

**Luxury Community-Based Tourism:
The Enhancement of Local Experiences in Phuket**

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Abstract

Community-based tourism has benefited from a direct economic impact on families, socioeconomic enhancements, and sustainable lifestyle diversification in 7 local communities in Phuket. This academic article aims to present and analyze major local communities in Phuket. This article provides a detailed analysis of Luxury Community-Based Tourism, Tourist Luxury Experiences and their enhancement to become luxury community-based tourism in Phuket. Community-based tourism in Phuket must empower its concepts to reach new targets of tourists, especially to engage luxury tourists. By focusing on locally and independently owned participation in local communities, 7 community-based tourism sites in Phuket have enhanced their standards to provide exclusivity, authenticity, and enjoyment to create cultural and spiritual experiences for new targets of tourists. At the same time, these communities can create products and services that are environmentally conscious, sustainable, and socially responsible in the area. However, community-based tourism in Phuket should consider more closely customized and individualized based on the needs and motivations of tourists. High-priced tourist products and high-quality services should be provided to encourage luxury tourism establishments in the area.

Keywords: luxury community-based tourism, tourism experience, local participation

Introduction

Community-based tourism has become one of the essential tools to promote sustainable tourism, especially in developing countries. To boost a community's carrying capacity by developing community-based tourism in local communities' benefits generate incomes, growing cooperation among locals, preserving local culture and natural resources in communities, etc. (Henama et al., 2019). Community-based tourism has been supported by Thai governments for many decades. Many local communities in Thailand have developed themselves and enhanced their efficiency to become

successful community-based tourism sites (Chatkaewnapanon & Lee, 2022), such as Phuket. Phuket has long been known as a world-famous travel destination in Thailand. The growth of tourism has brought Phuket to face several negative impacts from tourism (Manui, 2018). Hence, community-based tourism was adopted to minimize the negative impacts of tourism and create strong local participation to enhance tourism in this area. Recent studies about community-based tourism in Thailand mostly focused on sustainability (Chatkaewnapanon & Lee 2022; Treephan et al., 2019; Bagus et al., 2019; Pornprasit & Rurkkhum, 2019; Giampiccoli, 2020; Suriyankietkaew et al., 2021; Srithong et al., 2019;). While others studies focused on participatory (Treephan et al., 2019; Srithong et al., 2019) Moreover, Recent studies about empowerment (Irwan et al., 2021; Giampiccoli, 2020). However, studies on specific niche tourists and Luxury community-based tourism were limited and became the research gap in this study. In terms of marketing, each community should be able to specify their target of tourists to create proper experiences for tourists and as the power of buying among tourists had been increased recently, luxury community-based tourism was studied as the purpose to develop community-based tourism in Thailand.

The concepts of luxury community-based tourism have been focused to engage new tourism targets and profiting the larger society in local communities. To satisfy the preferences of the luxury market, community-based tourism requires enhancing several components to become luxury community-based tourism sites. Enhancing community-based tourism can not only improve tourism quality but also empowers the goal of creating an equitable society and just communities, creating environmentally conscious, sustainable, socially responsible and seeking depth and immersion in local cultures in community-based tourism (Dodds, Ali, & Galaski, 2018). With the benefit from the development of community-based tourism, community-based tourism sites can enhance their potentials to reach the new targeted tourists, luxury tourists. This article tends to analyze major local communities in Phuket and their enhancement to become luxury community-based tourism to apply the findings from this article to seek the targeted tourists and develop community-based tourism sites as the contribution of this research. This article is based on literature review utilizing journal articles and other available relevant and useful resources on the internet. By selecting 7 major local community-based tourism sites in Phuket based on their success announced by the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the data was based on a literature review.

Luxury Community-Based Tourism (LCBT)

To promote sustainable tourism, community-based tourism has long been supported by national governments from all over the world. By developing community-based tourism, local communities can increase their capacity to decrease negative impacts from tourism and increase positive ones at the same time. Community-based tourism should encourage locals to exchange and

transform knowledge and information from one to another (Mendoza-Moheno et al., 2021). The ideal of community-based tourism also encourages participation and involves stakeholders in communities such as local government, people, institutes, private sectors, etc. to shared-decision making and develop their communities and their local tourism (Castro-Arce & Vanclay, 2020). This would lead to benefit economic, sustainability, living standards, etc. for local people. Community-based tourism is unquestionably an effective method for implementing policy coordination, avoiding conflicts between different tourism stakeholders, and achieving synergies based on the exchange of information, analysis, and skills among all locals (Long, 2020). As a result, community-based tourism is regarded as a form of tourism for enhancing the living conditions of disadvantaged communities in remote, rural, impoverished, marginalized, economically depressed, undeveloped, poor, indigenous, ethnic minority, and small-town residents (Monterrubio, Osorio & Benítez, 2018).

Amidst the growth of luxury tourism, community-based tourism must adapt its concepts to reach new targets of tourists. It is essential to recognize that the luxury atmosphere and practical settings must be maintained to satisfy the preferences of the luxury market. Modern tourism accepts the concept of creating experiences over the material while maintaining the luxury aspects (Thirumaran, & Minh, 2022). This concept was later applied to community-based tourism. Luxury community-based tourism aims to enhance and spread the community-based tourism principles to a larger market and encourage tourism stakeholders to enhance the fundamental principles of community-based tourism, such as local control of the private sectors, a system of profit distribution to the larger society, respect for local cultures, and the prioritization of the use of local resources, among others (Govender & Giampiccoli, 2018). Luxury community-based tourism is a strategy to enhance community-based tourism by upgrading local resources (Giampiccoli, 2020), such as boutique hotels, to adopt, implement, and conform to specific criteria based on community-based tourism principles to follow tourism trends.

The distinguishing characteristics of luxury community-based tourism can be defined that it is independently and locally owned and rooted in the territory in which they are located (Dłużewska & Giampiccoli, 2021), while adopting community-based tourism principles to differentiate themselves from chain tourism companies. Luxury community-based tourism should exhibit its characteristics to represent a new configuration that combines luxury with community integration. It also should implement redistributive measures which facilitated the wide distribution of material and non-material resources to achieve a positive impact on the community as a whole, based on local resources both material (such as building material) and non-material (local knowledge and expertise). At the same time, it should be ethical and sustainable in regard to cultural, economic, environmental, psychological, and social matters while promoting education and empowerment with the goal of

creating a society that is equitable and just (Kioupi & Voulvoulis, 2019). Most importantly, luxury community-based tourism should provide exclusivity, experiences, and enjoyment.

Tourist Luxury Experiences

According to new tourism trends, tourist behavior has changed over time. Especially luxury tourists who now require more experience-based activities. However, they consider more about the environment, responsibility, and sustainability while seeking depth and local cultures (Longo et al., 2019). As new forms of experiences emerge exponentially against a backdrop of shifting tourist profiles, personalities, and markets, the tourism industry must adapt or perish. By involving tourists, personnel, and stakeholders in the innovation processes, tourism service providers can to some extent design, process, and facilitate tourist experiences (Bhaskara & Filimonau, 2021). Numerous studies conducted in the luxury context refer to high-priced tourist products, high-quality services, and material elements that create the luxury environment. Moreover, the core of the tourist product, the service concept, expresses the type of value which are based on their needs and motivations (Bhatnagar & Kumra, 2020). Tourists nowadays anticipate the value of the service and reflect their desired value. The service concept refers to the desires, objectives, and purposes of the customer's needs and how customers expect alternative products to fulfill them. Even though there is no consensus among scholars regarding the value dimensions of luxury (Khadka & Maharjan, 2017). Recent studies have discussed the consumers' growing desire for pleasure and emotional value over merely symbolic, functional, financial, or utilitarian benefits (Bairrada et al., 2018). Moreover, recent studies suggest that the perceived value of luxury may be more related to intrinsic goals; that is, consumers may seek deeper meaning and significance in luxury consumption (Kauppinen et al., 2019). The experiential activities pursued by the consumer embody the subjective, relative, and contextual nature of luxury.

The service process incorporates and describes the customer process, which generates customer experiences throughout the journey. The service process is communicated to the customer in the form of a service offering that includes a detailed description of each service module (e.g., lodging, meals, activities) and/or an itinerary in the promotional materials (Chen & Tussyadiah, 2021). For the service provider, the service process is a description of the formal product, consisting of the determination and definition of the chain of activities in the customer and production processes, as illustrated by a service blueprint, for instance.

Physical experience elements refer to the ambiance of the facilities (cleanliness, comfort, décor, and style), dimensions stimulating different senses (lighting, color scheme, soundscape, and odors), space/functionality, and symbols, signs, and artifacts (Iloranta & Kompola, (2022). Human interaction elements, such as personnel and other customers, can either enhance or detract from

the customer experience (Bolton et al., 2018). These factors have a significant impact on how customers feel. Multiple researchers have emphasized the significance of guides and tour leaders in creating positive and memorable tourist experiences. In the context of luxury service, both components of the service system are essential to the customer experience and level of satisfaction.

Community-Based Tourism in Phuket

Each country has developed a variety of marketing campaigns to entice tourists to visit by promoting its attractive tourist destinations, local cultures, cuisine, architecture, folklore, and man-made tourist attractions. As the tourism industry generates numerous economic benefits for the country, the Thai government has enacted several national policies to ensure the industry's continuous growth. Thailand, the ASEAN nation with the highest number of international visitors, is home to a variety of natural and cultural tourist attractions spread throughout the country (Kunaviktikul, 2022). Phuket, among the major tourist destinations, is one of the most well-known beach destinations among international tourists. Phuket is the largest island in Thailand and the country's only province-island. As an island destination, Phuket boasts numerous beautiful natural attractions, including beaches and small islands. Therefore, Phuket is renowned for island tourism or 3S tourism (sea, sand, sun). It is renowned not only for island tourism (tourism that emphasizes beach attractions), but also for its charming local culture (Thai, Chinese, and Muslim) and historical attractions (Wongwattanakit et al., 2017). Numerous construction projects have been executed on the islands primarily to accommodate tourism growth. Rapid government and private sector investments have significantly transformed Phuket into a popular tourist destination and shopping paradise for both domestic and international tourists (Sangpikul, 2017). For decades, Phuket has attracted millions of people from all over the world. Since Phuket is rich in natural resources, particularly the image of beach tourism, and has become one of the most popular tourist destinations in Thailand, it was selected as the focus of this study due to its high potential for attracting loyal/revisit tourists.

The Thai government has prioritized sustainable tourism, especially in an ecotourism destination such as Phuket, where tourism is on the rise. Phuket's community-based tourism has been supported by both the local and national governments of Thailand. To develop and promote community-based tourism in Phuket, cooperation between public sectors, such as the Ministry of Tourism and Sports and the Tourism Authority of Thailand, educational sectors, and local communities have been funded. There are 7 major community-based tourism sites in Phuket that have successfully been developed.

Tha Chat Chai Community-Based Tourism

Tha Chat Chai is considered Phuket's gateway. Since it is a home for young wildlife, including both terrestrial and aquatic species, The Chat Chai became one of the most important marine and mangrove learning centers in Phuket (Theingthae, 2017). A nature reserve that provides tourists with the opportunity to kayak with locals surrounded by aerial roots and vast green canopies – and get up close and personal with the island's flora and fauna to comprehend why it is essential to preserve them. The majority of locals are fishermen and some own Phuket lobster farms that export their products throughout Thailand.

Paklok Community-Based Tourism

Paklok, the small local community extends eastward from the Heroines Monument to the extreme eastern coast. It is home to many of the island's most rural tourist attractions. Within its boundaries are the Gibbon Rehabilitation Project, the Phuket Elephant Sanctuary, the Tonsai Waterfall, and the Bang Pae Waterfall (Pongsanukulwech, 2018). Paklok is a small village inhabited primarily by natives. Local participation has developed Paklok's tourism by promoting their pear farm.

Ban Kha Naeen Community-Based Tourism

Ban Kha Naeen is an old village since the Ayutthaya period according to the evidence: the three ancient stupas, one abandoned temple, and the historical story of ThaoThep Kasattri-Thao Sri Sunthon when they fought against Myanmar to save Tha Lang. Nora, a southern Thai dance with a long history and rich culture, has been passed down from generation to generation (Kuroda, 2020) by locals of Ban Kha Naeen. Therefore, Ban Kha Naeen community-based tourism has adopted Nora and developed it into 'Norabic', an exercise in Nora dance style to promote and attract tourists to their communities.

Phuket Old Town Community-Based Tourism

The 3 generations of Thai-Chinese locals have strived to preserve their cultural heritage in Phuket's old town community. The unique architectures, shops, temples, and museums in this area are the main destination to travel to Phuket's old town for community-based tourism (Telan & Jamieson, 2021). The local community is committed to sustainable tourism by implementing zero-waste sustainability policies to preserve the cleanliness of their local community for future generations as they participate as local guides for their communities.

Choeng Talay Community-Based Tourism

The community's way of life in Bang-Thao or Choeng Talay is straightforward and characterized by religious fidelity. Locals in Bang-Thao are predominantly Muslim. Their traditional occupations include gardening, animal husbandry, and fishing (Tinakhat, 2021). As a result of the attractiveness of the beaches, the local economy continues to flourish. The community maintains its original way of life or, even better, they blend in seamlessly. Choeng Talay is a religious site in Bang-Thao as well. It is the oldest and largest mosque in Phuket. The Community Visitor Center, where a

housewife group will demonstrate how to make khao-yam-bai-pa-hom, a popular dish in Bang-Thao, khao-yum with a Phuket recipe, Phuket pineapple, and a traditional snack called A-pong are run by locals.

Kamala Community-Based Tourism

Kamala Community is located in Kathu District, Phuket. It is surrounded by mountains and ocean which is considered one of the most beautiful areas in Phuket. Thai Buddhists and Muslims ran the local community of resorts, shops, and tourist sites. Their participation has promoted cultural tourism and developed community-based tourism in this area (Chuanthom & Promjanya, 2020). Local activities such as visiting local mosques, painting batik, and visiting local horse farms became major activities for attracting tourists.

Rawai-Ko Lon Community-Based Tourism

A relatively large island south of the city and close to Ao Chalong, Rawai-Ko Lon community-based tourism is a typical Fishing Village developing into community-based tourism by locals. The majority of community members are Muslims and make a living through fishing and farming. A community enterprise has been established to bolster the community through tourism development management (Neef et al., 2018). It offers a variety of tourism activities, such as learning the way of life and local wisdom by painting batik cloth with natural colors, making local desserts, such as Khanom Kho, Khanom Tom Bai Maphrao, catching Dollfus' octopus, a type of octopus that lives in sand holes, trekking to Namtok Pho Sai waterfall, etc.

According to 7 major community-based tourism sites in Phuket, it can be summarized that each tourism site was developed based on the participation of local people. The identities and uniqueness of local people, cultures, and traditions have been promoted to attract tourists to travel to community-based tourism in Phuket. Moreover, each community tends to create a workshop or experience-based activities for tourists to participate in to encourage environmentally conscious, sustainable, socially responsible, and/or healthy for their tourists to create a travel experience for tourists who visited community-based tourism sites in Phuket.

Luxury Local Experiences

Since luxury tourism has been focused on tourism research recently, community-based tourism is likely to be enhanced into a more luxurious position in the tourism business. Oates (2016) presents a new concept for luxury travelers: “the 5 C’s of Luxury Travel,” which consists of: 1) Culture: this group of tourists wants to learn about the qualities of culture and art, unique performances, various stories, and various luxurious things that have traditional characteristics. which is a new experience that can be obtained from traveling. 2) Cuisine (food): this group of tourists wants to gain experience in food. which is the first thing What this group of tourists considers is experiencing local

food. Quality local drinks, including learning how to cook too. 3) Community (participation): this group of tourists may not want to participate with other tourists.

4) Content (Format): the content and form of marketing that are conveyed will be the true story. There is a tourism program that offers luxury and outstanding. Presenting programs that are easy to access is the reason for choosing this form of tourism. 5) Customization: This is the thing that must be given the most importance because this group of tourists wants a lot of freedom and has a need to choose programs. Tourism itself Choose your own food. I don't want the tour to be a general tour program. Phuket, itself, has adapted its community-based tourism to reach a new target of tourists. From in-depth interview with locals and search the promotions from each community, new and fully experienced activities are offered to satisfy the preferences of the luxury market such as the Norabic dance class for luxury wellness tourists in Ban Kha Naen community or Khao-yam-bai-pa-hom cooking class in Choeng Talay community for luxury gastronomic tourists. Table 1 shows essential luxury local experiences offered by each community-based tourism site in Phuket.

Table1 Luxury Local Experiences Offered by Community-Based Tourism sites in Phuket

Community-Based Tourism Site	Luxury Local Experiences	The components of a luxury experience
Tha Chat Chai	- Private Kayaking in Mangrove	Content, Community
	- Catching Lobster	Cuisine
Paklok	- Pineapple Cooking Class	Cuisine
	- The Gibbon Rehabilitation Project	Customization
	- Planting Baby Mangroves	Community
Ban Kha Naeen	- Norabic Dance Class	Culture
Phuket Old Town	- Museum Hopping	Culture
	- Local Phuketian Gastronomic Tour	Cuisine
Choeng Talay	-Dried Fish Cooking Class	Cuisine
	- Bang Hod Goat Farm Tour	Community
	- Waterfall Trekking	Content
Kamala	- Baan Mussuree of White Blood Mythology Story	Culture, Content
	- Cavity	Community
Rawai-Ko Lon	- Cycling Route Tour	Community
	- Building Blue Swimming Crab Bank	Customization, Content

Source: Author

From table 1, each community tends to find experimental activities related to their cultures, religion, nature, and living lifestyle to connect locals and tourists. With the aim to enlarge the tourist market size, especially for luxury tourists, community-based tourism in Phuket focuses mainly on the priority of experiences over material possessions (while maintaining the luxury aspects) by developing such as local control of the company, a system of profit distribution to the larger society, respect for local cultures, and the prioritization of the use of local resources, among others (Riddhagni, 2019).

The findings from several research such as Suhartanto et al (2020) revealed that experience quality has the biggest effect on tourist loyalty, also products and processes, tourists and community were considered as the core elements to create experiences to enhance experiences from community-based tourism (Dias et al., 2023). Creative tourism by combining with local experiences could bring the cocreation of differentiated experiences and could be a useful tool to complement placemaking strategies (Gato et al., 2022). From the findings in this articles, local experiences were created in every 7 community-based tourism sites. Tha Chat Chai community offered private kayaking sessions and opportunities to catch lobsters with locals which no local tour operator can provide these services to tourists. Paklok community learnt to create experiences with sustainability by offering Gibbon Rehabilitation to tourists. Norabic Dance Class was preserved as authentic Thai culture and arts, by adopting tourism as a tool could also promote and preserve Thai culture and arts at the same time. Even gastronomic tour and museum hopping could be managed by tour operators, travelling with Phuket Old Town local community offered special and deep local meals which tourists barely knew in the local homes that not opened for normal tourists. Adventure tourists could find unique activities and sense the sustainable tourism with trekking, cavity and cycling with locals in Choeng Talay, Kamala and Rawai-Ko Lon communities. Every activity offered unique experiences in the local community sites and professional locals to fulfill the moments which tourists could not find from mass tourism. Because all activities from every community offer high-priced tourist products, high-quality services, and material elements that create the luxury environment and specialty for each group of tourists and related to previous researches, these kinds of experiences were concluded in this article as activities for tourists who would be willing to spend money memories and activities on or luxury tourists.

Moreover, all the 7 major community-based tourism sites in Phuket are locally and independently owned. The locals work cooperatively and independently without any collectively owned trust, Non-Profit Organization, etc. Although these communities may have been funded by public and private sectors, it was for educational purposes and empowerment (World Health Organization, 2018) with the goal of creating a society that is equitable and just.

Discussion

Community-based tourism in Phuket has developed its concept to enlarge its group of tourists. Local participation has been supported in mainly 7 communities, Tha Chat Chai, Paklok, Ban Kha Naeen, Phuket Old Town, Choeng Talay, Kamala, and Rawai-Ko Lon. These communities follow the essence of communities-based tourism by focusing on sharing of information and the transformation of the learning process itself in the service of people's self-development in form of local participation which related to the relevant theories such as behaviors of high-price tourists (Kioupi & Voulvoulis, 2019) and creative tourism (Bagus et al., 2019; Pornprasit & Rurkkhum, 2019; Giampiccoli, 2020; Suriyankietkaew et al., 2022; Swangjang & Kornpiphat, 2021). By focusing on locally and independently owned participation in local communities, 7 community-based tourism sites in Phuket have enhanced their standards to provide exclusivity, authenticity, and enjoyment to create cultural and spiritual experiences for new targets of tourists. Moreover, these communities tend to shift their level from community-based tourism to luxury community-based tourism by creating experienced activities to connect local people and luxury tourists. As mentioned, luxury community-based tourism must focus on exclusivity, experiences, and enjoyment based on locally and independently owned (Giampiccoli et al., 2020) 7 community-based tourism sites in Phuket are likely to be aware. These communities can create products and services that are environmentally conscious, sustainable, and socially responsible in the area. However, these 7 sites should also consider more preferences for personalized products offered in community-based tourism. Local communities should clearly understand tourist profiles, personalities, and markets to create depth and immersion in local cultures; rather than merely observing, they yearn for participation while still enjoying authentic wining and dining in comfort. Travel experiences should extend design, process, and facilitate tourist experiences based on participation while still enjoying authentic wining and dining in comfort. Moreover, to serve luxury tourism appropriately, high-priced tourist products, high-quality service, and material elements that create the luxury environment should be considered. Cleanliness, comfort, décor, and style should be more focused to develop the ambiance of the facilities and create the most positive and memorable tourist experiences for luxury community-based tourism in Phuket.

Conclusion

7 communities-based tourism in Phuket, Tha Chat Chai, Paklok, Ban Kha Naeen, Phuket Old Town, Choeng Talay, Kamala, and Rawai-Ko Lon tends to develop themselves to become luxury community-based tourism. The local participation cooperatively, locally, and independently owned, ease communities to enhance and spread the CBT principles to a larger market and encourage luxury tourism. 7 communities have used local resources to offer exclusivity, experience, and enjoyment for

tourists. However, to serve luxury tourism appropriately, the ambiance of the facilities, high-priced tourist products, high-quality service, and material elements that create the luxury environment should be more closely considered. Moreover, these 7 tourism communities need supports from several sectors such as government, private sectors, and local participation to develop brand image for luxury tourism and promote 7 communities-based tourism in Phuket to their targeted tourists properly.

Thus, in formulating policy recommendations, local government agencies play an important role in supporting the growth and competitiveness of luxury community-based tourism in Phuket. In terms of policy for the community: The community should make a difference in the offering. Creating an image that appeals to each community It is promoted online using the same platform. Entrepreneurs should create satisfaction value for luxury tourists; the value received will be of high quality, which can be the key to the sustainability of the luxury travel business.

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