

Policy on Community Tourism Development in Thailand

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Abstract

Tourism policy in Thailand has been simultaneously developed by several governmental sections/organizations. (1) TAT (Tourism Authority of Thailand), (2) Ministry of Tourism and Sports, (3) The department of Local Administration, Ministry of Interior and community tourism.

This presentation will analyze role of each sections/organizations in the course of tourism policy development, with special focus on policy of community tourism. Case study of Koh Yao Island located in Phangnga will be introduced to promote the understanding.

Additionally, current policy and future expectation of tourism policy shall be introduced. (1) The Eleventh National development plan of Thailand (2012-2016) and the community tourism, and (2) The Thailand National Tourism Development Plan 2012-2016 will be roughly introduced.

Keywords: tourism development policy, The Thailand National Tourism Development Plan, community tourism, Thailand

1. Introduction

Tourism Industry has played important role in Thailand Economy. Thailand government believes tourism as a fast tract to economy growth and requires less investment than other industries. Among the Southeast Asian countries, Thailand is attracted visitors.

Apart from exports, tourism is an important source of foreign exchange revenue in Thailand. Thailand has been well placed to benefit from tourism. Tourism attractions in Thailand include nature-based destinations, historical sites, culture, people's friendly deposition, Thai cuisine, recreational facilities. Concerted efforts are geared to help protect

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and preserve the environment at all sites with tourism attractions, resulting in rising popularity of eco-friendly or green tourism in recent years. Within the protected natural environment, green tourism supports and upholds local communities, traditional ways of life.

Community tourism (community-based tourism or CBT) is a form of tourism which aims to include and benefit local communities, particularly indigenous peoples and villagers in the developing countries. For instance, villagers might host tourist in their village, managing the scheme communally and sharing the profits. There are many types of community tourism project, including many in which the community works with a commercial tour operator, but all community tourism projects should give local people a fair share of the benefits/profits and a say in deciding how incoming tourism is managed.

CBT is socially sustainable tourism which is initiated and almost always operated exclusively by local and indigenous people. Shared leadership emphasizing community well-being over individual profit, balances power within community, and foster traditional culture, conservation, and responsible stewardship of the land.

CBT affords travelers with rare opportunities to experience local communities first hand. It's distinctive in that it provides an alternative to development that is not sustainable, giving rural and poor communities an additional source of income.

2. Overview of Tourism Development Policy in Thailand

The following governmental and private organizations have play important role in tourism development policy in Thailand

2.1 The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)

Tourism Authority of Thailand or TAT (formerly named the Tourist Organization of Thailand or T.O.T.), established in 1959, have played crucial role in tourism development in Thailand more than 52 years.

Both Thai language and English tourism magazine are published and distributed for tourism including seminars on tourism service development; such as hotel, restaurants and souvenir shops. TAT becomes a member of many international organizations related to tourism promotion; such as PATA, World Tourism Organization. TAT office is established in domestic and oversea. Thailand Tourism marketing and campaign are launched by TAT worldwide. Up to date, TAT was still a state enterprise under the Ministry of Tourism and Sports to promote the marketing.

2.1.1 TAT authority and responsibility are

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2.1.1.1 Promoting tourism and tourism industry, as well as occupations of Thai citizens in the tourism industry.

2.1.1.2 Propagating Thailand's natural beauty, archaeological site, antiquities, history, art, culture, sports, and evolution of techniques to others for travelling.

2.1.1.3 Providing convenience and safety to travelers.

2.1.2 Policy and Marketing plan of TAT

2.1.2.1 Promote the tourism industry to be important instrument in tackling the country's economic problem, creating jobs for people as well as increasing income for the country. Moreover, promoting should be done to make tourism play a vital role in the development of the quality of life in all regions of Thailand as per the policy of the government.

2.1.2.2 Promote and develop the operation of proactive marketing strategies for increasing the new markets as well as the niche-markets. This is in order to attract more quality tourists to visit Thailand. At the same time, domestic travel for Thais should be vigorously encouraged. The positioning of Thailand is to be drawn out clearly, too.

2.1.2.3 Promote cooperation in all levels domestically and internationally on promotion for the development of tourism markets. This aims to get rid of all hindrances in the tourism industry and pave the way for Thailand to be the tourism hub of Southeast Asia.

2.2 Ministry of Tourism and Sports

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports was established in 2002 to develop, support and promote industrial tourism, sports and recreation.

Among the department in the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, The department of Tourism, concerning tourism business and guide registration, tourism sites development, tourism service development, tourism academic, has played important role in tourism promotion. The Department of Tourism has its authorities and duties on the development of tourism sites, tourism industry, and national guides aimed to be classified a same standard level so that Thai tourism will be able to sustainably advantage.

The Department of Tourism main authorities are

(A) To study, analyze, research, and gather the statistic data on the tourism and its policies including tourism management and Development Plan and Policy.

(B) To organize the development plan of tourism service including tourism promotion and co-ordination patterns.

(C) To organize, support, and promote the development plan for the Bureau of

tourism Business and Guide.

(D) To organize, support, and promote the development plan for tourist attractions.

(E) To execute the tourism and guides laws including other participated laws.

(F) To track and evaluate the contribution of tourism development.

There are 73 province (or Changwat) tourism and sports offices in Thailand to carry out the objectives of The Ministry of Tourism and Sports and works closely with local government and local communities for tourism promotion such as knowledge management, training, national seminar among organizations and institutions concerning community based tourism.

2.3 The Department of Local Administration, Ministry of Interior and Local Government or Administration

The promulgation of Thai Constitution 1997 and present constitution 2007, and the Decentralization Plan and Process Act of 1999 has expanded the obligations of Thai local government to provide public services. Several tasks and responsibilities are mandated to local government. The constitution mandated that the central government or national government shall give autonomy to localities in accordance with the principles of self-government and the will of the people, e.g. promotion of local economy development, investment, employment, trade, and tourism.

2.4 The Designed Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization) or DASTA

DASTA is an organization with the mission to set guidelines for sustainable tourism development and has initiated the idea of a model in the designation of a special economic zone on the principle of co-creation involving local people and related stakeholder from all sectors. DASTA has studied experiences a special economic zone in other countries, e.g. the entire service provision system is developed to be transparent, fast, and efficient, setting up a specific ad hoc agency with the function to develop any such area, with full authority to act on behalf of local administrative organization in the designed areas and take charge of activities such as town planning, improving the city's landscape and the provision of various infrastructure such as telecommunication and communication as system.

DASTA's Guideline for area development as special economic zone for sustainable tourism:

(A) Appropriate location, with the defining of the properties of feasible area in physical, economic social and cultural terms that can lead to the development as special economic zone for sustainable tourism in the future.

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(B) Rules, regulations and various laws that lead to the setting of guidelines to design regulations and practice in legal frame to become a special economic zone for sustainable tourism.

(C) Defining desirable physical properties, guidelines for economic, social and cultural development in a special economic zone for sustainable tourism.

(D) Identifying opportunities in attracting investor to build strong economy, by defining different selling point.

(E) Defining guidelines to promote good quality of life and privileges of communities in the special economic zone for sustainable tourism, by attaching important to the society, the environment and the upholding of cultures and Thai lifestyle.

(F) Having social and cultural components to create authenticity for the special economic zone for sustainable tourism.

2.5 Tourism Council of Thailand

Tourism Council of Thailand is a private sector organization. It is responsible for implementation of objectives prescribed in the tourism Industry Council Act Thailand 2544 (2001) with the follow key elements:

- representatives of the tourism industry in terms of coordination between government and private sector together
- promote the development of the tourism industry
- promote the conservation of art, culture, tourist attraction and historic environment including the identity of Thai culture

2.6 Other Organizations and Institutes

Thailand Community-Based Tourism Institute (CBT-I), conviction of tourism can be a tool for community development and rural tourism to be sustainable, was established in 2006, and lies under the umbrella of the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) Regional Office, based in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand. CBT-I has worked for many years supporting Thai communities to develop small scale tourism programs, appropriate to their own cultures and environments.

Banks and Financial Institution: Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives, Government Savings bank, etc. have supported the tourism especially SME business by giving loans with special interest rate.

3. Policy on Community Tourism in Thailand

In 1999, TAT promoted agro-tourism and home stay tourism to strengthen

community tourism. From 1979 onward, Thailand tourism became the main contributor to the Thai economy, surpassing exports, textiles and agricultural goods. TAT aims at making industrial to tourism to be a sustainable form of tourism development. That means tourism resources would be environmentally-friendly, and would be improved with the "Concentration and Attention on Sustainable Tourism."

CBT service and activities are planned and managed by local community members, working together in a 'CBT group'. Activities are lead by trained community guides and host family members. In Thailand, over 70 local communities (number in 2009) are developing CBT and program are designed based upon special elements of local lifestyle, culture, people and nature that community members feel proud of and choose to share with guests.

Communities which choose to develop CBT require several steps of training to develop the knowledge and skills which enable them to welcome guests and work with actors in the tourism industry.

Training includes planning, the development of a local CBT Group, management, tour operation, marketing and monitoring CBT. Communities are assisted to develop activities, programs, prices, booking systems and other essential elemental of a success tour.

Communities also learn how to distribute the benefits of tourism within and beyond CBT service providers. They use techniques such as queues and contributing income to a Community Fund. Even small numbers of guests can make a valuable economic contribution to local community members. Increasing income is not only one of the goals of CBT but using tourism to support sustainable development the communities also. Benefits of CBT include income, improved hygiene, new skills and knowledge, and funds to support local conservation and social works.

Inbound operation play a crucial role in the community-based supply chain. Even though a tour may have been purchased from an over sea agent, inbound tour operator will actually escort guests to the community. Their cooperation and commitment is a key success factor for CBT.

In common with other parts of the world, increased awareness of the negative impacts of tourism in Thailand catalyzed a search for alternative models of tourism with negative impacts and more benefits for local people and the environment in rural areas. CBT, in recent years, is an attractive niche of tourism for evolved from successful home-stay tourism by encompassing entire communities within their natural development. CBT is operated by local-level association whose resident members welcome visitors to share their lifestyle. Tourism services and activities are planned and managed by community-based operators. Activities are designed to get visitors involved in joining community and

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environmental projects that provide employment and generate income for the host community, create a sense of pride on the part of all participants, and let guests gain novel experience.

CBT, owned and managed by the resident members of the local-level association, committed to environmental, social and cultural sustainability, is geared to supplement the local economic mainstay.

The foundation for this venture is laid through a participatory process comprising members' orientation by visiting sites where CBT is in operation, followed by stepwise training. Modules include communication, consensus building, organizational development, planning, operation, management, marketing, and monitoring.

CBT is guided by the principles of fairness through rotation and queuing in availing of opportunities, equity in deriving benefits from tourism, and contributing to dedicated funds. They may be disbursed for various projects such as infrastructure improvement, natural resource conservative, environmental protection, youth camps, or advocacy.

The corresponding mechanism is driven by active participation of all driven by active participants of all capable CBT members, stimulated by the sense of ownership and shared responsibility. In this spirit, the women, elderly and youth, including members of ethnic minority groups, are to be engaged. Efforts are geared to control any negative impacts of tourism, and to endure that the community as a whole well prosper within its protected natural environment.

Distinctive CBT purposes are to preserve indigenous knowledge, cultural traits, traditional skills and crafts; to strengthen communal cohesion; to create an innovative space for cultural expression and cross-cultural exchange; to boost residents' self-confidence; to protect the environment; and to conserve natural resources.

Highlight of CBT, an experience by short-stay visitors as well as long-stay guests, are triggered by the exposure to a different way of life. This may entail hands-on activities to acquire skills in crafts, to prepare meals, or to lend a helping hand particularly in 'green project' implementation, to join jungle trekking, or to watch wildlife, among many other activities.

Benefits of CBT are twofold, at least. The hosts acquire new skills, broaden their horizon, make friends, gain confidence in their capabilities, take pride in their hospitality, and build the sense of ownership. To date, there is evidence of financial rewards, reflected in an increase of annual income by some ten percent. The guests experience this unique sense of ownership through their hosts' tangible commitment, enthusiasm, friendliness and warmth. Ultimately, guests' grateful appreciation of indigenous traits and local ways of life will leave them with a lasting impression and, thus, have a multiplier effect.

TAT assists CBT in various activities, such as marketing. In 2011, the third

consecutive year in the trade and business talks among operators (sellers) and participant (buyers) TAT and the Thai Tourism Industry support CBT in marketing. More than 30 tour agents (more than year 2010) are interested in CBT. Tour agents tend to work with communities in the future .It shows sign that CBT has been known widely and will have opportunity to grow in the tourism market.

4 . Current Policy on Tourism in Thailand

Considering form the present constitution of The Kingdom of Thailand 2007, guarantee of stake-holder, especially community participation, community rights and environmental conservation are admitted.

4.1 The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand 2007

4.1.1 Part 3 State Administration Policy, Section 78: the State shall act in compliance with the State administration policy as follows;

- Carrying out the administration of State affairs with a view to establish sustainable development of social, economic and security of the nation and strengthening an implementation of the sufficient economy philosophy with due regard to general benefits of the national materially;

- Making powers, duties and responsibilities among the central administration, provincial administration and local administration to be clear and suitable for national development, and supporting a Changwat to set up its development plan and providing financial support for the implementation of such plan for the benefit of the public within that area;

- Delegating powers to local governments for the purpose of autonomy and self-determination of local affairs, enhancing local governments to participate and act in compliance with the directive principles of fundamental State policied. develop local economics, public utilities and assistances and information infrastructure in the localities thoroughly and equally throughout the country as well as development into a large sized local government organization a Changwat ready for such purpose with due regard to the will of the people in that Changwat

4.1.2 Part 10 Public Participation Policy, Section 87: the State shall act in compliance with the public participation policy as follows;

- encouraging public participation in the determination of public policy and the

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making of economic and social development plan both in the national and local level.

4.1.3 Part 12 Community Rights

Section 66: persons assembling as to a community, local community or traditional level community shall have the right to conserve or restore their customs, local wisdom, arts or good culture of their community and of the nation and participate in the management, maintenance and exploitation of natural resources, the environment and biological diversity in a balanced and sustainable fashion.

Section 67: the right of a person to participate with State and communities in the preservation and exploitation of natural resources and biological diversity and in the protection, promotion and conservation of the quality of the environment for usual and consistent survival in the environment which is not hazardous to his health and sanitary condition, welfare or quality of life, shall be protected appropriately.

Any project or activity which may seriously affect the quality of the environment, natural resources and biological diversity shall not be permitted, unless its impacts on the quality of the environment and on health of the people in the communities have been studied and evaluated and consultation with the public and interested parties have been organized, and opinions of an independent organization, consisting of representative from private environmental and health organization and from higher education institutions providing studies in the field of environment, natural resources of health, have been obtained prior to the operation of such project or activity

The right of a community to sue a government agency, State agency, State enterprise, local government organization or other State authority which is a juristic person to perform the duties under this section shall be protected.

4.2 The Eleventh National Economic and Social Development Plan of Thailand (2012-2016)

From the sixth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1987-1991), Thailand gave particular focus and attention to the development of tourism by a marketing exercise; the result was a substantial boost to tourism revenue.

Learning from the past national economic and social development plan and concerning natural resources and environmental aspect, natural wealth of Thailand has been depleted and deteriorated. The development of communities, areas, and regions has been confronted with income disparity, rapid urbanization and slow progress of the decentralization. In order to achieve sustainable development with a people-centered approach, it is necessary to enhance the country's self-resilience by strengthening

Thailand Economic and social capital.

The community is a key effective mechanism in development—it has been empowered in order to enhance self-reliance at the community level.

Improve public sector performance—Public sector management has to be transparent and accountable. Participation of the development partners has to be promoted. Therefore, the objective of the Eleventh Plan could be achieved efficiently and effectively.

Contribution of all stakeholders emphasis will be placed on developing potentials of communities, strengthening roles of local administration organizations, amending rules and regulation, stimulating people participation as well as creating networks for community development. In addition, local organizations have to be restructured in order to encourage involvement in the local administration as well as roles of government agencies have to be reformed as a development facilitator.

4.3 The Thailand National Tourism Development Plan (2012–2016)

Thailand has a vision to become a quality tourism destination with tourism competitiveness at the national level, thus enabling the country to generate more income and distribute wealth on a sustainable basis.

The Thailand National Tourism Development Plan (2012–2016) approved by the cabinet and the national tourism policy committee referred to the inclusion of tourism in the national agenda.

The objective of the National Tourism Development plan is to move Thailand's competitiveness up at 15 places, which would put it among the top five destinations in Asia. The plan also intends to increase tourism income by at least 5 percent during the five year period.

Five strategies have been set for implementation. The first strategy seeks to develop infrastructure and logistics, linking with domestic and international tourism. The second strategy involves the development and rehabilitation of tourism sites and improvement of various rules and regulations to enhance the country's potential for accommodating more tourist arrivals. In the third strategy, emphasis places on the development of the creative economy, which is the focus in the 11st National Economic and Social Development Plan, 2012–2016. New products and services will be launched, which incentives for tourism trade and investment will be offered and human resource development will be emphasized.

The fourth strategy seeks to create confidence in Thailand's good image among visitors, so that the country will welcome a greater number of tourists who will spend more in Thailand. The fifth strategy calls for the participation of the public sector, civil

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society, and local administration organization in tourism management.

Recognizing the vital role tourism industry in economic development, each local administration (Provincial administrative or PAO, Municipality or Tassaban Authority Administration TAO or Tambon or village administration organization) has allocated budget for promotion tourism, e. g. up-grading facilities and infrastructure, marketing and advertising.

4.4 Government Policy

Both former Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's government and Present Prime Minister Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra have supported Tourism.

4.4.1 Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra policy delivered to the National Assembly August 23, 2011

4.4.1.1 Promotion tourism including domestic tourism by Thais; attract foreign and domestic tourist by developing tourism and tourist destinations and ensuring traveler's safety under all circumstances; support ecotourism, cultural tourism, medical tourism and spas with high quality and value addition; and, set a target to double tourism revenue within five years. Development of Tourism

4.4.1.2 Promote the development of infrastructure to support tourism, expedite improvement in the standard of facilities safety and hygiene, with consideration given to accessibility to tourist destinations for the disabled and the elderly.

4.4.1.3 Develop, restore, and revive existing natural, historical, and cultural tourist destination: promote the development of new destinations in areas with potential for linking nature, culture and local lifestyles, in accordance with the tourism development plan, which sets the framework for the development of tourist destinations, and encourage investment by the private sector and local administration.

4.4.1.4 Raise and maintain the standard for tourism services to meet international standards; improve the standards of personnel in the tourism sector; and, improve public services in order to attract and be able to efficiently service and market for quality tourists.

4.4.1.5 Promote the market for quality tourists, both inbound and domestic, through proactive marketing strategies targeting various groups in Thailand and abroad; making Thailand a world class tourist destination, a center for international meetings and exhibitions, as well as a medical tourism hub; improve efficiency in issuing visas, waive visa fees for visitors from Thailand's FTA partner countries, of those with trade and investment relations with Thailand and waive visa requirement for tourist from target countries.

4.4.1.6 Promote tourism activities to add value to the tourism sector; improve the

quality of tourism services; promote Thailand as a filming location; and, support Thailand's bid to host international events.

4.4.1.7 Promote inter-agency cooperation to [provide quality service to tourists; improve the quality of tourist personnel to meet the demands; revive laws and regulations and improve the effectiveness of law enforcement to facilitate tourism; ensure safety; prevent the exploitation of tourists; resolve environmental problems; and, develop a sustainable tourism industry.

4.4.1.8 Improve marketing and public relations; promote the roles of local administration and the private sector in designing marketing and public relations and strategies to make Thailand a globally recognized tourist destination.

4.4.2 Former Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva policy towards tourism:

4.4.2.1 Expediently boost confidence of foreign tourist and implement measures to stimulate tourism by pursuing cooperation between the public and private sectors in launching campaigns to attract foreign tourists, encourage domestic tourism by Thais and adjust the budget plan of government agencies which have already been allocated for the 2009 fiscal year to include training and seminars across the country, as well as reduce tourism-related fees and servicing costs to promote tourism on a wide scale.

4.4.2.2 Expand the services sector base in the country's production structure by increasing the diversity of service businesses, adding value, enhancing competitiveness, improving skilled labor in terms of both quality and linguistic skills; and linking service, industrial and agricultural businesses into product clusters, e.g. healthcare, food and tourism business, including creative services products based on culture and Thai wisdom linked with modern technology.

4.4.2.3 Develop public and private tourist destinations by preserving and developing existing destinations, including natural historical, cultural and manmade attractions through linkage with community ways of life, establishing special economic zones on tourism and identifying the selling strengths of destinations in each region and provincial group in a complementary manner.

4.4.2.4 Develop standards for tourism services by setting up standards for tourism-related businesses such as tourist guides, travel, souvenir shops, hotels and accommodations; develop standards for human resources in tourism-related sectors such as hotel staff, tour company workers, tourist guides, restaurant workers, tour bus drivers, etc.; and improve the service standards of tourism-related government agencies regarding traveler safety, fees and charges.

4.4.2.5 Develop marketing and public relations for tourism by supporting private

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sector participation in identifying policy, marketing and public relations strategies to promote target destinations in Thailand as a world-class tourism hub, especially its readiness to serve as a centre for international conferences, product exhibitions and medical tourism; and encourage the role of local administration organization in upgrading tourist destinations so that they are known throughout the world.

4.4.2.6 Review all tourism-related laws to be up to date and complementary; and enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement of law enforcement on public safety and the environment.

5. Conclusion

The government tends to make flowery statement (policy statement of the council of ministers) that tourism generates huge revenue for the country, but they are only interested in mega projects and overlook social and environment dimensions. With the philosophy of Community based Tourism and is under main traditional tourism industry , we can not expect much in financial. Community-based tourism needs a strong commitment from the government from the government sector and recognition that it can be a tool to improve human resources, quality of life, conserve culture and the environment.

Tour operators were vital to CBT success and ground agents, who work with overseas tour operator is obstacle for CBT products. The ground agents who are familiar with mass tourism do not want to invest in selling CBT and are not willing to pass the business on to specialized companies that have the resources. They are not recommending CBT products because of the high investment in time and human resources to the service the sector.

CBT communities needed to highlight the experience and virtues of this kind of tourism to the local travel industry, while ensuring the marketing could align CBT products to responsible tourism, eco-tourism and pro-poor tourism. Stakeholders have to clearly identify their markets. This kind of product suits just a few select markets. They are not big like main stream travel, but there are very valuable for the communities with understanding.

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