

Rural Tourism Management Accroding of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in Thailand



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ABSTRACT

In Thailand, community-based tourism has been used as an important tool for economic revitalization and poverty elimination in over 150 rural communities both in a remote and an urban fringe area, which is associated with the philosophy of “sufficiency economy” applied in agricultural practice in terms of “sufficiency economy agriculture” and the national campaign titled “One Tambon One Product (OTOP).” It is assumed as a model for sustainable rural tourism development in rural Thailand, which has never been evaluated its performances in overall. Tourism has played a significant role to economy by attracting foreign revenues of about four billion baht a year. Tourism also leads to the expansion in some linkage industries such as hotels, restaurants, transportation, retail and souvenir stores and so forth. All of these contributions cause the growth of GDP, employment, export, investment as well as the government expenditure. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has put emphasis on the sustainability of tourism development and conducted a so-called Sustainable Tourism Development Plan which aims to balance the triple bottom line, including, economy, environment and society, while mixing in His Majesty the King’s “sufficiency economy” concept.

Keywords: Tourism Management, Sufficiency Economy

1. Introduction

The 9th-11th National Economic and Social Development Plans revealed vision of the country development on quality social development. This placed the importance of balance, adequacy, and smart people with code of conduct, and self-reliance (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board: ONESDB, 2006). While Thailand is aimed to develop the country's economy and prepared social order, the family institution which plays vital role towards quality of life development of an individual have not been overlook. Thus, the community must adjust its paradigm on moderate livelihoods with reasonableness to build self-immunity for the strong community. This conforms to the policy and direction of the country administration and development on the basis of the sufficiency economy principle in accordance with the Royal Initiatives (Prime Minister's Office, 2005)

The tourism industry is the one of important that stimulate economic growth. The public and private sectors to promote the campaign for foreign tourists by empathize the souvenirs are OTOP products with a focus on quality and value added. Cooperation is the process of groups of organisms working or acting together for common, mutual, or some underlying benefit, as opposed to working in competition for selfish benefit. Community has been promoted both the tourism project and the One Tambon One Product project, both of which have been funded by the government to improve the well-being of the community. In the present, found that the group of One Tambon One product is not cooperating with the group of tourism, resulting in the product being made inaccessible to tourists for sale as a souvenir, making the product surplus. It should study the cooperation network for product development with tourism in accordance with the philosophy of sufficiency economy to be concrete and sustainable in each community.

The local hosts are very important in tourism. One critical key factor of sustainable tourism development is local people. Some local communities have an ability to conduct their tourism based on the concept and principle of community- based tourism; the concept that can be accompanied with the OTOP model. These can increase positive investment atmosphere down to the locals. Moreover, the local communities' sense of belonging of and pride on their cultural and natural assets can be enriched by getting them involved in tourism planning and development process, so that they help protect their resources and care for the physical environment and the ecology in their area. Additionally, the most important aspect that should also be firstly prioritized is human resource development. Knowledgeable and discerning personnel will be able to apply and implement the established policies into

practice with the highest level of effectiveness, efficiency and productivity. Trainings and capability endorsement programs can be initiated particularly in the fields of professional tourist guide and foreign language skills, knowledge of history and cultures of attractions, and of tour business units. Trainings and workshops of special skills for small and medium entrepreneurs must be initiated in order to produce more quality human resources to serve the industry. There must be cooperation of public and private sectors. Additionally, trainings for managerial position should be carried out.

2. Rural Tourism Management

Rural Tourism generally refers to visits to places outside major metropolitan areas which specifics agriculture-based activity (Lane, 1994 and Melson, 2012). However, the concept has developed over the years to become a complex, multifaceted activity where it is no longer viewed as just tourism taking place in the countryside and agricultural concerns. (Melson, 2012). In particular, rural tourism extends beyond farm based tourism it includes special interest holidays, nature-based and ecotourism holidays, walking, climbing, cycling and riding holidays, adventure, sport and health tourism, hunting and angling, educational travel, arts, heritage and historic recreation, festivals and events, food and cultural tourism, and in some areas, ethnic tourism (Lane, 1994; Butler et al, 1998; Hall et al, 2005; Gorge et al, 2009; Wijaya, 2013; Sillignakis, 2014).

Consequently, these notions are likely to promote forms of rural tourism supply which build on the inherent character of rural areas, notably their attractive natural environments, original local culture and traditional systems of land use and farming (Bramwell, 1994). Rural tourism, therefore, is identified as a tool for rural revitalization where a socio-economic imbalance (Torre et al., 2013) by the characteristics of rural area, which include small settlements, low population densities, land use, agrarian and forest-based economics, traditional societies, and community identity and heritage (Bramwell, 1994; Okech et al., 2012:). From this array of varying definitions, one point to clarify definition in my opinion is describing in terms of the word “rurality” which is associated with the characteristics of rural spaces, areas where rural communities exist and rural activities occur (Kikuchi, 2010). This is because all tourism which takes place in rural areas is not rural tourism but it can be “urban” in form such as theme parks and leisure hotels (Lane, 1994a). Tourism growth can be an urbanizing influence, which by destroying rurality, a unique selling point for holidays in rural areas (Lane, 1994b).

Rural tourism has advanced and diversified in time and space, becoming an element of the rural development policy (Baltes and Ciuhureanu, 2010). Rural tourism in this study focuses on agrarian community in a remote and urban fringe area. Rural tourism in the remote area is examined by many scholars due to attractive rurality. Rural tourism is well-adapted and successful in Europe due to a balanced development method to protect and capitalize patrimony. The rural travel product is considered as a fundamental equation: accommodation in an agro-tourist boarding house = holiday in a village + spending free time in the rural surrounding. The elements of this equation are the crucial strategies to attract tourists spending their holidays in the rural hinterlands. Furthermore, the travel trips' motivation in the rural areas is represented by the unchanged natural environment by traditions and habits, by the activities practiced in these surroundings. One of the countries with the success experience is France (Baltes and Ciuhureanu, 2010). Focusing on Asia, rural tourism was first positioned as an important measure to realize positive changes in depopulated farm villages. In Japan, the agricultural experiences along with farmer enthusiasm are used to attract visitors which is becoming of value to developing tourism as a form of rural diversification (Wijaya, 2013). In Taiwan, rural tourism has promoted by two methods. One is to proceed from the agricultural products, to provide fresh fruits and vegetables, organizing agricultural festivals to attract urban dwellers to rural areas. Another way is through the rural community building to create and shape the characteristics of rural communities to provide a quality living environment, urban residents away from the metropolitan area to relieve work pressure (Yung Feng and Ching Lee, 2013).

3. Sufficiency Economy

Since Thailand has transformed to a newly industrialized country over the past two decades, national development has centered on urban-based industrialization and expanded global trade through direct foreign investment and international capital flows. However, inequalities in income and wealth distribution between urban and rural areas emerged as critical social and economic problems. In order to solve such problems, the government has promoted the community-based enterprises (CBEs) for additional source of income for in rural and farm households since the 5th National Socio-economic Development Plan (1982-1986) (Natsuda et al, 2011). Until 1997, Thailand encountered the Asian Economic Crisis, the "Economic Self-Sufficiency" for sustainable rural development was propagated based on the King's philosophy "Sufficiency Economy" (Routray, 2007). Promoting and

sustaining development, therefore, is the greatest challenge for the government to mitigate the poverty in rural areas. Sufficiency's theme is that a successful development strategy must be an integrated mix of rural, agriculture and community based-private sector initiatives supported by government organizations (Robert and Kanchana, 2007).

“Sufficiency Economy” is a philosophy placing the importance of proper livelihoods (middle path) and self-practices of people in the country of all level, from the family to the community (ONESDB, 2004). Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board applies the philosophy of sufficiency economy to be a guideline for the determination of policies, planning, and project implementation. That is, human resource is the center for sustainable development with balance in economy, society, politics, and environment for happiness and self-reliance (The Chaipattana Foundation, 2005).

The sufficiency economy is a philosophy for moderating the forces of globalization that comprises three elements: moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity, and it requires two conditions: knowledge and integrity (NESDB, 2007). Moderation is a way to avoid suffering from unreasonable situations. Reasonableness entails planning for causes and effects of relationships in advance. Self-immunity refers to personal approaches to unexpected shocks. Knowledge means accumulating information, local wisdom, and technology for the improvement of human capital, and integrity refers to ethics and virtues, patience, honesty, and greed control (Calkins, 2012; Jitsanguan, 2012). Reasonableness indicates moderation, and moderation builds self-immunity, and self-immunity is a requisite for reasonableness (Fig. 2-3). Sufficiency economy practices on the middle path to withstand internal and external changes regarding economic, social, environmental, and cultural factors (Mongsawad, 2009) and that can be applied in any fields at all levels, but particularly in agriculture (the new theory); these practices allow farmers to become self-sufficient, self-reliant, and frugal in a three stage process.

4. Conclusion

Thailand's social and economic plan relates to tourism promotion policies. The sufficient economy philosophy is accepted to apply for both public sector and private sector. This approach can use for risk protection and for solving problems in households, businesses, communities and the country. Economic development must be done step by step. It should begin with the strengthening of our economic foundation, by assuring that the majority of our population has enough to live on. Once reasonable progress has been

achieved, we should then embark on the next steps, by pursuing more advanced levels of economic development. Here, if one focuses only on rapid economic expansion without making sure that such a plan is appropriate for our people and the condition of our country, it will inevitably result in various imbalances and eventually end up as failure or crisis as found in other countries. Since then His Majesty the King developed the concept further which can now be summarized as Sufficiency Economy is a philosophy that stresses the middle path as the overriding principle for appropriate conduct by the populace at all levels. This applies to conduct at the level of the individual, families, and communities, as well as to the choice of a balanced development strategy for the nation so as to modernize in line with the forces of globalization while shielding against inevitable shocks and excesses that arise. Sufficiency means moderation and due consideration in all modes of conduct, as well as the need for sufficient protection from internal and external shocks. To achieve this, the application of knowledge with prudence is essential. In particular, great care is needed in the utilization of untested theories and methodologies for planning and implementation. At the same time, it is essential to strengthen the moral fiber of the nation, so that everyone, particularly political and public officials, technocrats, businessmen and financiers, adheres first and foremost to the principle of honesty and integrity. In addition, a balanced approach combining patience, perseverance, diligence, wisdom and prudence is indispensable to cope appropriately with critical challenges arising from extensive and rapid socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural changes occurring as a result of globalization.

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