

Development of Performance Factors of CBT Learning Organization at Doi Inthanon National Park, Thailand

Supawinee Songpornwanich, The graduate school, Kasetsart University, Thailand, email:panaja77@hotmail.com

Dachanee Emphandhu, Department of Conservation, Faculty of Forestry, Kasetsart University, Thailand

Introduction

Tourism industry contributes significantly on the growth of national economy of Thailand. Community-based tourism (CBT) became an alternative tourism, which focused on establishing participation in community development and conserving natural resource and culture while generating income to local community (Saunsri, 2003). Several local communities near the national parks manage community-based tourism and use tourism resources in the parks. Even though national parks have certain laws and regulation that visitors must follow, local communities must assist park authority in visitor management and impact control.

The issue of achieving tourism sustainability was always recognized in community-based tourism that used tourism resources in the national park. Schianetz et al (2007) noted that even the goal is to achieve sustainable tourism but to create tourism organizations which are adaptive to change and capable of learning how to improve sustainability continuously is very important in order to accomplish the sustainable goal. As Senge (1990) defines the learning organization as organizations where people are continuously expanding their capacity to create results they truly desire, new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, collective aspiration is set free, and people are continuously learning to achieve organization's goals, the tourism organization should adapt to the concept of learning organization.

In Doi Inthanon National Park, local community members created community tourism groups to deliver tourism program and services in the park. They must work with park staff in pursuing tourism in the park. Cooperation between community members and park authority was the main issue. Working with park authority could be a barrier to reach the tourism goal of sustainability. The way of thinking and practices, organizational culture as well as the knowledge management was relatively different between them. Hence, the concept of learning organization was employed here as a framework to design an efficient local tourism organizations to work with park authority. This study aimed to develop learning organization performance factors and to evaluate the success of learning organization in community-based tourism (CBT-LO) of the three communities at Doi Inthanon national park: Mae Klang Luang, Nong Lom, and Pa Mon.

Methods

The snowball sampling technique was employed for developing performance factors of CBT-LO and 25 experts were selected. Delphi technique was employed by mail survey until the experts' opinions were best conformed. The experts gave opinions

on the appropriateness of the performance CBT-LO factors and the significance of each factor ranking from 1 to 5, the lowest to the highest level. The mean, standard deviation, mode and median of the significant scores of performance factors of CBT-LO were calculated. The focus group was employed to pretest the CBT-LO factors at Ban Huay Hee in Mae Hongson province. The face validity and reliability was checked by the process of reflection.

The focus group was performed at each local village to evaluate the success of CBT-LO using the factors developed above. The evaluation results were calculated by weighting score method. The results reflected the performance of each local community tourism group as a learning organization in community-based tourism management especially on the issue of visitor management and resource conservation.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study revealed 18 performance factors of CBT-LO in 4 elements: (1) leaders and community members in organization, (2) organizational culture, (3) organizational communication, and (4) knowledge management process (seeking, sharing, using, storing, and transferring knowledge).

Table 1 showed the results of CBT-LO evaluated by the three villages. The average score of Pa Mon tourism group was the highest at 2.5 from the total score of 3, Mae Klang Loung 2.39 and the lower were Nong Lom 2.13, respectively. The strengths of community tourism group at Mae Klang Luang were sharing knowledge and organizational communication. However, the weaknesses were storing, transferring, and using knowledge which reflects lacking system of knowledge management and inadequate use of technology for information management.

The community tourism group at Nong Lom village had strength in leadership, community members and communication. In contrast, its weaknesses were on knowledge management. This might be because it had less experience (the youngest group) in tourism management. Hence, tourism management at Nong Lom village required the improvement of knowledge management process, for example, gaining knowledge from the outsiders and the park authority in visitor management strategies and creating partnership with travel agencies to promote tourism.

The strongest factors of the community tourism group at Pa Mon were sharing knowledge, organizational culture, communication, and leadership. However, it should improve on the aspect of seeking and transferring knowledge. Data from interview indicated that the tourism management was based on the outdated knowledge (about fifteen years ago) and they lacked of younger generation in their tourism organization to continue tourism in the future.

Table 1. Learning organization performance of local community-based tourism groups at Doi Inthanon National Park

Performance factors of learning organization in community-based tourism	W _i	Performance scores		
		Mae Klang Luang	Nong Lom	Pa Mon
1. Leaders and members in tourism organization	5	2.33	2.33	2.50
1.1 leaders encourage work of tourism group and provide opportunity to share idea (not only commanding)		3	2	2
1.2 leaders create new thinking and be flexible for learning and adaptation		2	2	2
1.3 leaders allow members in tourism group to make decision on tourism activities		2	3	2
1.4 leaders motivate members in the group to share experiences and learn to solve problems		3	3	3
1.5 members of tourism group are able to complete assignment and important mission		2	2	3
1.6 members of a group are able to work as a team		2	2	3
2. Organizational culture	4.8	2.5	2.38	2.75
2.1 establishing learning culture in the tourism group		2	2	2
2.2 providing opportunity and establishing learning space for members in the tourism group		2	2	3
2.3 creative thinking in the tourism group		3	2.5	3
2.4 establishing tourism activities according to community's ways of live		3	3	3
3. Communication within organization	5	2.66	2.33	2.66
3.1 tourism group has creative communication in their group		3	2	3
3.2 tourism group has continuous communication within the group		3	3	3
3.3 tourism group has continuous communication outside the group		2	2	2
4. Knowledge management	4.94	2.06	1.48	2.10
4.1 seeking new knowledge		2.25	1.50	1.25
4.2 sharing knowledge		2.75	2.00	3.00
4.3 using knowledge		2.00	1.25	2.25
4.4 storing knowledge		1.66	1.33	2.33
4.5 transferring knowledge		1.66	1.33	1.66
Total performance scores of community tourism group		2.39	2.13	2.50

Remark:

Score 0.00-0.75 = Low performance	1.51-2.25 = Moderate performance
0.76-1.50 = Relative low performance	2.26-3.00 = Good performance

Conclusion

The local community tourism groups in Doi Inthanon National Park when applied the concept of learning organization revealed that two out of three groups were in good performance. The only Nong Lom village was found moderate performance. The most improvement needed for all local community tourism groups was on knowledge management. To improve the working relationship with the park staff, the continuous communication and appropriate communication channel to park staff were suggested.



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