

Assessing to strengthen multicultural communities using the dimension of creative technology and sustainable tourism in Mae Hong Son province, Thailand.

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Abstract

This study was participatory action research. The objectives are to manage the research plan for efficiency, follow up and examine the research project under the research plan according to the objectives, and formulate a strategy for cultural community tourism management at the provincial level. The main activities were the evaluation and monitoring of research results in 15 communities in Pai, Pang Mapha, Muang, Khun Yuam, and Mae La Noi districts in Mae Hong Son Province. The results of the research showed that the research project under the research plan was carried out according to the plan. Budget expenditure is effective. 15 ethnic groups were included in the research area of Pai, Pang Mapha, Muang, Khun Yuam, and Mae La Noi districts. Stakeholders of this research project were benefited. There were establishments of civil society model network under the "SSDC" model (Strength Sustainable Development Civil Society) and community of Shan identity model, "FICES" (Sustainable Education Community Identity of Tai-Yai Faith) There were 5 community products which were a pendant with a python in a flower pattern, pheasant symbol pendant, Lawa cloth, coffee grounds soap, and tea from coffee flowers. This study established a community tourism and homestay database system registered under the username "Hilltribehomestay". (URL:<https://hilltribehomestay.com>) The communities were very satisfied and participated in this research as well as to develop better products and services. This study will present a model of cultural community tourism management to formulate the strategy of Mae Hong Son Province.

Keywords: community evaluation, multicultural, multicultural, sustainable tourism

Introduction

Mae Hong Son is a province with potential in terms of natural resources, tourist attractions, arts and culture, religion, beliefs, distinctive ethnic identities, and exquisite handicrafts. People lived a simple life, bound by the forests and rivers. There are more than 7 ethnic groups living with their beliefs, culture, tradition, and way of life that are unique and living together in peace. However, being a border province of Mae Hong

Son, there is still a lack of supporting factors in many aspects to drive the province to achieve sustainable stability in all dimensions, which takes quite a long time. That should be due to the fact that the responsible persons are frequently switched. This halted the implementation of the policy without continual improvement causing people to lose the opportunity to develop their potential in various fields whether it is transportation, education, public health, economy, society, culture, and well-being.

The lack of these opportunities has left the people of the province still in poverty and face with a hard time. This contradicts the readiness in various fields. Researchers foresee this problem and believe that Mae Hong Son Province has many opportunities to be driven to sustainable prosperity under a research context that supports the balance of natural resources, culture, and multicultural society to maintain the original condition as much as possible by using research as a base to drive communities to be sustainable and strong with technology and innovation under the preservation of traditional belief identity so that villagers can be self-reliant by minimizing dependency on external factors and increase the balance from internal factors as much as possible. This will make life happy, simple, and less competitive. Society will be full of generosity, supportive, achieve stability, prosperity, and sustainability.

For the above reason, the researcher has set up a research project on the assessment of strengthening multicultural communities with the dimension of creative technology and sustainable tourism in Mae Hong Son Province in order to monitor and evaluate the performance of research projects under this research plan for maximizing efficiency.

Emphasis on the concept of research methodology, analysis, assessment of needs; and community problems will be able to apply advantages and limitations as well as application procedures that can be applied to the research situation. This will lead to a positive impact on assessment and analysis until the poverty problem of the community can be solved by combining knowledge, technology, innovation, and multi-disciplinary community-based tourism management to be applied together with the government and civil society sectors in order to build sustainable strength in Mae Hong Son Province.

Research objectives

- 1) To manage research plans to be effective
- 2) To monitor research projects under the research plan to be carried out in accordance with the objectives
- 3) To formulate a provincial strategy for managing cultural community tourism

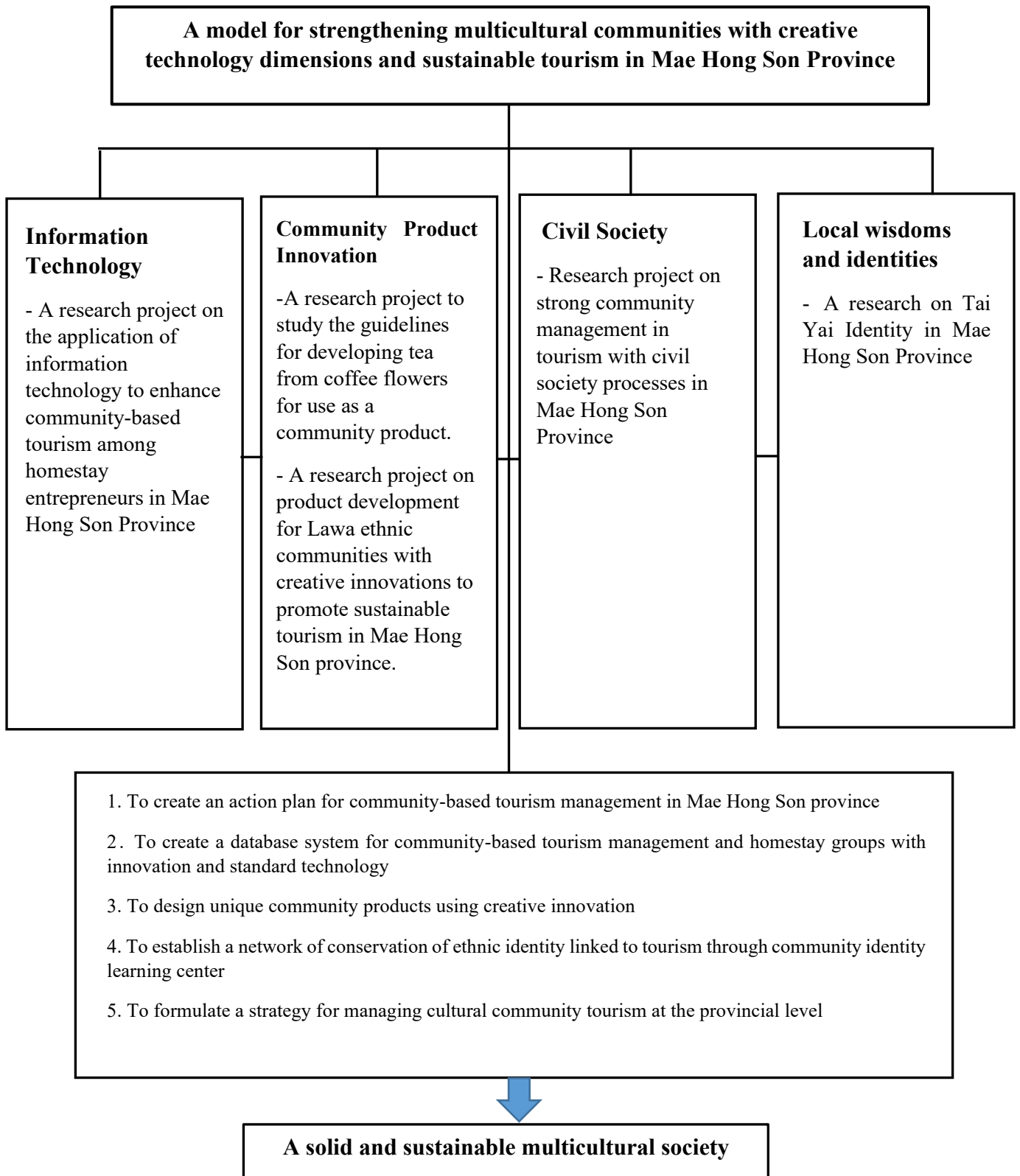
Review of Literature

The process of analyzing and evaluating community needs and problems is a concept of assessment and analysis using an educational process that requires the community to participate in brainstorming and to prioritize the needs of the community. On the other hand, the problems faced by the community may lead to the needs of the members within the community. This may be due to the wrong implementation of national, regional, and local government policies to the community which is not in accordance with the real needs of people. This creates an imperative need to modify the implementation of the policy to be able to meet the community's needs.

The concept of how to conduct an analysis and study of community needs in Thailand is commonly used by community development agencies and is often presented by government agencies involved in the development. This is to enable local authorities to implement them in accordance with the development guidelines of the development plan at all levels.

The Department of Community Development has published a Community Learning Guide created by the National Research Council of Thailand. The concept of community education was presented to understand the needs and problems of the community in 8 ways. 1) An urgent assessment of rural conditions is a method of qualitative analysis and study of the community in order to obtain information on the problems and needs of the community. 2) Participative assessment of community conditions is an approach developed from an education method with an urgent assessment of rural conditions. The importance of this assessment is the communities play a major role in analyzing their problems and needs. 3) Participatory action research is the analysis of community needs and problems that increases the potential of the community which enables members of the community to learn about the local research process and able to establish a local research team. 4) Analysis of rural systems is both research and analysis of needs at the household and community level that enables the understanding of the way of life of the community, wisdom, problems, and needs of the community. 5) Agroecological rural system analysis or area analysis technique is a method that can analyze the problems of needs and changes in various aspects of the community. 6) Community sensitivity analysis is a process that enhances the capacity and capabilities of community members for the ability to be self-reliant and the ability to work together to solve problems of the community. 7) AIC (Appreciation Influence Control) technique is a method that emphasizes democratic participation from the process of brainstorming to create intellectual power until one can understand the problems, needs, and potential of the participants' ideas. 8) The social learning process is a way of improving the quality of people in the community that focuses on enhancing learning skills, known as learning with knowledge. Brainstorming is carried out during the learning process with group action methods. (Bureau of Community Strengthening, 2010)

Research Framework



Picture 1: Research Framework

Research methodology

This study is a participatory action research and is conducted in 6 phases as follows:

Phase 1: Field visits to 15 communities to meet community leaders and study the community's context by conducting discussions with villagers to find issues, design tools, and guidelines for data collection by designing in-depth interviews and small group discussions.

Phase 2: Data were collected in the main target areas of 15 communities in Pai, Pang Mapha, Muang, Khun Yuam, and Mae La Noi Districts, Mae Hong Son Province.

Phase 3: The researcher designed in-depth interviews and conducted a small group interview and discussion with a group of 100 stakeholders in a research area of 15 communities by means of specific sampling to analyze the potential of the community in the conservation and inheritance of ethnic identity, setting up a networking group, tourism management, civil society process, product development through innovation and technology development of tourism, and homestay database systems and to exchange ideas and opinions to find ways and patterns to develop community potential in various fields.

Phase 4: All data were collected for analysis in order to develop an action plan with the community, develop community products through innovation and creative technology, develop a database system for tourism and homestay, establish groups and networks to preserve the ethnic identity of the community, and a network of cultural community tourism management through civil society processes.

Phase 5: Complete full research paper

Phase 6: Transferring research results to the community and transcribing knowledge by presenting academic articles in academic forums or published in national or international academic journals

Findings

Summarizing the research findings from the research data collection area for 15 ethnic communities covering 5 districts in Mae Hong Son Province are as follows:

1) Management of research plans for efficiency

The research plan has a clear framework for the 2020 implementation plan. There is a system to check transparency in budget expenditure. The research area is defined, the research goal is set, the schedule of field visits is well planned under the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic situation, which the community and researchers must proceed is with caution in accordance with the procedure of Coronavirus Disease 2019 Epidemic Administrative Center. However, the research plan was carried out in accordance with the intended goals and accomplished in a timely manner. The research results were successful in accordance with all objectives and indicators.

2) Monitor research projects carried out under research plans

Research projects under the research plan are carried out accordingly. Budget disbursement is efficient and meets all objectives. 15 ethnic communities in the research area are included covering 5 districts in Mae Hong Son province. Research project stakeholders are benefitted. A model network of civil society under the model "SSDC" (Strength Sustainable Development Civil Society) and a model community of Tai Yai identity model "FICES" (Sustainable Education Community Identity of Tai-Yai Faith) were established. 5 community products were created; a pendant necklace with a python in a flower pattern, pheasant symbol pendant, Lawa woven fabric, coffee grounds soap, and tea from coffee flowers. There is a logo and packaging of tea products from coffee flowers and a database system for community tourism and homestays registered as "hilltribehomestay" under url: <https://hilltribehomestay.com/>. The participated community representatives are satisfied are willing to continue to develop better products and services.

3) Establish a provincial strategy for managing cultural community tourism

The researcher worked with 15 communities to analyze the potential of the community in order to formulate and drive a strategy for managing cultural community tourism at the provincial level and connect to community-based tourism in Mae Hong Son province in the aspects of the way of life, faith, tourism management, a network of tourism communities, and the creation of a model for community-based tourism management. This can be summarized as follows:

(1) Ways of life:

There are two aspects in the way of life of ethnic communities: 1) Material, it was found that the communities have tools and appliances used for living both natural and artificially derived from their ancestors, such as the threshing machine, equipment for food treatment and preservation, weaving looms, etc., and newly invented items such as water-powered rice mills, tractors, combine harvesters, garlic peeling machine, etc. All of these materials are derived from local wisdom. 2) Abstract

way of life can be classified into 2 parts: (i) a system of thought, belief, attitude, a social value which is behind human behavior, or a moral value system that holds the minds of people in the community, including the respect and worship of the village spirits, going to the temple to make merit according to Buddhist principles, respect for elders and local sages, etc., and (ii) part of the technique of life whether it is a lifestyle plan, simplicity, behavior, eating, dress, folk games, livelihood, and survival in the forest. They are all techniques and unique identities of each ethnic group.

(2) Belief

It was found that ethnic communities still maintain their beliefs, such as worshipping ancestor spirits, cultural aspects include dress, language, and food, traditions include organizing Forty-two traditions such as Shan ordination, offering auspicious rice, etc., and using wisdom to pass on knowledge and activities through the family system, relatives, communities, and networks of groups with similar or consistent cultural patterns. This can be done by focusing on preserving and inheriting a culture that is unique to a specific group to maintain stability and sustainability inherited to the present day.

(3) Tourism management

Ethnic communities organize tourism in the form of committees, such as the community-based tourism management committee, local tour guide committee, homestay management committee, welfare committee, security committee, etc. Tourist attractions within the community are also abundant and beautiful which consists of Eco-friendly, eco-cultural, historical, health-conscious, agro-recreational, and recreational attractions such as Kho-Gusoh Bamboo Bridge, Pambok Waterfall, Lod Cave, organic garlic plantation, Kong Mu Temple, Pang-Mu pagoda, Mexican-sunflower field, La-Oop silverware, etc. The community has orderly management of community product production and distribution in the area of tourist attractions.

(4) Community tourism networks

In the past, each community had mainly managed tourism within their own community but lacked a network link to exchange knowledge on tourism management or tourism resources and lack of sharing tourists. There are only some activities where government agencies bring representatives of the tourism community in the exchange program but it is just a preliminary study visit. There is no concrete continuation of the tourism network.

(5) Building a model community network in community-based tourism management

The researcher, together with the ethnic community network, analyzed the potential of 15 communities in the research area and found that the Tai Yai community of Ban Pam Bok can be established as a model community for community-based tourism management because this community is "Tai Yai identity model community" that is ready in many aspects such as (1) Community leaders are creative, initiative, and realize the importance of inheriting the Tai Yai culture and linking them

to tourism community management. (2) Community members are united and welcome changes for the progress of the community. (3) Monk (The abbot of Huai Kai-Khiri Buddhist monastery) is a practitioner, developer, initiative to create both spiritual and material prosperity for members of the community including people all over the country. (4) Tourism resources in the Ban Pam Bok community include natural attractions such as Pam Bok Waterfall, Doi Miang, Doi Thong, etc. The attraction that was created by man is the Kho-Gusoh bamboo merit bridge, a bamboo bridge that the abbot of Huai Kai-Khiri Buddhist monastery with the members of the devotees in Ban Pam Bok community and people all over the country built from the entrance of the village stretching more than a kilometer through the rice fields to the temple. This bridge is unique and very beautiful. The motto of building a bamboo bridge of the Tai Yai people also means that when you die you will be able to walk across the bamboo bridge to heaven, which is a belief passed down from our ancestors. (5) Ban Pam Bok School is open for teaching from grades 1-6. There is a tradition and culture that is unique to the Shan people such as Shan mythical bird dancing, Shan dress, making Shan sweets, etc. in the curriculum of the school. (6) The community has been driven and developed both in terms of preserving the Shan culture, community-based tourism management, community products, and agriculture by government agencies and private network partners continuously. Therefore, the ethnic group network agreed to have the Shan community leader of Ban Pam Bok become chair of the committee of the ethnic community network to promote community-based tourism.

Results from the analysis of community potential to drive the construction of a tourism community network linking to community-based tourism led to the establishment of an ethnic community network committee to promote community-based tourism in the cultural aspect. They are responsible for managing the tourism community, coordinating and supervising policies, coordinating with government agencies and private sectors, and connect the tourism community network to enable community tourism management to drive and develop continuously and with maximum efficiency. Moreover, they are able to create alliances that are affiliated with the tourism community network to jointly push the cultural community tourism in Mae Hong Son Province to meet the standards and be accepted by tourists and people who are interested in cultural tourism. Provincial strategies for cultural community tourism management can be proposed consequently.



Picture 2 : In-depth interviews with specific stakeholder groups and small group discussions

Discussion

Evaluation of this research cause research results to be in accordance with the research plan that has been set and effectively benefits to 15 community in many ways whether in the field of civil society power network, the "SSDC" model, a model community of Shan identity under the "FICES" model, 5 community products, a community tourism and homestay database system under the URL: <http://hilltribehomestay.com/> where the communities in the research area have cooperated and participated in driving this research very well. This demonstrates the potential of the research to be able to develop communities to be sustainable and be a model and network of other communities in Mae Hong Son and other provinces. This is consistent with the research done by Sasong, S. and Binprathan, A.(2018) entitled development of community potential in belief identity for sustainable tourism management of Pam Bok Community, Pai District, Mae Hong Son Province. The results showed that The Pam Bok community has the potential to preserve and carry on its identity, supernatural beliefs, Buddhism, and way of life. The community maintains, transmits, and passes on such faith and lifestyle to the younger generation. The treatment and transmission are passed on by community leaders, village spiritual leaders of traditions and rituals to youth groups.

Suggestions

1) Policy recommendation

There should be a joint drive and development of ethnic communities in all dimensions integrated with civil society, the public sector, and the private sector in order to create a model of ethnic relations that link the whole province and form an annual strategic plan of Mae Hong Son Province.

2) Suggestions for further research

(1) There should be a study comparing the identity of ethnic groups to achieve driven ethnic groups as is required by the rules of each group and create a good relationship between them.

(2) There should be research on the issue of integration of ethnic relations for building stable sustainability in Mae Hong Son province.

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