

**A Study of Potential of Local Community for Community- Based Tourism:  
A Case Study of Koh Kerd Community in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya  
Province, Thailand**

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**Abstract**

This study discussed the concept of sustainable tourism development in the aspect of participation of local community in community- based tourism (CBT), utilizing the case of Koh Kerd Community in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province. The purpose of the study was to investigate potential of local people of Koh Kerd Community in development and management of community- based tourism. The study also discussed local participation skills in the CBT operation. Meanwhile, this study gave a concluding remark on problems and obstacles of local people in the CBT participation. The study applied mixed method. The quantitative method used questionnaire with 50 samples who were local people, whereas the in- depth interview as the qualitative method was conducted with the leader of the community. The study concluded some major findings in the aspects of local community's awareness in an inadequate training and education, and leading role of government, NGOs and other related national and international institutions in training and financial supports.

*Key Words:* Community-based tourism, potential, local participation, skills

**Introduction**

Community- based tourism (CBT) is one of the tourism activities that supports the traditional means of living of local community and helps the community become prosperous by safeguarding and sustaining values of socio-cultural fabrics and natural and cultural heritage resources. The ownership, management, operation and control of these establishments belong to the community.

Koh Kerd Community is an OTOP tourist attraction that has been developed since 1994. It was led by Mrs. Lamphun Phanwai, the village head of Koh Kerd Community. It all started with the lifelong herbal medicine. There are herb gardens, cooperatives for production, and a village fund. OTOP groups produce herbal medicine for body massaging, shampoos, and bio liquid fertilizers. In 2004 they set up the community learning center and in 2005 they were selected as an OTOP village. Lamphoon, together with others, set up a Homestay. During 2007-2008, this project had been supported by SML project which provided a special car to take tourist around the village. In 2009, the homestay was certified by the Office of Tourism Development, Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand. It was also selected as an example of a sufficiency economy village for “Good living and Being Happy

The main purpose of this study was to investigate potential of local people of Koh Kerd Community in development and management of community- based tourism. The study also discussed local participation skills in the CBT operation. Meanwhile, this study gave a concluding remark on problems and obstacles of local people in the CBT participation.

### **Literature Review**

The context of this study was based on the reviews of 5 related papers. In ‘Potential for Developing Community-based Tourism among the Bedouins in Badia’ (Salem and Majd, 2011), the objectives were to find alternative tourism resources based on understanding of the potential tourism resources in the Badia, and to attract tourists for cultural heritage experiences. The case study used in this paper was based on demonstrating the importance of indigenous community members involved in tourism- as decision makers, partners and a salient attraction for tourists. There is demand throughout the world for experiencing the indigenous culture and lifestyle of the Bedouins. Another study was ‘Sustainability of Homestay as a Form of Community-Based Tourism: A Case Study of the Rural Community in Bavanat-Iran’ (Pakshir and Nair, 2011.). Based on the study, there were seven main recommendations on the improvement for future development of Bavanat, including the improvement in management, participation and cooperation, visitor management, training, services, building of awareness and infrastructure development.

The third paper emphasized on an investigation into community-based tourism as a potential development strategy for villages in Solomon Islands, using a case study of Gizo Islands(Smiley, 2014).This paper pointed out the importance of financial and human

resources and other related issues such as infrastructure in order to develop the village into community based-tourism. Few of the operators understand tourism; they learn by experience when they receive tourists. However, knowledge about tourism is very low in the community, and so is the access to tourist markets. Moreover in ‘Community-based Tourism Enterprise: Challenges and Prospects for Community Participation in Khama Rhino Sanctuary Trust, Botswana’ (Stone, 2011), the conclusion was noted that to ensure that community participation could be maximized, the community should be well informed and educated about its trust. The management should be transparent and accountable in its dealing; community should require training on their rights and responsibilities. The last study concerned Community– Based Tourism in Developing Countries in El Salvador (Lopez,Sanchez and Pavon, 2011). This paper showcased the community-based tourism presence in many different geographical areas of the world, in particular in developing countries. The main outcomes of this study showed that this type of tourism was assessed by the local community in a very positive way because it was perceived as a way of generating economic benefits and at the same time, creating new jobs. Similarly, the development of tourism would mean the creation of resources such as health services, education and infrastructure for the community itself.

### **Methodology**

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized in this research. The quantitative method was used for studying local participation skills in different aspects and the qualitative method for finding potential of the community and the problem or obstacles when operating the community- based tourism. The quantitative method used questionnaire survey for a total of 50 local people as the main sample group. The method was applied to collect the opinion of local people in their participation skills such as communication skill, work- collaborate skill, problem- solving skill, activities arrangement skill and marketing skill when operating the community- based tourism. In the qualitative method, in-depth interviews were conducted with 5 key informants. In the sampling conduct, the first main key informant, Mrs. Lamphun Phanwai, the former village headman and the village’s senior advisor of Koh Kerd Community was chosen, who later recommended the other community members as potential and relevant key informants, including those members in different duties (homestay, activities, promotion and marketing).

## Results

The findings exhibited in Table 1-5 revealed the local people's opinion on their participation's skills in the operation of the community-based tourism at Koh Kerd Community.

Table 1: The respondents' opinion on communication skill

Attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation	Implication
1. Local people are able to deliver the clear information to tourists.	3.64	0.921	High level
2. Local People are able to communicate in English to the foreign tourists.	3.06	1.236	Medium level
3. Local people are always polite when communicate with others.	4.02	0.769	High level

Table 1 presents the respondent's opinion on communication skill; each factor was based on local people's opinion on their capability. The study found that the local people were always polite when communicating with tourists, with the highest mean score of 4.02 in communication skill. The second rank was on the local people's capability in delivering clear information to tourists with a mean score of 3.64, followed by the lowest score in communication skill, capability in communicating in English to foreign tourists with, a mean score of 3.06 out of 5.00.

Table 2: The respondents' opinion on work collaborate skill

Attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation	Implication
1. Local people have participation in the decision-making regarding tourism development.	4.06	1.114	High level
2. Local people can express their opinion and their ideas and knowledge with others.	4.04	1.068	High level
3. Local people participation in stages of the process including planning, implementation of CBT.	4.08	1.122	High level

Table 2 presents the respondent's opinion on work collaborative skill; each factor was based on local people's opinion on their capability. It found that the highest score was on local people's participation in stages of the process including planning, implementation of CBT, with a mean score of 4.08. The second level was the fact that local people had participation in the decision-making regarding tourism development with a mean score of 4.06. Lastly, the lowest score in work collaborative skill was local people capability in expressing their opinions, ideas and knowledge with others with a mean score of 3.06 out of 5.00.

Table 3: The respondents' opinion on activities arrangement skill

<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Implication</b>
1. Local people are able to create tourism activities program of the community to the tourists.	3.76	1.061	High level
2. The activities provided to tourists can let the tourists experience the traditional life way and culture of the community.	4.14	0.729	High level
3. The activities provided to tourists are useful and tourists are able to gain the knowledge through the activities.	4.16	0.738	High level

Table 3 presents the respondents' opinion on their activities arrangement skill. The study revealed that the attribute representing the highest mean score on their activities arrangement skill was the fact that the activities provided to tourists were useful and tourists were able to gain the knowledge through the activities, with a mean score of 4.16. This was followed by the attribute stating the activities provided to tourists could let the tourists experience the traditional life way and culture of the community, with a mean score of 4.14. The lowest score in activities arrangement skill was that local people were able to create tourism activities with a mean score of 3.76 out of 5.00.

Table 4: The respondents' opinion on problem- solving skill

<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Implication</b>
1. Local people are able to handle difficulties at the first moment when unexpected situation happens.	3.84	0.889	High level
2. When identifying possible solutions, local people know how to communicate the problem to others.	4.06	0.740	High level
3. Local people have the ability to recognise the emotions of themselves and others	4.10	0.763	High level

Table 4 presents the respondents' opinion on problem- solving skill. The highest score in this skill set was on the people's capability in re recognising the emotions of themselves and others with a mean score of 4.10. Furthermore, the second level in problem-solving skill was that local people knew how to communicate the problem to others when identifying possible solutions, with a mean score of 4.06. Lastly, the lowest level in problem-solving skill was the fact that local people were able to handle difficulties at the first moment when unexpected situation happens, with a mean score of 3.84.

Table 5: The respondents' opinion on marketing skill

<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Implication</b>
1. Local people are able to promote the community via website or social media	3.66	1.303	High level
2. Local people are able to make tourists get interested in the OTOP products of the community.	4.08	0.804	High level
3. Local people have the knowledge about how to promote and market the community.	3.88	0.895	High level

Table 5 shows the respondents' opinion on marketing skill where each factor was based on their capability. Firstly, the local people felt that they were able to make tourists get interested in the OTOP products of the community, gaining the highest level with a mean score of 4.08. This was followed by an opinion on having knowledge about how to promote and market the community with a mean score of 3.88. Finally, the lowest score in the marketing skill was that local people were able to promote the community via website or social media with a mean score of 3.66 out of 5.00.

Furthermore, the findings from the qualitative study by in-depth interview were twofold as follows.

*(1) The potential of the local people in Koh Kerd Community in management and development community based tourism*

The findings revealed that the potential of local people managed and developed their community as the community-based tourism with the factors associated from the creation process cooperation such as survey of conditions, invent and analysis of problems together, planning process for solving problem and developing communities, and sharing mutual benefit to everyone. The result showed that Koh Kerd Community is a strength and harmony in the community, as some of the members' answers:

*“All the residents in the community gather together to start the project”.*

*“We had passed the 4 times failure of developing the Koh Kerd Community as the community- based tourism but we never give up”.*

*“Everyone is in the learning process, because most of us do not have high education but we always help each other.”*

*(2) Problem and obstacles during CBT participation*

The findings revealed some problem and obstacles during CBT participation. Most respondents concluded the three main problems and obstacles that they met during CBT participation. The first problem is that the community lack of young generation power due to the young generation being less aware of the importance of developing the community to become a better community-based tourism. Secondly, it concerned limited budget of the organization. Thirdly, there still is an insufficient training skill in communication, in which only a few members can speak English.

*“Young people in the village are not aware of the importance of developing the community. We have 80 members involved in the community project but there are 4-5 young people only involved”.*

*“The organization has limited budget for developing the community”.*

*“Most of us can’t speak English. Every time when foreigners come, we will face the communication problem”.*

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

From the research results, it was found that the successful factor of developing a village to be a community- based tourism was based on the cooperation among the community local people. Community-based tourism requires community involvement and control. Therefore, the cooperation among local people is the most important thing in tourism development. Moreover, the successful factor of Koh Kerd Community is everyone are qualified to express their opinions because they respect each other. In addition, the local people should have the skills in community- based tourism operation such as communication skill, work- collaborative skill, activities arrangement skill, problem-solving skill and marketing skill. The abovementioned skills can be guideline and standard for assisting in development and management of the community. The three main problems and obstacles faced by local people cover communicating in English, the fact that young generation are not aware of importance of community development and lack of financial support from the government.

Finally, one major conclusion can be drawn from this survey. The local community is very much aware of the fact that it currently does not have adequate training and education. Given this situation, government, NGOs and other institutions such as universities, both national and foreign should perform a leading role in providing trainings for local people and in financial support.

### **Recommendations**

The community should have public projects or activities with benefits shared among people in the community continuously, determined by clear monthly and annual plans. Moreover, government organizations or administrative organizations or local authorities must come to support activities as mentor for the community development and management.

Some suggestions were also made for further research. There should be research on tradition activities as well as various cultures of the community that lead to creation of community cooperation.

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