

The Structural Challenges on Coordinating a Local Business Network Towards a Sustainable Community-Based Tourism

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to illustrate the structural challenges on coordinating a local business network towards a sustainable community-based tourism. Scholarly works have given theoretical insights and support for developing a sustainable community-based tourism with ideas on how to get locals to participate but not going much into greater details on the encounters with a structural approach that is important for maintaining the initiative. For methodology, the work applied a reframing matrix analysis to develop theoretical insights on the aim in exemplifying the structural challenges. Data was collected by combing through the responses of participants who were interviewed but provided feedback that was an outlining deviant from the questions that were asked. Responses that addressed the apprehensive issues within each of the four perspectives were coded to highlight the dysfunction and fault lines that made it unachievable for participants to follow through. Participants' quotes were color-coded to initiate the themes for every four analytical perspectives in the reframing matrix model. The key findings were the following: while planning is done, it can lead to bad results when the forces such as financial resources, communication principles, economic survival, political instability, assumptions, and unclear vision constrain the capabilities of local groups to work in partnership with the institution's agenda. In contribution, the study shows how the theory of structure in a network of local business units/groups is presented in a dynamic challenge when certain aspects are causing stress and not being fully addressed.

Keywords: Community-Based Tourism; Coordination; Reframing; Structure; Sustainability

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Introduction

The idea of making community-based tourism sustainable requires a calculated coordination of relevant resources oriented towards an outcome that is value shared. However, even if the policies are developed from the beginning, they are not always followed through when they are not flexible enough to meet the needs of the local business network (Schönherr et al., 2023). In addition, policies that were administered from an external perspective have become quite cumbersome when trying to manage alongside the tourism business operation (Gössling et al., 2021). The problem is a complex myriad of unaddressed issues that often lie hidden until they become a big concern. Also, when the issues aren't resolved, they become obstacles that are time- consuming and divert attention away from the main goal. While numerous scholarly works have given theoretical insights and support for developing a sustainable community-based tourism with ideas on how to get locals to participate (Vongvisitsin et al., 2024), there is not much work delving into greater details on the encounters with a structural approach that is important for maintaining the initiative. This study is an extension of a previous work that explored the level of importance in managing behaviors for sustaining community-based tourism in Chiang Mai, which stated that *“there are clear challenges in stakeholder engagement, resource allocation, and adaptive planning that need to be addressed for these initiatives to reach their full potential”* (Chatchayaladasiri et al., 2025). The work goes further to provide insight into the causes that make it challenging for a local tourism business network to be organized in planning, research reporting, evaluating, and selecting the research tools for making their community sustainable.

This research aims to illustrate the structural challenges in coordinating a local business network towards sustainable community-based tourism. To achieve the research aim, the following research questions were utilized:

- 1) What were the challenges in the intentional planning design for sustaining a community-based tourism?
- 2) What were the challenges with the research report for maintaining the outcome and monitoring performance towards sustaining a community-based tourism?
- 3) What were the challenges in evaluating the planning of development initiatives for sustaining a community-based tourism?
- 4) What were the challenges with the selected research tools for each evaluation in sustaining a community-based tourism?

These four perspectives were chosen as a continuation of a previous study. In the inquiry form, the perspectives provide the analytical details on challenges of sustainability in planning, researching, developing, and applying research tools within a local business network.

Literature Review

Structuration Theory

The theory of structuration, which was developed by British sociologist Anthony Giddens, views that the structure and agency within a society or state constitute a framework of how things are intertwined to produce an outcome (Giddens, 1984). From this perspective, it explains how society is creating and recreating itself within the components of its own environment through the interactions formed that reinforce that idea or evolve it to another

level, with some principles being safeguarded (Giddens, 1991). Structuration defines two elements in its basis: structure and agency. In the former, structure is seen as a concurrent pattern that arranges a conglomerate of resources to form a certain output, which either benefits or limits the chances and opportunities to people or entities in operation (Heracleous, 2013). Such an example can be a legislative policy or a cultural custom being indoctrinated into business/social practice. For the latter, agency is described as free-thinking individuals who do things according to their own free will. While there may be certain laws that prevent them from committing illegal acts, these individuals act to the power they have and decide on their own what's best for themselves (Heracleous, *ibid*). Giddens mentioned a duality structure, which is a concept stating that structure exists due to the ongoing actions and reactions of human behavior, creating results that flow back towards redeveloping or redefining the structure, thus demonstrating that the individual's behavior has been conformed to meet the agenda (Whittington, 2015). In addition, Giddens also sees the idea of rules and resources as part of structuration. He deems rules are used by individuals to direct them on taking the necessary decisive actions while manipulating the resources that are available and accessible to their needs, thus leading towards the modification of their social structure (Howard-Grenville, 2005). Moreover, Giddens states that individuals are highly active in their social environment and they will participate in events. Known as reflexive agents, they are centered in the structuration process by making decisions that fit their interests and reflecting upon the actions that they take and the social influences encountered (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Furthermore, his work provides reasoning on the social practices that are undertaken by individuals with regard to time and space configured into their understanding of the situation that they are placed in (Marietto et al., 2016). The behavioral routines accumulated from the spatial and temporal dimensions contribute to giving meaning to the structuration formation and beliefs for others to follow and learn, thus leading to the social norm that is accepted or rejected in life (Marietto, Ribeiro and Serra, *ibid*).

Liao and Lu (2025) developed a framework explaining *“how sustainability capabilities are formed through the recursive interplay of interpretive, procedural, and symbolic routine work which are constructed through patterning, reflexivity, and meaning-making in organizational life.”* The idea of this work is on contributing to *“ongoing conversations at the intersection of capability theory, routine dynamics, and sustainability governance by reconceptualizing capability formation as a processual and recursive structuring phenomenon”* as well as demonstrating where the concepts of network coordination is most effective.

Parker and Chung (2018) applied a structuration theory and analysis in the hospitality industry to examine a case on the *“construction of social and environmental strategies and the related implementation of management control.”* Based on their analytical findings, *“top-down global corporate framing and bottom-up local-level staff initiatives that combine to develop a locally focused and differentiated social and environmental program and expedite an associated management control and accountability system”* are in strong interaction with one another. Their work also shows that there is a *“dominance of the traditional financial control system over the social and environmental management control system, and the simultaneously enabling and constraining nature of that relationship.”* Also, their research points out from *“an intra-organizational perspective that social and environmental strategizing and control processes and motivations elucidates forms of action, control and accountability, and the relationship between social/environmental control and financial control agendas.”*

Network Governance and Inter-Organizational Coordination

The protocol of governance is to set rules and regulations in the form of policies that are expected to be carried out as they are implemented. Structure is vital for the purpose of personnel and staff to know who to report to and what types of actions are to be taken when the policies are announced. This is for the sake of order, compliance, and to ensure that the system is intact for producing results. However, even governance has its limitations in getting positive results when trying to establish a systematic structure that is composed of a network based on voluntary goodwill (Beritelli & Bieger, 2014). Networking is made up of entities and organizations that have different variables in personal needs and interests, which creates a challenge in getting groups or individuals to make a full commitment to the cause, moving together in a synergistic mission, and developing a collaborative mindset between the public and private agents in foreseeing that sustainable development ideas are imminent (Presenza et al., 2015). Governance is a hands on practice with structuring between strategy and processes that also aims to gain a comprehension of the ways organized groups and their own network, made up of different components, can interact with the tasks given and determine where coordination is most effective when personal relationships and networking are efficiently functioning together (Valente et al., 2015). What is most challenging is trying to meet all the demands of the stakeholders involved when sustaining a community-based tourism. Good governance that is transparent and fair with many organizations is an ideal approach as it would be a welcoming, legitimate sign of professional standard. However, getting everyone to believe that the results can be achieved through working together, supporting the capacity of others, learning from the expertise of others, and sharing resources would need to be evaluated and assessed properly so that there is some sense of credibility (Selin, 2017).

Intentional Planning Design for Sustaining a Community-Based Tourism

Sustainability comes from an alignment of stakeholders within the local community, tourist operators, and environmental agencies that have set a mutual agreement based on the values shared together (Amerta & Made, 2017). Plans that are put into policies are derived from the relevant data and feedback that are part of the framework for obtaining results (Álvarez-García et al., 2018). The experience of tourism becomes welcoming when the needs of travelers are met along the journey, but most importantly, the ones providing the services have to feel that it's truly rewarding and worthwhile for themselves to keep their business operations in parallel with any plans to uphold sustainability (Strydom et al., 2019). When objectives are achieved, it is because the plans were designed to make it possible to do so; the opposition to this idea would be on making people do things that they were not capable of accomplishing in the first place (Gkoumas, 2019). It is not so much that the plans are too rigid or inflexible; instead, it is because of the behaviors that are uncertain of the consequences and not wanting to change from the familiar ways that have benefited them (Manaf et al., 2018).

Research Report for Maintaining Outcome and Monitoring Performance for Sustaining a Community-Based Tourism

What derives towards the outcome and being closely monitored are dependent on the interaction and collaboration of key participants and other critical assets/resources that provide the natural data and information, in sustaining a community-based tourism, on how the study is to be carried out (Graci, 2013), because without them the research becomes an incomplete picture of how things are actually occurring. Studies designed to mention only the problems in the results to be focused on are valuable, but so are the ones that also address the preamble or decisions leading to the negative results in sustainability (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015). In some

cases, previous revisions may have already reported on some people having the power to influence changes or prevent changes from happening at all, which already sets an awareness that if tourism sustainability is to be researched in finding better ways for progressing, then psychological obstacles should be dealt with in the first stage (Agyeiwaah et al., 2017). Due to many stakeholders who are directly and non-directly involved, doing a research report on sustaining a community-based tourism is quite complex as interests, needs, concerns, and desires are constantly intertwining like different river streams meeting at a chasm point, thus challenging the researchers to have a perspective from many viewpoints to make a sound report for professional decision making and smart action (Han et al., 2014). Knowing why such sustainable programs are not meeting expectations in outcome and meager in monitoring performance are sources of learning opportunities to correct the fallacy in thoughts and actions as long as stakeholders know in advance that it has nothing to do about questioning their credibility and focus, but showing instead how one can make a better key contribution to the initiative (Wijaya et al., 2020).

Evaluating Planning of Development Initiatives for Sustaining a Community-Based Tourism

Evaluation is based on analyzing a snapshot of the systematic event or phenomenon that has occurred, with marking points established for checking whether the actions have resulted in favor of promoting sustainability or going against it (Holden, 2008). Most importantly, the output from the evaluation serves as the facts for discussion or learning what aspects were working while which factors have to be taken into consideration for sustainability to make further progress (Deslatte & Stokan, 2020). Although an evaluation may be easy to implement, the explanation part does create a level of anxiety as it may be too abstract in technical terms for others to grasp the situation (Khalid et al., 2019), or in some cases people will have an uneasy feeling about the results as they feel a sense of humiliation and inferiority of not being able to carry out the mission properly (Zeemering, 2018). In the idea of having a sustainable community, the questions asked from the beginning of the study are critical as they lead to how models are re-examined, re-defined, and relearned for direct stakeholders involved to know what methods need to be changed or how to utilize their current resources for adapting efficiently (Muñoz-Torres et al., 2018).

Selected Research Tools to Evaluate for Sustaining a Community-Based Tourism

The research tools selected to analyze the dimensional factors and variables, which have not been considered before, are the ones estimated to be the best fit in generating a good amount of information for further development and making decisions (Rahman et al., 2022). However, previous research tools that have been proven incomplete and ineffective for deep analysis would require a re-examination for data collection, as well as looking at other innovative methods to capture the dynamics of sustaining a community-based tourism (Priatmoko et al., 2021). Stakeholders have their own view on what a community-based tourism looks like as being sustainable: they define the idea as having employment security, developing a solid trust within the network, business protocols and procedures working in harmony, sustainability is carried out as a practical philosophy, innovation and social responsibility is promoted despite differences in operation, and anticipating on novel demands by other external participants that make up the tourism social environment (Naranjo, 2022). Over time, other unknown factors are added into the equation for sustainability and either pose a challenge to identify the context for a better understanding; thus it is a necessity to have a collective pool of knowledge experts to determine the appropriate research tools for gauging the magnitude of the situation (Mwantimwa, 2020). What is really critical is the fact that the collection of data for analysis

is just part of the process for the aim of conducting a study, because the main point is presenting an argument for why certain practical models for sustainability either need to be developed further to help achieve the goal or make a proposal for changes so that the mission operation is still possible to reach (Mayaka et al., 2019).

Research Methodology

For data collection and analysis, the work applied a reframing matrix analysis to develop theoretical insights on the aim of exemplifying the structural challenges in coordinating a local business network towards sustainable community-based tourism. The reframing matrix was developed by Morgan (1993) as a tool for developing creative solutions by looking at business problems from many different perspectives. The reframing matrix format begins with a drawn-out four-square grid that has a box space placed in the middle of the grid. The box space is reserved for writing down the problem or issue for the study to be illustrated. In this case, the aim of the research is written in the box space with a table shown below.

Table 1: Written Statement Issue

Note: This table demonstrates the first stage of applying the reframing matrix analysis tool.

Table 1. shows the focus of the study. This is the first stage for carrying out the research method. Normally, the tool is used for a group or team of idea creators or problem solvers to understand the issue/problem to be resolved or to generate new concepts. The work utilizes this method as an emphasis for illustrating the causes that present themselves as structural challenges in coordinating towards sustainability. The next table below goes into further details.

The second part of this table shows the structural content presented as the four perspectives for illustrating the challenging reasons in coordination. The four perspectives were derived from the preceding study that asked general questions for exploration through an interview with five community-based tourism areas located in the Chiang Mai province. These communities had ten local businesses operating in the district of Borsang, Mae Kompong, Muen Ngoen, On Tai, and Tep Sadit. They have been doing business for many decades in tourism affairs and have been resilient in overcoming the financial impact after the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of fifty local businesses took part in a questionnaire and were later interviewed individually. These local businesses were the following: 37 in leisure services providing dining and/or consumption, along with purchasing souvenirs as gifts/collection (74%). 3 in accommodation (.06%). 3 in recreation activities (.06%). 3 doing learning/cultural engagement (.06%). 2 in the operation of health/aesthetic therapy service (.04%). 1 selling

candies/sweets (.02%). 1 providing services in embroidery on clothes (.02%). Those selected for the interviewing process were the business owners who were directly responsible for managing the daily business affairs of operation and marketing promotion, and the line managers who provided support in business planning. They were selected based on the number of experiences being involved in the local business network projects. The interview process was done on-site with each person for a minimum of 20 minutes to ensure that they were able to gather their thoughts to answer the questions without any pressure. Their responses were recorded on video and then documented later on.

Table 2: Structural Content Put into Perspective

Intentional Planning Design Perspective 1. 2. 3. 4.	Research Report Perspective 1. 2. 3. 4.
Issue: Structural Challenges on Coordinating a Local Business Network Towards a Sustainable Community-Based Tourism	
Evaluating the Planning Perspective 1. 2. 3. 4.	Selected Research Tools Perspective 1. 2. 3. 4.

Note: This table shows the second stage of applying the reframing matrix analysis tool.

Data was collected by combing through the responses of participants who were interviewed but provided feedback that was an outlining deviant from the questions that were asked. The deviant responses signified that individuals expressed their viewpoints that went against the ideal norms of seeing things in a positive light and telling the facts as they are. Their deviant responses provided intriguing and insightful information on the coordination of local business networks towards a sustainable community-based tourism, which was a challenging lesson in practice. The non-deviant statements were also thoroughly looked into for any possible structural issues, but did not have much of an impact. The repeated responses that addressed the apprehensive issues within each of the four perspectives were coded to highlight the dysfunction and fault lines that made it unachievable for participants to follow through. Data was validated by applying “epistemological reflexivity”, whereas the researchers reflected on the assumptions and knowledge claimed in the study (Olmos-Vega, 2022). The authors of this work questioned the paradigms, methods, and theories that were implemented and reflected on the assumptions about those participants experiencing the situation. The concept allowed us to understand how the answers were told and interpret the data as straightforward as possible, while also acknowledging that the study also has limitations and should be further conducted in the future.

The participants' direct quotes that mentioned concerns from a video interview were documented verbatim. The researchers did not ask them to go into details on the cause of their worry, because it was necessary to keep an open mind about the dynamics of people working within their local networks based on the government's initiative. Below are the participants' quotes that were color-coded to initiate the themes for every four analytical perspectives in the reframing matrix model.

Challenges in intentional planning design:

- 1) absence of customers.... Variability in tourist arrivals maintaining high customer satisfaction.
- 2) COVID-19, have led to a lack of new customers, ... clear communication and mutual
- 3) economic downturn....
- 4) shifted focus....
- 5) no **specific** plans,... need to adapt, ...gain acceptance from the community/.. meeting industry standards and operating with lower capital compared to previous years;
- 6) a **clear** vision to guide sustainable tourism efforts; ... commitment to nature conservation; ... a unified understanding
- 7) no **contribution** ... need to increase their efforts .. guidelines to support .. provide primary support for sustainable initiatives; ... mutual support among partners; ... partnerships with either the public or private sectors to support sustainable business practices;

Challenges with Research Report for Maintaining Outcome and Monitoring Performance:

- 1) current economic challenges;.
- 2) lack sufficient internal connections .. tourism activities are only partially evaluated for sustainability and not thoroughly assessed; ... not been adequately evaluated, as no agency has focused sufficiently on determining the true standards
- 3) no clear mechanism in place ... tourism activities ... somewhat evaluated, but not thoroughly, ... lack of serious inspection
- 4) unclear whether travel activities are evaluated ... no established measurement standards;
- 5) tourism activities have not been evaluated;

Challenges on Evaluating the Planning of Development Initiatives:

- 1) follow consistent waste management and resource conservation practices
- 2) adapt their operations to align with seasonal changes and community needs .. cooperation with each other to align with the goals
- 3) need to collaborate more effectively
- 4) transparency
- 5) need for strong, transparent leaders.
- 6) to establish and reinforce community rules to ensure alignment ... should follow village rules and support one another to maintain alignment ... need to be adjusted to better align ... continued involvement may need to be adjusted to better align

Challenges with the Selected Research Tools for Each Evaluation:

- 1) feedback and opinions from customers ... Gathering opinions from the local community and customers
- 2) measure effectiveness by assessing how well we support the community through local employment and product development.
- 3) customer feedback

The following table shows the themes identified for the issue and the four analytical perspectives in the reframing matrix:

Table 3: Identified Themes for the Four Analytical Perspectives

Intentional Planning Design Perspective 1) Minimal customers/travelers from COVID-19 pandemic lowers profit of local businesses. 2) Communication and mutual understanding needed for unified goal. 3) Economic downturn led to locals looking for other business ventures. 4) Plan not specified due to unclear vision, thus producing lack of contribution and unrealistic support.	Research Report Perspective 1) Economic challenges. 2) Lack of connections led to undermining of evaluation.
Issue: Structural Challenges on Coordinating a Local Business Network Towards a Sustainable Community-Based Tourism	
Evaluating the Planning Perspective 1) Discipline on proper practices not followed thoroughly. 2) Alignment is still a work in progress. 3) Transparency is required for fairness.	Selected Research Tools Perspective 1) Feedback and opinions of customers were viewed as most important. 2) Community response determines the performance of local businesses.

Note: This table shows the identified themes for the four analytical perspectives.

The top left quadrant identified the themes of “minimal customers/travelers from COVID-19, communication and mutual understanding for unified goal, economic downturn, and unspecified plan” for the intentional planning design perspective. For the top right quadrant, the research report perspective had the themes of “economic challenges and lack of connections” for analysis. In the bottom left quadrant, which is the evaluating planning perspective, the themes of “undiscipline, lack of alignment, and transparency” provide a keen analytical focus. The bottom right quadrant has the themes of “customers’ feedback and opinion, and community response” serving as support for the analytical lens.

Research Methodology Process

A diagram is shown below on how the research was conducted.



Figure 1: Diagram of the Research Process

Note: This figure shows the steps taken in the research process.

The first step began with the development of the model. The issue is put into the center for focus, and the four perspectives were written out for content analysis. The second step was reviewing the previous recorded interview responses that were documented from the original study and highlighting the information that seemed to deviate. The third stage took the participants' deviant feedback and placed them in accordance with that perspective for further analysis.

Research Findings on the Challenges for Sustaining a Community-Based Tourism

Challenges in the Intentional Planning Design

Externally, some of the local businesses were more concerned about the lack of customers and tourists visiting and shopping in their area, which had an impact on income stability and business planning. They were more dependent upon customer satisfaction because it is their marketing tool for recommending the services to others, and is evidently crucial for sustaining their own business overall. These local businesses were still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and are trying to rationalize their resources to gain some ground for business growth. One of the primary challenges is ensuring that both customers (tourists) and organization tour guides share a unified goal of promoting sustainable tourism. The method in communication and for mutual understanding had not made the locals collaborate effectively enough toward sustainable practices. It was stated that the overall economic conditions and consumer trends are shifting, impacting business. To maintain a steady flow of income, certain local members tried to do other businesses, such as offering home-stay along the side but unsuccessful. Within the local business network, most of the challenges were based on assumptions without any connecting data. No specific plans were explained with what really needed to be done, and operations remain unchanged. There wasn't any initiative for adapting. They felt that in order to take action, all of the networks within the community should be fully committed. With regards to interdependency, community leaders didn't really have a clear vision on guiding a sustainable community-based tourism, according to the feedback. Furthermore, it was stated that there were no real contributions from other partners. Government and community agencies rarely did much to increase their efforts in promoting sustainable planning. Provincial Administrative Organization (PAO) was dubious in establishing guidelines to support sustainable planning. The government agencies were expected to provide primary support for sustainable initiatives, but came up short on the idea. Partnerships with either the public or private sectors to support sustainable business practices were not visible enough to feel the policy as being genuine.

Challenges with Research Report for Maintaining Outcome and Monitoring Performance

Local businesses found it difficult to determine the level of sustainability due to the economic situation that they were facing. Even having an ongoing promotion, which is necessary for maintaining and enhancing the sustainability of activities, was not financially viable. The operations, from agriculture to product development and marketing, were partly measured. There was a lack of sufficient internal connections to fully utilize government events for a thorough sustainability assessment. There was no full commitment in doing a proper evaluation and calculation to verify the actual results of being sustainable. With responsibilities

not taken in good faith nor accountability carried out with professionalism, the actions in proceeding with the research had become invisible and forgotten. It became a case where no one agency focused sufficiently on determining the true standards of sustainability being implemented. This led to other consequences, such as having no clear mechanism in place to ensure sustainability. Locals involved in the program knew that there had been a lack of serious inspection by relevant agencies in the past, but they can't be bothered with getting highly involved as they were suffering financially just to keep their business above water. While they are aware about other activities being sustainable and advanced in other districts, they feel that those with the degree of knowledge for carrying out the research studies should be the ones taking the most initiative instead of themselves. Without any leadership, misperception lingered around the local atmosphere on whether travel activities should be evaluated for sustainability because there was no one providing an established measurement standard to be followed. Local businesses were questioning the importance of measuring whether sustainability objectives are actually being met to evaluate the effectiveness of travel activities, but never received a clear response on the matter.

Challenges on Evaluating the Planning of Development Initiatives

Development was left to the local business network that didn't quite understand how to implement the evaluation and felt that the government should demonstrate some form of capacity support, such as providing training programs on how to measure progress. According to the interview, it was disappointing to learn that the entrepreneurs, tourists, and local residents were not following the standards on consistent waste management and resource conservation practices to support sustainability. Most of the time, local businesses stuck to their own outdated operations that were not aligned with seasonal changes and community needs. Cooperatives and government agencies were far apart in developing a collaborative relationship and seem to have their own view on how to be more effective in creating income opportunities for community members and supporting sustainable development.

Amongst individual operations within the network, there has been no significant change in current business operations to be more orientated to the outcome, thus needing more reconsideration on how evaluation is going to help the involved stakeholders learn and adapt to situations. There was a need for strong and transparent leaders who are committed to the community, as well as ensuring fair and equitable distribution of benefits.

With regards to local network interaction, there was an expression of concern to establish and reinforce community rules for ensuring alignment with sustainable tourism goals. They wanted more regular meetings every three months to foster cooperation, discuss opinions, and manage community affairs effectively. Also, there was a call for continued cooperation among all community members, which was essential for achieving the vision and mission of sustainable tourism. Although village leaders, committees, university research teams (e.g., CMU, CMRU), and government agencies have provided partial assistance, the local business network felt that their continued involvement may need to be adjusted in alignment with the sustainability goals and objectives.

Locals felt that implementing a support system within the community and engaging local acquaintances to assist each other were crucial for achieving tourism objectives. They also want government agencies to be more involved in promoting and enforcing sustainability

measures to ensure all businesses being aligned with sustainability goals. Furthermore, they want their stakeholders to address the issue of unequal access to resources to ensure that benefits are more widely distributed within the community.

Challenges with the Selected Research Tools for Each Evaluation

It was learned that there were no specific tools in place for measuring effectiveness in certain areas, nor methods not having been identified or used in the area. Evidently, from the feedback data, an effectiveness in measurement was never really established from the beginning. Although an effort was made, it became difficult in fully measuring or achieving the desired outcomes.

The effectiveness of research tools in measuring stakeholder performance was not clearly determined. This was because uncertainty was mostly in the mind, which made locals hesitant to apply any type of tools for measuring progress towards the vision and mission of sustainability. While comments and feedback were made, they fell short of being effective in getting the local businesses to develop a sense of collaboration to implement and test ideas.

While development was progressing, issues such as funding, location, government operations, and marketing were all waiting to be addressed. The tools provided some insights but did not fully capture these challenges as people were dealing with ambiguity along the process. Some locals mentioned the current situation but not raising any deep concern about falling short on the criteria for sustainability. They stated that improved methods or tools should be considered, and it should be in the hands of the authorities who want sustainability to be highly achieved.

Discussion on the Structural Challenges on Coordinating a Local Business Network Towards a Sustainable Community-Based Tourism

Structure is a composition of strategy and system that goes together in unison. By design for constant coordination and communication, structure sets the behavior for stakeholders to have their task performance directed towards the outcome. However, while the vision is to look far into the future, it doesn't mean that local business units have fully embraced the future when they are focusing on what is in front of them now. And it means that they have their own plans to survive for this year with the business that they are doing. The first point is that while intentional planning is done in good faith, it can lead to bad results when the forces, such as financial resources, communication principles, economic survival, political instability, assumptions, and unclear vision, are constraining the capabilities of local groups to work in partnership with the institution's agenda. Locals revealed that "*the absence of customers and tourists is a major challenge*" and that the "*variability in tourist arrivals affects the stability of income and business planning*". They also cited that a better "*clear communication and mutual understanding to lead the organization toward sustainable practices*" as well as noticing that "*there are currently no specific plans, and operations remain unchanged*" and urged their community leaders to "*possess a clear vision to guide sustainable tourism efforts*". Secondly, sustainable policy planning implemented in a local business network, with task expectations to be fulfilled, will not be coordinated effectively in a structure when participants are currently preoccupied with business issues that are holding them back. Thus, business units

that are taking care of their own priorities first will take other external matters as a secondary addendum to be dealt with later on. This was stated that *“planning is difficult due to the current economic downturn...overall economic conditions and consumer trends are shifting, impacting business”*. The situation led to one business owner having to shift the *“focus to sourcing coffee from local farmers and turning it into a social enterprise”*, just after he failed in a homestay venture. External and internal factors disrupting the planning process are considered for deeper examination and looking at possibilities of changes within a structure for resolving communication skill level of agents/partners, financial troubles, and supporting material resources to maintain alignment and firmly organized towards the goal, but can only be carried out if the organizational structure learns what has changed and adapting intelligently to the circumstances (Gurianova & Mechtcheriakova, 2015).

Maintaining standard quality in the outcome and monitoring performance requires some financial investments in the participants' capacity. Extracurricular tasks in research reporting should not be an economic burden for the partners agreeing to assist, but to work in unison with funding agents who are also gathering data on how the mission can be efficiently executed. Locals said that *“it is difficult to determine sustainability due to current economic challenges”* and they *“lack sufficient internal connections to fully utilize government events for sustainability assessment”*. Nevertheless, the research reporting needs to be aimed with accuracy and verification with a committee that sets a renown guideline for making local participants know that this task is to be done with credibility and integrity, and that their contribution is truly valued. It was pointed out from the feedback in the interview that *“tourism activities have not been adequately evaluated, as no agency has focused sufficiently on determining the true standards of sustainability being implemented”* and that *“there has been a lack of serious inspection by relevant agencies in the past”*. But most importantly, the results from the research report should also be relevant with how the stakeholders are benefiting from it and translated into where the opportunities are for making decisions, as well as actions to be taken that flourish for all local community members to gain from. A concern was expressed by stating that *“it is unclear whether travel activities are evaluated for sustainability because there are no established measurement standards”*, and *“it is important to measure whether sustainability objectives are being met to evaluate the effectiveness of travel activities”*.

The way of evaluating needs to be led by an expert with years of practical experience. To transfer the knowledge and know-how by training to local business community participants is a mixture of psychological art and science in getting trainees to grasp the nuances in the field. It's no cause for alarm when the learners are still making mistakes and errors during the training or trying to comprehend the craft on the fly. From the feedback, there was a belief that *“development should be driven by government support, including training programs to foster progress”* and *“regular meetings every three months should be held to foster cooperation, discuss opinions, and manage community affairs effectively”*. While the issue of distance, time, and other resources may not be readily available at the particular moment, it serves as a good lesson on decentralizing the information to be digitally accessed in smart time for the evaluator to actually learn along the process. It was cited in the interview that *“teachers from Chiang Mai Rajabhat University and experienced cocoa production consultants have provided partial assistance. Their continued involvement may need to be adjusted to better align with our sustainability goals”*. In addition, it was also revealed that *“cooperatives and government*

agencies need to collaborate more effectively to create income opportunities for community members and support sustainable development". Personal interests and transparency on how policies actually benefit those involved have to be discussed in honest details, as there is no guarantee that everyone will receive the benefit that they had expected to gain from. This was stated from the interview that *"there needs to be transparency regarding government budgets and how they are allocated to support the community"*, and *"...a need for strong, transparent leaders who are committed to the community and ensure fair and equitable distribution of benefits"*. When there is nothing to be gained from an initiative project/program, these local groups in the community will act out immediately to serve their own interests, and being unapologetic with their actions that make it inconvenient for others who are trying to have faith in the system. It was surprising to know that one of the locals stated that *"...locals and entrepreneurs may need to adapt while balancing traditional lifestyles with modern business practices to align with our sustainability objectives"*, while another said that *"local businesses must enhance their cooperation with each other to align with the goals of sustainable tourism."* Punishment in monetary fines or threatening with suspension penalties on business groups as a reaction towards violating the sustainable policies would only serve as a temporary fix to the problem but actually erode a sense of trust and collaboration spirit for the long term. Based on a suggestion that *"all entrepreneurs, tourists, and local residents should follow consistent waste management and resource conservation practices to support sustainability"*, it seemed that this issue was not taken seriously. It can be learned from this case that the idea of having a coordinated local business network for a sustainable community does not work when it's being structured in an industrial style, whereas business stakeholders are treated as manufacturing units that wait for the orders to come in and then take it into course for action. One feedback stating that *"there has been no significant change in current business operations, which may need to be reconsidered"* attests to this thought. Tourism occurs because of the people who have abstract interests and are looking to be served in meeting their own needs and expectations. Perhaps it's fair to let the government institution face the reality with what the locals go through in real life by letting them explain how things are really happening. Taking the statements made by locals saying *"it is crucial to establish and reinforce community rules to ensure alignment with sustainable tourism goals, continued cooperation among all community members is essential for achieving the vision and mission of sustainable tourism, and stakeholders should follow village rules and support one another to maintain alignment with tourism goals"* would provide a clue on where to resolve the causes in shortcomings for a stronger collaborative effort in the local business network. With regards to structuring, an expanded view going beyond existing resources and connections within the business/social environment, that includes key partners and stakeholders, for inclusive shared values in active participation, interaction and collaboration, provide greater insight in ways of creating value for a sustainability problem-solving context (Chaurasia et al., 2020).

Even with the tools provided for doing research to gather data and providing information, they are not distributed equally, nor are they given full access to a majority of stakeholders involved. The statement that they *"seek support and promotion from various sources, though we recognize that these efforts are currently insufficient"* indicates inefficient funding.

Nevertheless, the case of some local network sectors claiming of not being aware of any research tools points out that the system within this grand structure would have to monitor its own performance to equip their fellow participants on what the tool is and how it's used. Otherwise, the participants will apply tools that directly benefit their own interests, such as *“monitoring word-of-mouth referrals and repeat purchases as indicators of success, and using feedback and opinions from customers as the primary tools for measuring the achievement of the business goals”* as a substitute for the campaign of a sustainable local business community. Also, the research tools should address the needs of the networking groups involved. They felt that to make a strong effort, some generous support is strongly required to assist them in overcoming some financial hardships. Also, the support would let them strive on and especially having the disciplined behaviors of others in the local community to collaborate with the sustainable ideas, instead of them experiencing the disappointment of others demonstrating a lackadaisical attitude in character. With the issue stated that there weren't any research tools, this goes back to the policy on how things needed to be followed up on to ensure that local participants have been developed thoroughly to gather data/information for analysis on how sustainability is proceeding. In the absence of a structure to help the local participants, they will do something else that is not relevant to the original agenda. One such case from the feedback cited that *“while there isn't a formal measurement tool in place, the business has been informally evaluated by entrepreneurs, temple personnel, community members, and customers”* and that *“we measure effectiveness by assessing how well we support the community through local employment and product development”*. If the policy is not effective in getting local participants the right research tool, then officials involved may have to do an introspection on why this is happening and resolve the situation as soon as possible. According to a study done by Romero–Medina (Romero–Medina, et al., 2024) structure is most effective when there are members carefully selected and their roles and responsibilities are clearly stated to carry out their duties and responsibilities, especially when there's a need for having *“open and constant communication among selected members, whether in the form of cooperatives, collaboration, or partnership”*, is a fundamental pillar for ongoing success. Therefore, giving those involved in the initiative a sense of trust and respect that their needs are met to perform well.

Theoretical Contributions

The study shows how the theory of structure in a network of local business units and groups are presented in a dynamic challenge when certain aspects are causing stress and not being fully addressed. Therefore, a structural assessment would be required on a timely basis in order for management to remove any concerns before proceeding further with the initiative in coordinating a local business network towards a sustainable business community. This work adds to the academic learning on the concept of a structuration theory. Lecturers may use the analytical findings to assist students in asking the right questions for taking actions with structure development in the field of sustainability. The theory applied in this paper can also be a learning tool for academics who are designing a work study program for their undergraduates, who require internship/working credits, to go out into the field and doing a study on the challenges of having a sustainable local community-based tourism. Also, the lecturers can have students bring the information into the classroom for a situational learning exercise to brainstorm with their peers on what is the best solution to help the local community-based tourism move forward.

Managerial Implications

This is a managerial lesson for developing coordination and motivation for alignment by first understanding the causes that are making the structure being ineffective and inefficient towards producing the much-needed results. It is also on redesigning the structure itself that has a unique staffing approach to help people perform in the right direction. Most importantly, the local participants must be given the capability and capacity to perform under proper management support. On the practical side of managerial planning, the work provides a dimensional view on how the complex needs and concerns of stakeholders involved strain the progress of achieving the objectives of a sustainable goal. In addition, getting feedback and measurements in a complex networking environment is vital for management to be in control. Human resources management can develop structured training programs for local leaders by promoting workshops that showcase the best practices and brainstorming for practical solutions. In the form of public management, policies and procedures should not only be focused on the mission of a sustainable business community, but also meeting the needs of locals for easing their hardships while getting access to the resources for supporting the goal.

Conclusion

In conclusion, an assessment on the environmental landscape of the local business network and on the institutional agent would have been appropriate from the start and being aware of certain challenges that will occur. It's about learning to grow and being settled on these variables for the purpose of preventing groups and key participants in disassociating from the idea and developing a united focus that keeps the values within the structure that lead towards a sustainable outcome.

Brief Summary

This research is a continuation of a recent work that focused on the level of importance in managing behaviors for sustaining community-based tourism in Chiang Mai. The data were re-examined and led to a study on the structural challenges in coordinating a local business network towards a sustainable community. It is with hope that this paper will raise the awareness of the local community towards sustainable tourism, as well as focusing on business network.

Limitations and Directions of Future Research

The limitation of the research work was making time to go back and have another round of interviews to find out the deep-rooted causes of challenges in structural management and coordination. What would have been more ideal was to have the participants provide a chronological report that points out how the goal and objectives for a sustainable community-based tourism were going to be achieved, and to write down things that were accomplished and issues that needed to be improved on before going any further. However, that would be time-consuming because it needs to be planned out carefully for the sake of research integrity. Most importantly, the researchers are aware that there are sensitive issues involved, and there are certain things that should not be discussed deeply because negative consequences would occur for those who want to continue in being part of the local community-based tourism initiatives. In the future, the research will look at the annual achievements and shortcomings to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the current structure model.

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