requirements

Furthermore, tourism products inspired by tourists' interests were all resulted from tourists' critical thinking processes and concepts along with their experiences and perception happened in such an area and period of time. Also, tourists' relaxation, escapes from busy workplaces, particular interests, lasting memories, beautiful sceneries, new learning experiences in different villages, as well as their participation in managing unseen tourist attractions were all affected by tourists' motivation and their different travelling purposes. Therefore, the tourists' experiences in tourism productivity, as well as their travelling motivation on unique tourist attractions in Pha Wai community were also identified for tourists' requirements and importance of tourism products.

Concepts of interpretation in tourist attractions

Interpreting the meaning of tourism in Pha Wai community was a communication art, which offered stories stimulating tourists' better understandings, and awareness of the values, and importance of natural attractions with its historical backgrounds, and culture. Besides, it played an important role in adding valued products, offering tourist services, building tourists' enjoyment, impressing visitors, appreciating tourist's presented stories, as well as creating tourists' positive attitudes towards the preservation and sustainable development of tourism resources. In other words, meaningful communication in Pha Wai community's tourist attractions focused on the community's participation in perceiving and learning the problems within the community. Moreover, searching for important tourism products and creating stories in community attractions were well-planned and proceeded for the applications of other tourism products.

Results of the Study

This qualitative research was conducted in Pha Wai community, Puan Pu sub-district, Nong Hin district, Loei province. Data were collected through in-depth interview and a focus group with 3 groups of informants: tourism-related government officers, community leaders and tourism leaders from conservative tourism group, and members of the conservative tourism group. The results were as follows:

Results of the study revealed that Pha Wai community tourism was in the form of community-based tourism and the community was a learning base. There was self-development for sustainable tourism management supported by various agencies in terms of budgets and knowledge. This helped Pha Wai community be self-reliant through sustainable tourism management. Likewise, using existing local culture could be a tool for enhancing tourists to gain experience and knowledge about background of the community leading to impression and revisit. In fact, community leaders there develop their village to be a tourism community since 2007. Ever since, there was potential development of the community particularly on community-based tourism. To simplify the evolution of Pha Wai community tourism, the researchers had analyzed and proposed tourism evolution of Pha Wai community based on timeline as shown in Figure 1 in comparison with a human life cycle starting from a newborn symbolizing the initial stage of tourism to walking symbolizing the existence of community-based tourism administration.

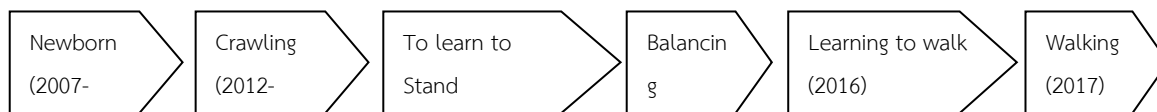


Figure 1 Timeline of tourism evolution of Pha Wai community

Naming of the evolution period of Pha Wai community tourism was based on the comparison with growth period of a child as follows:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Period 1 | Newborn (2007-2012), Initiation and community preparation |
| Period 2 | Crawling (2012-2013), Tourism launching in the community |
| Period 3 | Standing (2014), Establishment of Phupapor Conservative Tourism Club for tourism promotion. |
| Period 4 | Balancing (2015), Registered of Phu Pa Por Eco-Tourism club. Various agencies began to extend knowledge about community-based tourism. |
| Period 5 | Toddler (2016), Began to be systematic tourism management. |
| Period 6 | Walking (2017), Community-based tourism managerial administration. |

Period 1 Newborn

Mr. Boonlue Promhala, the village head of Pha Wai community, Puan Pu sub-district, Nonghin district, Loei province, told background of “Phupapor” reclaiming to be a conservation tourism place of Pha Wai community as follows:

“Prior to this, people in Pha Wai community were farmers growing rice and maize from generations to generations. Later on (2007), Royal Forest Department proclaimed Phukor and Phukratae areas in Puan Pu sub-district to be wildlife conservation area. Thus, people there suffered since they were not allowed to do farming there. Pha Wai community tourism began with conflicts about the cultivated land between local people and Royal Forest Department personnel. Eventually, the village head (Mr.Boonlue Promhala) compromised this incident and proposed the conflicted area to be a conservative tourism place. This aimed to generate incomes from tourism activities to Pha Wai community leading to be a strong community”. (20 March, 2018).

After that Mr. Boonlue Promhala hold a village meeting to inform villagers that he had a project to make Pha Wai to be a conservative tourism place because it was near Suan Hin Pha Ngam garden (Khun Ming of Thailand). He claimed that Phu Hor mountain there was resemble to “Fuji Yama” of Japan and there were cold climate, fog sea, and forest suitable for

nature lovers to visit. Mr. Boonlue Promhala had to use his talent to earn incomes for developing Phu Pa Por to be a tourist place in Loei province. He played music in various festivals, important places where there were a lot of people, and tourist places in Loei city. This was also because the local administrative organization perceived that it was fruitless to make Pha Wai to be a tourism community. In 2012, however, the area began to be developed continually to be ready to be Pha Wai tourism community.

Period 2 Crawling

This was the period of the development of area and people in Pha Wai community to be ready for tourism activities. In the late 2012, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and soldiers from Srisongrak military camp helped improve landscape, construct scenic areas/toilets, and grow trees. There was the village committee responsible for tourism managerial administration supported by Phukor-Phukratae Wildlife Conservation Region and Nonghin District Office. After that, people in Pha Wai community could generate supplementary incomes from tourism activities there. Moreover, There was a decrease in forest encroachment and local people helped conserve the forest together with reforestation. At the initial stage, there was a community meeting which focused on local people participation (informal). This made people in the community perceive benefits of community-based tourism in terms of supplementary incomes and environmental/cultural conservation. On the important religious day, people in the community made a survey to perceive beauty of the local nature as the natural capital.

Furthermore, the village head (Mr. Boonlue Promhala) told that it took many years to solve the conflicts between the villagers and forestry personnel. He and his villagers helped one another to prepare and beautify tourist spots. Some of the villagers helped construct a trail to Phuhor (Phu Pa Por at present), shelters, and scenic areas. Fortunately, the villagers were energetic to participate in this project which would be beneficial to their community and themselves. In 2013, there was a soft opening ceremony which the provincial governor was the president. At the initial stage, there were few tourists but there were more tourists after the public relations by mass media such as Anuwat Chathai program, news column of Channel 8 T.V., Phuying Thueng Phuying program (Channel 3 T.V.), and Thiew Lamai Thailand world program. Besides, there was public relations through Tourism Authority of Thailand, Loei office and other online social media such as Facebook and Instagram. All of these made Phu Pa Por be well-known among Thai and foreign tourists. Interestingly, on

December 5, 2013 there were a lot of tourists visiting Phu Pa Por and this incident continued up to the New Year Day. At the initial stage, people in Pha Wai community provided services on eateries and souvenir shops and after that many people there were members of hired car (E-tack car) to Phu Pa Por service.

Period 3 Standing

The Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization) Area 5 developed infrastructure contributing to tourism activities there such as construction of the road to Phu Pa Por. Also, there was a training of tourism personnel and trainings on garbage disposal and sorting, environmental conservation, local tour guides, eatery entrepreneurs, etc. In 2014, there was the establishment of Phu Pa Por Conservative Tourism aiming to : 1) promote tourism and conserve/rehabilitate natural resources and environment; 2) conserve arts and culture, good tradition, and local wisdoms; 3) be a center of tourism services and sustainable learning exchange; and 4) generate supplementary incomes and elevate quality of life of people in the community (Muenkul et al., 2016: 16).

In addition, Loei Rajabhat University hold a training for the community to gain knowledge and understand about tourism service and management. This included the development of landscape to be appropriate with tourism management. For example, knowledge transfer on food service and management; management of Phu Pa Por landscape; landscape rehabilitation of residential areas of Pha Wai community to welcome tourists; and development of local tour guides in Phu Pa Por area. All of these aimed to develop tourism potential for the community. Also, there was a connection of tourism route between Suan Hin Pha Ngam garden and Phu Pa Por. Not only this, local personnel were developed for sustainable tourism management and to be responsive to needs of future tourism of the community.

Prior to be Phu Pa Por Conservative Tourism Club at present, it began with the establishment of the community enterprise group, the Phu Pa Por conservation group, and the Baan Pha Wai tourism group. After that, they combined their group together to be Phu Pa Por conservative Tourism Club. Their goal was to be able to apply for the loans from. The government Savings Bank to buy E-tack car for tourism purpose. Those who applied for the club member must pay 20 baht for the application and 500 baht for the share (71 shares at present). The club members must develop tourist spots there (e.g. grass cutting, tree growing, Tourist service Center maintenance, etc.) every Buddhist observance day. Another reason of

the club establishment was to be self-reliant of the club members. As a matter of fact, their community enterprise group in the past was not able to propose a project to gain a supporting budget from other agencies directly. This was because it needed to apply through Puan Pu Local Administrative Organization which there were some conflicts. Thus, they had an idea to be registered as the community welfare organization for convenient operation (Uncle Kosol Nammali, secretary of Phu Pa Por Conservative Tourism Club, interviewed on 17th May, 2016).

Period 4 Balancing

Baan Pha Wai community-based tourism used the community as a learning base. There was self-development to develop sustainable tourism. Various agencies supported budgets and knowledge extension at the initial stage of the community-based tourism management. It was believed that sustainable tourism management could make the community be self-reliant. Existing local culture could be a tool enhancing tourists to gain experience and learn background of the community which would lead to impression and revisit.

On 17th April, 2015, committee of the club establishment went to register to certify the status of the community welfare organization for convenient operation. Mr. Kosan Nammali, secretary of Phu Pa Por conservative Tourism Club told that the tourism managerial administration was supported by Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization) Area 5, Tourism Authority of Thailand, Loei Office, and Loei Rajabhat University. This was based on knowledge extension, training on tourism strategy preparation, and public relations through various media. Particularly, Loei Rajabhat University took part in training which aimed to develop the area and managerial administration. This included potential development of cultural tourism personnel project, tourism service standards training project, landscape development of residential areas in the community and Phu Pa Por tourism area project, and garbage disposal in the community and Phu Pa Por tourism area project.

Period 5 Toddler

In this period, the development of Pha Wai community tourism was consistent with the tourism development strategy of Loei province. This was part of the sustainable tourism development context of Nonghin district. It put the importance on infrastructure development, convenient access to tourist spots, area development for tourism, tourism services, and public relations. Pha Wai community played more roles in tourism development participation. There was a systematic direction of tourism development. There was the designation of the club

administration committee (21 persons). The Advisory Committee Chairpersons were sheriff, head of Phukor-Phu Kratae Wildlife Conservation Region, and Director of Baan Pha Wai school. The operational process consisted of treasurer, public relations section, tour car section, tour guide section, shop section, the center care-taking section, and security guard section.

Phu Pa Por Conservative Tourism Club was responsible for managerial administration and operation on Phu Pa Por tourism. In this respect, the Tourist Service Center provided data on tourism and services. This included the management of E-tack car, local tour guide, and food shop/souvenir shop care-taking to meet standards. Also, there were managerial administration, personnel development, and tourism area development plans. Main incomes of the club were from E-tack car service (20% of the service charge and another 50% for development, repairing, and growing ornamental plants. The followings were expenses: annual compensation for the club committee (20%), community welfare/school activity fund (15%), and another 5% was for others. In this year, there were 134,837 tourists visiting Pha Wai community (102,527 adults, 32,210 children, and 100 foreigners). Out of this, 134,837 tourists went to Phu Pa Por mountain. The E-tack car service could generate an income for 8,090,220 baht and 20% belonged to the club (1,618,004 baht) (Mr. Boonlue Promhala, interviewed on 28th May, 2018).

Period 6 Walking

Pha Wai community developed community-based tourism in accordance with the sustainable tourism development plan of Nonghin district. This began with the establishment of Phu Pa Por Conservative Tourism Club in 2014 and registered the club in 2015. Also, there was the designation of the club committee (2 years/term). The management of Phu Pa Por Conservative Tourism Club was based on all components of community-based tourism management. The operational mechanism of the club could connect tourism with community development. There were appropriate rules and regulations and fair benefit distribution. Also, there was a fund contribution to social and economic development. Besides, it could create a learning process between the villagers and tourists there. In fact, the tourism management there put the importance on the sustainability of environment, society and culture. There was the classification of the club members for the convenience in managerial administration. This consisted of : 1) hired car group in the area; 2) food and souvenir entrepreneur group; 3) local meaning conveyor group (community tour guide); 4) homestay group; and 5) housewife producing product group.

In 2017, there were 121,363 tourists visiting Pha Wai community (95,953 adults, 25,210 children, and 200 foreign tourists). The E-tack hired car service could generate an income for 7,281,780 baht (20% belonged to the club). According to an interview with Mr. Boonlue Promhala on 28th May, 2018, it was found that, most tourists visiting Pha Wai community were educational trip groups and they used private cars.

Discussion/Conclusion

The development of Pha Wai community-based tourism could be classified into 6 periods based on the comparison with growth development of children in each period: 1) period 1 (Newborn), initiation and community preparation (2007-2012); 2) period 2 (Crawling), tourism launching in the community (2012-2013); 3) period 3 (Standing), establishment of Phu Pa Por Conservative Tourism Club for tourism promotion (2014); 4) period 4 (Balancing), registered of Phu Pa Por Conservative Tourism Club (2015); 5) period 5 (Toddler), began to be systematic tourism management (2016); and 6) period 6 (Walking), community-based tourism managerial administration (2017), as shown in Figure 2.

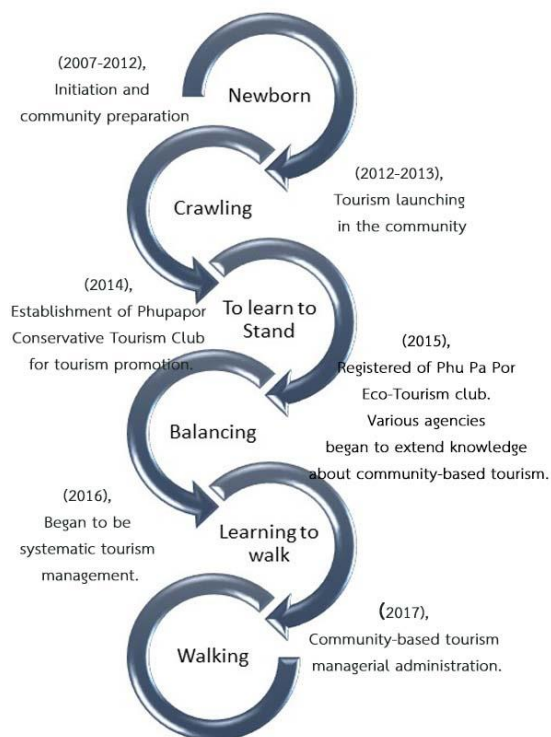


Figure 2 Evolution of Pha Wai community-based tourism based on the comparison with growth of children in each period

Community-based tourism at Pha Wai community employed the community as the learning base. There was sustainable tourism development supported by various agencies in terms of budgets and knowledge extension leading to be sustainable self-reliant. Existing local culture was used as a tool for enhancing experience and the community learning for tourists leading to impression and revisit (Surachet Umsan, 2018: 90). The evolution of tourism at Pa Wai community in Loei province attempted to encourage tourists to understand what the community presented to them. It also tried to make tourists be curious and enjoyable while visiting there.

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