

## Community Participation in Tourist Attraction Management in Nang Loeng Area, Bangkok, Thailand

Yutthapoom Suwannavej<sup>1</sup>, Maythika Puangsang<sup>2\*</sup>, Suwanna Kemdang<sup>3</sup>, Sari Wongmonta<sup>4</sup>, and Jusana Techakana<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, Bangkok, 10300, Thailand, <sup>4</sup> College of Management, University of Phayao, Bangkok, 10330, Thailand, <sup>5</sup> Faculty of Business Administration, King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok, Bangkok, 10800, Thailand

\* Corresponding author. E-mail address: [maythika.p@rmutp.ac.th](mailto:maythika.p@rmutp.ac.th)

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### Abstract

The findings indicate a high degree of participation across four dimensions: decision-making and planning, operations, benefit-sharing, and monitoring and evaluation. The highest level of participation is in operations ( $\bar{x} = 3.81$ ), whereas the lowest is in monitoring and evaluation ( $\bar{x} = 3.43$ ). Variation in age, educational attainment, occupation, and length of residence significantly affects overall participation, while gender does not. Key factors fostering involvement include cultural and historical ties, awareness of tourism's benefits, accessible channels for engagement, and external support from government and private sectors. However, limited coordination among stakeholders, internal conflicts, insufficient managerial expertise, and inadequate resources pose obstacles.

To address these challenges, the study recommends forming a joint committee comprising government agencies, private organizations, and community representatives to develop comprehensive management plans. Additionally, capacity-building initiatives, such as tourism management training, can strengthen local skills and ensure sustainable participation. These findings underscore the need for integrated efforts among all stakeholders in Thailand's tourism sector to foster a thriving, community-driven tourism environment. By comprehensively promoting collaboration, resource-sharing, and transparent communication, such measures can effectively address existing obstacles and ultimately optimize community-led tourism development.

**Keywords:** Community Participation, Tourist Attraction Management, Nang Loeng District, Bangkok, Thailand

## Introduction

Tourism not only generates substantial income but also creates opportunities across economic, social, and environmental sectors. It contributes significantly to national and local economies through spending on accommodations, food, and transportation. Beyond its economic impact, tourism promotes cultural exchange and fosters greater understanding and respect among diverse groups, while simultaneously raising awareness of environmental concerns and sustainable practices. In Thailand, tourism remains a vital source of national revenue; as of December 2023, it contributed over 139 billion Thai baht (Walderich, 2024).

Although Thailand is internationally recognized for its renowned destinations—such as natural parks, historic sites, and vibrant shopping centers—local tourism also plays a crucial role in stimulating economic growth. One notable example is Nang Loeng District in Bangkok, a historical area celebrated for its unique architecture, traditional shops, and culinary offerings. Community participation is essential in preserving the district's cultural heritage and ensuring sustainable development, as it empowers local residents to engage in decision-making processes and align tourism initiatives with community interests.

Building on these points, the present study explores community participation in managing tourist attractions in Nang Loeng. Specifically, it surveys the perspectives of local residents and other stakeholders to assess current engagement levels, examines factors that either facilitate or hinder involvement, and proposes guidelines for enhancing community-driven tourism development. The study's objectives are to (1) investigate the degree of community participation in managing tourist attractions, (2) analyze factors that promote or impede such participation, and (3) recommend strategies to increase the efficiency and sustainability of local tourism management.

## Literature Review

Community participation plays a pivotal role in shaping sustainable tourism initiatives and has received significant attention in academic and policy discussions. Not only does community involvement enhance the socio-economic well-being of local populations, but it also fosters cultural preservation and environmental stewardship. Effective participation ensures that decisions regarding tourism development reflect local aspirations, minimize externalities, and facilitate equitable outcomes (Timothy, 1999). Over time, scholars have explored multiple dimensions of community participation—ranging from economic empowerment and cultural protection to environmental preservation and social cohesion.

### 1. Economic Benefits and Poverty Alleviation

Engaging local communities in tourism helps generate employment opportunities and stimulates local economies. Community-based tourism (CBT) ensures that revenue stays within the community,

reducing leakage and contributing to poverty alleviation (Mitchell & Ashley, 2010). By emphasizing the local ownership of businesses, craft industries, and accommodations, CBT models encourage a redistribution of wealth where traditional tourism ventures might have funneled most profits away from local stakeholders. Researchers like Murphy (1985) have long advocated bottom-up planning in tourism, arguing that incorporating community perspectives early in the decision-making process leads to more sustainable economic gains. Specifically, locally owned accommodations and restaurants benefit from direct tourist expenditures, while local guides and artisans expand their markets. Moreover, women and youth—often marginalized in conventional economic systems—can find meaningful employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in community-owned or managed tourism enterprises (Simpson, 2008).

## **2. Cultural Preservation and Heritage Management**

Local communities play a crucial role in preserving and showcasing their cultural heritage to visitors. When community members actively participate in tourism, they can maintain control over how cultural practices and traditions are presented, minimizing the risks of commodification or misrepresentation (Okazaki, 2008). This approach enhances cultural pride and identity among community members. In many CBT projects, dances, ceremonies, and crafts are showcased in respectful ways that reinforce—rather than exploit—local identities (Cole, 2006). Through community-driven initiatives, local people have the agency to determine which elements of their heritage are appropriate for public display and which should remain private. The process of cultural tourism, if led by the community, can reinvigorate disappearing traditions by providing economic incentives for cultural practices to continue. For example, weavers or traditional dancers might otherwise shift to different livelihoods; however, the tourism market can create sustained demand for cultural artistry that contributes to heritage preservation.

## **3. Environmental Conservation**

Local communities often possess detailed knowledge of their natural surroundings, ecosystems, and biodiversity, making their engagement essential for environmentally responsible tourism development. Scheyvens (1999) emphasizes that community involvement in ecotourism, in particular, can catalyze better environmental management practices, as locals guide visitors on sustainable interactions with nature. This includes enforcing limits on visitor numbers in sensitive habitats, monitoring resource usage, and rehabilitating degraded areas. In places where endangered species or fragile ecosystems exist, community-based monitoring can serve as an effective early-warning system for detecting environmental stress (Goodwin, 2007). Additionally, revenues from environmentally conscious tourism initiatives—like guided wildlife tours or community-run conservation areas—often fund local projects aimed at reforestation, wildlife protection, and education programs that raise environmental awareness among residents and visitors alike.

Consequently, when communities have a stake in conservation outcomes, they become proactive guardians of their environmental resources.

#### **4. Social Cohesion and Empowerment**

Community participation in tourism fosters social cohesion by bringing together various stakeholder groups—youth, women, elders, and community leaders—in the planning and execution of tourism projects (Tosun, 2000). This inclusive process empowers traditionally marginalized groups, enabling them to voice their opinions and influence decision-making. Arnstein's (1969) "ladder of citizen participation" conceptualizes the ways in which community members can engage, ranging from passive consultation to full-scale citizen control. The ladder framework underscores how higher rungs (e.g., partnership, delegation, citizen control) reflect substantive engagement, rather than mere tokenism. When community members genuinely co-manage projects, the sense of ownership and accountability strengthens community unity, making them more resilient against external shocks—be they economic or environmental. Additionally, social cohesion bolstered through community participation often extends beyond tourism. As community members collaborate on tourism initiatives, they may develop new networks and leadership skills applicable in other development areas.

#### **5. Conflict Mitigation and Stakeholder Collaboration**

Tourism development can sometimes engender conflicts, particularly when external investors initiate projects without acknowledging local needs or resource usage patterns. However, when local communities actively participate in tourism planning, potential disputes are mitigated, as community representatives have avenues to express concerns, recommend changes, and negotiate benefits (Tosun, 2000). Engaging local voices ensures that tourism activities align with existing community values and land-use traditions. Such collaboration extends beyond the community level, encompassing partnerships with government bodies and the private sector. The inclusion of local stakeholders in multi-sectoral tourism boards or committees allows them to shape policies, zoning regulations, and marketing strategies (Okazaki, 2008). By incorporating local feedback—whether about preserving sacred sites or regulating visitor behaviors—tourism strategies are more likely to receive local endorsement. Arnstein's (1969) model further suggests that genuine involvement of community members in the highest rungs of participation can minimize power imbalances and foster stable, long-term relationships with external actors.

#### **6. Sustainable Development through Community Engagement**

Ultimately, community participation is a catalyst for sustainable tourism development. It ensures that economic objectives do not overshadow cultural values and environmental integrity. Such an integrated approach involves balancing the triple bottom line—economic viability, environmental

protection, and socio-cultural well-being (Goodwin, 2007). Local ownership or co-ownership of tourism ventures often extends benefits to broader segments of the community, discouraging exploitation by external stakeholders. Moreover, the knowledge transfer that happens when communities work closely with conservationists, government agencies, and tourism experts can elevate local capacities in fields like marketing, business management, and environmental stewardship (Scheyvens, 1999).

In conclusion, community participation is fundamental for creating **sustainable, equitable**, and locally beneficial tourism systems. When individuals are integrated into the planning, management, and execution of tourism initiatives, multiple positive outcomes emerge. These include increased economic opportunities, stronger cultural identity, greater environmental stewardship, and improved social cohesion. By enabling local people to dictate how tourism evolves, planners and policymakers can ensure that tourism activities truly reflect community aspirations, rather than imposing external agendas. Such genuine participation aligns with Arnstein's (1969) notion of citizen power, elevating community voices to influential levels in decision-making. Empirical evidence from various contexts—rural tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism—validates that tourism projects fare better, both in longevity and positive impact, when grounded in local ownership and collaboration (Mitchell & Ashley, 2010; Okazaki, 2008; Scheyvens, 1999; Tosun, 2000).

## **Methodology**

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the level of community participation in managing tourist attractions in Nang Loeng, Bangkok, and to analyze the factors that facilitate or hinder such participation. The research comprised two steps:

### **Step 1: Study of Community Participation Level**

#### **Population and Sample**

A total of 225 participants was selected from 538 Nang Loeng community members (Bangkok, 2023). The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula at a 95% confidence level and obtained through purposive sampling.

#### **Research Tools**

A three-part questionnaire was administered. The first section collected demographic information (gender, age, education, occupation, and length of residence). The second section measured community participation in tourist attraction management, focusing on four dimensions: decision-making and planning, operation, benefit sharing, and monitoring and evaluation. Responses were rated on a 5-point scale. The final section examined information perception, also rated on a 5-point scale. The questionnaire followed Wichit U-on's (2007) scoring criteria:

- 4.21–5.00 = highest level
- 3.41–4.20 = high level
- 2.61–3.40 = moderate level
- 1.81–2.60 = low level
- 1.00–1.80 = lowest level

### **Validity and Reliability**

Content validity was assessed using an index of consistency (IOC), yielding an overall IOC of 0.86; only items with IOC values between 0.50 and 1.00 were retained (Kittiphong Pipitkul, 2018). The questionnaire was pilot-tested with 50 individuals sharing characteristics similar to the main sample. Cronbach's alpha for the entire instrument was 0.95, indicating high reliability (Thaweerat, 2000).

### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation), t-tests, and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze the quantitative data. Correlation coefficients were interpreted according to Wongrattana (2001), where  $r > 0.91$  indicates a very high relationship, 0.71–0.90 high, 0.31–0.70 moderate, 0.01–0.30 low, and  $r = 0$  no relationship. Statistical significance was set at the .05 level.

### **Step 2: Analysis of Influential Factors and Development of Guidelines**

This phase aimed to identify factors promoting or obstructing community participation in managing tourist attractions in Nang Loeng and to propose measures for improving management efficiency. The sample consisted of 15 key informants, selected through purposive sampling. These included community leaders, local entrepreneurs, community members, and representatives of government agencies.

### **Research Tools**

Semi-structured interviews, group discussions, and observations were employed. Interview questions were reviewed by experts for clarity and appropriateness prior to data collection. During field visits, non-participant observations were conducted in community activities. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were then carried out to gather qualitative insights, supplemented by direct observations.

### **Data Analysis**

Data from interviews, discussions, and observations were subjected to content analysis. Findings from this qualitative approach were used to identify key themes and develop guidelines to enhance community participation in tourist attraction management.

## Results and Discussion

### Results

**Demographic Characteristics of the Sample Group:** The sample group consisted of 62.76% males and 37.24% females, ensuring that the total equals 100%. Regarding age distribution, 47.91% of the respondents were between 41-50 years old. In terms of education and occupational background, 52.35% had attained an education level below a bachelor's degree, while 64.06% were farmers. Furthermore, 70.83% had lived in the area for more than 10 years.

**Community Participation Levels:** The level of community participation in managing tourist attractions was high across all aspects, including participation in decision-making and planning, operations, benefit-sharing, and monitoring and evaluation. The highest level of participation was observed in operations ( $\bar{x} = 3.81$  on a scale from 1 to 5), while the lowest level of participation was noted in monitoring and evaluation ( $\bar{x} = 3.43$ ), as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Level of Opinion on Community Participation (n = 225)

Aspects of Community Participation	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level	Rank
1. Participation in decision-making and planning	3.70	0.65	High	3
2. Participation in operation	3.85	0.81	High	1
3. Participation in benefit sharing	3.73	0.53	High	2
4. Participation in monitoring and evaluation	3.53	0.82	High	4
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.76</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>High</b>	—

**Note:**  $\bar{x}$  = mean score; S.D. = standard deviation.

All aspects of community participation were rated at a **high** level, with “Participation in operation” scoring the highest mean (3.85). The overall mean score (3.76) also indicates a high level of community participation across the measured dimensions.

**Information Perception:** The perception of information regarding the management of tourist attractions was at a moderate level. The sample group indicated that community leaders were the most common source of information, followed by social networks and applications such as Facebook and LINE.

**Factors Affecting Participation:** Variations in age, education levels, occupation, and length of residence significantly influenced the level of participation, whereas gender did not have a statistically significant impact. Furthermore, the perception of information was highly correlated with community participation in managing tourist attractions, as summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Summary of the Results of Hypothesis Testing (n = 225)

Hypothesis	Significance Level (p)	Result
1. Gender	0.121	Not Significant
2. Age	0.000*	Significant
3. Education Level	0.000*	Significant
4. Career	0.000*	Significant
5. Period of Living in the Area	0.000*	Significant
6. Perception of Information	0.969	Not Significant

\*Significant at  $p < .05$

**Table 3:** Factors that Promote and Prevent Community Participation in the Management of Tourist Attractions

Promoting Factors	Preventing Factors
• Cultural and historical ties of people in the community	• Lack of communication and coordination among different agencies
• Perception of the benefits of tourism to the community	• Distrust and conflict within the community
• Availability of spaces and channels for community participation	• Lack of skills and knowledge in managing tourist attractions
• Support from government and private agencies	• Limited resources and financial support

*Note:* Table 2 presents the hypotheses tested for factors affecting community participation, and Table 3 summarizes the key promoting and preventing factors in the context of tourism management in the Nang Loeng area, Bangkok, Thailand.

**Guidelines for Enhancing Community Participation:** To improve the efficiency of community participation in managing tourist attractions in Nang Loeng, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Establish a joint committee comprising public, private, and community agencies to enhance communication and coordination.
- Develop tourism management plans that incorporate community input and reflect local needs and aspirations.

- Organize training programs to enhance community members' skills in managing tourist attractions.
- Allocate resources and financial support to sustain community-led initiatives.
- Promote cultural and historical tourism that respects and preserves the local way of life.

These strategies aim to foster greater community involvement in sustainable tourism management and contribute to the long-term success of tourism development in the Nang Loeng area.

## **Discussion**

### **Community Participation in Nang Loeng Tourism Management**

Community participation is crucial for the sustainability of Nang Loeng tourist attractions. This study examined factors that promote and hinder community participation and proposed guidelines for enhancing engagement in tourism management. The findings indicate that participation levels were high, with the highest level observed in operations ( $\bar{x} = 3.81$ ) and the lowest in monitoring and evaluation ( $\bar{x} = 3.43$ ). Factors such as age, education, occupation, and length of residence significantly influenced participation, whereas gender did not. Information perception was strongly correlated with participation levels.

### **Comparisons with Existing Studies**

Shani and Pizam (2011) emphasized that community participation (CP) is a vital component of sustainable tourism development. They discussed the importance of matching CP techniques to objectives and highlighted challenges in implementation. Their study aligns with the present research, which found that while participation was generally high, certain aspects, such as monitoring and evaluation, require improvement. Additionally, the necessity of carefully planning CP initiatives to suit local contexts was highlighted.

Hermawan and Hary (2020) studied community participation in Jabal Kelor, identifying key areas such as idea formulation, physical participation, skill development, and financial involvement. Their findings align with the present study's results, which identified cultural and historical ties, perceived community benefits, and government and private sector support as promoting factors. Conversely, the barriers found in Jabal Kelor, such as a lack of financial resources and skill gaps, were also present in the Nang Loeng community.

Giampiccoli and Saayman (2018) explored community-based tourism (CBT) and its relationship with the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC). They noted that CBT should be self-initiated and community-driven but is often marginalized by external stakeholders over time. This observation resonates with the present findings, which suggest that external support must be carefully managed to ensure that it benefits the local community rather than displacing it.

### **Factors Affecting Community Participation**

The study identified key factors influencing community participation. Promoting factors include:

- Strong cultural and historical ties
- Perceived benefits of tourism
- Opportunities for community involvement
- Government and private sector support

### **Barriers to participation include:**

- Lack of communication and coordination between agencies
- Distrust and internal conflicts within the community
- Insufficient skills and knowledge in tourism management
- Limited financial resources
- Guidelines for Enhancing Community Participation

### **To improve community involvement, the following recommendations are proposed:**

- Establish a joint committee comprising government agencies, private sector representatives, and community members to coordinate tourism management efforts.
- Develop management plans that integrate community input and reflect local needs.
- Conduct training programs to enhance tourism management skills among community members.
- Allocate financial resources to support community-led tourism initiatives.
- Promote cultural and historical tourism that aligns with the local way of life.
- Implications for Sustainable Tourism Development

These findings reinforce the importance of structured community participation for sustainable tourism development in Nang Loeng. The research aligns with Chutrakul and Haocharoen (2021), who examined factors influencing the persistence of the Nang Loeng community. Their study highlighted the role of physical, social, economic, and external factors in shaping community resilience. This study similarly found that internal and external factors significantly impact community participation in tourism management.

In conclusion, while community participation in Nang Loeng is strong, certain barriers hinder full engagement. Addressing these issues through strategic planning and inclusive governance will enhance the sustainability of the Nang Loeng tourism sector and benefit both the community and visitors.

## Conclusion and Suggestions

The level of community participation in managing tourist attractions in the Nang Loeng area, Bangkok, Thailand, is high across all aspects. The highest level of participation was observed in operations, while the lowest was in monitoring and evaluation. Age, education level, occupation, and length of residence significantly influenced participation levels, whereas gender did not. Additionally, a strong correlation was found between participants' information perception and their level of involvement in tourism management.

Factors that promote community participation include cultural and historical ties, the perceived benefits of tourism, accessible participation opportunities, and support from governmental and private sectors. Conversely, barriers to participation include poor communication and coordination among agencies, distrust and conflicts within the community, lack of skills and knowledge in tourism management, and limited financial resources.

To enhance community participation, the following guidelines are recommended:

- Establishing a joint committee comprising governmental agencies, private sector representatives, and community members to develop a comprehensive tourism management plan.
- Prioritizing training programs to enhance community members' skills in managing tourist attractions.

## Recommendations and Suggestions

Future research should focus on an in-depth analysis of the internal dynamics within the community, particularly given the aging demographic trend. Additionally, studies should explore key factors that motivate community members to actively participate in tourism promotion. Understanding these dynamics will help develop sustainable and inclusive strategies that foster long-term engagement and benefit both the community and tourism development.

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