The Development of Managerial Competency for the Achievement of Sustainable National Park in Thailand

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Abstract To develop the sustainability, organizations and companies strive to achieve the social and economic progress while the environmental issue also needs to be regarded with an aim to conserve the natural resources. Thus, these three inseparable and interdependent components should be included in any development of sustainability. Furthermore, the successful development of sustainability cannot be achieved regardless of the participation and cooperation from related stakeholders. Thus, the managerial competency of stakeholders is of importance as the major determinant in managing and achieving the sustainability. Consequently, this research was aimed to explore and develop the stakeholders’ managerial competency in sustainably managing Kaeng Krachan National Park in Thailand. The qualitative research by conducting in-depth interview and focus group was employed to collect data from stakeholders. In addition, the content analysis was also incorporated in this study to analyze the data. The informants included 20 management executives and staffs, 10 related governmental officers, 5 individuals from communities and 5 tourists which were accounted for 40 individuals. The research findings revealed that the development of sustainability required the cooperation of governmental, private and community sectors in implementing the activities of both tourism promotion and forest conservation. The utmost participation and contribution of local communities and agencies as the committee member played an important role in the participative management of this national park. Moreover, the successful sustainability of this national park required the continuous cooperation of stakeholders in balancing the three components of sustainability including social, economic and environmental issues. Implications derived from the findings are discussed.

Keywords Managerial Competency, Sustainable National Park, Stakeholders

1. Introduction

To date, tourism has been recognized as the revenue generator of Thai economy by appealing foreign revenues of approximately 4.5 billion baht in 2012 [21]. In addition, 22 million tourists visited Thailand in 2012. However, Thailand has to trade off this economic success with the negative consequences in terms of social well-being and environmental degradation and pollution. In addition, Thailand has benefited the tourism growth on the exploitation of natural resources and the deterioration of environmental quality.

The tourism industry is defined as an integrated system based on demand and supply factors and larger environmental, political, social and economic systems [11]. Consistently, Butler’s [4] definition of sustainable tourism expands on this point tourism which is developed and maintained in an area (community, environment) in such a manner and at such a scale that it remains viable over an indefinite period and does not degrade or alter the environment (human and physical) in which it exists to such a degree that it prohibits the successful development and well-being of other activities and processes.

In general, sustainable tourism was described as an approach striving to achieve the long-term viability and quality of both human and natural resources [2,10,20]. Consistently, promoting a sustainable tourism is dependent upon balancing supply and demand by implementing strategies that ensure that demand does not drive supply to the extent that the local environment and socioeconomic environment is compromised [11]. Thus, the sustainability should not give emphasis only on the economic and social/cultural development but also on the environmental protection. Moreover, the sustainable development has long been acknowledged within the international development not only for the community and business sectors but also for the ecotourism concerning natural resources and environments. Consequently, the sustainable development of the national parks should be established to conserve natural resources and forest environment as well as contribute to the economic and social welfare of local communities. The biodiversities of forestry and wildlife of Kaeng Krachan National Park was recognized as the world natural heritage according to the official announcement of UNSECO. Although this sustainable development has been implemented with Kaeng
Sustainability development is regarded as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The objective of sustainability indicates that economic development should also incorporate social and environmental interests [5]. Economic sustainability enhances the well-being of local communities through economic development, job creation, and infrastructure development of local communities. Increasing tourism revenues leads to economic growth and prosperity to local communities. Moreover, it also creates jobs for local community members and the development of increased infrastructure. Social sustainability involves activities that promote community and social well-being. The local cultures, traditions and wisdoms should be sustained in order to positively contribute to the conservation of cultural heritage and communities’ diversity. Environmental sustainability entails the activities involving environmental resources management and environmental protection. Thus, for ecotourism destinations, sustainability development needs to take into account the long-term viability of environment and natural resources in terms of biodiversity conservation, animal protection, forestation, illegal hunting, etc. The successful development of sustainability cannot be achieved regardless of the participation and cooperation from related stakeholders. Thus, the successful development of sustainability depends upon the quality and the structure of interrelationships, interdependency and interactions among related stakeholders [1]. Stakeholders in the tourism industry are regarded as those having been impacted by the tourism development; therefore it minimizes potential conflict between tourists and host communities by involving the local communities in the process and implementation of tourism development [1]. Thus, all related stakeholders in the tourism context including government, non-governmental organizations, businesses, tourists and local communities should be incorporated in the development of sustainable tourism.

2. Literature Review

Managerial Competency

Earlier empirical studies defined competency as the observable performance, the quality of the outcome of performance, or the underlying attributes of a person [9]. Consistently, it was also defined as the standards that represent benchmarks against individual performance which can be assessed at a particular point in time but the assessment of performance requires some monitoring of individual achievement over time [15]. Competency development requires both participatory and dialogic aspects [16], which are fundamental in order to set in motion competent actions for the common construction of meanings for the work itself, for sustainability, and for the competencies needed to implement it.

Lizzio and Wilson [14] defined competence as the capacity to enact specific combinations of knowledge, skills and attitudes in appropriate job contexts. Moreover, Taconis et al. [17] stressed that knowledge, skills and attitudes should be addressed in an integrated way to achieve the desired competent behavior. For the sustainability development, competency is regarded as a functionally linked complex of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable successful task performance and problem solving with respect to the real-world sustainability problems, challenges, and opportunities [3]. According to Kanter [12], six criteria are required for the successful development of managerial competency including common goals, long-term approach, emotional commitment, opening to the public, innovation and self-organization.

Sustainability Development

Sustainable development is regarded as the development of the forest and environmental degradation still exists in this national park in terms of illegal deforesting and hunting and these problems have resulted in the decline of eco-tourism so far. Thus, this study was aimed to develop the guidelines of managerial competency to achieve the sustainable Kaeng Krachan National Park in Thailand through the cooperation and participation of all related stakeholders with an aim to satisfy the economic, social and environmental objectives.

3. Research Methodology

This research was aimed to develop the management competency for the sustainability of Kaeng Krachan National Park by investigating the attitudes of stakeholders. The qualitative research was employed to collect the information through in-depth interview and focus group with stakeholders. Moreover, the observation of the stakeholders and environments at Kaeng Krachan National Park was also incorporated to gather more detailed information in this research. The informants included (1) 20 management executives and staffs of Kaeng Krachan National Park and Praneun Trung hill (2) 10 related governmental officers (3) 5 individuals from communities (4) 5 tourists which was accounted for 40 individuals. The judgmental sampling was employed to recruit the qualified informants.

The selected topics for interviewing stakeholders of this national park included 9 issues of (1) the sustainability of natural resources and biodiversity (2) the impact of globalization on the natural world heritage (3) marketing activities for promoting eco-tourism (4) the effective national park management (5) the relationship management with communities (6) the volunteer program of stakeholders (7) the programs promoting Thai natural heritage (8) creative ecological activities and (9) economic values. The information from the depth interview and focus group was gathered for the content analysis to develop the guidelines of managerial competency for the sustainable national park.
The duration of this qualitative research started from July to September 2012.

4. Results

The content analysis of the information gathered from the depth interviews and focus groups with all stakeholders was conducted to form the managerial competency in managing this sustainable park. As the sustainable development of Kaeng Krachan National Park including three vital pillars of environmental, economic and social/cultural developments, therefore, the research finding was presented in terms of these three components as follows.

Environmental Sustainability

According to the findings of Daniere & Takahashi [6], the better understanding the local and national values of Thai residents was found to help Thai policymakers improve the effectiveness of local environmental policy. Consequently, the management executives should strive to develop the network with other related stakeholders to help conserve the natural resources and wildlife by the following activities.

1) Focusing on building the cooperation and participation between governmental sector and local communities and entrepreneurs in educating tourists about environmental awareness, local wisdoms and activities in conserving the forest. Currently, the national park continuously strive to restore the decadent forests, suppress the illegal hunting and protect wildfire under the cooperation with governmental, private, and community sectors. Moreover, the conservation activities included the afforesting, the building of dam and the clue reporting of deforesting and hunting under the network of community volunteers.

2) Enhancing the participation of tourists in natural conservation by emphasizing the learning through eco-tourism. Moreover, the national park should specify and prepare the facilities to accommodate tourists including residence, tenting area at Grang village or Praneun Trung hill in order to minimize the environmental damage. The contribution of local communities and entrepreneurs as the committee played the important role in managing this national park effectively and efficiently. The signage along with instructions should be installed to communicate and convey the necessary information about the appropriate behavior in conserving the environment.

3) Setting the volunteer project under the cooperation of both governmental officials and communities in continuously protecting this national park and mitigate the damaging effects of wildfire, deforesting and tourists. However, there were still individuals committing illegal deforesting and hunting which included either local communities or hunters while most villagers were more aware of the importance of natural resources and forest. Therefore, the forestry laws should be strictly reinforced with these kinds of illegal crimes and more forest patrol of volunteers are required to minimize these dilemmas.

Economic Sustainability

The effective and sustainable management of Kaeng Krachan National Park requires the continuous formation and participation of stakeholders from both nearby and outer areas with an objective to conserve natural resources and promote tourism of this national park. The environmental pollution and natural degradation are regarded as the main problems which mitigate the demand of ecotourism of this national park. The sustainable economic development which greatly affects the economic welfare of local communities should emphasize on these following activities:

1) Promoting the participation of academic sector and local communities in organizing the volunteer tourism along with the community-based tourism. To promote the community-based tourism of this national park, the local communities had the potential of being the tourist attractions for learning the local lifestyles and folks of hill tribes. Moreover, local communities should attract more tourists by introducing authentic activities and local wisdoms which provide tourists opportunities to participate in these creative tourism activities. The related tourism agency should also promote and include these tourism activities as the packaged tour for eco-tourists to learn nature and participate in conserving environment as well as learn the local lifestyles, folks and cultures of communities.

2) Promoting local souvenirs and handicraft products under the cooperation with the related tourism agencies in seeking for markets and building tourists’ demand for these local products. Besides ecotourism, the villagers and local communities still benefited tourism in other aspects such as the income from restaurants, residence and home-stay, transportation by vehicles and boats, etc. Thus, the ecotourism growth of this national park will benefit the economic welfare of local communities. As a result, the periodic training is required to equip local communities with the effective management of home-stay, ecotourism, and community-based tourism.

3) Training all related stakeholders of the ecotourism management of Kaeng Krachan National Park. The forestry officials of this national park should be well trained not only the forest patrol and forest management but also the effective communication, recreational activities and ecotourism handling. The more the ecotourism of this national park grows, the more revenues and budgets for developing and training the forestry officials to professionally...
manage the ecotourism and this sustainable national park will be required.

Social/Cultural Sustainability

The three pillars including environmental, economic and social/cultural sustainability are well acknowledged as the model addressing sustainability. Even though the environmental and economic developments have considerably more attention as the leading success factors of this national park [5,19], the social/cultural development involving the welfares of local communities is still necessarily required to gain the cooperation and participation of local communities in managing the sustainable national park successfully. Consequently,

1) Conserving and promoting the community characteristics particular to the locality such as local lifestyles, folks and cultures of hill tribes as the signature of local communities. These local characteristics can be utilized as the tourism attractions and activities as the tourism attraction in promoting the ecotourism. In addition, the promotion of hill tribes’ folks and cultures also help build the social harmony among different social groups in the communities.

2) Conducting research and development to conserve the local wisdoms, cultures and traditions in order to sustain the cultural richness of communities. The R&D implementation should be initiated and undertaken by the academic sector under the cooperation of local communities and governmental sector. The R&D project will help sustain the local wisdoms and cultures as well as enhance the contribution to knowledge.

3) Building the social equity to achieve the fair income distribution among stakeholders and the well-being of local communities. The equality of opportunity will help attract the cooperation and participation of local communities in the successfully sustainable management of this national park.

4) Promoting social networks and a sense of social responsibility [5] by encouraging social interaction and participation in conserving and monitoring the forest. The building of sense of belonging among local communities should be developed to motivate and stimulate the environmental awareness in protecting Kaeng Krachan National Park.

However, the sustainable development of Kaeng Krachan National Park with the goals of preserving the environment, benefiting local people and satisfying tourists, requires full participation and cooperation from all stakeholders to jointly develop Kaeng Krachan National Park as the sustainable tourist destination. Thus, the sustainable development should incorporate all stakeholders in planning, organizing and implementing the development blueprints. The sustainable development is recommended to develop the public participation process for the people and local administrative organizations by organizing the public hearing. Furthermore, it should be undertaken through combined regulatory, promotional and educational measures in order to achieve the practical and effective approaches of sustainable development.

5. Conclusions

In sum, the managerial competency in managing the sustainable development of Kaeng Krachan National Park was designed to achieve the environmental, economic and social/cultural sustainability. Stakeholders’ participation and collaboration was utterly required for the successful management of national parks’ sustainability. The projects initiated by the government and national park’s officials requires all related stakeholders, including local communities, business operators and tourists, involving in the participative and implementation processes of tourism development [7,8,13]. Regarding the environmental sustainability, the cooperation and participation among stakeholders were required to build environmental awareness, conserve the national park’s resources and engage in the volunteer project with an aim to mitigate the environmental damage. For the economic sustainability, the promotion of community-based tourism, local souvenirs and handicraft products and periodical trainings of ecotourism management was established to successfully elevate local communities’ economic growth and well-being. The social/cultural sustainability was achieved through the conservation of local communities’ characteristics, the implementation of research and development to conserve the local wisdoms, cultures and traditions and the formation of social equity and networks.

6. Limitation

The limitation was concerned with the data collection method of depth interview and focus groups with stakeholders. Some key informants of these depth interview and focus groups unwillingly provided the sensitive information involving the illegal deforestation and wildlife hunting. Consequently, the research findings might lack some sincere and critical point of views from stakeholders towards the mentioned issues. To response to the increasing demand of eco-tourism, future research should recruit more tourists with an aim to gain more perceptions towards the drivers of eco-tourists’ demand. It is recommended that future comparative studies should be conducted with other national parks in order to generalize and apply the research findings with other eco-tourism destinations.

REFERENCES

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