

Tourism Impacts and the Management of Local Community Wisdoms: A Case Study of Thaka Community, Samut Songkhram Province

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Abstract

This study examined perception of local people on tourism development effects occurred in their community and direction of management by use of local wisdoms. The case study of this research was Thaka Community, Samut Songkhram Province, Thailand. The objectives were to study environmental effects from tourism development, to explore main factors from tourism that ruined the environment. The study applied mixed method. The quantitative method used questionnaire with 50 samples who were local people in order to obtain their perception towards the tourism effects occurred in local tourist attractions. In-depth interview was conducted with the leader of the community and of local people to find out the management of community on the tourism effects and the management and application of their wisdoms for sustainability. The management of Thaka Community on tourism effects was found very effective by using the dynamic of participation of members of the community and the understanding in the same direction. The highlights of local wisdoms include coconut sugar making tradition, handicrafts from coconut leaves and Thai local desserts.

Keywords: Local Community Wisdoms, Samut Songkhram, Thaka Community, Tourism Impacts

Introduction

Thaka Community is the community where the local people have the simple life style. The canal is the important way for their transportation and their economic because there is the important market in the center of the community where people sell their local products and it has become one of the tourist attractions of Samut Songkhram Province. Thaka Community is located in Amphawa District, Samut Songkram Province, 10 kilometers far from the center of the district. The northern part is connected with Donmanora and Jompluak Sub-district of Bang

Konti District; the southern part is connected with Bang Chang Sub-district of Amphawa District; the eastern part is connected with Klong Khuen and Nang Thakien Sub-district of Muang District; and the western part is connected with Bang Krabue Sub-district of Bang Khonti District. Thaka is characterized by low land with canals. Thaka or Sala Canal is the main canal of water transportation. Establishment of houses in Thaka was influenced by the shape of canal. Most of houses are located on the riverbank, surrounded by coconut orchards and almost every house have the waterfront terrace. Villagers' wooden houses were built in traditional Thai style with high space under the house to prevent the house from flood. In the past, the level of water in the canal could be very high especially during July and August [1].

Tourism in Thaka Community has been more well-known than the past. Some of the local life style may change and the expectation of visitors may influence local product patterns and their uniqueness [2]. An example is in the past, the floating market was open only on the 2nd, 7th, and 12th waxing and waning moon nights but nowadays they open the market every weekend [3].

Therefore, the researcher studied the environmental impacts and explored main factors from tourism activities, both positive and negative sides, which affected local community and the management of local wisdoms in the community.

Literature Review

Tourism effects and the management in preserving the riverside community has been studied in a wide range of tourism impacts studies. Some of them were reviewed and discussed in this study.

A. Residents' Perception on Tourism

Normally, local people can feel of unwillingness to the effects from tourism. An example are water and environment pollution and the socio-culture effects that make the local people become unwell to be part of tourism activities or planning [4]. But the positive from tourism such as the positive economic impact can make the local people to adjust their view point and to support the tourism development to reach the goals, if they feel they are part of the tourism economic sharing. Therefore, this means perception and experience of impacts from tourism are related with level of participation among the community members [5].

B. Water Tourism Destination

Water tourism destination can provide activities along the river to attract tourists to visit the riverside area. The examples include enjoying the views or activities related with river of the tourist attractions [6]. Local people can be participating with understanding in maintaining cleanliness of river surface and in how the river is important to their community. As well local people can make an understanding to tourists regarding the environment and local culture and life style.

C. Environmental Management on Riverside Community

Tourism in riverside community is important to develop the community and to preserve the culture. The tourism development plan is for increasing income and jobs for local people and exchanging the cultures for more understanding between tourists and local people. Therefore, community members and planners should have considerations in protecting river landscape to be beautiful and clean [7]. Community members and planners should have plans to work together with other concerned organizations to be participating in tourism activities within the common objectives and purposes. Balance of resources especially along riverside areas must be of high concern as unplanned and unbalanced tourism development along riverside and in communities near rivers can destructively affect quality of local community living.

Methodology

This research used both the quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data was from questionnaires launched to 50 local people in Thaka Community. The qualitative data was from in-depth interviews with the leader of Thaka Community and 3 local people. The areas in the scope of this research were Thaka Community and Thaka Floating Market where local people normally gather for selling and buying. The questionnaire survey was conducted to study local people's perception on effects from tourism development.

Results

The study of the perception of local people on impacts from tourism development revealed the results shown in Table 1-3.

Table 1:

The respondents' perception on economic impacts from tourism

Attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Tourism development creates new business opportunities for the local community	4.62	0.490
2. Tourism development has increased the standard of living of the residents	4.30	0.995
3. Tourism development appeals many investments into the community as a result of landscape improvement in the community	3.82	1.137
4. Prices of goods and services are increased in the community due to tourism development	3.54	1.581

Table 1 shows that the impact of tourism in creating new business opportunities for the local community gained the highest score (4.62). The second one was that tourism development increased the standard of living of the residents in the community (4.3), followed by the induced investment into the community as a result of landscape improvement (3.82), and increased prices of goods and services due to tourism development in the community (3.54).

Table 2:

The respondents' perception on environmental impacts from tourism

Attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Tourism has contributed to the implementation of preservation of natural areas	4.54	0.646
2. Tourism has improved the ecological environment of the community in many ways	4.24	0.981
3. The riverside constructions and homestays has destroyed the environment in the community	2.16	1.434
4. Tourism caused environmental pollutions; air, water, and soil	1.54	0.762
4.1 Air Pollution	1.54	0.838
4.2 Water pollution	1.54	0.838
4.3 Soil pollution	1.84	1.201
4.4 Waste pollution	2.66	1.479

Table 2 reports the respondents' perception on environmental impacts from tourism. The results showed that tourism was perceived to contribute to the implementation of preservation of natural areas as the highest level (4.54), followed by the perception on improved ecological environment in many ways influenced by tourism (4.24). The rest of impacts showed very low score in the perception.

Table 3:

The respondents' perception on socio-cultural impacts from tourism

Attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Tourism development provided entertainment opportunities for the local community	4.02	1.220
2. Tourism development provided opportunities to meet new people from outside the community	4.70	0.463
3. Tourism development led to increased tourist traffic in the community to be more crowded	2.00	1.355
4. Tourism negatively contributes to social problems such as crime, drug use, prostitution, alcoholism, gambling, smuggling, and so on in the community	1.52	0.931

5. Tourism has increased residents' pride in the local culture in the community	4.38	0.697
6. Tourism development does not modify local culture and living style	3.26	1.614
7. Tourism development is negatively altering the traditional beliefs and local cultural values in the community	2.00	1.212

Table 3 presents the respondents' perception on socio-cultural impacts from tourism. The most prominent impact in the perception was that tourism development provided opportunities to meet new people from outside the community (4.70), followed by tourism with role of increasing residents' pride in the local culture in the community (4.38), and tourism development providing entertainment opportunities for the local community (4.02). The impacts with significantly lower level of perception included tourism development leading to increased tourist traffic in the community to be more crowded (2.00) and tourism negatively contributing to social problems such as crime, drug use, prostitution, alcoholism, gambling, smuggling in the community (1.52).

The results from the interviews addressed the good management of the community in dealing with conflicts, and local participation in community's activities such as the activity of cleaning canals twice a month. Future plan of community was found to support the green tourism and to show more culture and wisdoms of community to provide unique products. For example, the local product is local and traditional coconut sugar making in which liquid from top of coconut flowers is brought to boiling and stew process with old – style coconut sugar furnace; the process during which good care is required. Another wisdom is to craft products such as hat or umbrellas to cover foods, made with coconut leaves. Local people and the leader of the community use the local wisdoms and their resources on tourism. This helps promote the community's learning center of Thai culture in the zone where there is plenty of coconut plantations.

Conclusion

The study found that tourism was perceived by the local residents for its creation of new business opportunities for the local community and the standard of living of the residents in Thaka Community. Tourism has contributed to the implementation of preservation of natural areas and ecological environment of the community has been improved in many ways. There are not much effects from tourism development in natural resources of Thaka Community. However, the highly perceived effect was waste problem, yet the community has the rules in managing the problem, while leveling up themselves in terms of participation among the community members. In term of social and cultural impacts, tourism development provides entertainment opportunities for the local people and opportunities to meet new people from outside the community. This promotes exchange of ideas and more understanding of way of

life. Most importantly, tourism development occurred in Thaka Community was perceived to increase the local residents' pride in their local culture.

Discussion and Recommendation

Thaka Community is the community where the local people have the simple life style. The canal is the important way for their transportation and their economic because the main market is located in the center of the community, selling local products made from local resources and by the local wisdoms. These elements are combined to become an attractive tourist attraction alternative to Ampawa Floating Market. Moreover, the positive economic impact has brought to the local people realization of how their local resources are important and valuable, and must be preserved and safeguarded by their participation together. Thaka Community is therefore one of the communities that has good management in the environment of the community, in conservation and preservation. The factors to success with the management is that there must be communication between local government, members and leaders in order to have an understanding in the same direction and to have willingness in participating the community's activities. Fair benefit sharing will gain satisfaction from all local people and will as a result encourage them to support tourism management and environmental preservation.

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