

The Competency Development to Manage Agro-Eco Tourism of Pla Ba Community, Loei, Thailand

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Article History

Received: 29 July 2019

Revised: 24 September 2019

Published: 30 September 2019

Abstract

This article was the study aiming to enhance the competency for agro-eco tourism management in Pla-Ba Community so the community members could develop their knowledge and ability to manage local tourism more efficiently and sustainably. The study was conducted with a population group consisting of 23 board members of the Pla Ba Community-Based Tourism Promotion Club at Pla Ba Sub-district, Loei Province, who were responsible for local tourism management. The research tools used in the study was the test on individual knowledge, skill, attitude, and the training program on competency enhancement for agro-eco-tourism management. The study outcome indicated that the board of members demonstrated better score for their competency after passing the training program. Namely, their individual knowledge was increased and the mean score = 23.17 points or 77.23%, Standard Deviation (S.D) = 2.41 or Very Good; their skill was developed with mean score = 1.35 or 67.50%, Standard Deviation (S.D.) = 0.17 or Very Good; and their attitude was developed with mean score = 3.32 and Standard Deviation (S.D) = 0.20 or Very Good. The result was statistically significant (0.05). In conclusion, the competency for agro-eco tourism management could be effectively developed through the designed training program in which the program should be suitable and matched with the community's capacity.

Keywords: Competency of Tourism Management, Competency Development, Agro-Eco Tourism

Introduction

Tourism industry today has become a major industry driving the national economy in both in developed countries or developing countries (Eddy, Tukamushaba, Roselyne, Okech, 2011: 19). As obviously seen, the government is continuously push and supporting and the expansion of tourism industry is gaining the revenue for the country (Chankoson, 2018: 2).

At mean time, the government has realized the significance of tourism and therefore has launched a policy to promote tourism by giving priority to tourism resource development i.e. conservation promotion, restoring the arts, culture, traditions, environment, and enhancing the utilization of local resources in order to develop unique tourism products and services for local symbol (Isichaikul, 2014: 6-7) including the policies to encourage all provinces to promote tourism following the guidelines to organize tourism activities to add more values to the products and services; for example, using the country's resources to create as a product to attract tourists and promote and expand new tourist market or niche markets by setting goals for successful tourism development with sustainable activities via integrating the concept of using local resources as tourism resource with the development of tourism products that are new and interesting to offer to tourists (Chuaybamrung, 2010: 3)

The fact is that tourism in Thailand has more advantages due to the outstanding potential and cost of tourism resources that can be used to promote various forms of tourism e.g. agro-eco tourism, agro tourism, cultural tourism, historical tourism, health tourism all of which are caused by integration from the local resource base that has emphasizing the combination of natural resources and living culture of local people, which is unique and creates a charming tourist attraction. One of the most popular forms of tourism is agro- tourism which most people in Thai society are in the agricultural sector, more than 5 million families or about 40 million people (Seng Sui, 2008: 3). The potential of agriculture that can be developed into promotion as agro- tourism destination to raise the agricultural sector to tourism. In addition, tourism that has always been popular is agro-eco tourism with a large number of tourists who admire it and it is considered to have national and international reputation all over the country in Thailand especially in the northeast both natural and agricultural potentials have been developed continuously, making it popular with tourists, especially in Nakhon Ratchasima. Sakol Nakorn and Loei Province. The promotion and development of tourism in Thailand can be more systematic with the main objective to increase the choice for tourists and add tourism to promote Thailand as a major tourist attraction where tourists can visit all year round and to increase the distribution of tourism throughout the region. (Srithong, Suthitakon, and Karnjanakit, 2019: 1)

In the past, there were many studies mentioning the concepts of sustainable tourism development with main focus on tourism management for economic promotion, social development, community, natural resource conservation, environment under the sustainable tourism trend. It hence generated a tourism model managed by the community (Community - based tourism) in a unique way that care for sustainability of the society environment and community culture. This tourism model is managed by the community for the community itself and the community has a role as the owner as well. In addition to making income for people in the community, it also helps strengthen the community and reminds the community members of the value of local resources. However, it can be said that tourism communities nowadays is not yet a success as expected. Partly, since people in the community do not practically participate in tourism i.e. they lack of understanding in tourism management, knowledge and ability in developing tourism local products of communities (Patti, 2013: 3). Furthermore, income from tourism is not spread to those communities. Owning tourism resources community tourism management also has to rely on outside department both budget and many help (Aksonphim. 2017: 9) and often encounter conflicts between the development and conservation of tourism resources. Another important problem and obstacle for the community-based tourism development is the lack of knowledge, understanding, awareness of the conservation of natural resources correctly, lack of systematic tourism management so the community tourism is still ineffective (Sertsri and Buason, 2017: 5; Seisawatwanit, 2013: 1) . Therefore, the study was conducted to develop the competency of the community to efficiently manage and achieve sustainable tourism through the

participation process of the community in the management and promotion of knowledge in the correct conservation by providing training and knowledge to raise the level of tourism management capabilities of the community.

Research Questions

In most cases, community-based tourism management basically requires the support from external organizations and this is similar to the case of Pla-Ba community. In fact, the local communities typically allows the members to manage all process from the beginning and also encourages them to form a group to manage their local tourism. On the other hands, community-based tourism is likely one of the key roles for a local community to manage on their own (Maneerote, 2017: 4). Even though this tourism model should be run by local people, their knowledge for tourism management is still insufficient while it is the core of tourism development including planning, operating, and principles (Keawkhum, 2018: 9) as well as related skill, knowledge, and comprehension on tourism management (Mayaka and Akama, 2007: 15). Namely, it is necessary for a community to gain more knowledge to further develop itself to become a sustainable tourism community (Jungprawate, 2017). As a consequence, this research aimed to investigate and look for empirical solution for the competency in agro-eco tourism management of Pla-Ba community in Loei Province in order to define how competent they could be and the suitable process to efficiently enhance their competency in managing agro-eco tourism. The result was expected to solve the problems found in the area and to push forward the agro-eco tourism in Pla-Ba Community to become more sustainable.

Research objectives

- 1) To develop training curriculums for studying of the competency to manage agro-eco Tourism of Pla Ba Community, Loei Province, Thailand.
- 2) To develop the competency for managing agro-eco Tourism of Pla Ba Community, Loei Province, Thailand

Review of Related Concepts, Theories and Researches

The concept of developing the Competency to manage Agro-eco tourism

Agro-eco tourism is a trip to the area of agriculture that is related and linked to the way of life, culture, nature and the local environment by giving a chance to tourists to visit to travel, to learn, to experiment, to participate and to gain experience from agricultural activities and it is a responsible tourism in the tourist attractions, both nature and way of life of the community with management and tourism services by local communities including the conservation of natural resources ecology and environment is a new tourism management process that is used to prevent and reduce the potential impacts from tourism.

Community competency development in agro-eco tourism management is the development to manage tourism in their area by the community being the operator and coordinating work with various related organizations by using local resource costs as an important factor. Giving importance to learning together and participation of those involved, especially the local community that is geared towards sustainable tourism development where development of capabilities is an enhancement of knowledge, skills and good attitudes in tourism management which these capabilities can be developed by organizing training curriculums that requires an appropriate design for the community to develop the knowledge and required skills for that job (Malik and Vivek, 2018: 3; Cass, 2014: 8).

Training is considered as a process of personnel development for learning and creating experiences and increasing work Competency (Melphon and Akama, 2007: 15) using methods of training (education) and development with the aim of those who have been developed knowledge, skills and good attitudes towards work in the training, there are 6 important steps (Smithitkrai, 2008: 53) as follows

Step 1 Analyze training needs/ training needs analysis

Step 2: Determine the purpose of the training information obtained from the needs analysis.

Step 3: Design curriculum and training programs, content, training methods, instructors and time.

Step 4 Create criteria for evaluation and rubrics for evaluation.

Step 5 Manage the training from the plans that have been placed.

Step 6 Evaluation of training, evaluation process, training consists of 2 types of processes: creating criteria for evaluation (step 4) and measurement using experimental methods or non-experimental methods to check if any changes occur or not after training.

From the literature review, the researcher therefore concluded that the competency development can be achieved through training, education, and development with the aim of developing and educating people with skills and good attitudes towards the work they have to do and also to enable the development of community management following the enabling objective, goal or direction that they want. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to develop a curriculum that will lead to the development of capabilities for the community. (Competency-Based Training) to be able to manage tourism in their own area and this is a curriculum that is consistent with the skills, knowledge, and basic understanding of the community.

Concept of curriculum designs for developing tourism management Competency

Design of the training system that is applied Competency concept focusing on developing Competency for it. Managing tourism by their own and pays attention to the effectiveness of training which will help to develop the Competency effectively (Noppanatwongsakorn, Rodpleng, and Noiwilai, 2016: 8) which consists of defining course topics, course details or content training period, training style, places including budget for the training program can be used to develop competencies effectively. The application of competency concepts to be used in effective staff training can be classified into 2 approaches: (Khaolueang, 2011: 3)

1) Applying the concept of Competency in training design process (Competency-Based ISD Model)

2) Training system that uses the concept of Competency (Competency-Based Training System) Is one way to strengthen the ability of a person to be able to actually perform work The training will be designed to develop the knowledge, skills and necessary motivation to perform the job in responsibilities of each employee in order to achieve excellent performance that is consistent with the goals and organization strategy which the process of CBT starts from (Department of Tourism, 2012: 1-2)

1) Analysis of training needs

2) Determining the framework of competency model or training objectives

3) Design or create training curriculums

4) Implementing CBT into practice, providing training according to the objectives in item 3

5) Measurement and evaluation

From the study of the curriculum design for the development of tourism management capabilities the researcher concluded that community Competency development in tourism management which is a result of knowledge, skills, attitude, that we call KSA can enable to work or produce results (performance) as expected. The community must be developed in a form called Competency-Based Training (CBT) which focuses on the development of community qualifications that are essential to the job and also requires the curriculum design and development of courses to enhance their capabilities.

Research Methodology

In this research, the researcher conducted 2 steps of research using qualitative research, mixed with quantitative research methods as follows

Step 1: Studying and evaluating the competency to manage agro-eco tourism of Pla Ba Community in Loei Province by the researcher was conducting the test of the Competency from 23 persons who are the board of tourism promotion committee of Pla Ba Sub-district which is a population by using tools like the competency test that covers 3 areas of competency: knowledge, skills and attitude in agro-eco tourism management. The researcher has reviewed the literature and related research to create research tools then took the test to experts, considering by organizing a small group meeting for checking the content validity of the test.

In term of the test, the researcher invited 5 experts to evaluate the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) and tested with a sample of 30 sets to find the Cronbach's alpha coefficient with the following evaluation results

Based on the evaluation of the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC), the average value is 0.96. The assessment tool for the management of agro-eco tourism in Loei province has more than 0.50. The entire Cronbach's alpha coefficient has an average value of 0.94, which is greater than 0.9. It means that the research tools are reliable in very good level.

Population

In this research study, the researcher collected the data from 23 participants who are the board members of Pla Ba Community tourism promotion committee responsible for managing the agro-eco tourism.

Data analysis

The researcher will use data analysis in each issue of the questionnaire as follows.

Part 1: The researcher brought the questionnaire to check the data integrity before making the data code by using descriptive and inferential statistics to find the frequency, mean, percentage and standard deviation for describing the data obtained from the assessment form

Part 2: Interpretation of the evaluation of the level of agro-eco tourism management Competency of the Pla Ba Community tourism promotion committee in Loei Province to summarize and apply for development with the scoring criteria as follows

1. Knowledge test. Got from completed questionnaires for 30 copied to analyze the questionnaires with 4 scales.
2. Skills test. Got from completed questionnaires for 45 copied to analyze questionnaires with 3 scales.
3. Attitudes test. Got from completed questionnaires for 38 copied with the highest range as 4 to analyze the questionnaires with 4 scales.

Step 2: Curriculum development and training to develop the competency to manage agro-eco tourism of Pla Ba Community in Loei Province by the researcher summarizing the outline content training curriculums (competency based training: CBT) by applying the results of the evaluation of Stage 1 capabilities and from reviewing relevant academic documents. Then invite 8 experts in agro-eco tourism to prepare of teaching and learning courses, measurement evaluation, human resource development, specialist community travel experts in the area of sustainable tourism development for summarizing and confirming the training curriculum before implementing.

Training management using techniques combining participatory research with action research, including the AIC (Appreciation Influence Control) technique, to find out the real problems of the community (participatory action research: PAR - AIC) for knowledge creation, creating development guidelines and a co-operation approach with the community in order to acquire new knowledge in the management of agro-eco tourism in the community by researcher, community and villagers' leaders participate in joint thinking, decision making, checking and sharing in the benefits along with the community learning process including use the PDCA (plan-do - check - action) quality process to be able to reach the target.

Step 3: Studying and evaluating the competency of agro-eco tourism management of Pla Ba community, Loei province after being trained to develop capabilities by taking the test from Step 1 to test again and comparing the results from the development that what is the difference between the level of competency before and after training and analyzing by T-test (Dependent Samples).

Research Results

Assessment of the competency to manage agro-eco tourism in Pla Ba community, Loei province (before training)

At this stage, the researcher evaluated the competency to manage agro-eco tourism in Pla Ba community, Loei province of the Community Tourism Promotion Management Committee. The results of the study are as follows:

Table 1: The results of the assessment of the competency to manage agro-eco tourism in Pla Ba Community, Loei Province (before training)

The Competency to manage Agro-eco tourism (Before training)	Mean	(S.D.)	Percentage of all points	Assessment level
knowledge	17.4	4.48	57.97	Good
skill	0.85	0.56	42.5	medium
attitude	2.91	0.71	72.75	Very good

The table shows the results of the assessment of the competency to manage agro-eco tourism in Pla Ba Community, Loei Province (before training), and the results showed that

1) Knowledge in the management of agro-eco tourism with Mean Score of 17.4 points, with a standard deviation of 4.48, representing 57.97% of the total score. The assessment results are good.

2) Agro-eco tourism management skills with an average skill level of 0.85, with a standard deviation (SD) at 0.56, representing 42.5% of the total score. The assessment results are moderate.

3) Attitude towards agro-eco tourism management with Mean Score of 2.83 with standard deviation (SD) at 0.79, representing 72.75% of the total score. The assessment results are very good.

Development of training curriculums to improve the competency to manage agro-eco tourism

The researcher evaluated the competency in Step 1 and then brought the study results together with review the documents and related literature to design as a curriculum development outline then take the course outline that has been submitted to experts to evaluate and make an appointment to attend a small group meeting again to summarize the course before implementing.

After meeting the small group for evaluating and developing the training curriculum, the researcher has revised and sent the curriculum to the experts to evaluate the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) of the course again by evaluating in 10 areas as follows: 1. Principles and reasons of the course 2. Objectives of the course 3. Structure of the course 4. Content in each unit of learning 5. Arranging in order of each unit content for learning 6. Training activities 7. Media used in each training unit 8. Measurement and evaluation in each unit 9. Training period for each unit 10. Training schedule

The results of the Index of Item Objective Congruence Assessment (IOC) of the course have Mean Score of 0.8, considered valid. Its details of the following courses are as follows.

Curriculum name: Training curriculum on competency development in agro-eco tourism management

Course Objectives:

- 1) To develop knowledge, skills and good attitudes in agro-eco tourism management for the Pla Ba Community Tourism Promotion Committee.
- 2) To develop the competency of Pla Ba Community Tourism Promotion Committee for planning the management of agro-eco tourism correctly and appropriate for their area
- 3) To develop the Competency of agro-eco tourism management of Pla Ba Community Tourism Promotion Committee to be more efficient.

Goal: In this training Is a training to develop the competency of the Pla Ba Community Tourism Promotion Committee, Phu Ruea District, Loei Province for having knowledge and ability in managing agro-eco tourism which is being in charge of the management of tourism in the area directly in particular Pla Ba Community, a special area for sustainable development and have the potential to develop as an agro-eco tourism tourist attraction

Structure and scope of the curriculum: This course consists of 7 training units, including 70 hours

Unit 1: Tourism management competency 1 hour

Unit 2 Tourism Industry 2 hours

Unit 3 Agro-eco tourism 6 hours

Unit 4 Principles of conservation and development of tourism resources 6 hours

Unit 5: Tourism management principles 6 hours

Unit 6: Field trips 12 hours

Unit 7: Integrating management principles into actual work 48 hours

From the abovementioned, the training was conducted for 4 days according to the curriculum structure specified and allowing the community to develop their own tourism management by integrating the knowledge gained from the training for another 8 days; it was totally 12 days.

Assessment of the ability to manage agro-eco tourism in Pla Ba Community, Loei Province (after training)

After implementing the training program, the community members had 4 months for applying the gained knowledge to manage tourism in their community. The researcher then evaluated the competency of the community tourism promotion committee to manage the community again with the results of the study as follows:

Table 2: The results of the assessment of the competency to manage agro-eco tourism in Pla Ba Community, Loei Province (after training)

The Competency to manage agro-eco tourism(after training)	Mean	(S.D.)	Percentage of all points	Assessment level
Knowledge	23.17	2.41	77.23	Very good
skill	1.35	0.45	67.50	Very good
attitude	3.32	0.43	83.00	Very good

The table shows the assessment of the competency to manage agro-eco tourism in Pla Ba community, Loei province (after training). The results showed that

- 1) Knowledge in the management of agro-eco tourism with Mean Score of 23.17 points with a standard deviation of 2.41 representing 77.23% of the total score. The assessment results are very good.
- 2) Agro-eco tourism management skills with an average skill level of 1.35 points, with a standard deviation (SD) at 0.45, representing 67.50% of the total score. The assessment results are very good.

3) Attitude towards agro-eco tourism management with Mean Score of 3.32, with standard deviation (SD) at 0.43, representing 83% of the total score. The assessment results are very good.

The comparison of the Competency to manage agro-eco tourism evaluation in Pla Ba Community, Loei province, Thailand before and after training

When the assessment after training has been already made for developing the competency to manage agro-eco tourism, the researcher compared the level of management competency with the results of the study as follows:

Table 3: Comparison of knowledge scores in agro-eco tourism management of the community tourism promotion committee, Pla Ba Community before and after training

Test	N	Mean	S.D	Median	Min	Max	MD	t	Sig.
Pre-test	23	17.39	4.48	17	8	25			
Post-test	23	23.17	2.41	23	19	27	5.78	7.23	.00* *

* Statistical significance at 0.05

From the table of knowledge scores, Mean Score of knowledge before training was 17.39, Mean Score, knowledge after training is 23.17, with Mean Score of 5.78 and when comparing the knowledge score before and after training found that the knowledge score after training was increased with statistical significance at 0.05.

Table 4: Comparison of skills scores in agro-eco tourism management the community of tourism promotion committee, Pla Ba Community before and after training

Test	N	Mean	S.D	Median	Min	Max	MD	t	Sig.
Pre-test	23	0.85	0.36	0.84	0.22	1.76	0.50	8.20	.00*
Post-test	23	1.35	0.17	1.38	1.07	1.82			

* Statistical significance at 0.05

From the table of skills scores, it was indicated that the Mean Score on the skills before training was 0.85 but the Mean Score on the skills after training was 1.29. The Mean Score was increased by 0.50 and when comparing skills scores before and after training, it was found that skills scores after training was higher with statistical significance at 0.05.

Table 5: Comparison of attitude scores in agro-eco tourism management of the community tourism promotion committee, Pla Ba Community before and after training

Test	N	Mean	S.D	Median	Min	Max	MD	t	Sig.
Pre-test	23	2.91	0.34	2.79	2.39	3.63			
Post-test	23	3.32	0.20	3.29	3.11	3.84	0.41	9.35	.00* *

* Statistical significance at 0.05

From the table, the average level of attitude towards agro-eco tourism management of the community tourism promotion committee, Pla Ba Community before and after training, the study indicated that Mean Score of skills before training was 2.90, the Mean Score of skills after training was 3.32, the Mean Score increased 0.41, and when comparing skills scores before and after training, it was found that skills scores after training was higher with statistical significance at 0.05.

Table 6: Study table to develop the Competency of agro-eco tourism management of the committee to promote community-based tourism of Pla Ba Sub-district, Loei Province

The Competency to manage agro-eco tourism	Mean Scores before training	Mean Scores after training	Percentage of the increased score	Assessment level
Knowledge	57.97	77.23	19.27	Very good
skill	42.5	67.50	25.00	Very good
attitude	72.75	83.00	10.25	Very good

From the study table to develop the Competency of agro-eco tourism management of the community tourism promotion committee, Pla Ba Sub-district, Loei Province. It was found that the development of the competency to manage agro-eco tourism through the training process by the curriculum can develop more capabilities in 3 areas: knowledge in agro-eco tourism management, skills in agro-eco tourism management and attitude towards the agro-eco tourism management. Furthermore, the study also found that the most increasing competency is skill in the management of agro-eco tourism accounted for 25% of the assessment with questionnaires and increased 23% from interviews, followed by knowledge in tourism management of agro-eco tourism accounted for 22% and the least is attitude to management of agro-eco tourism 19.27%.

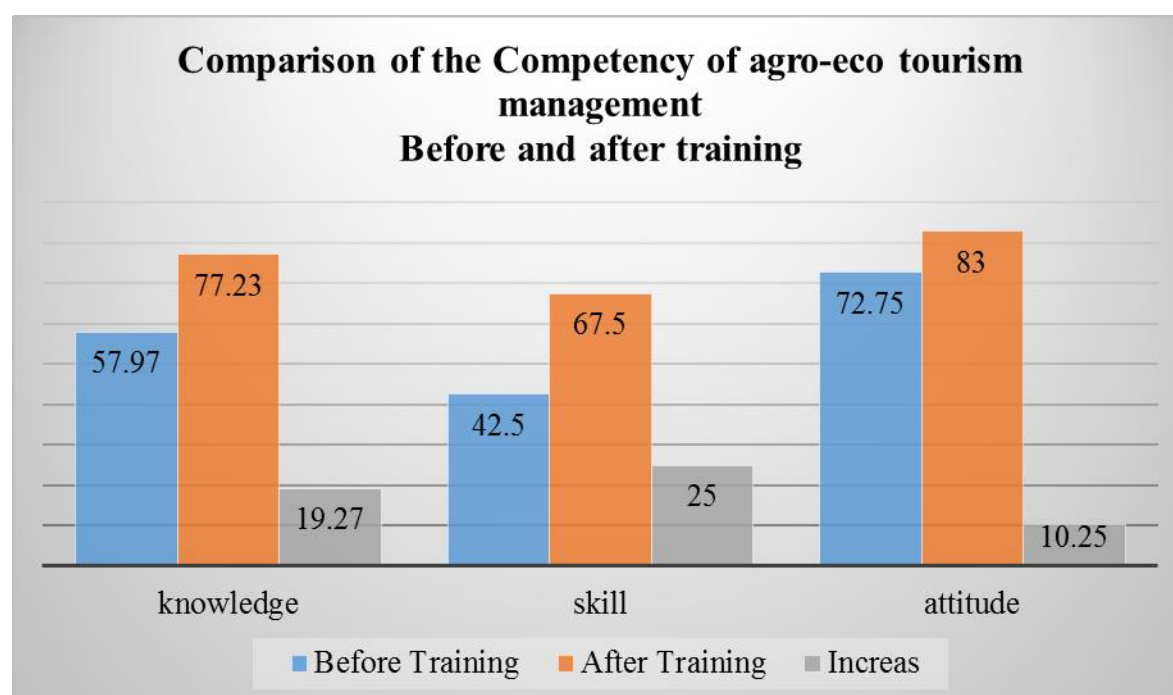


Figure 1: Comparison of the Competency of agro-eco tourism management before and after training

From the comparative study can confirm that the development of agro-eco tourism management competency of the eco-tourism management of the community tourism promotion committee, Pla Ba Sub-district by training curriculum to improve the competency to manage agro-eco tourism can work well with the practical use with statistical significance at 0.05

Discussions

The competency in community-based tourism management is the ability to allocate and use existing resources to maximize efficiency and maximize local benefits. which is similar to the study outcome found by Roger Chan and Kishan Bhatta (2013: 21) conclusively stating that an effective tourism management should fully answer the demands and provide benefits for a community as well as reduce any possible side effect from tourism. Exactly, community-based tourism is a key tool for tourism management that enable a community to efficiently make good use of their local tourism resources and this is consistent with a previous study (Jermstittiprasert, Joemsittiprasert, and Phonwattana, 2019: 3) suggesting that the competency in tourism management has positive impact on a community to efficiently and sustainably succeed and become a winner in any competitions. Capacity development in ecological agriculture tourism management can be achieved through appropriate processes and training courses as considered as an important mechanism to develop the capacity of the community in tourism management in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes consistent with Praphai Thipluepong, Kritsada Tangchaisak, Natthawut Songwut, Kobchai Tantiworakulchai (2017: 10) that summarizes the results of the study that knowledge, skill and attitudes are better called KSAs is a core competency in the work. Besides, it can develop to be able to increase with training as well as the research of Pattamaporn Chalertphet (2008: 189-190), which concluded that the training program focuses on developing competencies for local communities in planning tourism management strategies.

Allowing communities to manage tourism under the context of the area and community needs to be able to jointly plan (plan), co-operate (do), join check (check) along with the improvement (action) to be effective as well and control the work with the PDCA quality cycle process (plan-do - check - action) in accordance with the research of Jutamas Phengkona¹, Benjamas Na Thongkaew, Amnat Raksapol, Boonsin Jittapraphan and Tepin Pophawee (2017: 13) said that curriculum development is an accumulation of experiences that are organized into system and efficiency according to the objectives set to develop learners to have the highest knowledge and competency according to the potential of each person as well as Risley and McKee (2010: 10-12), said that the development of the training process with the teacher's teachings with the theory of adults learning by focusing on creating the atmosphere of learning to occur, especially the learning group that focuses on development and practice work skills that are coupled with continuous learning and lead to sustainable tourism management. Therefore, the development of tourism management capabilities requires appropriate processes and must be based on community needs. Providing effective courses as guidelines and methods that will lead to true management and tourism development.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. There should be more studies to develop the competency to manage tourism to other communities for increasing the Competency of community effectively and become utmost benefit for their own local community.
2. There should be further study to develop and enhance the tourism community in order to particularly provide quality and a chance to villagers to facilitate their occupation and distribute income to local communities.

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