

An Agrotourism Management Model to Generate Incomes for Communities in Khokklang Subdistrict, Lamplaimat District, Buriram Province

By

Wisanu Panyayong

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University, Thailand

Pitiwan Faikhoksung

Faculty of Management Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University, Thailand

Sakon Phromsathit

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University, Thailand

Kakanang Chorchoo

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University, Thailand

Abstract

The research process aimed to study the context and potential of the agrotourism management, and to develop the agro tourism management model to generate incomes for the communities in Khokklang sub district, Lamplaimat district, Buriram province. The samples were 24 persons, consisting of two representatives of government sectors, 16 community leaders, four entrepreneurs, and two members of tourism committee. The research was conducted in four stages: diagnosis, operation, measurement and reflection. The instruments were a questionnaire, an in-depth interview, a workshop meeting, and a forum. The collection and analysis of quantitative data were carried out by using a statistical package program. Statistics used for analysis were frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The qualitative data were analyzed by using the content analysis. The research results revealed that the agro tourism management was carried out by the communities using the local resources based on the principles of sufficiency economy with unique activities in the local contexts. The acquired results led to a pilot tourism to evaluate the potential of agro tourism. It was found that tourists were overall satisfied with tourism in Khokklang sub district at a high level. The synthesis results of Khokklang subdistrict tourism development plan to generate community incomes consisted of three projects: 1) the agro tourism route development project for connecting other tourist attractions in the communities, 2) the agricultural product processing project, and 3) the media development project for promoting tourism. The agro tourism development model provided a mechanism for community engagement that relied primarily on community resources and wisdom. There were also network partners with strong community leaders to stimulate activities and develop products in the area. This has changed the area to become a major tourist attraction in Buriram province.

Keywords: Management, Agrotourism Attraction, Community Income Generation, Participatory Action Research

Introduction

Agro tourism is a tourism model which integrates agricultural activities with tourism in order to enable tourists to acquire more agricultural knowledge as well as to appreciate the predominant landscapes of rural areas (Butler, Hall, & Jenkins, 1997). This kind of tourism resembles rural tourism in a sense. As a result, agro tourism becomes one of the landscape development activities to link agriculture and tourism, which can have an impact on the recovery of natural resources and the allocation of economic and social benefits (Jan & Karel, 2004). It also plays a particularly vital role in the developing countries because of agriculture as the key factor in the rural development (Akpınar et al., 2005). An outstanding feature of agro tourism allows tourists the good opportunity to have first-hand experience with natural environments, the agriculturists' way of life, a combination of activities as well as knowledge and understanding on the part of tourists. Most importantly, it enables them to learn more and have pride in the agricultural occupation under the philosophical concepts of their ancestors. It is the form of tourism combining traditional ways and modern technology with a well-balanced fashion (Culapalo & Culapalo, 2013).

Therefore, the agro tourism plays a vital role in developing and generating the community incomes. To become a strong and sustainable community, the local people are required to cooperate in carrying out the activities, such as planning, management, operation, evaluation as well as study of problems and guidelines. If they cooperate in taking part in the relevant activities, they will cherish and inevitably feel proud of their communities. This will lead to economic and social sustainability (Sangkharat & Taweeburut, 2014). Khokklang sub district located in Lumplaimat district, Buriram province covers the areas of 16 villages and occupies the area of 72.95 square kilometers, with a total of 9,232 populations. The majority of the population was rice farmers. A large swathe of the land is suitable for rice cultivation. The Livestock grown in communities are pigs and poultry. The most important sources of tourism are: 1) Mechai Pattana School: It is the place for learning sources of integrated learning and teaching management with social business agriculture. This involves learning how to become a proficient entrepreneur in business with social responsibility and various vocational skills. It starts from zero knowledge that is, understanding the cooperative system, having good consciousnesses, and understanding the system to reward good deeds in a creative manner. This is also the learning sources that has made numerous Thai and foreign tourists a study visit. 2) Charoen Sukwiboon's "Scholars' Network" or Etonoi Learning Center: it is the learning center that has the prominent highlight of managing soil, water, and forests in a proper way. As a result, farmers and tourists are interested in its operation. The statistical data (January-November 2019) of the Ban Samrong Learning Centre located in Khokklang sub-district revealed that 1,351 tourists who have made a field study at the agricultural learning center were mostly the community agriculturists. 3) The agricultural garden of the local scholar, Sombat Jongnakrapiban: it is the agricultural garden which he has turned an arid land of 25 raise into an integrated agricultural learning center. This site was chosen by the Bank of Agriculture and Cooperatives to be the learning center. 4) OTOP Inno-life-tourism based village of Ban

Samrong, Khokklang sub district, Lamplaimat district; It is the community with ethnic diversity, that is, Thais, Khmers, Laos, and Suay. These groups settled down in the same area, resulting in a cultural diversity and socialization. Today, the communities have unique traditions and ways of dressing, especially in food culture. In this regard, there are diverse agro tourism resources, for example, the agricultural learning sources and the cow raising center, which become popular among the farmers. As a result, Khokklang sub district is prominent and interesting in terms of agro tourism. The study and development of the agro tourism management model are essential to take urgent measures so that communities can effectively manage this kind of tourism. In addition, the communities are expected to appreciate their own communities and want to preserve their occupations. With this tourism properly managed, more incomes can be generated for the communities concerned. However, it is clear that there is insufficient support for agro tourism in Buriram Province. In general, tourism is concentrated in certain areas. As a result, large-scale communities do not benefit from the growing tourism industry. Income is not evenly distributed, resulting in a reduction in local tourism. In this study, to conform to the provincial tourism policy, the researchers focus on the management contexts of agro tourism sources in order to evaluate the management potential of the agro tourism sources, and to develop a management model for the tourism.

Objectives of the Research

- 1 To study the context and potential of management of agro tourism of Khokklang subdistrict, Lamplaimat district, Buriram province
- 2 To develop the pattern of management of agro tourism of Khokklang subdistrict, Lamplaimat district, Buriram province

Related Concepts and Theories

This study presents the following related concepts and theories:

Agrotourism

Agro tourism is tourism with agricultural activities used as the main touristic resources. The main goal is to raise income for local farmers who can play an active role in the tourism. This is the agro tourism model which is regarded as a sustainable activity (Sisomyong, 2000). Agro tourism comprises three components: 1) tourism resources, that is, soil, water, wildlife reserves, agricultural knowledge; 2) tourists, including the general public, and farmers interested in agricultural activities to improve their occupations, and tourists who are interested in natural environments and agricultural activities; 3) tourism service, including the service and facilities.

Tourism Potential

The tourism potential of the communities includes the one to manage the agricultural tourism sources, which is the capacity to have a plan and execute it, to manage the sources more sustainably, and to provide the tourism services. The capacity may also encompass a variety of activities related to tourism sources, data on the sources, training and transmission of knowledge, attraction of potential tourists, and means to impress potential tourists. The last

point covers a predominance of sufficiency economy and local wisdom, scenic environments, a wide variety of tourist sources and agricultural products (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017).

Communal Contribution

Local people and communities should participate in drawing up a plan, putting it into practice, obtaining benefits, monitoring and preserving tourism resources. With the communal participation, benefits will be commonly shared, an income is widely distributed, and a life quality is improved. The term 'local' includes people from the grassroots level to local administrative organizations. It may also encompass those concerned with the communal participation, local resources, patterns and activities of agricultural tourism (Suansi, 1998).

Participatory Action Research

The development of the agro tourism management model to generate incomes for communities in Khokklang subdistrict, Lamplimat district, Buriram province was participatory action research. This was the community development by using the research-based process. In the development process, it was imperative to develop knowledge and enable stakeholders to participate in research to share their views. Then, the collected data were used to make a decision and to evaluate. Development and evaluation required a research process, a variety of techniques and methods. The participatory research is the work that focuses on analyzing the problems and finding out the solution, which can come in four stages (Coghlan & Brannick, 2001). 1) Diagnosis: this stage explored the effects, problems and obstacles in implementing and managing the communities' tourism. 2) Action: a workshop was held to involve the participation of the stakeholders in the communities by using SWOT. 3) Measurement: this stage measured and evaluated the performance according to the communal tourism development plan. 4) Reflection: it was a result of follow-up, monitoring, implementation and evaluation of the performance in terms of various stages used in the research.

A review of related concepts and theories was aimed to utilize them as the guidelines in the research. A conceptual framework could be illustrated as follows:

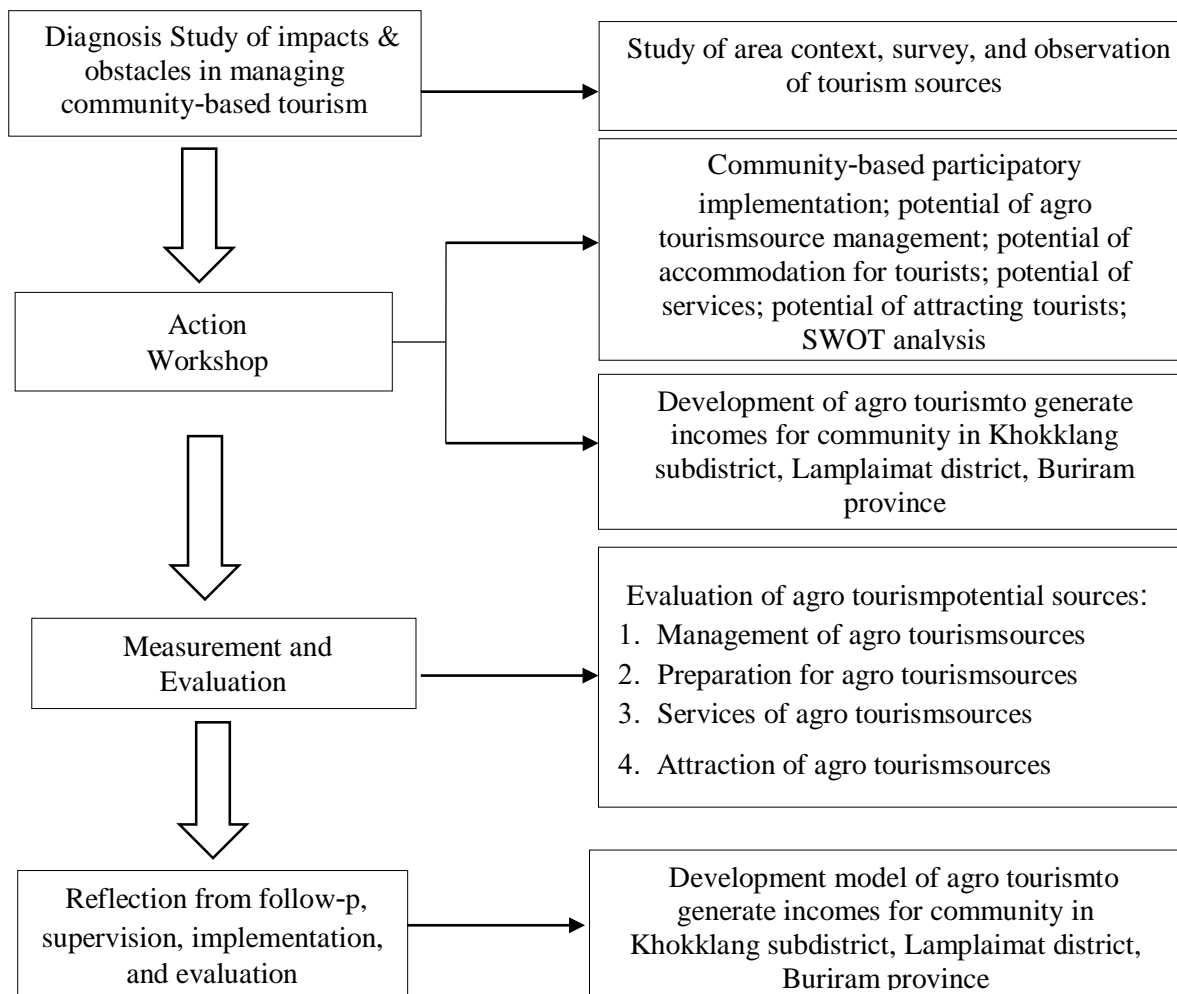


Figure 1: The stages of Participatory Action Research

Research Methodology

This study was conducted through the research and development: R&D in the following four phases:

Phase 1 Diagnosing

This phase was the study of agro tourism context of Khokklang subdistrict, Lamplaimat district, Buriram province and on the potential in light of management of tourism, agro tourism services, and attraction of would-be tourists, possibility and opportunity to manage agro tourism. Key informants were 24 individuals from the state agencies, community leaders, community representatives and Khokklang sub district tourism committee. The research instruments were a focus group, an in-depth interview, observation and guidelines for reviewing action. Data were analyzed by means of content analysis, summary, report and SWOT.

Phase 2 Action

This phase was the brainstorm of different opinions and recommendations from the state agencies, community leaders, entrepreneurs, community representatives, and the committee members of Khokklang sub district tourism. The research instruments in this stage were training, network forum, and network drive, a workshop. Data analysis was based on SWOT analysis, problem tree, 4Ds, appreciative and participatory planning and action: APPA.

Phase 3 Measurement

This phase represented the implementation to examine the patterns of agro tourism, including a pilot tourism, according to the operation plan as made at the workshop. A total of 50 samples used in this study consisted of tourists, volunteers, academics, tourism operators, and stakeholders. They were derived from a specific random sampling. The research instrument was a rating-scale questionnaire. The instrument was validated by five experts to check IOC. Then it was tried out with 30 subjects of the experimental group. The questionnaire had the value of coefficient of reliability equivalent to 0.72. Opinions and discussions were held on models and activities related to the management of agro tourism, tourist routes, issues and recommendations on the management of the tourism by a community.

Phase 4 Reflection

This phase presented the reflection from follow-up, supervision, inspection and evaluation of the working stages ranging from diagnosis, operation, and measurement. Thanks to these stages, both quantitative and qualitative data were known, and the derived lessons led to implementing policies to develop and manage the agro tourism to generate incomes for the communities in Khokklang sub district, Lamplaimat district, Buriram province. The key informants were 24 representatives from the state agencies, the communities, the entrepreneurs, and the Khokklang sub district tourism committee. The research instruments were a focus group, an in-depth interview, observation and lesson-based learning. Data analysis was conducted by means of content analysis, conclusion and report.

Research Results

The results of a study of the context and potential of agro tourism of Khokklang sub district were as follows:

Management of tourism sources: the communities managed tourism by first being the learning centers with the local administrative organization acting as the working center. The tourism committee was established. Locally made goods were sold and incomes obtained were distributed to all members. There were three cooperative networks: 1) the community network was meant for the members, 2) the intercommunity network and 3) marketing network.

Receiving tourists: the communities in Khokklang sub district, Lamplaimat district, Buriram province transmitted the tourism resources through activities to tourists keen to learn

more about the communal way of life. The activities included local knowledge of the mixed agriculture, processing agricultural products, water management, making local sweets, weaving cloths, dyeing cloths, etc.

Services: focus was given to the exchange of learning on the way of life and agricultural occupations between tourists and the communities. The services should involve all concerned, be it the community members, the occupational groups and other agencies. The quality service was focused to impress tourists.

Attraction of tourists: the communities under study had attracted tourists and had been eminent thanks to the presence of local scholars who were knowledgeable in different disciplines, for example mixed agriculture, processing the agricultural products, plant and animal species, cloth weaving techniques, and inventing the items from naturally available materials.

The context of the agro tourism management in Chuckling sub district was analyzed in the following:

Strength: the communities had made the landscapes in conformity with the way of life, had the learning center from the local wisdom, preserved the local culture, and maximized the use of natural resources. It is important to note that community leaders have been effective and creative.

Weakness: the water sources which were available all year round were insufficient. The dry season plant grower had to stop due to water shortage. Besides, there were no creative activities to attract tourists throughout the year.

Obstacles: there was no coordination between the state sector and the people in implementing the state policy to apply the philosophy of sufficiency economy. No sufficient budget was allocated for this goal. Furthermore, the infrastructures were not adequately developed to provide the quality service and to accommodate tourists.

The results of the development of agro tourism management model in Khokklang subdistrict revealed that:

The communities in the study viewed that the tourism management should be carried out by the sub district tourism committee whose role was to take responsibility for the communities' tourism activities. The members of the committee came from the communities concerned. All members one way or another contributed to local tourism through their livelihood, occupations, products and agricultural activities.

The results obtained from the meeting of the agro tourism network were found that

The subjects who attended the meeting acquired new experience, appreciated the agro tourism management and the benefits from it. As a result, there was more cooperation from different groups at different levels.

The results from the meeting and planning on the potential and knowledge over the activities to attract tourists indicated that there were many activities that could be attractive to tourists, for instance, the activities to develop the tourism route, the activities to develop a variety of products, the activities for processing the local products. The expected outcomes were the communities got better idea on receiving tourists, presenting the tourist sites and the like.

The project to develop the activities and agro tourism route to link with the communities including the Etonoi Learning Center, Yupin's Plantation, Ban Nongdonnoi Cloth Weaving Group, Krokpradoo Community Forest, Ban Nong Kheetoon Cloth Weaving Group, etc.

The pilot tourism management to evaluate agro tourism potential and routes was as follows:

The results of the pilot tourism management were found that tourists were satisfied with the potential of tourist sources in Khokklang sub district. The satisfaction was found at a 'high' level averaging 3.92. Considering individual aspects, it was found that the potential to attract tourists was at the highest level, averaging 4.28, while the potential in light of the service was at a high level, averaging 4.18. The potential to accommodate tourists averaged 3.88, and that to administer and manage the tourism was at a moderate level, averaging 3.40.

Discussions

The study of agro tourism context in Khokklang sub district Lamplaimat district, Buriram province was discussed below:

The research results were found that the communities of Khokklang sub district had commenced tourism by gathering various groups of farmers, housewives, village scholars, and the cooperative networks. The community level tourism was elevated to the sub-district one. The model of tourism was almost exclusively based on the local way of life, natural resources and environments, expertise of the community scholars. There were state agencies that supported the community tourism in the aspects of local wisdom, occupations, and development activities. The capable community leaders played a vital role in securing a budget for the local tourism development. [Sangkharat and Taweeburut \(2014\)](#) conducted a study on management of tourism according to a local identity and a community way of life in the ecological tourist sites in southern Thailand. The result found was in accordance with the study on the guidelines for participation in management of the community tourism management in Songprak sub district in Pang-nga province by [Sangkharat and Taweeburut \(2014\)](#) in that 'a forum for exchange of knowledge and opinions to examine the problems allows the locals to take part and hold unique tourism activities', and 'with the public voices heard and public participation involved, maximum benefits can be expected (Agriculture Promotion Department, 2013).

The study results of the agro tourism contexts in Khokklang sub district, Lamplaimat district, Buriram province were found that the problems and needs of the communities were essential. Accordingly, the plan was made to deal with the issues found. Importantly, the locals

had to be involved in an analysis process. The more the community's participation was, the clearer their problems became (Thani, 2000). With the development properly done, more incomes could be generated for the communities, and more benefits could be accessible to the communities. The research of a fieldwork could act as a key mechanism to bring the local residents closer.

A development of agro tourism in Khokklang sub district included a forum for public opinions, an analysis of the communal potential, a tourism network and an operation meeting. The research results could be described in the following sections.

- 1) The communities became aware of the significance of agro tourism which could lead to an income distribution. In addition, a public awareness led to more cooperation at a local level to drive the community tourism, and to a coordination from relevant organizations and agencies.
- 2) There was a cooperation at the community level and a coordination among the organizations and agencies, and the local administrative bodies, which could act as a driving force to move the community level tourism. The potential of individuals from different communities could be enhanced by means of exchange of knowledge and experience among the subjects. Furthermore, the community realized the values of existing resources.
- 3) A plan for developing the community tourism was achieved. The meeting and planning resulted in three projects for the development of agro tourism, that is, the project for the development of agro tourism routes and activities to link with other tourist sites, the project for processing agricultural products, and the project for tourism public relations as available in the form of leaflet and Facebook.

Whether a model of agro tourism to generate more incomes for the communities in Khokklang sub district will succeed or not depends on the community needs and systematic management. It is important for the communities to have unique identity to inspire and attract tourist to their local communities. The group has to be established and its members are to be assigned different tasks and duties in order to drive the tourism activities. Prominent activities which are reflective of the cultural life of the communities are to be developed. The working network is to be supported and cooperation in various aspects is to be developed. The aim is to strengthen the communities concerned. The idea is in line with that of Suansi (1998) who said that the components in managing the community tourism included sustainable natural resources, effective community system, efficient management, and a systematic learning system. Following the use of PAR, SWOT Analysis, Problem Tree Technique, and 4Ds (discovery, dream, design, and delivery), there are three projects: the project of a development of agro tourism to link with other tourist sites, the project to process agricultural products, and the project to develop the tourism public relations in the form of leaflets. All three projects aimed at the community tourism network in Khokklang sub district, including group leaders, community leaders, district development officers, community enterprise groups. The aims in question were in consistence with the concepts of Suansi (1998) on the tourism management that required PAR to analyze the public participation. They were also in line with the study by Punak (2015) which utilized PAR to explore the potential of the communities of Ampawa

water market. Similar works were made by [Saensing \(2008\)](#) who studied the management of agro tourism of Ban Babuaterng, Thachang sub district, Sawangwerawong district, Ubon Ratchathani. In the study, priority was given to the participation in the learning process in all stages.

After implementing the project as per the scheduled plan to develop a model of agro tourism, researchers orchestrated the pilot tourism activities to evaluate the potential of agro tourism. The evaluation results found that tourists were satisfied at a high level. The results can be found in the following aspects: attraction of tourists, services, accommodation of tourists, and management. The research results enabled the researchers to assume that a majority of tourists got a feeling of comfort and warmth. This may be due to the fact that the communities were well prepared and it was a community tourism. Other factors that made tourists more comfortable were as the following: A local dialect made tourists more comfortable, a moderate travel distance made them energetic and active, foods and accommodation were clean and convenient, and the atmosphere was pleasant and natural. The factors just described were in accordance with the results found by [Wongkronpan \(2004\)](#) who said that tourist sources, tourism management, environments, accessibility, facilities could influence the tourists to a great extent. Likewise, [Sukpongthai \(2007\)](#) who conducted research on the opinions of tourists on the service found the similar factors that could affect the tourists' interests and behaviors.

Recommendations

A wide variety of agro tourism activities should be organized by using the unique identity of the local communities. Equally important, children and the young should be involved in the tourism development. Last but not least, the locals should be aware of their own valuable resources. For further studies, a study on preparedness of agro tourism should be conducted to enhance a wide range of local tourism. An evaluation should also be made on tourism management to explore the factors in relation to success, obstacles, limitations as well as opinions and satisfaction of the tourists for further development.

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