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Contact
Editor-in-Chief
International Journal of Agricultural Travel and Tourism
School of Tourism Development, Maejo University, Thailand
Email: asiatourisma@gmail.com
Website: www.atma2010.ning.com
FOREWORD

Agrotourism can contribute to regional development, a priority goal of each country in the region. Very similar to ecotourism, agrotourism emphasizes on cultural aspects of the rural areas that also help in improving the economy of the area, yet promoting agrobiodiversity. Rural tourism also encompasses ethnotourism, project tourism, health tourism, historical tourism, cultural tourism or adventure tourism. Therefore, researches relating to rural tourism and agrotourism hope to bring awareness to the farmers, tourists, and people concerned with the fate of both the people in and our mother planet. Furthermore, cultural and biological conservation in the rural areas can be harmonized.

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Editor-in-Chief
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EXPECTATION OF TRIBAL COMMUNITY TO DEVELOP AGROTURISM DESTINATION IN BAN PANG-KHON, CHIANG RAI, THAILAND

Budi Guntoro¹ and Weerapon Thongma²

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¹Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia
²Maejo University, Thailand

ABSTRACT

This study that generally aimed to analyze the expectation of tribal community in developing agrotourism destination in Northern Thailand was done in Ban Pang-khon village, one of underdeveloped villages in Chiang Rai Province of Thailand. Ban Pang-khon is multi-ethnics village located in Tambon Huay Chumphu, Amphur Muang, Chiang Rai. This village was selected as focal area due to the potentials of tourism attraction in agrotourism activities, which will be implemented by the community themselves. Aside from that, the government also developed the area under the King’s Project in agriculture. Research was done by triangulation methods which were survey by questionnaire study, in-dept interview by participant observation and it was completed by secondary data in order to ensure the validation of data. The results of the study showed that there were high expectations of tribal community on developing tourism destination in Ban Pang-khon. The tourism that they expected was focusing on coffee and other agriculutral activities along with tribal culture as main attractions. However, due to many challenges that they will meet they should consider the social changes brought about by tourism such as meeting other cultures in their village, and losing their genuine culture would also be side effect of tourism development. This study concluded that development of the tourism destination in some area even in the remote area, should also consider the accessibility and infrastructure to support the tourism destination. Therefore, local government should support the needs of their people in increasing the income and improving quality of life in the local community.

Key words: Expectation, tribal community, agrotourism, Thailand
INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1980s, the trend in international conservation has been to manage people/local community-tourist site relationship through integrated conservation and development project. This approach is based on the idea that providing recognized and significant benefits to site neighbors can enhance local respect for and acceptance of national parks and other protected areas. Building local people appreciation and acceptance of such area can be accomplishing a number of ways. One strategy is to provide economic opportunities to local communities directly related to the protected area, such as employment in natural conservation or employment in the tourism industry, sale of food and handicrafts to tourists, provision of services to local communities, and allowing traditional land uses. Another strategy is the development of economic opportunities outside the protected area that reduce economic dependence on park resources, such as agricultural, agro forestry, forestry, or fisheries projects. In a document on tourism’s role in the conservation of large carnivores, World Wildlife Forum (WWF) argues that obstacles to community involvement in projects might include “pressure for more rapid economic growth” and also “conflicting aspirations of local farmers and hunters with the emerging tourism industry” (WWF-UK, 2000 in Butcher, 2006).

Agricultural tourism (also known as agritourism and agrotourism) is one of the alternative tourism that could be managed by local community and private company as well. Lobo, Goldman, Jolly, Wallace, Schrader, and Parker, 1999 said that it can have significant benefits for farmers and both agricultural-rural and urban communities. Results from visitor study indicate that agricultural tourism has substantial economic impacts on local communities. In addition, agritourism provides opportunities for diversification and economic incentives for growers, promotes economic development and helps educate the public about the important contributions of agriculture to the county’s economy and quality of life. Agritourism is defined as any business conducted by a farmer for the enjoyment or education of the public, to promote the products of the farm and to generate additional farm income (Hilchey, 1993). It includes a variety of facilities and activities such as agricultural festivals, farm visits, farm tours, demonstration farms, farm stays, wineries, nursery trails and agricultural museums.

The potential benefits of agrotourism for local agriculture are varied. First, agrotourism may generate diversification opportunities for local farmers to increase revenues and enhance the viability of their operations. Second, it may be an excellent tool to educate the public about the importance of agriculture and its contribution to the county’s economy and quality of life. Third, it may provide economic incentives and reduce friction in the agricultural-urban interface, thus helping to preserve agricultural land. Finally, agrotourism may enhance the appeal and demand for local products, foster regional marketing efforts and create value-added and direct-marketing opportunities that may stimulate economic activity and spread the benefits to various communities in the local.

Ban Pangkon, is one Akha tribe village, located in Huay Chomphu subdistrict, Muang district of Chiang Rai Province, Thailand, the mountainous area of agriculture dominated by coffee and vegetables. Since nearby this village a Royal Project for agriculture has been built, the community of Ban Pangkhon has started to have an expectation that in the near future, it could be the tourist destination. With such an expectation of
local community for developing agrotourism destination, therefore, the objectives of this study are: 1) to recover the expectation of tribal community of Ban Pangkhon in developing agrotourism destination and 2) to study the internal and external factors that support and challenge Ban Pangkhon as tourist destination.

METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative research, and it was done by triangulation methods, that were field research with in-depth interview through participant observation. This research was also completed by secondary data. Ban Pangkhon was selected as the study focal point, since this tribal village occupied by Akha, Yao, Lahu and Chinese tribes in 11 sub-villages had rich cultural and agricultural activities. Besides, this village which has been built in the Royal Project for agriculture in the mountain area, and its Kun-khon waterfall, were often passed by tourists. In-depth interview was done by researchers with village leaders and three young leaders from three tribes of Lahu, Akha and Yao. Deep interview also done with ten village members which were selected by convenience sampling method, since few tribal people speak Thai fluently. The gathering of data by participant observation involved the daily activities such as planting and harvesting coffee, picking vegetable, eating together in daily life, joining in the wedding party, and working together to build the house of one village member. Through this method, the researchers could access easily to become a part of the village, and in such a way, can get the data from interview and observation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ban Pangkhon is bounded in the west by Tawee sub-district (Mae Suai District), the north by Ban Huay Maerim, the east by Ban Mae Mon, and the south by Ban Huay Shan. Ban Pangkhon had 11 Moo (sub-village), and its population was about 1654 people (892 male, 762 female) in 2009.

Expectation from tribal community.

From the deep interview of three representatives of young Akha, Lahu and Yao, it could break down to several statements as follows:

1. They hoped in coming future that they will have tourism destination in Ban Pang-khon, especially in agriculture, culture and nature tourism. Their expectation was coming from their deep hearts in order to develop their poor village to be improved, and calling people who work in the city to come back and work with tourism activities. Right now many young tribal people are going out to find jobs. A lot of them have low education, working in the factories as laborers, some as housekeepers and working at restaurants in Chiang Rai and other cities in Thailand. And also many of them work as labors outside the country. With existing tourism destination in their village, they expected that they will earn income from their village, open shops and sell handicrafts from their own culture.

2. The youths are ready to welcome the tourism project either from local government or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They tried to look for some NGOs to come to their village so that they have chance to develop their village. They welcome missionaries because they can bring some information regarding their village to public. One young Akha, Mr. Meetapap, has tried to open a coffee shop. He has inspiration for serving the tourists who come to the village. Aside from that, he also tried to make small coffee garden and workshop for showing the tourist who visit the
village. Other young Akhas also have inspiration to open the museum of Akha culture, and make traditional Akha dance

3. To serve tourists, they hope that it will come soon.

4. They realized that the development of tourism in their area will affect their Akha way of life. From the interview, it concluded that they did not worry about cultural change from original Akha, Yao or Lahu, as long as the change can make their lives better. Although they said that not all traditional tribes will bring them to better of life, for the present situation, they open their minds for other people. However, they are still concerned about their old culture from their ancestors, that they have to maintain it for the next generations.

5. Agricultural activities are the major source of income of the village, especially coffee. They have some ideas that these activities could be created as tourism destination in agriculture. Today, they just process the coffee and sell to the middleman who come to Ban Pang-khon or to the company in Bangkok. They have planned that the village will grow, harvest, process coffee for making good seed, until packaging and marketing, and tasting of their skinned coffee. This is just small process, but it is so good for learning about coffee process in traditional way.

**Strengths of village**

From the observation, discussion and analysis, several strengths for Ban Pang-khon to be the tourist destination were drawn as follows:

1. The village is rich in tribal culture, such as Akha, Yao, Lahu and Chinese cultures. In some villages in Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai, it can be the main attraction of the community and nature based tourism. Tourists learn the way of life of tribal communities, that is very unique and artful. Guntoro et. al., (2010) mentioned that tribal culture with the colorful dresses make the location in the remote area become beautiful, although there are much nice natural scenery and resources. Most tourists just want to see the tribal people with the unique life, with a little interest to see other natural sceneries. They like to take picture standing beside local people and their houses. Few tourists have a journey to the village countryside, trekking to the high mountains, and camping in the forest. In some villages in Chiang Rai such as Ban Ruammit (Karen village), tourists come to the village in anticipation of seeing the colorful dress, tasting the exotic foods, and experiencing the Karen’s way of life. They tend to see the lifestyles of tribal people as different and exotic. Many tour companies and individual travelers fulfill an opportunity to get a glimpse of tribal villages and their simple way of life. For tourists, hill tribes would be considered the primary attraction of Northern Thailand.

2. Agricultural activities, such as vegetables and coffee, are the main source of income for the tribal community. Since they have changed the agricultural activities from the opium plantation to the coffee, it was hard work in the beginning, but for the past six years, developing the coffee plantation became daily life in Ban Pangkhon. Vegetables such as tomatoes, cabbage, cucumber, chili, and beans, are major vegetables that are sold at Chiang Rai market. Since five years ago, the local government had supported facilities for coffee machine for skinning and cleaning the coffee to the tribal villages. Ban Pangkhon has become the major producer of coffee in Muang district, Chiang Rai province for six years already.

3. Local environment. Aside from tribal culture, other interesting element for tourism is environment. Many local
environment become purpose for tourism to visit countryside. Local environment such as river, forest, high mountains, agricultural conservation, hill tribe agriculture, even though some objects are not in the Ban Pang-khon village such as waterfall, but those locations are related to Ban Pang-khon.

4. Hospitality resources. Tourists in tribal community tend to receive a general feeling of welcome from villagers. Most of the villagers appear to enjoy having tourists. In addition to liking most of the tourists, they acknowledge the important role that tourists have in generating income for the village. This acknowledgement is demonstrated by the following statement from one of the villagers: “everybody wants to have tourists because they can make money”. The impact that the tourists have on the daily lives of the villagers is at an acceptable level (Guntoro et al, 2010).

5. Pang-khon Agricultural Royal Project, has been established for developing agriculture in Ban Pang-khon area. This project also involved local people to maintain the area. In the near future, the community has high intention with this area to be the tourist destination.

6. Christian missionary had come to Ban Pang-khon for religious purposes. Within five years, almost 90 percent of the people were converted to Christian religion. It means that the socialization and civilization of the community is now open. They accepted other cultures to reach their culture.

Challenges:

1. Many tourist destinations are losing the soul of sustainability, decreasing number of tourist due to missing their natural resources, and exceeding their carrying capacity. This village which is rich in natural and cultural resources could be well maintained by having a good plan for making it a tourist destination. Many tourists will stop over for some days and nights.

2. Interaction between hosts and tourists. The contact hypothesis states that social contact between individuals from different cultures result to mutual appreciation, understanding, respect, tolerance and liking (Brochner, 1982). However, the same contact may also help develop negative attitudes, stereotypes, prejudices and increase tension, hostility, suspicion and often violent attacks. It was strongly argued that contact between people from different cultural backgrounds lead to tension, misunderstanding and stereotyping. According to Hofstede (2001) contact between tourists and hosts of different cultural backgrounds is “the most superficial form of cultural encounter”. Tourists’ and hosts’ perceptions of each other are highly distorted. Hosts develop their perceptions of tourists on the basis of symbols such as clothing or music. Tourists develop their opinions of hosts on the basis of host work status, responsibilities and the outcomes of their mutual commercial exchange. These perceptions are superficial and may create communication problems. In fact, tourist – host contact may result in a negative change of attitudes (Anastasopoulos, 1992 cited by Reisinger and Turner, 2003). Moreover, in Ban Pang-khon where cultural differences between tourists and local communities are greater, the negative effect that it will bring is direct tourist – host contact often generates exploitation, assault, victimization and numerous social problems. Pearce (1992) suggested that while all of these processes need not be present at once, they occur due to large cultural differences that are important elements shaping tourists’ and hosts’ perceptions of each other. There were negative stereotypes of tourists to the hosts and vice-versa. Moreover, most hosts of Ban Pang-khon are hill tribes. The hill
Figure 1. Ban Pang-khon in the tourism system
REFERENCES


