



Barriers to Local Residents' Participation in Coastal Tourism Development in Trang Province

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the barriers to local residents' participation in the process of tourism development. Focusing on the local people in Park Meng and Chang Lang Beach areas which are part of Had Chao Mai National Park, Trang Province. It is a quantitative study involved 318 local people in the two villages located in the coastal. The findings indicate that the most barriers to local community participation is the structural limitations (lack of qualified personnel with expertise in tourism planning and lack of an appropriate legal system for community participation in tourism development), followed by operational limitations (the centralization of public administration of tourism development, a lack of coordination between relevant individual public sectors and private sectors, and a lack of information made available to the local people of the tourist destination), and cultural limitations (the limited capacity due to poverty and a low level of participation awareness in the local community).

This study highlights the importance of the local community participation in Park Meng and Chang Lang Beach toward tourism development for sustainability of tourist attractions.

Keywords: Local Residents' Participation, Coastal Tourism Development, Pak Meng Beach Chang Lang Beach, Barriers



Introduction

Trang is a southern province on the west coast of Thailand adjacent to the Andaman Sea of the Indian Ocean. Trang is the 4th largest province in the south and the 33rd in the country. Having a long coastline of 119 kilometers along with 46 islands of various sizes, it is considered one of the provinces that have abundant tourism resources and outstanding culture. There are various cultural and natural tourism resources with their own identity for the absolute natural beauty. In 2018, there were 1,596,657 visitors (tourists and excursionists) consisting of 1,393,840 local (Thai) people and 202,817 foreigners which contributed tourism revenue of 9,916.29 million baht.

One of Trang's coastal natural tourist attractions and major and magnificent islands in Trang is Had Chao Mai National Park. It is the largest marine national park in the province which covers the 2 districts of Kantang and Sikao with a 20-kilometer coastline consisting of seashore and islands (Trang Provincial Office, 2019). Pak Meng Beach, one of the areas under the responsibilities of Had Chao Mai National Park, is regarded as the province's most famous land-based attraction located in Sikao District, approximately 40 kilometers from the city. The beach is beautiful with its crescent-like shape along which a line of sea pine trees of about 5 kilometers long. There is the island shaped like a man lying northward on his back which is the beach symbol (Had Chao Mai National Park, n.d.-a). In Pak Meng Beach areas, there is a road lying parallel to the beach that is eclectically aligned with abundant beach stalls (for foods and drinks, clothes, and swim rings), various types of resorts, kiosks, and hawkers as well as canvas beds and beach umbrellas all of which line up the esplanade. Chang Lang Beach gives a similar sandy beach view connected from Pak Meng beach. It is shady with a line of pine trees and provides a more peaceful atmosphere than Pak Meng Beach areas. At the north end of the beach is Chang Lang canal where the sea meeting area has a diverse spectacular viewpoint (Had Chao Mai National Park, n.d.-b). Nevertheless, the Pak Meng and Chang Lang Beach areas are still ones of the lands encountering tourism development problems. The issue is partly caused by the fact that most of their usable areas for tourism are within the boundary of Had Chao Mai National Park resulting in limitations in terms of regulations that cause difficulties in developing business-oriented tourism (Office of the Public Sector Development, 2011). According to the interview with private sectors running tourism-based businesses in the Pak Meng Beach



area, the problems affecting the tourism development were thought to be administrative management as well as the expansion of the area with no direction. This resulted in the following problems of many aspects such as the problems concerning infrastructure, garbage, and polluted water as well as non-quality and standard products and services that are related to tourism (“Hotel Development,” 2021). Besides, it was found the problem of “The Pak Meng Plaza Civil State Market”, a large building in the area, has been neglected with no sellers and visiting tourists (“Had Chao Mai,” 2018). The construction purposed to organize the beach atmosphere by moving in all the shops, hawkers, and stalls along the beach to the plaza (Jamreonnusit, 2018). However, the intended outcome was not achieved - they could not arrange these sellers moving into the building. Some of the sellers consequently set up the tables and kiosks selling food on the beach untidily without any supervisors. There are lack of sanitation and cleanliness of food and place where is the public domain. This situation has continued to the present time.

Several past academicians indicated that local people’s participation in the development of tourism is a vital factor toward the intended success. Since local people living in the tourism areas are primary interested parties, relevant sectors that have authority and responsibility shall be considering and taking this issue into account (Chan et al., 2021; Kantsperger et al., 2019). However, researchers concerning the barriers to local people’s participation in the processes of tourism development are still rare (Mustapha et al., 2013), and especially the areas under the supervision of Had Chao Mai National Park such as Pak Meng Beach and Chang Lang Beach areas have not yet been studied. Owing to the problem situation about tourism administrative management at the present, the researcher became aware of the necessity for the study of the barriers. The study aimed to contribute the research results as guidance to enhance more effective administrative management over the areas providing utmost benefits to coastal tourism areas and communities surrounding Had Chao Mai National Park.

Objective

The objectives of this study were to investigate the socio-demographic characteristics and the barriers of local community participation in tourism development processes at Pak Meng Beach and Chang Lang Beach areas.



Literature Reviews

Community Participation in Tourism

Arnstein (1969) proposed the participation theory describing degrees of citizen participation as a metaphorical eight-rung ladder. The eight rungs sorted in ascending order were Manipulation, Therapy, Informing, Consulting, Placation, Partnership, Delegated, and Citizen Control.

The first two rungs of the participation ladder representing the Manipulation and the Therapy were considered Pseudo Participation or Nonparticipation where citizens did not participate in decision making because only a few people (the authorities) had the power to do so. The real purpose was not for citizen participation in planning or project supervision, but for the authorities to be able to proceed with the educational provision or merely maintain them as participants.

The third-to-the-fifth rung of the participation ladder was called Degrees of Tokenism or Partial Participation. The third and the fourth rungs representing the Informing and the Consultation meant that citizens' opinions were more listened to by the authorities; however, this was still under the condition that there would be no guarantee whether their opinions would be considered. Owing to this limitation, changing any environment was still difficult. Although the fifth rung or the Placation that was the highest level in the Degrees of Tokenism or Partial Participation allowed citizens to advise the authorities, the right to make the decision was still reserved for the powerholders.

The sixth-to-the-eighth rung of the participation ladder called the 'Degrees of Citizen Power' described more citizen participation. The sixth rung or the Partnership meant that citizens was able to participate in negotiation with the authorities for better deals while the seventh rung or the participation as Delegated Power occurred when citizens had the power to make decisions via citizen delegates. Contrastingly, the eighth rung or the Citizen Control denoted the actual power of the citizens who had full control over decision-making.

Barriers to Community Participation

Tosun (2000) investigated barriers of community participation in tourism development and categorized them into 3 major groups—operational, structural, and cultural limitations. 1) The operational limitations included, for example, the centralization

of public administration of tourism development, a lack of coordination between relevant individual public sectors and private sectors, and a lack of information made available to the local people of the tourist destination. 2) The structural limitations were, for example, lack of qualified personnel with expertise in tourism planning and lack of an appropriate legal system for community participation in tourism development. 3) The cultural limitations were, for example, the limited capacity due to poverty and a low level of participation awareness in the local community.

Land Ownership in Pak Meng and Chang Lang Beach

Pak Meng Beach and Chang Lang Beach areas are of various patterns of ownership. That is some of the local people who have been living there have land right documents: Sor Khor 1 (ส.ค.1) and Nor Sor 3 Kor (น.ส.3 ก) while some who do not are living in the properties of Trang Provincial Administrative Organization, Royal Forest Department, or within the premise of Had Chao Mai National Park (“Senate Committee,” 2011; “Special Report,” 2014).

In the real situation, these people have earned a living on the entire beach areas, but the lands are in the boundaries of Had Chao Mai National Park, National Forests, Kala Sae Canal Forest, and Dead Wood Canal Forest as well as within the areas under the responsibility of Trang Provincial Administrative Organization. This considerably obstructs the tourism development of the areas. For example, hotel and resort entrepreneurs were not able to obtain a hotel business license due to the problem concerning land documentary evidence (The Secretariat of the Senate, 2020).

Research Methodology

This research studied the coastal land areas of Had Chao Mai National Park covering the population of 2 villages, totally of 1,557 households, comprised of 1,070 households from Moo 4 Baan Had Pak Meng, Tambon Mai Fat and 487 households from Moo 5 Baan Chang Lang, Tambon Mai Fat. The sample size was 318 samples calculated from Yamane formula (1970) with the acceptable sampling error of 0.05. The Stratified Random Sampling technique was applied with households’ representatives aged 18 years onwards in line with the proportion of households of each village. Therefore, 219 samples were selected from Moo 4 Baan Had Pak Meng and 99 samples from Moo 5 Baan Chang Lang. Then,

Simple Random Sampling was employed to select the samples.

The data was collected during February 2021 using a Thai version questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 2 sections. The first section was a checklist asking about demographic data such as gender, age, income, main occupation, number of household workers, number of years of residency, and involvement in shop or stalls for tourists in Pak Meng Beach. The second section was a five-point Likert scale asking about barriers to participation in decision-making processes for tourism development. All these questions are close ended with 5 levels of agreement; 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 representing agree strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree, respectively.

Result of the Research

The geographic coordinates (latitude and longitude) of all the 318 samples during the implementation of the questionnaire survey were specified in Figure 1.

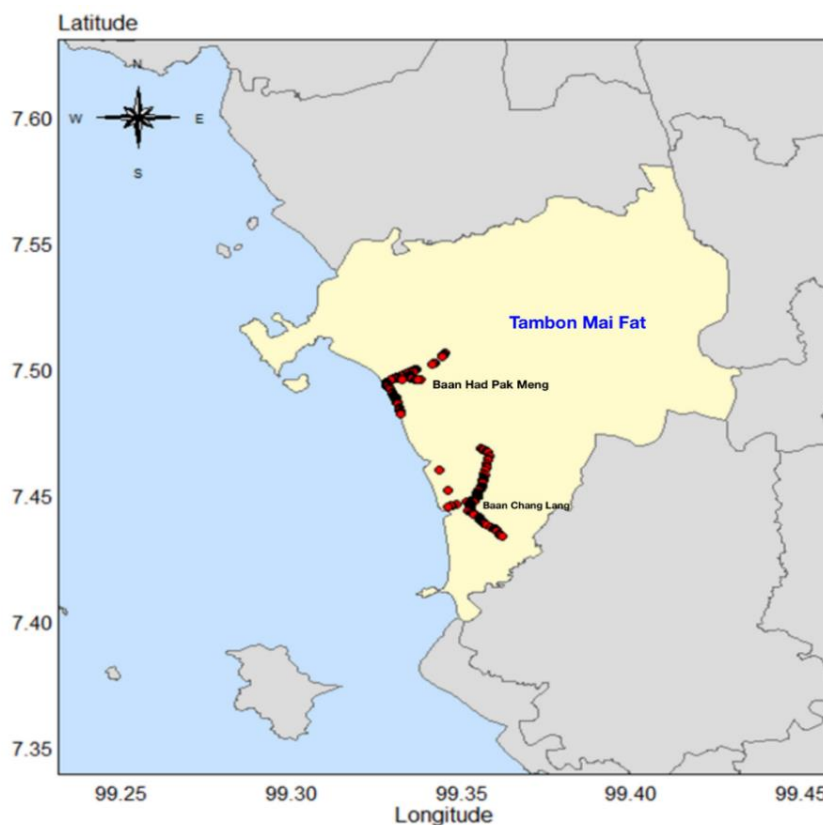


Figure 1: Geographic coordinates of all the 318 samples in Baan Had Pak Meng and Baan Chang Lang, Tambon Mai Fat

Respondent Profile

The majority of the residents are female (59.4%), whereas male accounted for 40.6%. Eighty five percent of the respondents is between the age of 31 to 60 years old. Almost 63% of the respondents mentioned that their income is less than 15000 Bath. Another group is between 15001 to 30000 Bath (35.5%). Forty five percent of the respondents are working in tourism sectors while the remaining respondents work in fishery sectors and agriculture sectors. In terms of number of household members who are workers, 3 to 5 (40.3%) is the highest, followed by more than 5 (35.5%). More than half of respondents (51.9) have been residing in this area more than 10 years. Approximately 43% have been involvement in shop or beach stalls for tourists in Pak Meng Beach. Detail profile of the respondents is as in Table 1.

Table 1 Respondent profile

Respondents' characteristics	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	129	40.6
Female	189	59.4
Age		
Under 30	16	5
31-45	162	50.9
46-60	107	33.6
Older than 60	33	10.4
Income (Bath)		
<15000	199	62.6
15001-30000	113	35.5
30001-50000	5	1.6
>50000	1	0.3
Main Occupation		
Agriculture	42	13.2
Fishery	85	26.7
Tourism	144	45.3
Merchant	38	11.9
Others	9	2.8

Respondents' characteristics	Number	Percentage (%)
Number of Household Workers		
1	10	3.1
2	67	21.1
3-5	128	40.3
>5	113	35.5
Years of Residency		
<1 year	15	4.7
1-6 years	52	16.4
6-10 years	86	27
>10 years	165	51.9
Shop or Stalls for Tourists in Pak Meng Beach		
Involvement	136	42.8
Non-involvement	182	57.2

Barriers to Community Participation

As shown in Table 2, mean barriers to community participation in tourism development in the structural limitations are the highest and have the lowest standard deviation than other limitation groups (mean = 4.32, SD = 0.78), followed by the operational limitations with 4.07 mean score and 0.85 standard deviation, and the cultural limitations with 3.74 mean score and 1.08 standard deviation, respectively.

Table 2 Barriers to community participation in tourism development

Type of Barriers	Levels of Agreement					Mean	SD
	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)		
Operational Limitations						4.07	0.85
1. Centralization of public administration of tourism development	1 (0.3)	4 (1.3)	105 (33.0)	87 (27.4)	121 (38.1)	4.01	0.88
2. Lack of coordination between relevant individual public sectors and private sectors	3 (0.9)	6 (1.9)	77 (24.2)	107 (33.6)	125 (39.3)	4.08	0.88
3. Lack of information made available to the local people	2 (0.6)	12 (3.8)	56 (17.6)	126 (39.6)	122 (38.4)	4.11	0.86
						4.32	0.78

Type of Barriers	Levels of Agreement					Mean	SD
	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)		
Structural Limitations							
1. Lack of qualified personnel with expertise in tourism planning	0 (0)	6 (1.9)	49 (15.4)	101 (31.8)	162 (50.9)	4.31	0.80
2. Lack of an appropriate legal system for community participation	1 (0.3)	11 (3.5)	26 (8.2)	123 (38.7)	157 (49.4)	4.33	0.79
Cultural Limitations						3.74	1.08
1. Limited capacity due to poverty	18 (5.7)	26 (8.2)	81 (25.5)	95 (29.9)	98 (30.8)	3.72	1.15
2. Low level of participation awareness in the local community	10 (3.1)	19 (6.0)	102 (32.1)	91 (28.6)	96 (30.2)	3.76	1.04

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the analysis of barriers to participation in decision-making processes for tourism development, it was found that the structural limitations had the highest mean, followed by operational limitations, and cultural limitations as the lowest. The data obtained were inconsistent with Mustapha et al. (2013) that investigating barriers to community participation in island tourism development in Malaysia. This is probably owing to the complete difference in the context of the area studied – the present study dealt with obstacles to participation in tourism development processes of local people in Pak Meng and Chang Lang Beach areas which are part of Had Chao Mai National Park.

The findings of the study showed that the structural limitations received the highest mean score, which comprised a lack of experts in tourism planning and a lack of a suitable legal system for local people participation. This is consistent with the reported information about the operation of “Pak Meng Plaza Civil State Market.” The construction processes were carried out by Mai Fat Subdistrict Administrative Organization who applied for the building permission at the Department of National Parks, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation for the construction of a large building in the vicinity of Had Chao Mai National Park before handing the building over to Had Chao Mai National Park for its administrative management (Jamreonnusit, 2018). However, this was not successful—no sellers of goods and services for tourists in the building. This is partly because the market is located far from Pak Meng



Port where most tourists need to visit for taking a boat to the islands. Moreover, the shop construction design was considered not suitable, and the parking entrance was inconveniently narrow (“Had Chao Mai,” 2018). This all reflects the lack of experts in tourism planning as well as the lack of a suitable legal system that enhances the participation of local people in providing suggestions despite being stakeholders who are directly affected.

Tourism development should be regarded in the local community participation manner. This is because tourism development occurred from the involvement with local people would help reduce confrontation problems between local people and public sectors with supervisory roles. Thus, the authorities should be collaborations between all government agencies as well as network enhancement and involvement with local people in tourism development processes of the Pak Meng and Chang Lang Beach areas to provide community members with opportunities to take part in driving tourism. Tourism's support by local people could be the most important factors that assists sustainability of tourist attractions (Gohori & Merwe, 2021).

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