

# A Theoretical Concept of Business Sustainability of Community-Based Tourism in Thailand: A Social Enterprise Perspective

## แนวคิดทฤษฎีความยั่งยืนทางธุรกิจของการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชนในประเทศไทย ตามทัศนะแห่งหลักกิจการเพื่อสังคม

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### Abstract

This paper presents the integration between social enterprise (SE) concepts and community-based tourism (CBT) concepts in designating key success factors that create business sustainability of CBT communities in Thailand. By analyzing and synthesizing related literature, three main concepts including 1) CBT-SE key success factors, 2) organizational change theories and 3) business sustainability are found able to be integrated in practice. Based on the thematic analysis, the study reveals six key success factors: 1) Enterprise Orientation, 2) Stakeholder Participation and Ownership, 3) Strategic Alliances and Network with Others, 4) Capacities development, 5) Authenticity and Identity, 6) Leadership, that are compatible. The analysis of changes resulted from those key success factors includes the following aspects: 1) Evolutionary, 2) Teleological, 3) Life cycle, 4) Political, 5) Social cognition, and 6) Cultural.



## Keywords

Social Enterprise, Community-Based Tourism, Key Success Factors, Organizational Change, Business Sustainability

## บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้นำเสนอการบูรณาการระหว่างแนวคิดกิจการเพื่อสังคม และแนวคิดการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชนเพื่อกำหนดปัจจัยความสำเร็จในการสร้างความยั่งยืนทางธุรกิจของการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชนในประเทศไทย โดยดำเนินการวิเคราะห์และสังเคราะห์วรรณกรรมที่เกี่ยวข้อง พบว่ามีแนวคิดที่สามารถนำมาบูรณาการกันได้ทั้งในทางปฏิบัติได้แก่ 1) แนวคิดปัจจัยแห่งความสำเร็จของการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชนและกิจการเพื่อสังคม 2) ทฤษฎีการเปลี่ยนแปลงองค์การ และ 3) แนวคิดความยั่งยืนทางธุรกิจ จากการจำแนกและแบ่งกลุ่มข้อมูล (Thematic Analysis) พบว่าปัจจัยแห่งความสำเร็จของการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชน-กิจการเพื่อสังคมที่สอดคล้องไปในทิศทางเดียวกัน จำแนกเป็น 6 ปัจจัย ได้แก่ 1) การมุ่งการประกอบการ 2) การมีส่วนร่วมในการบริหารจัดการและการเป็นเจ้าของธุรกิจของภาคีการท่องเที่ยว 3) การร่วมมือ พันธมิตร และเครือข่าย 4) การพัฒนาศักยภาพชุมชนท่องเที่ยว 5) การเป็นของแท้และมีความมีอัตลักษณ์ 6) การเป็นผู้นำ ทั้งนี้ในการวิเคราะห์การเปลี่ยนแปลงอันเนื่องมาจากปัจจัยความสำเร็จดังกล่าวข้างต้นประกอบด้วยประเด็นวิวัฒนาการ (Evolutionary) เหตุผลเชิงอันติวิทยา (Teleological) วงจรชีวิต (Life Cycle) การเมือง (Political) ความรู้ความเข้าใจทางสังคม (Social Cognition) และวัฒนธรรม (Cultural)

## คำสำคัญ

กิจการเพื่อสังคม การท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชน ปัจจัยแห่งความสำเร็จ การเปลี่ยนแปลงองค์การ ความยั่งยืนทางธุรกิจ

## Introduction

Today's businesses tend to focus more on sustainability as the embedded sustainability efforts clearly result in a positive impact on business performance (Whelan & Fink, 2016). Different business sectors including tourism also aim at sustainability. In practice, community-based tourism (CBT) becomes a form of tourism that has been used to promote sustainability for decades. CBT emerged in the 1970s as a response to the negative impacts of the international mass tourism development model (Cater, 1993 ; De Kadt, 1979 ; Hall & Lew, 2009 ; Murphy, 1985 ; Smith, 1977 ; Turner & Ash, 1975, cited in Saarinen, Rogerson & Manwa (Eds.), 2013). Initially, most CBT programs were related to small rural communities and nature conservation through ecotourism. Later, the concept has been extended to a range of different tourism products (e.g. local culture and folklore, gastronomy, traditional handicraft) and managerial models around the world.

CBT has, for over three decades, been globally promoted as a means of development whereby the social, environmental and economic needs of local communities are met through the offering of a tourism product (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009 ; Santilli, 2008). Recently, The ASEAN Secretariat (2016) defines CBT as “a tourism activity, community owned and operated, and managed or coordinated at the community level that contributes to the well-being of communities through supporting sustainable livelihoods and protecting valued socio-cultural traditions and natural and cultural heritage resources”. This definition of CBT clearly reflects its sustainable development goals.

Literature on CBT in Thailand often reports the success cases in the country (Kontogeorgopoulos, Churyen & Duangsaeng, 2014 ; Suansri & Richards, 2013 ; Nguangchaiyapoom, Yongvanit & Sripun, 2012). Some studies reported that the revenues from CBT are relatively small (Mitchell & Muckosy, 2008; Goodwin, 2006) and sometimes do not even outweigh the costs. CBT projects can also fail because of a lack of access to markets and poor governance. A few studies observed sustainability of CBT in general (Kallayanamitra, 2011 ; Jitpakdee & Thapa, 2012), however, the topic of business sustainability of CBT seems to be neglected. If we view a CBT community as a business unit, the understanding of business sustainability of CBT is essential for all stakes but it is still in much debate of how to bring sustainable business into practice. Thus, to begin to search for the answer, an appropriate theoretical conceptual framework should be brought into discussion. As business sustainability today depends not only on earnings but also on a broader impact on social and the environment, the study should be set around this trend.

Regarding the impact on economic, social and the environment, it clearly involves the core principle of social enterprise (SE). Since CBT is used as a tool for conservation and rehabilitation of natural environment and socio-culture of the local community in addition to poverty deduction and the local's better quality of life (Sitikarn, 2014), its contributions share the essence of social enterprise concept in aspects of both its purpose and its means. CBT is also approved by law as a type of social enterprises in Thailand (The Secretariat of the House of Representatives, 2015). In this paper, tourism is seen as a business aspect that contribute to the business sustainability of CBT. Meanwhile, SE is used as a crucial tool in enhancing CBT business sustainability. Therefore, to observe business sustainability of CBT, this paper explores key success factors proposed in both fields: Social Enterprise (SE) and Community-based Tourism (CBT). Then, those success factors are analyzed and synthesized as CBT-SE key success factors. These factors lead to an organizational change that brings business sustainability to the CBT communities.

In summary, this paper discusses three main aspects, namely key success factors of both SE and CBT, organizational change theories and business sustainability. These concepts are analyzed and synthesized to design a theoretical framework for researching business sustainability of CBT communities in Thailand.



### A Theoretical Concept of CBT-SE Business Sustainability

According to the literature on CBT-SE business sustainability issues, the data were classified into four thematic sets: the concepts of social enterprise, community-based tourism, organizational change, and business sustainability. Regarding the first two concepts, six CBT-SE key success factors 1) Enterprise Orientation 2) Stakeholder Participation and Ownership 3) Strategic Alliances and Network with Others, 4) Develop Capacities 5) Leadership and 6) Authenticity and Identity are condensed. Those variables are highlighted to observe the organizational change that lead to the insight of business sustainability, which is based on the CBT-SE's economic, social and environmental impacts on the triple bottom line throughout the supply chain. The theoretical concept of CBT-SE business sustainability is demonstrated in Figure 1 below.

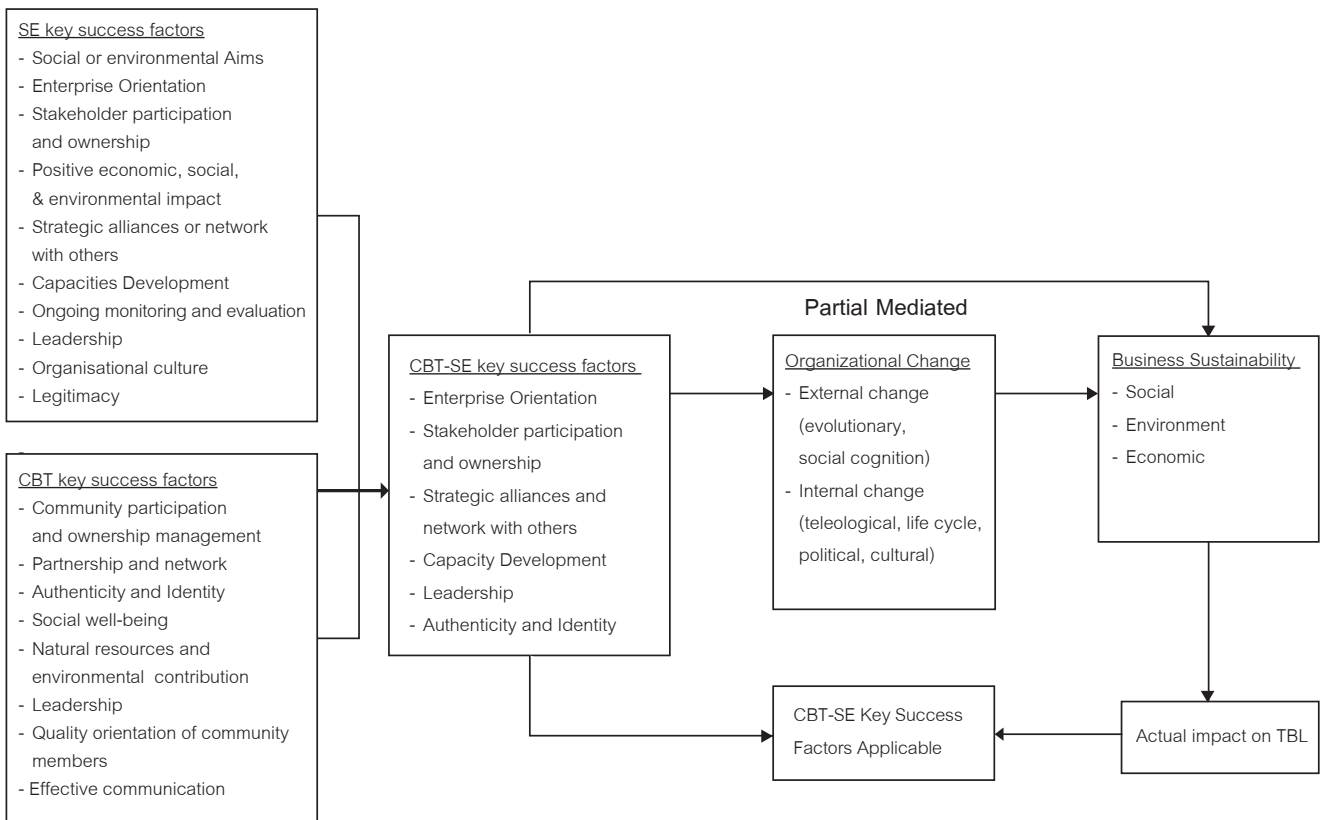


Figure 1: The theoretical concept of CBT-SE business sustainability

### Key success factors of Social Enterprise

Scholars have defined 'Social Enterprise' as "a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximize profit for shareholders and owners." (DTI, 2002, 14). Based on this definition, double and triple bottom line was often used to measure the sustainability performance of social entrepreneurs and social enterprises.

According to Hudson (2011), Nielsen & Carranza (2012), Weppen & Cochrane (2012) and Jenner (2016), ten characteristics of SE key success factors sharing the common ground in those studies are as follows.

1. Social or environmental aims are the major purpose of organization comprises balances financial with social/ environmental aims.
2. Enterprise orientation refers to the business-like operation that accumulates revenue principally from business activities, not from the donation. This has been made up of creating a self-sustaining community-based business plan with a long-term, identifying resourcing, organizational capabilities, clear market orientation, preparing to invest time and resources during the start-up process, and growth orientation.
3. Stakeholder participation and ownership refers to the inclusion of community members as partners in co-creation to enhance buy-in and ownership
4. Positive economic, social, & environmental impact are made up of address positive economic, social, & environmental impact.
5. Strategic alliances or network with others refers to the collaborative networks, the inter-organizational networks among the partners, and strategic alliances with others
6. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation comprises support ongoing monitoring and evaluation.
7. Strong leadership
8. Develop capacities
9. Legitimacy
10. Organizational culture in terms of clear organizational culture also includes in ten characteristics

As Social enterprise has been recognized as a crucial tool in social economy development leading to the sustainability. Community-based tourism has been claimed as a social enterprise (Lorgulescu & Răvar, 2015 ; Mulindwa, 2015 ; Nthiga, Van de Dium, Visseren-Hamakers & Larners, 2015 ; Salazar, 2012, Theerapappisit, 2012). With the reason of social enterprises can assist the



development of rural CBT by delivering tourism services and products. However, the implementation of social economy in the development of CBT also meets challenges (Johnson, 2010, cited in Lorgulescu & Răvar, 2015).

### Key Success Factors of CBT

These days, CBT has been developed according to the CBT standard and various CBT research aspects have been conducted, to look for CBT-SE key success factor, exogenous variables, CBT key success factors researches (Satarat, 2010 ; Nitikasetsoontorn, 2015 ;Rachel, Alisha & Kelly, 2016 and Lun, Pechlaner & Volgger, 2016) can be analyzed and synthesized into eight variables: as follows.

1. Community Participation and Ownership Management: participation in decision-making processes, local ownership, local management, collective responsibility and participatory planning and capacity building community's tourism management skills and fair benefit distribution.
2. Partnership and Network: partnership and outside support, collaboration and partnerships facilitating links to market, assistance from enablers to access formal economy and inter-sectoral networks.
3. Authenticity and Identity: achieve authenticity and achieve distinction and deliver authentic tourism experiences
4. Social Well-being: establishment of community goal and generate supplemental income for long-term.
5. Natural Resources and Environmental Contribution: establishment of environmental goal
6. Leadership: leadership and management.
7. Quality Orientation of Community Members: a common orientation towards quality.
8. Effective Communication.

CBT can be regarded as a social enterprise as their common concepts run through most definitions of sustainability include environment, economic and social. However, there are several common attributes that can share the concepts as CBT-SE key success factors in the following topic.

### CBT-SE Key Success Factors

Based on literature reviewed above, CBT-SE key success factors are based on SE key success factors and CBT key success factors. The two components are synthesized as CBT-SE key success factors, as shown below.

1. Enterprise Orientation comprises abundance of tourism resources, effective natural resource management, creating a self-sustaining community-based business plan with a long-term strategy, preparing to invest time and resources during the start-up process, identifying resourcing, organizational capabilities, clear market orientation, growth orientation, and generate supplemental income for long-term sustainability.

2. Stakeholder participation and ownership consists of level of community participation, include community members as partners in co-creation to enhance buy-in and ownership, participation in decision-making processes, local ownership, collective responsibility, participatory planning, and local management and fair benefit distribution.

3. Strategic alliances and network with others refer to sufficient outside support, the inter-organizational networks among the partners, the social entrepreneur's network of learning process enablers, knowledge providers and co-creators, strategic alliances with others, collaborative networks, partnership and outside support, collaboration and partnerships facilitating links to market, assistance from enablers to access formal economy, and inter-sectoral networks

4. Capacity development includes capacity building community's tourism management skills, a common orientation towards quality, and effective communication

5. Leadership comprises strong leadership and leadership and management.

6. Authenticity and Identity include achieve authenticity and distinction and deliver authentic tourism experiences. Those key success factors reflect the key success factors of CBT-SE, which can be used to research the CBT communities in Thailand. It is interesting to see that why and how those variables can cause the change leading to business sustainability. Other word to say, they can discover the changing process before business sustainability is happening. The following section reviews some theories describing the changes.

### Organizational Change Theories

The organizational change concept has appeared in different fields. However, these six main typologies namely, evolutionary, teleological, life cycle, political, social cognition and cultural are significant (Kezar, 2001). These typologies can be divided into two groups- External change (evolutionary, social cognition) and internal change (teleological, life cycle, political, cultural). Each typology is summarized below.

1. Evolutionary: External environment caused of change. Adaption; slow; gradual; non-intentional are the process of change. New structures and processes; first order are the outcomes of change. Self-producing organism is its key metaphor. Resource dependency; strategic; choice; population ecology are example of this typology. Lack of human emphasis; deterministic quality are also criticized. However, Environmental emphasizes; system approach are its benefit.



2. Teleological: Leaders; internal environment caused the change. Rational; linear; purposeful are its process of change. New structures and organizing principles are its outcomes of change. Change master is its key metaphor. Organizational development, strategic planning; reengineering; TQM are its examples. Overly rational and linear; inability to explain second-order change; plasticity of people are criticized. Importance of change agents; management techniques and strategies are its benefits.

3. Life Cycle: Leaders guiding individual's natural growth are the reason of change. Natural progression; result of training and motivation; altering habits and identity are the process of change. New organizational identity is the outcome of change. Teacher is a key metaphor of this typology. Developmental models; organizational decline; social psychology of change are its example. Little empirical proof, deterministic character are criticized. Change related to phases; temporal aspect; focus on people throughout the organization are its benefits.

4. Political: Dialectical tension of values, norms, or patterns cause change. First order followed by occasional second order; negotiation and power are process of change. New organizational ideology is the outcome of change. Social movement is its metaphor. Empowerment; bargaining; political change; Marxist theory are its example. Deterministic; lack of environmental concerns; little guidance for leaders are criticized. Change not always progressive; irrationality; role of power are its benefits.

5. Social Cognition: Cognitive dissonance; appropriateness are the reasons of change. Learning; altering paradigms or lens; interconnected and complex are the process of change. New frame of mind is the outcome of change. Brain is its metaphor. Single-and double looped learning; paradigm-shifting; sense-making are its examples. Deemphasizes environment; overemphasizes ease of change; ignores values and emotions are its criticisms. Emphasizes socially constructed nature; emphasis on individuals; habits and attitudes as barriers are its benefits.

6. Cultural: Response to alterations in the human environment is the reason of change. Long-term; slow; symbolic process; nonlinear; unpredictable are the process of change. New culture is the outcome of change. Social movement is its metaphor. Interpretive strategy; paradigm-shifting; processual change are its example. Impractical to guide leaders; focus on universalistic culture mostly untested are criticized. Context; Irrationality; values, and beliefs; complexity; multiple levels of change are its benefits.

These six organizational change typologies can be used as tools to reveal and explain the changes in the CBT communities in different aspects, i.e. the reasons that change occurs, process and outcomes of change leading to business sustainability.



## Business Sustainability

Business sustainability from the perspectives of CBT-SE Impacts is based on the sustainable triple bottom line: social, environment and economic (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002 ; Mason, 2008 ; Satarat, 2010 ; Høgevoid, & Svensson, 2012 ; Breugel's, 2013 ; GRI, 2015 ; Nunthasiriphon, 2015, and Financial Times Lexicon, 2017). There are three main variables: maintaining the sustainable triple bottom line, growing the triple bottom line and reducing the impact on triple bottom line throughout the supply chain.

1. The Social Sustainability is reflected by the revival of the local culture and way of living, community unity, bring education to the community, bring funds for community development, cooperation with government and private agencies, close contact with tourists, and improve health of local people,

2. The Environmental Sustainability concerns the awareness of the importance of nature and environment conservation, encouragement of participation, and an increase of awareness regarding the preservation of environment, encouraging environmental planning, the restoration and maintenance of natural attractions, developing environmental management skills, managing environmental problems and clean place

3. The Economic Sustainability requires the generation of additional incomes, the employment rate, and diversify the local economy

## Conclusion

Sustainable Development become the goal of every sectors. Business sustainability also adhere to the principles of sustainable development. Community-based tourism (CBT) has, for over three decades, been globally promoted as a means of development whereby the social, environmental and economic needs of local communities are met through the offering of a tourism product. Although CBT is very popular for sustainable tourism development, it has rarely been critically reviewed. CBT projects come with risks. Whereas social enterprise has been recognized as a crucial tool in solving the social and environment problem by using the business as an arm and reinvest for the sake of community. Thus, the concepts of social enterprise, community-based tourism, and organizational change are deployed to study the variables leading to business sustainability. Six CBT-SE key success factors: Enterprise Orientation, Stakeholder Participation and Ownership, Strategic Alliances and Network with Others, Capacities Development, Leadership, and Authenticity and Identity are revealed in this paper. Other variables in organizational change are also investigated. These variables comprise six main typologies, which are divided into two groups- External change (evolutionary, social cognition) and Internal change



(teleological, life cycle, political, cultural). To obtain the insight details of business sustainability, these variables should be analyzed based on CBT-SE's economic, social and environmental impact. Also, this study should be regarded as a new concept for deploying social enterprise perspectives in the study of CBT. Moreover, as most previous research often focused only on CBT key success factors or critical success factors, the change initiated by those success factors is neglected. This theoretical concept could be useful for the future study on CBT business sustainability in the perspective of SE.

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