

**THE MANAGEMENT STEPS TOWARDS THE SUCCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF
MAE KAMPONG TOURISM COMMUNITY**

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ABSTRACT

The community based tourism (CBT) has become another alternative for development in the remote suburban areas of Thailand. For a couple of decades, the CBT has been linked to the development goals in terms of increasing income for local people, improving their life quality, and leading them out of poverty. Not only CBT communities that gained advantages from this kind of tourism, but tourists benefit from it by experiencing the local way of life as well. However, the CBT is not as simple as just thinking and doing. The communities need to clearly understand how to manage and operate the CBT sustainably. Otherwise it would be just a firework that popped in the sky and vanished. So, the management of the CBT community is the key to success and sustainability. This paper analyzes the management steps, and extracts the management know-how that led them to the success of a community that is located in the mountainous area of Chiang Mai which is in the Northern region of Thailand namely Mae Kampong village. By collecting data through observation and interviews, and also reviewing related literatures, it is believed that the success and sustainability of Mae Kampong's CBT operation is based upon the continuous process of the management cycle.

Keywords: Management system, sustainable community management, strategic planning, PDCA cycle, community based tourism

INTRODUCTION

At the present time, community based tourism (CBT) has become a popular alternative not only for tourists but also for local communities that are looking for the way to adapt, adjust, and survive in the modern world. Still being a developing country, Thailand including many local communities in several parts of the country is suffering from the poverty problem which plagues the country for a long time. According to Pasquali (2015), Thailand has been ranked eightieth on the global list of the richest countries measured by the total gross domestic product (GDP) and the power purchasing parity (PPP) which is behind other leading ASEAN countries such as Singapore (ranked third) and Malaysia (ranked forty fifth). In the wake of Thailand's CBT in

recent decades, it shades new light of hope for the Thai people especially in suburban and remote areas to have a new way of life to have more income, and to improve their life quality.

Thailand's aims to increase local people's income and improve the quality of life through the CBT comply with one of the global issue. According to the United Nations (2015) and Brandon (2017), the recent shift of the development in the global scale since 2015 was the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adjusted from the time-bounded goals for all nations or so called the new Millennium Development Goals (MDG). One of the SDGs is aimed to solve the poverty and hunger problem. If the aim of the CBT in Thailand is achieved, then the poor local people could earn more income and have a better life, which could lead the country to the goal of poverty eradication.

In order to achieve the objective of operating the CBT, the local communities in Thailand need to be well prepared, and consistently work on the overall process of the tourism. By doing so, the local communities need to have the management system to enable and drive themselves forward, and reach their goals sustainably. The steps consist of the Plan, the Do, the Act, and the Check or so called the PDCA cycle (Bushell, 1992; Johnson, 2016). For the plan (P), it is very important for the local people who are looking to operate the CBT to have the vision of their communities in the future. So, they can work on the operation towards that scenario (Cohen, 2006; Stephan, 2010; Cottrell, 2014). Furthermore, the communities also need to assess the availability of manpower and budget which are the management resources for the CBT operation. Next step is the do (D). Basically at this point is the step involved with the human resource management (HRM). In other words, it means that the communities have to prepare local people for the CBT. In every organization, people are considered to be human resource which is needed to be managed, and human resource in this context is the local people in the communities. To reach the CBT goals as planned, the local people have to be trained and work systematically (Armstrong, 2006). Then, the process would follow by the check step (C). At this point, the CBT communities need to evaluate the result of the operation in the do step to find out the mistakes or the issues that could be improves (Johnson, 2016). Finally, the last step for the management is the act step (A). The CBT communities should apply a better solution for the should-be-improved issues found on the check step in order to improve the overall process of the CBT (Bushell, 1992). If the communities can continue to follow these management steps, then it is likely that these CBT communities can be successful, and reach to the state of sustainability.

This paper will scrutinize the management of Mae Kampong village to understand the reasons behind the success and sustainability on the CBT of the village. The purposes of this study are to underline the importance of Mae Kampong's management steps, to extract the know-how, and to suggest an alternative for the CBT realm. Mae Kampong is a famous community in Chiang Mai province located in the Northern region of Thailand. In addition, the community is also well recognized for their practice on the environmental conservation which enriches them with variety of natural resource(Phuangmala, 2010).

Although the CBT management has been studied by many scholars, especially in Thailand, there are some aspects of the CBT that should be addressed. Thus, the researchers would like to underline and remind the local people in the communities who seek to gain more income and improve their life quality through the CBT to be aware of and emphasize on the importance of the ways in management. This paper will begin with the generalization of the community and the CBT. Then, it will follow by the description of the research methodology. After that, it will demonstrate the management steps of Mae Kampong, and analyze them by viewing through the concept of the PDCA cycle. Above all, it is believed that the application of the management steps of the village is the major reason for its success and sustainability on the CBT.

1.1 Generalization on the CBT

As mentioned earlier that the CBT has become more popular in recent decades. Some scholars view the CBT as the creative type of tourism that offers tourists the pleasure in experiencing the way of life of local people, getting close to the communities, and understanding the culture that is different from theirs (Creative Tourism Thailand, 2014). However, other people also perceive the CBT as the tourism that is based upon the balance between the social issue, the economic issue, and the environmental issue (Suansri and Yeejaw-haw, 2013). Moreover, the CBT have to be operated by the local people who are the members of the communities. The whole process implementation of the CBT belongs to the people from the beginning to the end (Blackstock, 2005; Putjorn, 2013).

Furthermore, the differences between the mainstream tourism and the CBT also need to be explained. Putjorn (2013) suggests that on the one hand, the mainstream tourism usually involves with the travel agency and tour operators with a large group of tourists go sightseeing or scenic touring on the risk-free, non-adventure, and convenience basis. While on the other hand, tourists who choose the CBT would seek for the adventure and experience especially on the new things and knowledge. In addition, these new things include life experience, tradition, and way of life.

Moreover, more description of the CBT should also be added for a better understanding. The ownership of the CBT has to belong to the local people. It is vital that everyone in the community participates in the whole operation which should make them proud of what they are doing. Furthermore, all the tourism activities and services must be environmental friendly, while the local culture, traditions and way of life need to be preserved. Most importantly, the CBT also have to generate income for local people, which they can use it to improve their life quality at the end of the day (Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration, 2013).

Another issue of the CBT that cannot be opted out is the CBT principles. Without these principles, the communities would suffer from finding the way towards the right course of actions (Denman, 2001). Firstly, the assessment for the communities' readiness is required to understand whether the communities are capable of receiving tourists or not in terms of areas, resources, activities and services. Secondly, it is required for the CBT communities to have the attractive tourism activities and services which could bring more tourists to the locale. Finally, the local people have to obtain the profits of the CBT operation distributed back to them as it

could answer the objectives of the CBT to increase people's income and improve their quality of life.

Referring to the CBT definitions, characteristics, and principles, it would lead to the question of how and in what way that Mae Kampong village has done for these past years to be successful and sustainable. The following parts of this paper will lead to the further study on the know-how of the community. Therefore, it is very crucial for communities that would like to transform themselves into the CBT destinations to understand the way to manage the CBT or at least use the result of this study to be the basis of the development for their respective communities.

1.2 Methodology

This research's main objective was to scrutinize the management of the CBT by the local community in the Northern part of Thailand, Mae Kampong village. By doing so, the research qualitative approach was used for data collection of this study. In order to obtain the problem insights, the in-depth scenario, and the way of doing something, it is believed that the qualitative approach would be appropriate as it could provide the participants' perspective, history, and phenomenon (Ryan, 2006; Gray, 2008; Family Health International, 2015). It will be followed by the analysis of the gathered data through the PDCA cycle that breaks the management into four steps, which are the plan step, the do step, the check step, and the act step (Bushell, 1992; Johnson, 2016; The Deming Institute, 2016).

The researchers began this study by observing the phenomena occurred in the village. Then, it followed by the in-depth interviews. As for the sample of this study, the researchers used the convenient sampling technique to determine and purposively selected them to participate in the interviews. The interviewees consist of the tourism committee, the village management committee, the local business runners, and the local community members. These groups of people were the ones involving in the CBT management on the daily basis, and could provide the vital information regarding the matter from several viewpoints. By employing the semi-structure set of questions, the in-depth interviews were conducted. Additionally, several issues on the CBT management of the village were raised, while other related questions on the operation were also asked on the simultaneous basis. The validation of the obtained information from the data collection has been done with the triangulation.

For the concept of the PDCA cycle, it is a decision making tool that works in a continual loop towards the improvement of the process. It enables the managers of organizations to identify the problems which are needed to be solved for better working solutions (Bushell, 1992; Arveson, 1998). The cycle was created back in 1950 by W. Edward Deming with the desire for any organization to continuously improve the process of the operation (Johnson, 2016). The researchers applied this concept to analyze Mae Kampong's CBT management. The PDCA cycle is a four-step process consists of the plan step, the do step, the check step, and the act step. First of all, the plan step is the phase that the organizations have to design on what to do and why (Moen, 2010). This stage allows the CBT community to assess available resources such as manpower and budget, and set the course of actions that would lead to the goals. For the second

step, the do, is the stage where the implementation of the plan is taken (Arveson, 1998). After the CBT communities have a clear scenario, goals and objectives, then they have to follow the plan they designed towards the desired achievements. For the third step, the check, assesses the results of the implementation in the previous step whether everything goes well or should it need any improvement (Johnson, 2016). The CBT communities have to evaluate on their results of actions, and explore the process to find out issues that are needed to be fixed or improved. The final step, the act, is the step that the organizations have to bring what has been found in the check step into consideration for further changes (Weinstein & Vasovski, 2004). The CBT communities need to search for other opportunity to improve the overall management process. Moreover, employing the PDCA cycle also provides an advantage for organizations as it offers a method for improvement, which allows the organizations, Mae Kampong village in this case, can continually and sustainably improve in the future.

2. The Management of Mae Kampong

In order to scrutinize the way that Mae Kampong village became successful, the analysis of the community through the concept of the PDCA cycle have to be conducted. The cycle provides the necessary information, and breaks it down into each step of the management (Johnson, 2016). It could provide information on Mae Kampong's development goal, objectives of the CBT, and the list of work that needs to be entailed. Additionally, the issues of management resources that are available for the CBT operation are also included. As for the rest of the cycle, it could provide the details on the course of actions that would lead to the goals, the problems or issues that need to be improved, and the alterations that should be done. So, the following parts will be the step-by-step analysis of Mae Kampong's CBT management.

2.1 Step One: Planning the Future

The first and the beginning step of the CBT management of Mae Kampong village require the knowledge of the context surrounding the community before making a strategic plan. The plan could lead an organization to reach its goal and fulfil its objective which consists of vision, mission, objective, and strategy (Cohen, 2006; Stephan, 2010; Cottrell, 2014). It began when people of Mae Kampong village were envisioned to transform their village into the tourism community (Phuangmala, 2010). The operation at the time was implemented under the leadership of Prommin Phuangmala, the former village headman. The first purpose of the idea was to increase the flow of community's economy, which could lead to the second purpose, which is to improve people's life quality in the long-run. One of the indicators for the community's better economy is the purchasing power of the local people (Abuaf & Jorion, 1990; Acaravci & Ozturk, 2010). If the people of Mae Kampong have more income, then it means that they also have more purchasing power which could stimulate the economy in the community. Furthermore, the improved well-being of the local people is another issue that could indicate the life quality of the local people (Lucchetti & Font, 2012). At that time, the life quality of Mae Kampong is not as well as of today and also not hygienic. So, the local people suffered from

diseases and other health problems. If these people were healthier, then their life quality would be better subsequently.

Furthermore, it is believed that once the organizations have the plans, then it is time for them to entail on work and resources. If the plan is clearly strategized, then the working details should be designed, and the management resources can be assessed and placed to each detail (Ruangsakul, 2013). For the context of Mae Kampong, the community has plenty of the natural resources including the forest area where variety of plants, trees and animals are resided. In addition, they also have stone garden, stone cliff, rocking stone, and waterfall. By these available natural resources, the community could create the trekking routes for tourists to experience the beautiful nature of Mae Kampong. Moreover, the cultural resources also offer the community opportunities to create more tourism activities and services including local performances, music, and massage. Referring to the location of the community that situated on the mountain, agriculture has been the major source of income for the local people especially for herb and tea production. As a result, the community developed the way of production and became popular with herbal tea, fermented tea, and tea leaves pillow. However, the management resource, the budget especially, was insufficient in the initial stage. With the lack of budget and tools, the only available resource for them was manpower, which all of local people involved and helped each other to transform the village.

From the plan step of Mae Kampong village, the idea of transforming the remote agricultural community into the tourism community could be summarized as in table 1.

Table 1 Strategic Plan of Mae Kampong village at the initial stage

Vision	To become a tourism community and destination
Missions	1. To increase the flow of economy in the community 2. To improve life quality of local people
Objectives	1. To increase local people's income 2. To develop local people's health 3. To improve local people's attitude on service providing
Strategies	1. Create occupations related to the CBT 2. Provide knowledge on health education 3. Train local people on customer service

2.2 Step Two: Doing by the Charted Courses

For the second step of the PDCA cycle is the do step. At this stage, the CBT community has to work on what have been planned to achieve the goal. To be a tourism community, it means that there must be tourist attractions. In the case of Mae Kampong village, the local people offer the forest and mountain trekking activity. A journey into the forest and climbing up on the mountain path to reach waterfall, stone garden, and stone cliff were offered to tourists to experience the nature surrounding the village. Also, there were several occupational groups in Mae Kampong that provide opportunities for other CBT service providers, and at the same time they could attract tourists as well. However these occupational groups operated separately from each other.

Furthermore in order to receive tourists into the community, the local people in the community needed to understand the importance of health education. The majority of tourists would like to experience the new and different way of life, traditions and culture (Creative Tourism Thailand, 2014). As a consequence, the people of Mae Kampong had to agree with that. Before started receiving tourists, the local people helped each other to build standardized facilities including hygienic toilets in the village. In addition, they also had several seminars on the knowledge of hygiene and health issues in order to provide the basic services.

Moreover, in order to ensure that all tourism activities and services were satisfied for tourists, the service providers are also required to understand the appropriate way of doing (Evenson, 2011). The local people of Mae Kampong have gone under the practical trainings on customer service. They were trained to have service mind. Additionally, the practices on several issues such as accommodation preparation, meal hygiene, and safety, were also arranged in order to provide services for tourists as good as possible. Thus, the assessment of the results from these actions will be further explained in the next section, the check step.

2.3 Step Three: Checking the Outcomes

In the third step of the cycle, the check, it requires the community to consider the results of the plan implementation, and then assess the whole process to find out what should have been improved. As for Mae Kampong, after the local people had operated the CBT at the initial stage, it turned out that there were two kinds of feedback that concerned the people. The first kind was the satisfaction from the tourists. People who went for Mae Kampong's CBT activities and services found that even though the village has plenty of natural resources and interesting cultural activities, they thought that the tourism routes in the village were not connected. Tourists had to choose to go from one attraction and return to the village before leaving for another site, where they should have been connected together as a single circulated route. Moreover, the similar issue also raised a concern to the occupational groups as they allowed tourists to visit and participate in the arranged activities. However, they operated separately from each other.

Despite of the route connecting issue, tourists also concerned for the limited range of activities and services. They believed that there should be more interesting activities and wider range of alternative services offered to tourists. It was suggested that the more adventurous activities

should be added, while the cultural activities were much satisfied. However, another point of concern was directed to the CBT services. At the beginning of the CBT, there were few options provided for tourists in terms of meals. People who were vegetarians found difficulty regarding the matter.

The second kind of feedback was the internal management of Mae Kampong village. The most important issue that could lead to other problems in any organization is the human resource management (Armstrong, 2006). The income distribution had become a problem. Only some people in the community got the income from the CBT even though other or most of the people helped operating the CBT. In addition, the accommodation was also a problem as there was no management of the queuing system, and resulted in the occurrence of conflict between local people. Furthermore, another concern that also happened, the migration of young people to work in the city area. On the one hand, some people might believe that the migration of young people to work in the city could stimulate the economy system in the larger scale. On the other hand, it could damage the socio-economy of the local community where these young people came from (Hoffer, 2014). It also happened with Mae Kampong village. The young people of the community at the time had few roles to take part in the CBT. Later on, after the CBT of the community had been in a better state, the age gap between people in the community became bigger. So, by the assessment of the CBT operation of Mae Kampong, it raised several concerns that need to be fixed and improve that will be further demonstrated in the next section.

2.4 Step Four: Acting for Changes

The fourth and final step of the PDCA cycle, the act, requires the CBT community to act upon the problems found in the previous step. Once the people of Mae Kampong village learned that there were several issues that need to be addressed, the followings were the ways that the community took to overcome their problems. For the first concern regarding the tourism activities and services offered to tourists was the limited range of activities. The community decided to allow external business runners to rent a land in the village to organize new kind of activities such as jungle adventure and zipline tour. Additionally, they also established local cafés. While another concern was that the places of tourism activities in the community did not connect to each other. So, the community made the alteration by making a tourism route that connected from one activity to another. For example, the route began with the trekking in the forest before climbing up onto the mountain. Then, tourists had to take the path that led back to the village before participating in the activities of each occupational group or vice versa.

Later, tourists would have an opportunity to experience food from the local cuisine in the evening. At this point, another improvement that was needed to be done is about the variety of food provided to tourists. Despite trying to prepare more ingredients for more choices of food, the community also developed a reservation system. Tourists had to reserve the accommodation and meal sets as their preferences prior to the arrival. However, the food for the walk-in tourists was also available.

Moreover, the internal problems also needed to be solved. In terms of the income distribution problem, the community encountered with several chained problems, especially the conflict between people in the community. So, they consensually agreed to form the tourism committee to run the CBT of the community at the policy level. The committee also created the accommodation queuing system, which fairly provided opportunity for local people who registered as service providers. Furthermore, they also established the management system based upon the co-operative structure. With the co-operative style that made the income distribution became transparent and accountable, the new distribution system offered the solution to the internal conflict as everyone involved in the CBT would obtain the fair share of income (United State Department of Agriculture, 1997). Another internal issue that had to be solved was the migration of young people. In order to solve the problem, the CBT committee of Mae Kampong and the local people agreed to add the roles of young people by involving them in the CBT operation, and letting them to participate with their family. So, they would acknowledge that there was no need to move and search for work elsewhere. Additionally, other welfares of the community provided for the young ones were also an incentive to retain them with the community.

3. Conclusion

Throughout the PDCA cycle of Mae Kampong village, it becomes clear that the success of the community was credited to their managerial skill. It was the key to solve internal conflicts between local people, and led to the better provision of CBT activities and services (Jitpakdee, Harun & Zain, 2016). Moreover, the successful management of the community also increased the income of the local people which led to the better life quality. Not only individual's objectives had been answered, but the collective goals of the community and the MDG mentioned earlier were also reached. As a result of the management by following the steps of PDCA at the initial stage of the village, it provided the essential information for communities that would like to operate the CBT. They have to set their goals clearly before planning strategies, and entail the ways to work towards the desired end. Furthermore, they have to follow and implement on what have been planned. Then, the communities need to check for errors, mistakes, or issues that may lag the CBT operation or cause problems. After that, they have to fix, modify and improve on what they found in order to provide the best CBT activities and services. Most importantly, these management steps taken by Mae Kampong village have to be done and repeated continually. For over ten years of experience and lessons, the one thing that the people of Mae Kampong village find out to be a necessary supporting factor for the CBT management is continuity. Even though the leadership of the village may be passed on to its successor and the management steps are still on going, the tourism committee has to be responsible for steering the community towards the course that has been charted. If the tourism communities could follow these steps and continue to improve as suggested, then not only that they could be successful, but they could achieve the SDG(s) in terms of overcoming the poverty, and reach the state of sustainability as well (Bushell, 1992; Arveson, 1998; Moen, 2010; Johnson, 2016; Brandon 2017). In other words, they have to keep changing for the better.

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