



## The Strategic Management for CBT during the Pandemic of Covid-19: A Case Study of Surrounding Communities of Sukhothai Muangkao Cultural World Heritage Site, Thailand

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The Purpose of this research is to identify the main-Crisis Management of Community-based Cultural Tourism Model (CM-CBTM) during the Covid-19 pandemic (Corrected) that should be implemented within the surrounding community in Muangkao sub-district administrative upon the new-normal period as well as to find out the key specific strategic management area in which local administrative government has been initiated based on the main-key stakeholders under the collaboration policy approach.

**Research methods:** This research applies a qualitative approach by using interview technique, participatory observation, focus-group discussion. For data analysis technique, the researcher adopted coding information process of grounded theory. By Involving codes which classified in group discussion in align with the strategic management of the community-based tourism model that was interviewed respectively.

**Findings:** The community-based tourism Model indicated that several challenges had been experienced during the period of Covid-19 pandemic including conflict management over resource ownership and benefit leaking, financial issues, and problems of community participation. The study found the key specific strategic management that require preparation stage on the part of the community moving toward community-based tourism.

**Implications:** Outcome of the improvement in Community-based tourism development model is highly relevant with community empowerment and local participation approach. Additionally, the suggestions shown that local administrative government are expected to bring the community alignment policy that developed with a various consultative process. Within this potential-criteria, the community in Muangkao sub-district administrative become more adaptable management policy that most of key actors included villagers, community leaders, active government and non-government officers are working as the co-facilitator. The new-normal implementation policy



changed touristy of Muangkao sub-district administration, it created a new network of partnership based on the availability of local politics values which prioritized the majority of local voice empowerment to build up the clear policy guideline in the community. As a result, the practical requirement strategies of the Covid-19 prevention mechanism manipulated by primary public health care unit, sub-district hospital, and some support from surrounding communities brought advantages in community development capacity which integrated with local.

**Keywords:** strategic management, community-based tourism, the period of Covid-19 pandemic.

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a dynamic global economic activity that creates jobs, generates income, and drives regional cooperation and integration. Globally, international visitor arrivals reached 1.5 billion in 2019, a 4% increase compared with 2018. The People's Republic of China (PRC) is the world's top outbound source market, with 155 million international Chinese travelers, spending \$255 billion in 2019. Asia and the Pacific received 360.70 million international visitors in 2019, up 4.1% compared with 2018 (Wolnicki & Piasecki, 2021). Asia and the Pacific will be the world's fastest growing region through to 2030, when international visitors will reach 535 million, equal to 30% of global market share. Within Asia and the Pacific, the 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries welcomed 133 million international visitors in 2019 and is expected to grow by 5.1% per year and reach 187 million in 2030 (Leung, 2020).

Thailand is amongst the countries in southeast Asian region that receive the most international tourists to travel in every-years. A total number of international tourists visiting to Thailand from 11.15 million international visitors arrived in 2022, compared to 6.7 million in 2020 (Lancaster Kate, 2022). This create a favor condition for cultural tourism in Thailand that being developed across the countries such as Sukhothai Muangkao Cultural World Heritage areas (Sucharitkul, 2015).

Sukhothai old town community is located in Tambon Muang Kao, Amphoe Mueang. Most of the area is plain and suitable for agriculture. The area has high and low mountains in line with Khao Luang in the west. The community is located around Sukhothai Historical Park area consists of 12 sub-communities with a total population of 7,439 people. most of whom are engaged in agriculture, farming,

rice planting, trading, government service and employed, respectively. Most of the communities have skills and expertise in arts and culture, handicrafts, and painting (Mishra, 2010).

Cultural and Heritage tourism marketing strategic management in Sukhothai Muangkao area seemed to be driven by unique culture and local wisdom of the local community. Similarly, the big problem of marketing strategic management concept in Sukhothai Muangkao area is less reveal with the supports from local residence who is working directly with the community-based tourism project such as local entrepreneur who own a local SMEs business activities. However, as the Covid-19 pandemic bring effect on the whole image of Thai tourism industry, the perspective development changing of local tourism tend to be focus more within the availability of tourism safety measure mechanism (Kerdpitak, 2022).

Community-based tourism has adopted in general to illustrate more on the major part of the community management model such as identify the community development challenging factors in term of socio-cultural issues, focusing more on the long-term sustainable development program that bring about community integration project with a form of community partnership perspective. As evidenced, the progressive of community-based tourism development agenda in Thailand has become a center of study for many researchers who seek to understand deeply over the rural community development situation in strategic ways (Li et al., 2021).

The milestone achievement of community-based tourism development agenda in Muangkao Sukhothai has enabled the process of community management model become part of critical responsible issues among other stakeholders. With this connection, it is necessary to address the principle of community achievement bellows such as: enhancing the community diversification level regarding to local productivity, develop a sense of self-reliance concept which stressed more on the people-centered development concept as the main-core value, advocate for the use of community resource both financially and spiritually, design the satisfy process of community organization which response directly to the needs of democratization concept, preserve the environmental and natural resource management rights that could respect in prior to community wisdom (Supradith & Pooripakdee, 2023).

Commonly, the problem of CBT development barriers seemed to be connected with the level of understanding in policy implementation as well as in building up the role model of related agencies to help and build the support among the availability of CBT mechanism that still operated at the local level (Jamal & Dredge, 2014). As shown, the problem of CBT development agenda in Muangkao could reflect by the difference planning approach that CBTs Member in Muangkao has been initiated with the local authority. This includes the community-based tourism planning approach, the empowerment management agenda, the stakeholder management and integration level, efficiency of marketing and public relations capacity, human rights knowledge within tourism study, conservation and promotion of the community cultural world heritage, and other inform policy approach that could adapt within a responsible manner (Bumyut et al., 2022).

The management problem in Sukhothai Muangkao is revealed with many forms of the community concerns development agenda such as the lack of empowerment project that co-financing from other stakeholders which might cause the level of development in the area become less friendly environmental (Esichaikul & Chansawang, 2022).

During the pandemic, the Tourism authority of Thailand adopted the safety and health administrative standards (SHA) which considered as the Covid-19 prevention strategies for public health and social measure based on personal hygiene, workplace sanitation, and health risk communication. The SHA standard is a cooperative project agenda of Ministry of public health, follow by the private organization in partnership with the government in the tourism industry (Bumyut et al., 2022).

SHA is a certificate that represents Tourism industry entrepreneurs' readiness in improving their products, services and sanitation measures which is the crucial factor in preventing the spread of Covid-19 by complying with the sanitation measures, which in turn can build trust and confidence in customers and service recipients of such products and services (Deng et al., 2023). However, the problem of using SHA in Sukhothai old town community is mostly related to lack of good governance initiative as well as better participation from other stakeholders. Thereby, CBT related to SHA program applying is very

importance to be initiated at the main area of tourism destination in Thailand aim to building up the destination safeness and friendly environmentally.

To tackle the CBT development during the pandemic of Covid-19, the change of community image perspective followed by the change of local residence quality of life since the first wave of Covid-19 announcement in March 2020 is considered crucial (Kuniya, 2020). To gain the insight view with diverse perspective of local community development initiative, the crisis management of community-based cultural tourism Model (CM-CBTM) becomes the alternative solution.

CM-CBTM was found in current study mostly related with community involvement, participation, and the lack of community development planning agenda. Meanwhile, a barrier in developing the successful criteria of CM-CBTM is still found upon survey campaign. As evidenced, CBT development in Thailand mostly highlighted partnership network responsible such as the lack of responsibility in building up the CBT partnership networks between the villager and head of village in facilitate the local participation value (Zielinski, Kim, Botero, & Yanes, 2020).

Without considering the CM-CBTM, insufficiency of building up the strong relationship within community member in managing crisis by using community resources and ability that would be significantly advantages has been neglected. Within academic study result, limitation in identify the process flows of local administrative management structure during the crisis that could lead to positive change in local development aspect that could shape the planning agenda of CBT in Muangkao hasn't been developed.

Upon this, no specific business model program that could enhance the value of Muangkao which has bring a strong evidenced of business-enabling environment for higher value travel and tourism upon Covid-19 pandemic hasn't been designed. With this connection, the shortage of skills hospitality workers and public tourism management expertise within a responsive ways especially when Covid-19 pandemic has been exposed recently, there is no any community lesson-learned guidelines that could transfer the local knowledge in management skills mandate to the new local elected leaders as well (Gohori & van der Merwe, 2021).

As a result, it is very important to initiate the CM-CBTM that has been reflected with a form of community resources. Based on local community safety development guideline, It is very crucial to highlight the key strategic areas of Local community study which sustainably reflect the interaction of community leadership role that has been adopted in the Sukhothai Muangkao.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research is applied to the qualitative study method which uses the interview technique, participatory observation, focus-group discussion. Participation among researchers and stakeholders within the community are useful for identifying the problem and basic requirement needs of the community and other solution proposal aim to reduce the community development barriers within the project. The field-survey activities have been conducted in between the period: 13-30/July/2022.

The study area is based in surrounded the community of Muangkao Sukhothai Cultural World heritage sites in which situated in Ban Muangkao Sub-district, Ampoe Muang, Sukhothai Province.

Focus group discussion is a technique where a researcher gathers necessary Information from a group of individuals to discuss a specific topic, aiming to draw up from the complex personal experience, belief, perception, and attitude of the participation through moderate interaction.

Involving participants were Local sub-district health directors, Village committee, Homestay group president, Deputy Mayor of Muangkao sub-district administrative, Provincial President of OTOP group in Sukhothai. A list available of in-depth-interview guidelines was applied. All interview questions were semi-structured to ensure consistency across the individual interviews.

## FINDINGS

Within the study, two-main findings were displayed as follows.

### **The Crisis Management of Community-based Cultural Tourism Model (CM-CBTM) during the Covid-9 pandemic**

Information obtain from the field-observation and in-depth discussion has been indicated that Muangkao sub-district area has been developed their own

model of the crisis-management of community-based cultural tourism during Covid-19 pandemic in which focusing more on supplementary actions plans such as government financial support, business compensation, early vaccination nation-wide project implementation.

This creates the community mobilization resource management surrounded the village of Muangkao such as bring the community networking agenda with a form of community product establishment regarding to one village one initiative project, empowered more rights to the local to make decision over their career choice and give them power to negotiate over the community product agreement that led to the change of overall local perception in economic re-integration platform.

Policy options regarding future of key strategic management model in economic community modernization of Muangkao shall be established with wider consultation process management ranging from sub-district council to all rank of management in provincial level. Those options were likely presented to the decentralization in functional power management model at the sub-national level as well.

### **The Key Specific Strategic Management for CM-CBT**

1) The key strategic management of local healthcare system during Covid-19 pandemic in Muangkao sub-district area

Information obtain from the field-observation and in-depth discussion has been indicated that Muangkao sub-district area has been developed their own responsibility model to initiate the local healthcare system during Covid-19 pandemic with a form of local organization management model ranging from Thai Tourism Authority in Sukhothai Muangkao, Provincial administrative, Local-sub district administrative, as well as Local Public health officers. The above-essential teams have been fully collaborated to each other aim to tackle the management crisis become more resiliencies follow with a strategic-ways.

Additionally, there is some indication factors that could represents the key-strategic role of community strength related to power of intervention during Covid-19 pandemic such as personal and environmental hygiene, Improving community behavioral communication, community engagement, public preventive and avoidance measure, social distancing, developing communication strategies,

ensuring the access of basic-healthcare treatment through the applied of universal healthcare, appropriate use of personal protective equipment, the push for the active-movement of human resource and frontier public health workforce activities.

## 2) The strong links of cultural world heritage management models with the value of local development program

Information obtain from the field-observation and in-depth discussion has been indicated that Muangkao sub-district area has been developed their own capacity of cultural world heritage management models based on the establishment of partnership value with the local responsibilities and regulation. Moreover, elected local representatives in Muangkao are closely associated with planning and development operation. This key figure shown that the reflection value of local world heritage development model is also link with prior position of Sukhothai Tourism authority and DASTA Areas 4 who work as co-consultation process to help establishing the technical support in policy-making program as well as propose any tourism conservative planning project for Muangkao area. Thereby, the special zone of conservative character development shall be designed their own accessibility zone base on the visible improvement of building inside the village without affect the overall landscape of national park of Sukhothai Muangkao ancient temple both environmentally and socialization.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the key element related with CM-CBTM in Muangkao areas are likely reveal with Community based tourism planning scenarios, community-flexible response, activation guidelines, crisis response team and chain of command, crisis facilitator, communication strategy, regular community-financial simulation, as well as post-crisis review management model.

To this means, key-specific strategies in managing the crisis of community-based cultural tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic are very crucial to determine the strength and weakness point of Muangkao Cultural Community village. The community-flexible response with proper management from local administrative management represented the community qualified development that the local development policy-strategies have been drawn up.

Thereby, the participatory methods have been mobilized the outcome of community development through working-group consultation process which represented the difference views of interested-groups ranging from local leaders from each-sub districts, representative of the senior's citizen in the community, representative of educational institutions, member of the council and management board.

The main-illustration structure of Thai Sub-national management model has been occurred from the current demand for decentralization of good-governance study to push for the process of local community development to be self-reliance and make the local decision themselves become actively resiliency ranging from provincial administrative organization, municipality, sub-district administration organization. The proper management and responsible policy for community-based cultural tourism model in Muangkao which reflect the awareness concern of local residence under the aspect of governmental measure of safety and health administrative standards, aligned with the essential element of community-based tourism for sustainable tourism management. Thereby, the model of CBT-service implementation project such as homestay, restaurants, and recreational activities establishment complied with SHA standard which highly build the strong bond and trusts between the private sectors, the government and local community. This required a need to continue to reform a deep level of the whole institution management model by strengthening the effectiveness laws in sub-national implementation level especially in the readiness form of community-based tourism study both quality of tourist markets, and CBT Management culture perspective. As a result, the strengthening of public administration's capacity needs to be highlighted.

In summary, this qualitative study approach, the process of developing the better CM-CBTM model in Muangkao linking with three pillars (People, Culture, Context). By this, the better service quality delivering from people as the centered has enhanced the community strength. Following this criteria development, CM-CBTM involved local community culture and the value of world heritage management based on socio-environmental context as follow:

- Reinforce community sustainability through balancing the level of institutional structure reforms by developing the model of village ownership with the protecting long-term strategies.

- Need to regulate more the standardized CM-CBTM strategic management and community-heritage based development by linking community culture connected value using heritage development guidelines.
- Enhance communication with local people in delivery of long-term CM-CBTM related projects.
- Sharing responsibility between local council and heritage trust by developing community empowerment with a visionary of institutionalization power and wellbeing once addressing intuitional
- The preparing fund for strategic management of CM-CBTM is crucial and need well-organized long-term cooperation of three main institutional partners, Thailand's tourism development organization, local administrative government office, and surrounding community. The tourism development programs which are ~~likely~~ centrally set up by the government's annual budget program need to be reconsidered based on the specific characteristics of the socio-environmental context of Muangkao.

Based on previous study review, the discussion has been given more perspective support ideas which highly bring a huge image of community-readiness development model during Covid-19 pandemic. In this connection, the discussion bellow represents the study result in each of case-study areas that founded in some part of regions which closely similar with Communities of Sukhothai Muangkao Cultural World Heritage Site, Thailand. Thereby, the supportive literature as well as other challenging factor of development aspect will be presented by using the several research articles that remain in published.

According to research article namely as Community-based tourism in Bolivia: projects and perspective, shown that although Bolivia's natural and cultural diversity has provided many potentials for tourism growth, however it shown that the government have to increase their quality of community fund investment project based on partnership between community, private tours of operators, with support from Non-governmental Organization, as well as other institutions. As a result, the destination should be sustainably managed and empowered by the community member that situated in Bolivia (Peaty & Portillo, 2009).

According to research article namely as Community-based tourism (CBT) management during the Coronavirus pandemic along the Andaman coast of Thailand, community-based tourism (CBT) has been considered as the challenged in the Coronavirus 2019 era. Additionally, the needs of tourism operation were focused on building community-networking confidence and safety for tourists. As a result, travel during new-normal, has become part of alternative choice that turn and support the community resiliency development upon the period of Covid-19 crisis (Khunnikom et al., 2022).

The results led to the following recommendations.

Component 1: strengthening more local residence knowledge awareness on protecting the local resource that availability by addressing the value of local governance study as the main-driven force of cultural-community development.

Component 2: Local governance agency and Local Entrepreneur should work as the co-partnership criteria aim to co-facilitate the value of local community development, by which every resource allocation shall be prioritized to the household family's group.

Component 3: CM-CBTM Knowledge need to be addressed at all level of community development.

Component 4: Heritage Management shall be protected under the model of DASTA Guidelines. However, Local Residence engagement in Heritage management activities must be prioritized the value of Heritage Conservation by addressing the difference level of people perception and expectation criteria under the model of social accountability.

Component 5: the DASTA shall provide a co-financing project with Local administrative management in Muangkao area to help enhance the standard of strategic management of CM-CBTM in cultural tourism industry at Munagkao in which empowerment to make plan, negotiate, have to align with the model of Local Expectation of Muangkao Residence.

Component 6: case study in Muangkao, has shown that surrounding communities of the World heritage sites represent human value, in which every conservation program has to be recognized by local, national and international laws.

Component 7: Cultural tourism of a specific destination must be developed according to the long-term CM-CBT strategic plan based on analysis

comprehending all possible advantages and damages, as well as sustainable development principle.

Component 8: to minimize negative tourism impact consists in pursuing the local community to share the sense of ownership of cultural resources. The development of cultural tourism should not represent a burden to the local community. The local community must be properly informed and engaged in all process of CM-CBT.

Component 9: By highlight, the active engagement of the three partnerships, surrounding community, local administrative government, and primary health care institutions, and the application of CM-CBT strategic management, the researcher has a strong belief that sustainability of cultural tourism could be established at Muangkao, Thailand.

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