

Local Residents' Perspectives Regarding Community Based Tourism at the Bo Saen Community, Phang Nga Province, Thailand

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Abstract: This study investigated local residents' perceptions toward Community Based Tourism development in the case of the Bo Saen community. Bo Saen is a subdistrict of the Phang Nga province of Thailand. A survey questionnaire, using a convenience sampling method, was used in this study. Ninety usable cases were available for a descriptive statistical analysis using MS excel. Local residents' perceptions regarding trust and social, economic, and environmental impacts are reported.

Keywords: Local resident perception, Bo Saen community, CBT

1. Introduction

Tourism is a tool for developing and building sustainable practices with the participation of all sectors to make an income for a community (Choibumrung, 2009; Thongma, 2015). Tourism can be a tool to develop the community and create an exchange of knowledge between locals and visitors. In addition, it can be a tool to make the community stronger in resource management. Community Based Tourism (CBT) refers to a form of tourism that has the idea of maintaining a sustainable natural environment, social system, and local culture. One goal of CBT is to ensure the full ownership and management of tourism resources by fully engaged local communities.

In past decades, the Thai government has extensively promoted CBT and a number of cities in Thailand have been promoted as CBT destinations. Still, there are issues which must be faced with participation from the community—including environment protection, commercial marketing, and human resources development (Siwaluk et al., 2016). Locals are the key element in organizing CBT for the community and locals, who own the tourist attractions, have the right to take care of visitors and share their knowledge with them (Suansri & Yeejorhor, 2013).

This study proposed to investigate local residents' perceptions toward CBT development in the case of the Bo Saen community. Bo Saen is a subdistrict of the Phang Nga province of

Thailand. The Bo Saen subdistrict was founded 200 years ago. Historically, people moved there from Trang in Thailand and Saiburi in Malaysia. The community was named after its environment—there were wells where people could use water all year round. The term Bo Saen means one thousand wells. The area is located in the southern Thap Put district and approximately 9 km. from the Thap Put district office. The district has an area of approximately 44 km², which is approximately 27,500 rai. The Bo Saen subdistrict is divided into eight villages: Ban Na, Ban Sai Siet, Ban Khlong Bo Saen, Ban Khuan, Ban Lang Yai, Ban Bang Sai Ban Thung, Ban Tha Sai, and Ban Tha Yai. The total population is 7,124, of which there are 3,545 men and 3,579 women from 1,878 households (Associate Professor Dr. Saranya Bunnag). Islam is the main religion for the local population with Buddhism as a minority religion. There are nine mosques and one Buddhist temple in the village.

Most of the Bo Saen area is flat. Part of the area slopes south to Phang Nga Bay. There are natural water sources as follows: Khlong Bo Saen, Khlong BangSai, Khlong PakThorn, Khlong Bang, Khlong Phueng, and Khlong Bang. The Bo Saen climate, in general, is hot and humid. It rains almost all year round. The average temperature throughout the year is about 27 to 35 degrees Celsius. Most of the Bo Saen people are engaged in agriculture such as rubber plantations, palm plantations, fruit orchards, and vegetable gardening. Therefore, the main sources of income are rubber, palm oil, and other local OTOP products. The tourism resources available in Bo Saen feature bamboo rafting and kayaking at Khlong Ban Khlong Bo Saen, the Khao Toh Dam Cave, the Lad Ton Nao Goat farm, the Tao thong waterfall, and the Tao thong hills. In recent years, the village has worked together with the local Phangnga government to initiate its CBT destination. The perception of the locals is important as it can determine the extent of their support for tourism development (Afthanorhan et al., 2017). Residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and their attitudes towards tourism development feature prominently in the literature. Perceived tourism impacts include both positive and negative ones, generally covering the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental aspects of the local community. However, we lack information regarding the local perceptions toward CBT development at the Bo Saen destination.

2. Literature Review

The review of literature suggests there has been a wide investigation into local residents' perceptions toward CBT that has utilized Social Exchange Theory (SET) as a theoretical foundation. Social exchange theory is one of the major theories of social interaction in the social sciences. Homans (1961, cited in Emerson, 1987), one of the first sociological theorists to focus on interpersonal exchanges where the dominant emphasis was the individual behaviors of actors in interaction with one another. Homans (1961 cited in Emerson, 1987, p.13) defined social exchange as the exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, that is more or less rewarding or costly, between, at least, two parties. Individuals attempt to maximize their rewards while minimizing their costs. Interaction with others is a series of exchanges and those people who receive rewards feel obligated to reciprocate (Sprecher, 1998).

A number of tourism studies have sought to understand residents' perceptions in support of various forms of tourism. For example, Long et al. (1990) examined differences in resident tourism perceptions and attitudes across rural Colorado communities. They suggested that both the perceived negative and positive impacts of tourism increase with increasing levels of tourism. With respect to resident attitudes toward additional tourism development, resident attitudes initially increase in favorability with increases in tourism. In 2017, Afthanorhan et al. used Terengganu, Malaysia as a research context. They found residents understood that the

tourism sector can strengthen the national economy, but the residents also wanted natural resources to be protected. In addition, the residents of Terengganu believed that tourism development had the possibility of yielding both positive and negative effects on national development in terms of the three dimensions of the environment, socio-cultural aspects, and economics. Wang and Luo (2018) researched the perceptions and attitudes of local residents from Beichuan County in the Sichuan Province of China, where the Great Sichuan Earthquake occurred in 2008. This study found that residents tended to express positive attitudes towards dark tourism development. Lan et al. (2021) focused on Meizhou Island in the Fujian Province of China and found that the perception of local residents toward the benefits of tourism development had a significant positive impact on their value co-creation participation behavior with tourists, whereas their perception toward the costs of tourism development had a significant negative impact.

As well as studying established tourism destinations, researchers also examined resident attitudes toward future tourism development. Cárdenas et al. (2017) surveyed local residents in a small town of the southeastern US concerning a new international horse park. They suggested trustworthiness positively predicts resident support. Moreover, resident attitudes toward tourism development are highly correlated with the perceived economic, social, and environmental impacts to the community. Particularly, perceived positive environmental, social, and economic benefits, respectively, were significant influencing factors in determining attitudes toward the proposed tourism development. In addition, Park et al. (2017) explored residents' attitudes toward future tourism development of a cultural village regarding their community well-being and community attachment. Their study found that community well-being is related to income and that community attachment is related to safety. A study from Eyisi et al. (2021) specially focused on socio-cultural impacts. They illustrated that being realistic, working together, creating equal opportunities, and education/awareness should be used as strategies for addressing potential negative socio-cultural impacts.

In Thailand, Green (2005) explained how a community on the island of Koh Samui perceived their everyday surroundings within the context of a rapidly changing environment. The change was primarily due to tourism and associated development. Six environmental features were identified, namely, nontourist buildings that hold cultural and social significance for locals, tourist facilities and their associated social and environmental problems, water features used by the local community, and environmental features representative of 'unspoilt' nature. Research by Huttasin (2008) focused on the social impacts from tourism. Huttasin (2008) investigate the impacts of tourism development at Baan Tawai, the first OTOP Tourism Village in Thailand. The study examined the relationship between demographic factors and Baan Tawai residents' perceptions of the social impacts of tourism development. This study used survey questionnaires and found that the residents positively perceived social impacts in terms of job creation for women in the village. Additionally, locals did not see any social changes brought on by tourism nor did they think that tourism leads to an increase in prostitution, vandalism, burglary, or drug abuse.

Studies in local perceptions using destinations in Thailand as case studies focused mainly on renowned tourism destinations. A CBT destination that has just launched its tourism products and services should be investigated to provide evidence of its local perceptions toward tourism development as such evidence would benefit theory and practice.

3. Method

Quantitative research methods were used in this study. One type of technique quantitative researchers use to conduct their research is surveys (Neuman, 2011). There are many reasons for using the survey method. First, accuracy, reliability, and validity can be provided (Neuman, 2011). Finally, Babbie (2013) confirmed that the survey method is suitable for a study in which several questions are asked on a given topic and, especially, when many variables are analyzed concurrently. Therefore, the survey questionnaire needs to be well constructed and easy for respondents to understand.

A convenience sampling method was used in this study. The samples were recruited from eight villages of the Bo Saen subdistrict. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed in the area. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was adopted. Questions related to tourism impacts were fully adapted from the existing research of Cárdenas et al. (2017). The first section of the questionnaire was the main section and contained questions relating to the perceptions of local residents toward tourism impacts. The second part of the questionnaire asked about socio-demographic factors. The last section of the questionnaire was an open-ended question for respondents to provide further information. The questionnaire was pre-tested to ensure that the items were simple and understandable. Ninety usable cases were used for a descriptive statistical analysis using MS excel.

4. Results and Discussion

A descriptive analysis indicated that most of the respondents were male. One-fourth of the respondents were 18 to 25 and those from 26 to 35 years old contributed another fourth. Half of them were married, and 42% of them were single. 71% of them had attended high school or under whereas one-fourth held their bachelor degree. 28.89 % of them were working as farmers while 22% were working for an employer. Over half of them have lived in the community for more than 26 years. 86.67% of them were living in Moo 3. Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Information

Item		Frequency	percentage
Gender	Male	47	52.22%
	Female	43	47.78%
Age	18-25	24	26.67%
	26-35	23	25.56%
	36-55	26	28.89%
	> 55	17	18.89%
Status	single	38	42.22%
	married	47	52.22%
	separate	5	5.56%
Level of education	High school or under	64	71.11%
	Bachelor's degree	23	25.56%
	Higher than bachelor's degree	3	3.33%
Occupation	Students	10	11.11%
	Civil servants	9	10.00%
	Maid	5	5.56%
	Farmers	26	28.89%
	Sales/personal business	15	16.67%
	Employees	20	22.22%
	Other	5	5.56%

Item		Frequency	percentage
Length of time you lived (years)	1-5	1	1.11%
	6-10	0	0.00%
	11-15	2	2.22%
	16-20	19	21.11%
	21-25	18	20.00%
	More than 26	50	55.56%
Residential area	Moo 1	2	2.22 %
	Moo 2	3	3.33%
	Moo 3	78	86.67%
	Moo 4	2	2.22%
	Moo 5	4	4.44%
	Moo 6	1	1.11%
	Moo 7	0	0.00%
Monthly revenue	Below 15,000	8	8.89%
	50,000 – 100,000	30	33.33%
	100,001 – 200,000	32	35.56%
	Higher than 200,000	6	6.67%
	Not specified	14	15.56%

In terms of trust in community leaders, it was found that the highest mean score involved success in implementing ideas (see Table 2). The lowest average score was on their perception of the leaders' values. It was also found that all assessed items were rated with a score higher than 4 on a 5-point scale.

Table 2. Resident perception regarding trust in community leaders

Trust	Mean	Standard deviation
They are typically successful at implementing ideas	4.20	0.56
Community leaders have perfect success at work	4.19	0.73
They will go out of their way to help my community	4.14	0.86
They are very capable of performing their job	4.13	0.85
I am feeling very confident about their abilities	4.13	0.19
They have specialized capabilities that can enhance our community	4.12	1.17
They are very concerned about my community welfare	4.11	0.79
They have much knowledge with respect to community needs	4.10	1.29
They would not knowingly do anything to hurt my community	4.08	0.98
They are well qualified	4.03	0.85
I like their values	4.03	1.05

Table 3 displays the perceptions of local Bo Saen community residents regarding economic benefits and costs. It was found that the highest mean score involved the economic benefit provided to local community, followed by investment promotion for the local community. The current study supports the findings of Park et al. (2017) that income effects are viewed as positive impacts from tourism development. In terms of economic costs, the highest negative impact was the increase in prices of goods and services because of tourism development in the area. The lowest perceived cost is the cost of developing the Bo Saen community and its associated visitor facilities.

Table 3. Economic impacts

Impact	Mean	Standard deviation
Benefits		
It will provide economic benefits to the local people of the Bo Saen community	4.50	0.43
It will promote investment in our community	4.48	0.45
Tourism can generate more income for people in the community	4.43	0.45
Tourism can generate more jobs for people in the community	4.33	0.42
It will lead to more visitors spending in our community	4.26	1.15
Costs		
The prices of goods and services will increase because of it	4.47	0.45
It will lead to an increase in land prices	4.26	1.15
The costs of developing the Bo Saen community and associated visitor facilities	4.28	0.93

Table 4 shows the social benefits and social costs impacting local residents. It was found that benefits regarding cultural exchange and destination image enhancement received the highest scores from the respondents. However, local residents believed mass tourism would be a negative social impact.

Table 4. Social impacts

Impact	Mean	Standard deviation
Benefits		
It will result in more cultural exchange between tourists and residents	4.38	0.55
It will enhance the positive image of our community	4.37	0.65
It will encourage a variety of activities for local residents	4.20	0.47
It will create more events to go to, more things to do, and more entertainment and amenities	4.19	0.49
Costs		
Local residents will be negatively impacted by mass tourism	3.54	1.96
More tourism will change our traditional culture	3.24	2.16

In terms of environmental impacts, Table 5 shows that local residents gave the highest scores to the creation of recreational facilities for local residents regarding benefits. Effects from the construction of tourism facilities and congestion were seen as the worst negative impacts on the environment—which is consistent with previous findings from Green (2005).

Table 5. Environmental impacts

Impact	Mean	Standard deviation
Benefits		
It will provide more recreational facilities for local residents	4.13	0.78
It will help preserve green spaces in our community.	3.59	1.55
Costs		
Construction of tourism facilities will destroy nature.	3.50	1.92
If there are too many tourists, it will cause congestion in the community	3.50	1.87
It will result in an increase in noise.	3.44	2.16
It will cause pollution from visitors (e.g., water, air, trash)	3.40	1.97
It will result in traffic congestion	3.39	2.13

5. Conclusions

This study investigated local residents' perceptions toward CBT development in the case of the Bo Saen community. This research is a preliminary study of the opinions of local residents. It was found that most of the people in the community had a positive opinion of their community leaders. The leaders are well suited to caring for this community. However, local residents are concerned about the economic impact. Economic benefits will occur; however, the cost of living may increase from the development of CBT. Cultural exchanges between tourists and residents and positive images of the destination were stated as positive social impacts. Nevertheless, negative impacts from mass tourism are possible. Regarding environmental impacts, harm may occur from construction.

There are some limitations to this research. The first limitation relates to the research sample size. As mentioned earlier, the sample size of the current study is only 90 and may not be representative. The second limitation of this study is that the study involved only the leaders and residents of the Bo Saen community, so future research may require collecting data from other communities.

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