



An Exploratory Study of the Participation Stages in Trang Communities to Enhance Tourism Attractiveness

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Abstract

A key driving force of Thailand's economy is the tourism and hospitality industry, in general and locally, across many varied tourism resource bases. This is especially true of community units which are ubiquitously recognized as a key element of tourism that can be utilized to improve a community's economic status. This study aimed to explore the participation stages of the Trang community and examine the influence of community participation on tourism attractiveness. Quantitative research methods were used. We recruited 388 participants using purposive sampling in this study. The sample size consisted of Trang people over 18 years old, who had been living in the community for at least one year, and attended at least one activity provided by the community, gathered by face-to-face questionnaires. The Ordinary Least Square (OLS) was employed to test a statistical model to determine the influences of community participation on tourism attractiveness. Results revealed three explored participation stages in the context of the Trang community. In addition, the findings exhibited the positive influences of all three stages of community participation on tourism attractiveness. Community participation is an integral component of tourism development to enhance the tourism attractiveness of a community. Yet, to date, few studies have been conducted to determine community participation's influence on tourism in the context of Trang's communities, which have shown to be key factors for enhancing tourism in other contexts. Thus, this research intends to eliminate this gap in academic knowledge and present useful discussions of the related implications based on the findings.

Keywords: Community Participation, Trang Province, Tourism Attractiveness, Exploratory Study

Introduction

Tourism is a crucial driving force of Thailand's economy because its earnings directly flow to different types of business sectors, in general, and locally, across many varied tourism resource bases. Tourism can contribute to economic growth by creating individual employment and incomes, developing local infrastructure, and promoting and preserving cultural heritage and traditional local wisdom spread across the regions and communities throughout the country (Çakmak & Çenesiz, 2020; Wondirad & Ewnetu, 2019). One of the elements that has been related to tourism development is the community. Communities are ubiquitously recognized as a key element of tourism that can be utilized to improve a community's economic status (Dodds et al., 2018). For example, local communities can attract an increasing amount of interest from tourists due to their traditional cultures and societies and leverage them to provide tourism experiences and bolster their local income, business opportunities, and infrastructure. Tourism and hospitality in Thailand have also raised the demand for, and development of, new tourism locales, especially in rural areas, that will attract both domestic and foreign tourists (Chatkaewnapanon & Lee, 2022). As a result, the community is a resource base that is a keystone for generating changes in the value and structure of an entire community.

Although many communities in Thailand have been the focus of efforts of public and private actors to promote and develop them as tourism destinations, these efforts have lacked continuity and sustainability due to the lack of sufficient participation from the communities' stakeholders (Li et al., 2020b). Numerous components of the mechanisms of community participation, and their impacts on tourism development and sustainability, have



attracted considerable attention. Community participation is a crucial driver to enhance tourism attractiveness because communities can make known their needs and expectations regarding what they want tourism to enhance through the roles the stakeholders, such as people, entrepreneurs, and the government, play in the community (Bello et al., 2016). It is an issue that tourism and hospitality providers must be concerned about because rural tourism destinations, which have strongly enhanced community participation, should not only act in the manner that best ensures continuity of development, but also operate in ways that protect and preserve the community's resources (Ghahramani et al., 2020). Therefore, examining how community participation's influence can help community stakeholders to continuously and sustainably develop and increase their tourism attractiveness is essential.

Trang province was chosen as the location for this case study analysis focusing on the role that community participation plays as a factor that may enhance tourism attractiveness. Community participation reflects the collaborative efforts of community stakeholders to reach mutually beneficial goals, improve their local area, and pursue personal objectives. In the Trang community context, previous research has mentioned that most people had participated with activities, especially within tourism context, in their communities at a moderate level, which does not guarantee that the engagement is sufficient for developing sustainable tourism through community participation (Jantamaneechot et al., 2023; Samati, 2022). In addition, the lack of stakeholder participation in tourism development plans is still an important issue that needs to be considered and studied (Keawchaum et al., 2023). Tourism in Trang Province is a very important factor driving both the local and provincial economies because Trang is one of the tourism areas along Thailand's Andaman Coast that is a tourism destination for numerous domestic and foreign tourists. Prior research has shown that community participation can improve and develop local tourism destinations and potential (Aly et al., 2021). Although the ability of community participation to drive tourism development has been previously confirmed, there is ambiguity regarding how community participation enhances tourism attractiveness and what stages of the community's participation play a role in enhancing tourism in the context of localities within Trang province. Thus, the objective of this study was to 1) explore the participation stages of Trang's communities, and 2) examine the influence of community participation on tourism attractiveness. This research proposes that the participation of Trang community members can be explored specifically within each stage. In addition, based on the stakeholder theory (Byrd, 2007), this research proposes that enhancing tourism attractiveness depends on the participation of community members, which would mean that communities with higher levels of participation by their members can enhance their tourism destinations and attractiveness. The theoretical aspect of this research will ascertain whether stakeholder theory explains why increased community participation is able to improve tourism attractiveness. From the managerial perspective, it should generate guidelines for communities regarding how participation stages relate to enhancing their tourism attractiveness.

Literature Review

Community Participation

The development of tourism at the local level requires the involvement and participation of the community, as previously pointed out, because it is an effective method to gain an understanding of the various stakeholders' needs and expectations (Tseng et al., 2019). The importance of local community participation in the enhancement of tourism is seen through its generation of attentiveness to developing local tourism potential and maintaining local business enterprises within the local community, such as the preservation of natural resources and culture,



as emphasized by many researchers (Osman et al., 2018; Sakata & Prideaux, 2013). Community participation from a tourism perspective is the concept in which the community members who live in a particular area or locality directly participate in taking some actions related to tourism (Adebayo & Butcher, 2023). Community participation has been widely studied from several perspectives that depend on the contexts of tourism research, area-based, and characteristics of communities. For example, the most essential element for local tourism development during drafting policymaking, tourism planning, monitoring, and managing tourism activities should have a starting point from local community participation (Nugroho & Numata, 2022). According to Arnstein (2019), community participation can occur in eight stages depending on the degrees of citizen participation (including nonparticipation, degrees of tokenism, and degrees of citizen power) from the manipulation stage to the citizen control stage. Adeyemo and Bada's (2017) study pointed out that the decision-making process regarding tourism in Nigeria is decidedly top-down in which community participation is seen in a passive form. In addition, the suggestions related to the marine in terms of ecotourism development from different stakeholders pointed out that this is an effective method for community participation (Tseng et al., 2019).

For some communities, tourism may be a driving force and encouraging factor to develop and enhance the community, while for others, it may be negatively affected by tourism causing more losses than expected. Community participation also plays an important role in increasing the benefits of tourism to the community and reducing negative impacts on the community and the way of life of local people (Nagarjuna, 2015; Salleh et al., 2016). For example, community participation allows local people in the community to gain the benefits of development occurring within the community area due to the promotion of tourism (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). Benefits for local people within the community from participation in the tourism context may be economic, social, educational, and entrepreneurial opportunities (Bello et al., 2016; Kry et al., 2020). In addition, community participation is essential to support local tourism by providing sustainable benefits in respect to the community's survival, especially in developing countries (Reindrawati, 2023).

In this study, the researchers have focused on community participation that should be consistent with the community context in Trang province in which it would be a key concept of local tourism development through the participation of Trang people. Thus, the researchers systematized all the elements of the reviewed researchers regarding community participation as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Elements of Community Participation from Literature Review

No.	Authors (Date of Publication)	Methods Used	Elements and Concepts of Community Participation
1	Sattayapanich et al. (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quantitative research - Used a random sampling technique to select participants - Used questionnaire surveys to collect data - Used multiple linear regression analyses to examine 	Level of participation in planning, implementing, and monitoring
2	Thetsane (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quantitative research - Used a combination of stratified and convenience sampling approaches - Used descriptive statistics like mean scores and standard deviations 	Financial support, Leading role as entrepreneurs, Consulting, Decision-making, Leading role as workers



Table 1 (Cont.)

No.	Authors (Date of Publication)	Methods Used	Elements and Concepts of Community Participation
3	Rasoolimanesh et al. (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quantitative research - Used systematic cluster sampling - Used questionnaire surveys to collect the data - Used PLS-SEM 	Three levels of community participation (Low-level, Middle-level, High-level)
4	Tosun (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Used surveys for local household and agency - Used interviews - Used descriptive statistics and content analysis 	Spontaneous Participation, Induced Participation, Coercive Participation
5	Wondirad and Ewnetu (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A mixed research approach using combination of descriptive and exploratory designs - Used both cross-sectional and longitudinal data - Used questionnaire surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions 	Benefit sharing
6	Jantamaneechot et al. (2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quantitative research - Used quota sampling - Used questionnaire - Used descriptive statistics and inference statistics with stepwise multiple regression analysis 	Four key elements of the concept of community participation (decision making, implementation, benefit sharing, evaluation)
7	Li et al. (2020a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A systematic literature review 	Perspectives of community participation (Engaged Communities, Participatory Methods, Participation Degrees, Process Steps)

Tourism Attractiveness

Tourism attractiveness refers to the feelings, beliefs, and opinions that tourists have about a tourism destination which is related to how they perceive its ability to provide satisfaction in relation to his or her travel desires. In addition, it also refers to the capacity of a tourism destination to offer alternative products and services to visiting tourists (Raimkulov et al., 2021). Previous research on tourism attractiveness has highlighted its importance from several perspectives, such as identifying which attributes attract tourists to tourism destinations, understanding aspects of host and guest dynamics regarding tourism destinations, and providing a deeper understanding of target markets and tourists’ decision-making processes (Formica & Uysal, 2006). The attributes of tourism attractiveness may vary depending on the research setting, research context, and the researchers’ approaches. To achieve the research goals and objectives of this study, six dimensions were examined related to the communities, namely: aesthetic and art value, entertainment value, cultural-historical value, scientific value, natural environment, and biodiversity, from the hosts’ perspectives.

The Influence of Community Participation on Tourism Attractiveness

The development of tourism at the local level requires the involvement and participation of the community, as previously pointed out, because it is an effective method to gain an understanding of the various stakeholders’ needs and expectations (Tseng et al., 2019). The importance of local community participation in the enhancement of tourism through its generation of attentiveness to developing local tourism attractiveness and maintaining local business enterprises within the local community, such as the preservation of natural resources and culture, has been



emphasized by many researchers (Osman et al., 2018; Sakata & Prideaux, 2013). The efforts to enhance tourism attractiveness are more likely to succeed if locals are given the opportunity to participate.

According to the stakeholder theory, when there is sufficient participation by local community stakeholders in tourism development activities, both tourism attractiveness and the likelihood of success increase. Previous studies indicate community participation leads to better approaches to building local tourism attractiveness (Khalid et al., 2019; Sebele, 2010; Tseng et al., 2019). Moreover, tourism attractiveness can be enhanced through the participation of the people living in the community in several ways. For example, when people within the community are actively involved in the improvement efforts from the inception of a project, the community can be on the lookout for any anticipated negative impacts to help discover and take action to mitigate them at an early stage, and their participation will also help to generate grassroots support of the activities and projects throughout the community (Akama & Kieti, 2007; Akama et al., 2011). In addition, community participation is also reflected in the community's engagement in decision-making, benefits sharing, resource conservation, and implementation of relevant tourism development activities (Osman et al., 2018; Rahman et al., 2022). After considering the theoretical support from the stakeholder theory and all the relevant empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is presented:

H₁: *Community participation has a positive influence on tourism attractiveness.*

The conceptual framework for the study is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Conceptual Framework.

Methodology

Sample Selection and Data Collection Procedures

The data was gathered in Trang, Thailand based on the following participant criteria: (a) aged over 18 years, (b) lived in the community for at least one year, (c) attended at least one activity provided by the community, such as a village meeting, a local traditional festival, or community tourism promotion activities, and (d) willing to participate in answering the questionnaire voluntarily. There were no accurate statistics regarding the size of the target population, thus determining an accurate sample size was impossible. Thus, the sample size was calculated by using Cochran's formula to achieve a 95 percent confidence level (Cochran, 1977) resulting in a required minimum sample size of 384 participants. The total sample size in this study of 388 participants was concluded to be acceptable. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that Trang's ten districts were proportionally represented.

The Center for Social and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board (PSU IRB 2021-LL-CM 042 (Internal)) provided ethical approval. Thereafter, data was collected between January and March 2023 via a questionnaire survey. The questionnaires were directly distributed to respondents and the primary objective of the data collection was explained. The questionnaire had three sections. The initial section consisted of items measuring community participation. The following one contained questions evaluating tourism attractiveness from the participants' perspectives. The last portion was questions on the respondents' demographics. The participants



were allowed to make inquiries before data collection and advised of their right to withdraw without giving a reason at any time prior to signing the consent form. Following the signing of the consent forms, the participants were requested to return their questionnaires directly to the researchers upon completing the survey. Three hundred and eighty-eight fully filled-in surveys were returned during the collection period. Table 2 contains the respondents' demographic profiles.

Table 2 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (n = 388)

Demographic Factors	Items	n	%
Gender	Male	151	38.92
	Female	237	61.08
Educational Level	Below Bachelor's Degree	253	65.21
	Bachelor's Degree	96	24.74
	Above Bachelor's Degree	39	10.05
Monthly Incomes	Less than 15,000 Bath	233	60.05
	Less than 15,000 – 30,000 Bath	105	27.06
	More than 30,000 Bath	50	12.89
Age	Mean: 41.75; S.D.: 13.964		

Measures

Tourism attractiveness was measured using six items adapted from previous studies (Bahar & Kozak, 2007; Hoang et al., 2018) in which participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they had an opinion regarding tourism attractiveness in their communities including attractiveness of aesthetic and art value, entertainment value, cultural-historical value, scientific value, natural environment, and biodiversity. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (least attracted) to 5 (most attracted) these variables were converted into an interval scale developed from the primary data, and the average value of each dimension was used for hypotheses testing.

The community participation dimension was measured using fifteen items adapted from previous studies (Jantamanechot et al., 2023; Sattayapanich et al., 2022) to be most consistent with the context of the community in the studied area. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they had participated in their communities. This scale was measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (least participation with the community) to 5 (most participation with the community). This scale was classified into each stage of community participation based on the results from the exploratory study. Then, variables classified as each stage were utilized as an interval scale, and the average value of each stage was used for hypotheses testing.

Data Analysis Methods

According to the conceptual framework, community participation was the independent variable, while tourism attractiveness was the dependent variable. Firstly, community participation was explored using factor loading analysis with the principal components method to extract the number of the component. Then, this exploratory used the varimax rotation method to separate groups of the stage of participation in the Trang community. Finally, giving the name of the vector is a stage for the interpretation of the factors formed. This exploratory research is a suitable approach for such types of studies because it helps the researchers understand more about a particular topic of interest and also helps narrow it down to formulate a clear hypothesis and problem statement (Dawadi et al., 2021). In the context of hypothesis testing, Ordinal Least Squares (OLS) were used to analyze the influence of community participation on tourism attractiveness. According to Petronilla (2022), the OLS focuses on the



mean which is a regression modeling technique, used for fitting models. In addition, OLS estimators are nevertheless unbiased and consistent, as are regression predictions based on them.

Results

The Stages of Community Participation Results

Table 3 reported the results from the Kaiser Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett’s Test. This found that the KMO value was equal to 0.903 which is greater than 0.5, with a threshold of 0.50 set as the minimum requirement (Shrestha, 2021). In terms of the Bartlett’s Test evaluation, the findings revealed that an approximate Chi–Square distribution value was equal to 2711.080 and the significance value was equal to 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Thus, the results revealed that all 15 items of community participation have sufficient relationship to be used for factor analysis.

Table 3 Kaiser Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett’s Test

KMO and Bartlett’s Test		
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.903
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi–Square	2711.080
	df	105
	Sig.	0.000

To explore the stage of community participation, the eigenvalues and total variance explained were examined in this study. The extraction method of factor analysis used in this study is principal component analysis as shown in Table 4. Before extraction, fifteen linear components are identified within the data set which there are three distinct linear components within the data set that had the eigenvalue greater than 1.0 after extraction and rotation steps. The three components are extracted accounting for a combined 64.31% of the total variance which is more than the recommended value of 50% (Panda et al., 2021). Thus, all three components explain 64.31% of the total information which can be considered good and also indicates that the stages of community participation should be separated into three stages for the Trang community context.

Table 4 Mean, S.D., Rotated Component Matrix (Varimax) Factor Analysis of the Stages of Trang Community’s Participation

Community Participation Items	Mean	S.D.	(Stage 1)	(Stage 2)	(Stage 3)
CP_1: Participation in planning	3.41	1.01	0.742	0.008	0.339
CP_2: Participation in helping and supporting	3.40	.969	0.791	0.119	0.178
CP_3: Participation in project thinking	3.40	.943	0.761	0.206	0.158
CP_4: Being part of the decision	3.39	.959	0.711	0.198	0.265
CP_5: Regular participation in decision-making	3.51	.939	0.760	0.269	0.191
CP_6: Participation in expressing opinions	3.50	1.01	0.727	0.194	0.263
CP_7: Participation in protection	3.71	.852	0.351	0.664	0.094
CP_8: Participating in cultural conservation	3.71	.862	0.342	0.707	0.025
CP_9: Engaging with members to protect and steward resources	3.78	.823	0.087	0.823	0.010
CP_10: Participation in being willing to take care of the community	3.84	.861	–0.020	0.792	0.075
CP_11: Participation in management	3.61	.999	0.224	0.639	0.370
CP_12: Participation in implementing projects and activities	3.83	.848	0.126	0.620	0.409
CP_13: Participation in considering benefit sharing	3.12	1.12	0.394	0.054	0.710
CP_14: Participation in receiving direct and indirect benefits	3.25	1.04	0.248	0.119	0.813

**Table 4** (Cont.)

Community Participation Items	Mean	S.D.	(Stage 1)	(Stage 2)	(Stage 3)
CP_15: Participation in sharing benefits	3.39	1.00	0.295	0.222	0.720
Eigenvalues			6.476	2.082	1.089
Percentage of Total Variance (%)			43.171	13.878	7.259
Cumulative (%)			43.171	57.048	64.307
Number of Test Measures			6	6	3

The rotated component matrix, as shown in Table 4, explains the factor loadings with the varimax method which is the correlation between the variable and the components. Factor loading values communicate the relationship of each variable to the underlying factors which should be more than the 0.50 recommended as the effective indicator for making a decision (Finch, 2020). In this study, the results revealed three stages of community participation in the context of Trang province from rotated component matrix analysis.

Stage 1 is labeled as “the Stage of Pre-implementation Participation” which contains six items that consist of participation in planning, participation in helping and supporting, participation in project thinking, being part of the decision, regular participation in decision making, and participation in expressing opinions. Stage 1 explained 43.171% of the total variance with an eigenvalue of 6.476.

Stage 2 is labeled as “the Stage of Implementation Participation” which contains six items that consist of participation in protection, participating in cultural conservation, engaging with members to protect and steward resources, participation in being willing to take care of the community, participation in management, and participation in implementing projects and activities. Stage 2 explained 13.878% of the total variance with an eigenvalue of 2.082.

Stage 3 is labeled as “the Stage of Post-implementation Participation” which contains three items that consist of participation in considering benefit sharing, participation in receiving direct and indirect benefits, and participation in sharing benefits. Stage 3 explained 7.259% of the total variance with an eigenvalue of 1.089.

In the context of the Trang community’s participation, local people’s average participation in the stage of pre-implementation was at a high level (Means of CP_1–CP_6 = 3.43; S.D. = 0.782). For the stage of implementation, Trang people had average participation in this stage at a high level as well (Means of CP_7–CP_12 = 3.75; S.D. = 0.657). Whereas, regarding the stage of post-implementation, local people in Trang communities had average participation at a moderate level (Means of CP_13–CP_15 = 3.25; S.D. = 0.887).

After performing a three-stage exploratory study on community participation, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was used to measure the reliability of variables in this study, with a threshold of 0.70 set as the minimum requirement (Nunnally, 1975). The findings revealed the alpha values for all variables, as shown in Table 5, exceeded the threshold of 0.70. Thus, the model’s reliability was confirmed.

Table 5 Reliability Analysis

Variables	Mean	S.D.	Reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha)	Items
Tourism Attractiveness	3.76	0.612	0.848	6
Participation in the Pre-implementation Stage	3.43	0.782	0.891	6
Participation in the Implementation Stage	3.75	0.657	0.845	6
Participation in the Post-implementation Stage	3.25	0.887	0.794	3



Hypotheses Testing Results

The results from OLS analysis are shown in Table 6. Regarding hypothesis 1, which proposed that community participation would positively influence tourism attractiveness, the results indicated that Trang communities' participation in the pre-implementation stage (X_1 ; $\beta = 0.206$; $p < 0.001$), in the implementation stage (X_2 ; $\beta = 0.226$; $p < 0.001$), and in the post-implementation stage (X_3 ; $\beta = 0.087$; $p < 0.05$) had a statistically significant positive influence on tourism attractiveness. Therefore, H_1 is supported. These results showed that Trang people participated more in the stages of pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation in their communities enhancing the attractiveness of tourism. Regarding the model's predictive accuracy, the coefficient of determination (R-square) value of 0.287 for tourism attractiveness denotes that 28.7% of the dependent construct's total variance is explained by the stages of community participation. In addition, the range of the full VIF values was between 1.013 and 1.840, indicating that there were no serious problems with multicollinearity in this research.

Table 6 OLS Regression Analysis for the Stages of Community Participation Affecting Tourism Attractiveness (n = 388)

Control and Explored Variables	β	S.E.	Beta	t	p-value	VIF
Constant	1.950	0.217		8.985	0.000	
Gender (Male = 1, Female = 2)	-0.023	0.059	-0.018	-0.397	0.692	1.013
Age	-0.002	0.002	-0.047	-0.997	0.319	1.097
Educational Level	0.077	0.066	0.063	1.164	0.245	1.440
Monthly Incomes	0.001	0.047	0.001	0.013	0.990	1.417
Participation in Pre-implementation Stage (X_1)	0.206	0.048	0.264	4.292	0.000	1.840
Participation in Implementation Stage (X_2)	0.226	0.049	0.243	4.571	0.000	1.379
Participation in Post-implementation Stage (X_3)	0.087	0.042	0.126	2.075	0.039	1.790

R = 0.536; R² = 0.287; Adj.R² = 0.272; S.E. of the Estimate = 0.5219; F = 19.994; p-value = 0.000

Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion of the Findings and Research Contributions

The goal of this study was to explore the participation stages of the Trang community and examine the influence of community participation on tourism attractiveness. The results from this study provide specific contributions to community participation in the context of the Trang community for each stage and its values on the enhancement of tourism attractiveness for Trang communities. Firstly, the exploratory study confirmed the stages of Trang communities' participation which can be classified into three stages, namely pre-implementation participation, implementation participation, and post-implementation participation. Regarding the first stage, the stage of pre-implementation participation which this stage pointed out that the local people had participated with their communities before projects or activities within the community area including planning, supporting, thinking, being part of the decision, decision making, and expressing opinions. In the second stage, the stage of implementation participation demonstrates that people in Trang communities participate with the community while the project or activity is in progress, namely in protection, cultural conservation, engaging with members to protect and steward resources, being willing to take care of the community, management, and implementing projects and activities. In the final stage, the stage of post-implementation participation exposed that the participation of local people in Trang communities occurs after a project or activity has been completed, including considering benefit sharing, receiving direct and indirect benefits, and sharing benefits. These results seem to be partly consistent with the

results from prior studies which have demonstrated the level of community participation in each stage of environmental corporate social responsibility project development including planning, implementing, and monitoring (Sattayapanich et al., 2022). In addition, these results are in line with findings documented in previous studies which pointed out that four key elements of the concept of community participation in the Tasaba community, which is one of Trang's communities, were the participation in decision making, implementation, benefit sharing, and evaluation (Jantamaneechot et al., 2023). Figure 2 shown three participation stages of Trang's communities which are necessary for enhancing tourism attractiveness among tourism destinations in Trang Province.



Figure 2 The Three Participation Stages in Trang Communities to Enhance Tourism Attractiveness.

Secondly, with respect to enhancing tourism attractiveness, the results obtained from the model estimations confirm the positive influence of community participation on tourism attractiveness at the stages of pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation in the context of Trang's communities. This suggests that high levels of community participation help communities to enhance tourism attractiveness. Community participation's influence on tourism attractiveness in the context of this study appears to correlate with the results from prior investigations demonstrating the positive influence of community participation on tourism potential, sustainability, and development (Cheng et al., 2019; Jantamaneechot et al., 2023; Osman et al., 2018; Rahman et al., 2022; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). For example, in the context of tourism in Thailand, community participation is a causal attribute influencing ecotourism potential and local community support for conservation activities (Tseng et al., 2019). In another context, in overseas context, community involvement also affects the performance of the tourism sector in the Mandalika tourist area of Lombok (Laksmi et al., 2023). Thus, stakeholders' involvement, especially members of local communities, can be a crucial element in enhancing and developing the tourism attractiveness of a destination from several standpoints. These results also correspond to prior literature and strengthens the importance of community participation and the need for it to be focused on to enhance tourism attractiveness within the community in both domestic and overseas contexts (Chatkaewnapanon & Lee, 2022; Esichaikul & Chansawang, 2022).

Furthermore, this study's theoretical contributions have created a more intimate look into the roles played by community participation and their influence on tourism attractiveness. The results are consistent with the stakeholder theory (Freeman et al., 2004), as the research confirms community participation can contribute to the design and implementation of the basic concepts of sustainable tourism development to enhance tourism attractiveness and can explain why the involvement of people in the local community can enhance tourism attractiveness. Thus, these results support the stakeholder theory.



Recommendations for Management

The exploratory study of the data and hypotheses in this study revealed that people in Trang were most involved with their communities regarding three stages of projects to enhance the tourism attractiveness of their tourism communities. In addition, the evidence also showed that enhancing tourism attractiveness requires participation from everyone in the community, not only those who have responsibilities related to the community's operations.

Several recommendations for the communities in Trang Province and their related stakeholders regarding managerial issues related to enhancing the communities' tourism attractiveness that should be taken into consideration arise from this research. First, it is imperative for Trang's communities to encourage the active participation of community members to increase their level of involvement during the pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation stages of community activities. Sufficient participation by community members is beneficial to the promotion of the community's cultural-historical value, aesthetic and art value, and entertainment value, as well as preserving the community's natural resources in accordance with the philosophical focus of sustainable tourism development. Second, the stakeholders related to Trang's communities can improve their community development activities by providing local people the opportunity and authority to participate in the community's development process. For example, village leaders can collaborate with village members at the pre-implementation and during the implementation phases of the development of a smart local tourism project. Finally, an in-depth understanding and knowledge of community participation and its influences on tourism should be promoted and enhanced among the community stakeholders from all sectors (e.g., the government, private, and academic sectors).

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

While several significant contributions to the field have been generated by this study, there are some limitations that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the study used a cross-sectional design for data collection, so we are unable to draw causal inferences. Thus, we can merely offer insights into the associations among the variables. Secondly, the research sample only included local people from Trang, Thailand's communities. Therefore, the study's outcomes may not be generalizable to communities elsewhere, whether domestic or international. In order to verify and increase the generalizability of the results from our study, we suggest future studies implement our model with samples of community members drawn from other domestic or international locales. Additionally, future research should seek out additional factors and study their influences on tourism attractiveness and development, as well.

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