



Factors Influencing Social Inequality and Quality of Life in Community-Based Tourism Thailand

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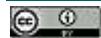
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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate factors affecting the quality of life (QOL) among people involved in community-based tourism (CBT). Data were collected based on the populations residing in the tourism-community areas in each region of Thailand totaling 200 subjects to complete data analysis using multiple regression analysis. The result found that factors influencing the QOL in CBT are found in various elements of Thailand. Furthermore, the main priority is public administration that is considered the most influencing factor concerning QOL among people in CBT followed by economic factors, technological and external actors, in ranked order. The implication of this study was to motivate the community to obtain QOL because managing public administration requires the government to integrate strategic planning and implement policies to resolve the existing inequality in communities. Additionally, the government's administrative structure in each area would be improved and made more appropriate in the context of the area in each community. Economic aspects in the community comprise creating work, increasing income for people and accessing several funding sources. In the technology section, public and private sectors are considered possessing the capability to establish technological access for the community. The aspect of external actors must be managed through regulations and laws created by the community generating awareness for community members including regulations and compliance to achieve sustainable QOL in the community.

Keywords: Quality of life; Economic; Public administration; Technological; External actors.



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1. Introduction

Over the past years, community-based tourism (CBT) has been considered one way to influence tourism development for the benefit of communities (Mannon and Glass-Coffin, 2020; Manyara and Jones, 2007). Currently, CBT is significant for a developing country where CBT can ensure the distribution of benefits equally. The profits derived from CBT can be achieved by all people in a local community including economic and social benefits through providing additional income, enhancing new employment opportunities, reducing poverty, and increasing welfare (Dewi *et al.*, 2020; Mahadevan and Suardi, 2019; Njoya and Seetaram, 2018; Nunkoo *et al.*, 2020; Pimrawee, 2009). CBT can be maintained by the existing local community as well as political and economic support. Collaboration is required to provide benefits and improve resident's well-being. The CBT approach in tourism development is needed as a responsibility that can maximize positive impacts and reduce negative impacts of tourism activities affecting on CBT regarding various issues (Del Baldo, 2018; Dewi *et al.*, 2020). This approach would increase values and decrease problems in society such as inequality issues, poverty, environmental impact issues, family complications, crime and others (Andereck and Nyaupane, 2011; Herring *et al.*, 2020). Also, effecting solutions to these problems would contribute to decrease social inequality and enhance quality of life (QOL) for CBT.

While social inequality has been of wide interest in the society over the past decades, it constitutes a factor affecting the QOL and human well-being. In addition, the determinants of social inequality, namely, factors contributing increasing inequality have various sources (Western *et al.*, 2005). Thus, CBT is an important part of tourism development in a developing country to encourage people to live better lives where the objective is to integrate social, economic and advanced technological development to facilitate increased QOL of residents (Tosun, 2002; Weaver and Lawton, 2000). Greater equality has an important part to play in development worldwide that could create a sustainable community. Also, stronger community life in more equal societies also means that people are more willing to act for the common good. Although developed countries are wealthy, income inequality is mostly associated with the indicators of health and social wellbeing (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2020). However, decreasing inequality is the most significant step for countries that can increase resident's well-being. In developing and emerging economies, both better equality and enhancements in QOL are needed by residents for their QOL (Wojewódzka *et al.*, 2020).

The development in the QOL is crucial because improving the main components will lead to better QOL to provide job opportunities and ensure a sufficient income for higher standards of living (Sittironnarit *et al.*, 2020). Several countries endeavor to develop and improve the QOL of people with higher living standards. Helping all members in society to enjoy well-being can perfectly resolve the challenges affecting QOL. Moreover, the result can

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help people to manage and achieve better life in the society. In addition, the QOL can reduce inequality, conflicts and social problems. Cecil *et al.* (2010); Wang *et al.* (2006). Hence, the remainder of this paper is organized to examine the factors influencing social inequality and QOL in CBT of Thailand. It describes through the literature review, the data collected and methods employed, and then proceeds to presents the results. Lastly, it discusses the implications of the findings and concludes citing policy implications, study limitations, and providing future research guidelines.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Factors Affecting Social Inequality and Quality of Life

Factors affecting social inequality and QOL involve various elements such as social capital, opportunity, access to education among people in each region, access to health care and welfare (Bootngam, 2016; Chaihong, 2016; Maozhong and Hua, 2011; Subramanian *et al.*, 2003) and quality social services to all the public sectors provided for people in the society (Emanuel *et al.*, 2015; Han *et al.*, 2016; Lippmann *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, social inequality can be observed throughout Thailand, particularly regarding economic factors inequality evidenced by the lack of opportunity, lack of human rights and lack of resources in the country (Chothipaporn, 2009). When the social strengthening, social trust and social relationship are degraded and weakened, people in community spreading distrust the QOL of people in the society will decrease. However, society should create mechanisms to build trust among people to feel security in life, enjoy better QOL in a safer community (Arsenio and Gold, 2006; Coburn, 2000; Murali and Oyeboode, 2004; Qi and Youfa, 2004; Veenstra, 2002). Factors affecting QOL have various dimensions particularly economic factors inequality which benefits the investor rather than the employee. The benefit derived from growth rate that comes from exported goods would be more beneficial to entrepreneurs. Moreover, the economic standard in the country is one that affects the QOL people in the community. Even though it contains the structure of economic good, it affects trading and employment that can increase the revenue and income for both society and community (García-Peñalosa *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, tourism generates job opportunities, creates infrastructures and services that have the ability to enhance the QOL (Sharpley, 2014). Also, economic factors are significant determinants for QOL and education (Cairó and Cajner, 2017).

Public administration tends to concentrate on urban centers and large cities in each region affecting the QOL among people residing in remote areas. Therefore, people residing in a community in a remote area will encounter difficulty accessing appropriate infrastructures and sufficient public services, particularly regarding quality education, skill development, health care and social welfare (Chothipaporn, 2009; Farole *et al.*, 2011; García-Peñalosa *et al.*, 2008; Han *et al.*, 2016; Lippmann *et al.*, 2015; Wan and Zhou, 2005; Xavier-Oliveira *et al.*, 2015). In addition, tourism services have a low threshold focusing on location factors such as infrastructure, labor, capital or institutional capacity based on regions (Hall and Campos, 2014) generating social inequality and negatively affecting QOL.

Furthermore, technological factors (Chothipaporn, 2009; Emanuel *et al.*, 2015; Lippmann *et al.*, 2015; OECD, 2011) can be beneficial for activities in daily life and working such as having modern equipment to serve in daily needs. In the case study of Orkwaha (2003), these factors could influence the acceptance of modern technology and income impact. In addition, other related research studies concerning technology focused on revenue distribution. Berman and Machin (2000), investigated the technology requiring skills in developing countries. The findings showed that the demand for labor has increased in countries with moderate income or with higher than moderate income. However, low income countries, experienced reduced skill requirement and lower labor demand rates leading to inequality concerning labor wages. On the other hand, inequality regarding distribution is further exacerbates the situation. Sarutpong (2000), studied the technological transference involving wages. The results showed that technological transference provides people with increased skills and higher wages leading to inequality of the initial labor wages. After that, the compensation or wages between skilled workforces and nonskilled workers began to balance. Thus, as a result in the inequality among the labor wages dropped over the long term. According to the study of Intrawut (2007) the effects of globalization on income distribution and poverty is greatly influenced by the role of technology. Factors affecting income distribution and empowered by the role of the technology are determined by each country, for example, foreign country research involves the development of scholarships the extent of the study, the proportion of labor skills to skilled workers and the average number of academic years. The study showed that every variable has a positive and negative relationship with the distribution of income.

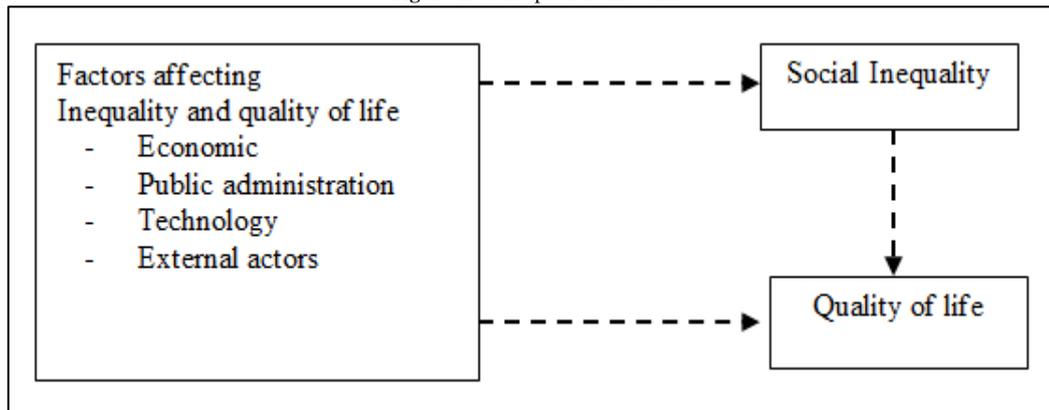
The arrival of an external investor in a community can generate impacts in the form of positive and negative effects to the area. The investment of the outside third party can serve as an integral part of the economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects within the area. External actors are required to use basic resources, natural resources and other resources within the area that are regarded as affecting the QOL among people in the area and generating impacts in the community (Engerman and Sokoloff, 2002; Kaewnuch, 2018; Mansuri and Rao, 2004). However, growing poverty and income inequality cause communities to become more vulnerable by reducing QOL and external linkages (Peters, 2019). However, a few research studies have argued that external actors in several areas support the community to increase their infrastructure and generate a good QOL (Anore *et al.*, 2019).

2.2. Conceptualization

The review of literature related to the factors affecting social inequality and QOL revealed that factors influencing social inequality and QOL consisted of four elements: economy, public administration, technology

system and external actors. Consequently, this formed the base of the conceptual framework in this study as demonstrated in Figure 1.

Figure-1. Conceptual framework



3. Method

3.1. Measurement

3.1.1. Population and Sample Size

The population in this research study comprised a group of people managing tourism within a community in Thailand. Also, specific and important data providers were selected using purposive sampling. These involved individuals in a Thai community managing CBT. The sample size would ensure that the results of data analysis could be considered as representative of the general population. The researchers determined the most appropriate sample size and decisive suitability of the subjects to best fit data analysis. Then data collection could obtain the required information to represent the population's response and prevent errors that might arise from incomplete methods. The researchers obtained a sample totaling 200 people involved in CBT based in a community of Thailand.

3.2. Instrument

The instrument used in this research was created by the researchers, namely, a questionnaire including all measurement parameters based on the concepts derived from the literature review. Following the review, a framework was created to further develop a line of inquiry. Therefore, the questionnaire comprised three parts. Part 1 covered the personal information of respondents including sex, age, education level and monthly income. All the items comprised closed ended and multiple-choice questions. Part 2 included the main variable measurement instrument to collect data containing a list of measurement parameters. Also, it consisted of the following factors: composition of factors affecting social inequality and QOL in CBT in a community of Thailand. For the questionnaire, the researchers adapted measurements designed within the Thai context to understand more easily. The questionnaire used a 7-point Likert scale (Dawes, 2008). Each questionnaire item ranged from 1 indicating very strongly disagree to 7 indicating very strongly agree. Also, these depended on the context of the area in considering how to rate and interpret the definition from the questionnaire. Then the test instrument and questionnaire items were drafted to check for content validity. The questionnaire was validated by academic experts who determined the suitability of the language by examining the corresponding values of item-objective congruency and reliability. The created and revised questionnaire was pilot tested with a nonrepresentative sample having similar characteristics as the sample of information providers totaling 30 people. The aim was to determine whether the questions could express the exact requirements if the study and were suitable and easy to understand. Therefore, confidence of the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for which (Cortina, 1993; Nunnally, 1978) the accepted criteria is an alpha (α) greater than 0.70. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was equal to 0.984.

3.3. Data Collection

The researchers collected data using the validated questionnaire from primary data sources and distributed to 200 subjects for about 3 months. After verifying the data to be complete each item was coded to add in the finished program. In addition, the frequency of the interview information was recorded and additional data was collected to fill in any incomplete section. After that, data was analyzed using synthetic statistics and summarized.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data collected in this study were analyzed to characterize the distribution of variables using descriptive statistics expressed as frequency and percentage. Finally, statistical inferences was used to determine associations between factors affecting inequality and QOL in CBT including multiple regression analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Profile of Respondents

The profiles of 200 respondents involved in the tourism community area revealed two thirds were female. In addition, the majority of participants were aged between 30 and 59 years. The educational levels of 50% of respondents were mostly primary school, senior high school, and junior high school. In terms of participants' occupation, most were accountants (29.5%) followed private business owner (17.5%), farmers and monthly private employees accounting for 12%. One half of respondents earned monthly income between 5,001 and 15,000 THB.

Table-1. The results of multiple regression analysis regarding factors influencing social inequality in CBT in Thailand

Variable	B	SE	Beta	T	Sig
Economic	.128	.048	.160	2.634	.009**
Public Administration	.355	.047	.462	7.520	.000**
Technology	.140	.046	.190	3.051	.003**
External Actors	.040	.034	.109	2.078	.039*
Constant	1.679	.251		6.692	.000**

Multiple R = .693, R² = .480, Adj R² = .470, SEE = .571, F= 45.036, Sig of F = .000, *P < .05, **P < .01

Considering the results of multiple regression in the composition of the factors influencing social inequality in CBT, the major key element of public administration was shown as the dynamic for social inequality in CBT. The secondary keys comprised technology, economic factors and external actors, in ranked order. The factors influencing social inequality in CBT exhibited equivalent multiple regression (R) equal to .693, coefficient (R²) equal to 0.480, and coefficient and standard error equal to 0.571. This meant that the influencing factors could predict 48% social inequality.

Table-2. The results of multiple regression analysis regarding factors influencing the quality of life among people in CBT in Thailand

Variable	B	SE	Beta	T	Sig
Economic	.165	.062	.189	2.685	.008**
Public Administration	.225	.060	.266	3.752	.000**
Technology	.182	.058	.224	3.118	.002**
External Actors	.040	.043	.057	.946	.345
Constant	2.358	.319		7.400	.000**

Multiple R = .555, R² = .308, Adj R² = .294, SEE = .725, F= 21.717, Sig of F = .000, *P < .05, **P < .01

Based on the results of multiple regression in the composition of the factors influencing QOL of people in CBT, the principal element of public administration was proved as the dynamic for the QOL in CBT. In addition, the secondary keys comprised technology, economic factors and external actors, in ranked order. The factors influencing QOL among people in CBT showed equivalent multiple regression (R) equal to .555, coefficient (R²) equal to 0.308 and coefficient and standard error equal to 0.725. This meant that the influencing factors could predict 30.8% of QOL.

Table-3. The results of multiple regression analysis regarding inequality influencing the quality of life among people in CBT in Thailand

Variables	B	SE	Beta	T	Sig
Inequality	.854	.049	.776	17.315	.000**
Constant	1.011	.239		4.229	.000**

Multiple R = .776, R² = .602, Adj R² = .600, SEE = .546, F= 299.813, Sig of F = .000, *P < .05, **P < .01

The results of multiple regression in the composition of social inequality influencing QOL among people in CBT, exhibited equivalent multiple regression (R) equal to .776, coefficient (R²) equal to 0.602 and coefficient and standard error equal to 0.546. This meant that social inequality could predict 60.2% of QOL.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Discussion

The significant results of this study comprised factors influencing social inequality and QOL. The study provided a conceptual framework based on the literature review of related research concerning factors affecting social inequality and QOL. We found the factors influencing social inequality and QOL were economic factors, public administration, technology system and external actors examined using both dependent variables. The research revealed that public administration was the most significant factor influencing social inequality ($\beta = .355$) and QOL ($\beta = .225$). This meant that public administration more strongly influenced social inequality with QOL. However, that social inequality and QOL were able to increase by good administration was similar to the findings of [García-Peñalosa et al. \(2008\)](#); [Han et al. \(2016\)](#); [Xavier-Oliveira et al. \(2015\)](#) considering that technology system was also significant in relation to both social inequality and QOL. Nevertheless, QOL is more greatly influenced by technology system ($\beta = .182$) even though social inequality is influenced by technology ($\beta = .140$). Hence, social inequality and QOL can be increased by technology system in the community based on [Intrawut, 2007](#); [Orkwaha, 2003](#)). The reference to economic aspects is significant and affects QOL ($\beta = .165$) while social inequality was equal

to $\beta = .128$. Conversely, both can be enhanced by creating a healthy economy which is stable (Cairó and Cajner, 2017; Sharpley, 2014). External actors was significantly associated with social inequality ($\beta = .040$) * $P < .05$ because it showed that social inequality could be improved by external actors (Kaewnuch, 2018). On the other hand, external actors did not significantly influence QOL. Social inequality is influenced by QOL for which data indicated a significant relationship. Also, the data were consistent with the results of related studies in social equality in each aspect, particularly that case income inequality mostly affected QOL (García-Peñalosa *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, in this case, we could enhance the QOL by improving social inequality which is able to focus on factors affecting social inequality.

According to the study, the factors influencing social inequality and QOL in CBT included public administration, technology, economy and external actors. To the highest degree, the primary public administration element could predict the social inequality and QOL among people in the community. Public administration has a concentration to centralized areas and infrastructure involving major cities in the region and affecting access to fundamental and quality government services between populations in urban and rural areas and populations in each region influencing social inequality and QOL (Lippmann *et al.*, 2015; Xavier-Oliveira *et al.*, 2015). Second, economic factors could influence the QOL of local community-based tourism. The benefits of economic growth at the base of exports includes significant income (García-Peñalosa *et al.*, 2008). The technology factor also influenced QOL in CBT consistently (Chothipaporn, 2009; Emanuel *et al.*, 2015). Technology factors, scientific advances and technology can be used to be beneficial to the modern lifestyle. Technological factors are related to the inequality of revenue distribution affecting the QOL among people in the area by applying technology into daily life. Technological development, information technology, access to data and to further reduce the technological inequality in the area that can comfort work and technology is essential for everyday life as well as involving various investments in the community to determine the potential of the community's technology resources (Emanuel *et al.*, 2015). The composition of external actors influences the QOL among people in community where the incoming business of external actors investing within the area, particularly in communities in which tourism is being managed. In the area, investors can make positive and negative impacts to the area by the investment of an external business. Also, it can be considered an aspect causing inequality in the economic, social, cultural and environmental conditions within the area by the entrance for external actors. They are required to use basic resources, natural resources and other resources within the area regarded as part of the QOL among people in the community (Kaewnuch, 2018; Mansuri and Rao, 2004).

Therefore, it could be seen that those factors affected social inequality and QOL among people in community within all aspects. In addition, each element exhibited a relationship with each other. What constitutes good QOL must be handled as the main cause of the problem. Therefore, it could be stated that public administration, technology, economic factors and external actors are important to be managed that can be handled by all sectors. All of the significant parts starts from the public and private sectors to other related parties so that all parties can help each other to solve the problem in each point and aspect. Additionally, the most important issue that will develop better QOL is to be aware of the lookout protection and value in their own community areas to make community management sustainable.

5.2. Conclusion

According to the results, the government is able to take the consequences from the study to create integration with strategic planning. To solve the issues of social inequality and QOL, can be achieved by dealing with key components that influence both. The research in these factors could help solve QOL in each issue regarding CBT in Thailand as well as to improve the management structure of the public sector in each area appropriately and correctly in the context of each community. However, the public administration cannot contribute to the development of the community by itself. Thus, that all sectors should be organized is important. Additionally, these academic results can be used to adapt and collaborate among the sectors in the tourism industry to resolve the social inequality and QOL issues with community-related tourism of Thailand that are in the same direction of all sectors. Important management needs to be handled from factors that will bring about QOL. Therefore, these findings constitute major suggestions leading to the improvements and deployment areas for resolving challenges in the tourism community in Thailand and lead to a good QOL. According to the management, the main activities that should be managed in the community are to create revenue, generate income, and access funding sources to increase the ability in managing revenue for the community including farmers, community tour guides and cooperative groups. Also, setting up groups that can create benefits will be made available to communities both directly and indirectly. In the technology management aspect, managing the access to technology data is crucial. Some communities are also far away from public access benefits. Consequently, public and private sectors are able to create technological access for the community including Wi-Fi, public telephones and benefits related to technology information. In the section involving external actors, they must be managed through rules and laws of the community to conduct in the same direction to prevent them from becoming more relevant to the people residing in the community. The most important issue for the community is to realize the rules and regulations of the community to maintain a sustainable community.

5.3. Limitations of This Study

This study encountered several limitations. Obviously, time was restricted. Hence, we have studied the key elements contributing to social inequality and QOL as well as the cause of the impact on and in CBT. However, future research should study other elements and challenges, critical and key-related factors that could impact QOL.

Moreover, it should incorporate a deeper study of the elements to address social inequality and QOL of people involved with CBT in Thailand.

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