



# A Community Based Tourism Model of OTOP Village Champion (OVC): A Case Study of Hat Sompan Village, Ranong Province

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## Abstract

The research aims to study the community based tourism model of OTOP Village Champion (OVC) through a case study of Hat Sompan Village, Ranong Province. The research was conducted qualitatively using 20 respondents, the sample included representatives from the village, community, experts and academics involved with OVC. The research results showed that the OVC management of Hat Sompan Village, Ranong Province has been due to the community synergy to reflect their creative ideas and to develop their resources to be more valuable, enhancing employment and contributing to income generation for their community. The cooperative activities on offer can be alluring to tourists who may visit to experience their community's lifestyle by promoting it as one of the tourist villages. The village's potential can sustain a number of tourists visiting and spending their money in the village where there is a warm hospitality experience and generally a good impression. The linkages between the local wisdom products, cultural arts and lifestyle, have been established under the participation of all concerned stakeholders in the village for their sustainable stability and they all thoroughly contribute to the income distribution of the village's people. The community's stability has been supported through OTOP product development processes in parallel with tourist attraction development so as to promote their creativity and participation under the 4P criteria consisting of: P : Place – Tourism Aspect: to potentially become tourist attractions, P: Product – Product Development Aspect: to develop products to become outstanding OTOP ones, P : People – Community Aspect: to promote the community's strong participation in OTOP village development and P: Preserve – Preservation Aspect: to be capable of preserving the community's identity in a sustainable manner.

**Keywords:** Tourist Village/One Tambon One Product (OTOP), Thailand

## Introduction

Thai tourism driven-direction of the future is required to be developed for stability, prosperity and sustainability. Stability means the ability to drive tourism effectively even though there may be domestic and international crises. Prosperity means that tourism will be generating an income and economic stability to the nation, whereas sustainability means the development of suitable responses to the tourists' requirement' without any negative impacts on the society, environment or the community. Consequently, in order for tourism growth to be quality and sustainability,



the Thai tourism driven-direction has to be capable of responding to the tourism trends of the world market by gaining an increasing market share, creating a tourism balance among higher income gain, spending more, increasing the number of tourist stays and distribution of tourists to other tourism attractions and regions for a more thorough income distribution to local communities. Adopted methods should also include solving urgent problems which are important obstacles going against tourism development. It is also and necessary to increase the capability and competitive advantage of Thai tourism personnel and operators.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports has developed tourism attractions in association with OTOP tourism villages, One Tambon One Product having 3 - 5 star rating quality with tourism capability, and attractive production processes as well as an interesting legendary history together with passionate atmosphere. Thus, the Promotion Agency has referred to OTOP projects as a primary selling point and they are focused on attracting tourists to visit those villages tourism attractions (The Office of Tourism Development, 2006). To sustainably develop the tourism development and OTOP project, it should be effectively built up and developed within each local community instead of being guided by only the government's agencies. The strategic planning process should be bottom- up defined so as to cope with the actual requirements from the people in each community with a clear working or supporting network and especially a needed and appropriate format for sustainable development to result.

As per the current situation, it was found that the producer group of the OTOP project and tourism operator groups, have not actually cooperated with each other but have rather worked on their own without any appropriate and substantial cooperative network being established due to the focusing on mass production with non-diversified product distribution channels. This then causes a large number of over-stocked products, while OTOP producers appear worried as to how to handle unsalable products, how to manage their community identity products and how to drive the OTOP products of each group to attract the tourists' attention until they ultimately opt to purchase such items as souvenirs to take back home.

"Ranong" is the west coast province where the tourists tend to visit for relaxation due to having beautiful natural attractions comparable to other provinces, including silent beaches, and both small and large islands. Ranong is located on the upper southern portion of Thailand along the Andaman Sea, and it is easily linked to the other routes of the southern provinces. In these areas there is a diversified tourism capability in terms of both natural and man-made tourist attractions, historical and cultural attractions and famous mineral resources. In addition, Ranong Province has established a development strategy which is promoting and developing tourism in the area, so that it is becoming a healthy tourism destination. It includes a good development direction in which it has launched tourism promotion activities, and has continuous tourism public relations through various media tools and the promotion of effective 'gift-aways' and souvenir production. Ranong tourism development and promotion thus plays a vital role as it contributes to income gain for the people in its



communities which will further help drive the economic growth of both Ranong and Thailand in general.

In conclusion, the study on the OTOP village champion (OVC) tourism management of Hat Sompan Village, Ranong Province is therefore a promotion and encouragement drive of the community' s participation to strengthen their tourism stability and thoroughly contribute to their own income distribution.

## **Research Objectives**

To study the community based tourism model of OTOP village champion (OVC) through a case study of Hat Sompan Village, Ranong Province.

## **Research Methodology**

This research employed was qualitative in nature and the data was collected from the respondents who were the representatives of the village/community/experts and academics, and the totalled twenty respondents. They were comprised of the representatives from the village/community/OTOP producers, Department of Tourism, OTOP community manufacturers, sub-district administrative organization & provincial administrative organization and academics. The tool used for data collection comprised of an interview questionnaire – via which the idea was to explore the in-depth information pertaining to tourist attractions, tourism types and OTOP products in line with certain tourist attractions and the concept of OTOP Village Champion Project. In addition the focus group discussion were conducted with the invited manufacturers and authorities concerned with the OVC, the representatives from the Department of Tourism, village and community persons, local OTOP manufacturers, sub-district administrative organizations & provincial administrative organizations and academics. Ethical protocols were observed and no respondent was coerced but accepted voluntarily to be involved.

## **Result**

The research result showed that the OVC management of Hat Sompan Village, Ranong Province has been based upon the community synergy and will to reflect their creative ideas in order to develop their resource to be more valuable, enhance employment and contribute to the income gain for their community. The cooperative activities can allure tourists to visit and to learn about their community's lifestyle by promoting it as one of the desired tourism villages. The village's potential can accept a number of tourists visiting and spending there money in the village in an ambience of warm hospitality and where they will likely get a good impression. The linkage between the local 'wisdom' products, cultural arts and lifestyle has been established under the participation process using all concerned in the village for their sustainable stability and they all thoroughly contribute to income distribution for the villagers. The



community's stability has been supported through OTOP product development processes in parallel with tourist attraction development so as to promote their creativity and participation under the 4P criteria consisting of: P: Place – Tourism Aspect: to potentially become tourist attractions, P: Product – Product Development Aspect: to develop products to become an outstanding OTOP ones, P: People – Community Aspect: to promote the community's strong participation in OTOP village development and P: Preserve – Preservation Aspect: to be capable of preserving the community's identity. The followings were the results and findings of the research :

### **History of Hat Sompan Village**

Hat Sompan Village is a small sub-district located in the valley surrounded by Nom Sao mountain. It's name has been distorted from the Chinese word "Huay Sum Pian" meaning "deep into the valley". This area used to be a dense forest area and was a destination where Chinese ancestors tracked the mineral route and gave the place its name "Huay Chan Pian or "Huay Sum Pa" before being distorted to currently being referred to as "Hat Sompan". The sub-district is approximately 8-kilometres away from Ranong's Mueang District and tourists can travel to it by using Phet Kasem Road and then move on to Raksa Varin Public Park (hot spring). It is a village surrounded by various natural resources and the people there are mainly miners. They settled there years ago and have applied the 'sufficiency economy' philosophy of His Majesty King Rama IX as their path of living.

### **Location and Territory**

Hat Sompan Village is located in the east of Ranong's Mueang District on highway no. 4005 (Ranong-Hat Sompan). The highway is an asphalted road which is 7km long and it is also the main route for travelling between Ranong's Mueang District and the village, and it is between Ranong's Mueang District and La-Oun District as well. The village's area is approximately 9,487 rai or 15.18 square kilometres with a total of population of 1,584 persons (House and population statistic according to data base of Ranong Registration Office, 2018).

### **Territory links**

North	Connected to Bang Sangdee Village and Bang Non Subdistrict, Ranong's Mueang District, Ranong Province
South	Connected to Thung Kha Village and Pak Song Subdistrict, Pha Toh District, Chumphon Province
East	Connected to Bang Phra Nue Subdistrict, La-Oun District, Ranong Province
West	Connected to Ngow and Bang Rin Subdistricts, Ranong's Mueang District, Ranong Province



## Highlighting key tourist attractions

### Wat Hat Sompan

Wat Hat Sompan is located at Moo 3, Hat Sompan Sub-district, Ranong's Mueang District, Ranong Province. This is a small temple amongst numerous other famous one's of Ranong which previously used to be a house for priests and it was later promoted to be a temple around about B.E 2473. There is a hexagon stupa (Chedi), 3-meter in width in each corner, established within the temple area which was supposedly built in over 100 years. In B.E 2535, to protect it from any robbery of valuable and sacred items kept in this ancient stupa, Phra Kru Paiboonwuttiyarn considered that the restoration of the stupa was required and the new external stupa was then built to overlap with the old one. In this temple, there is also a pavilion where the statue of Luang Phor Klai, the well-known respectful priest of the Ranong people, who had passed away at this temple, was established.

The stupa in which the Buddha relics were enshrined and worshipped and the Buddha footprint model are also there. The temple's location is in a natural and pleasant environment. Due to it being surrounded by a mountain, the weather there often appears as cold with heavy fog in the morning, whereas Hat Sompan Canal, the source of a single brook carp (Pla Phluang), flows along the temple's perimeter. Pla Phluang is a spicy fish in the same mould as Thai Carp or Silver Barb (Pla Tapian), which is a big fish of up to 2.1kg with a small head, two feelers and a brown-green body and it lives in big shoals. It is generally found in clear clean big rivers such as foothill water resources or waterfall brooklets. The fish is one of the most attractive items of the temple due to its large numbers but it is not consumed since it is considered to be a holy fish and it is believed that anyone consuming it will be 'drugged'. However, as per the scientific proof, such a symptom arises since it accumulates toxins from eating grain and people will possibly then be drugged after consuming this species of fish.

Outstanding activities of value to tourists at this temple include paying respect to the Luang Phor Khlai statue, the well-known priest of the Southern people, and sightseeing tours to absorb the ambience of the temple located in the midst of pristine nature. Furthermore, tourists can also relax at the pavilion and enjoy feeding Pla Phluang in the nearby river.



**Image 1:** Wat Hat Sompan

Source: Hat Sompan Subdistrict Administrative Organization

### **Hat Sompan Reservoir**

Hat Sompan Reservoir is located in Hat Sompan Sub-district, Ranong's Mueang District, Ranong province and it is on the same route to Raksa Varin Hot Waterfall and Wat Hat Sompan. The reservoir has a water containing capacity of 10 million sq. meter from which the people nearby can utilize water for their agriculture, rubber, palm oil plantations and orchards. It is also another resource of raw water for water supply to people living in Ranong's Mueang District. With its beautiful scenery and highland location surrounded by a green valley and peaceful atmosphere, the reservoir becomes a popular relaxing place for tourists where especially after rainfall, there sometimes appears a light fog-line drifting along the mountain slope.



**Image 2:** Hat Sompan Reservoir

## Ranong Canyon

Upon arrival at Hat Sompan, the tourist attraction that should not be missed is “Ranong Canyon” where there used to be a tin mine. This is another natural tourist attraction for relaxing during both morning and evening periods, since it is surrounded by a mountain and white stone. In the morning, tourists can see water seemingly chasing after the fog while water tide is slowly and gradually drifting up from the swamp when it is evaporated by the sunlight. Here, tourists can enjoy fish feeding since there are many species of fish living in this swamp. These include inter alia Pla Phluang, red carp, catfish, etc. and there are some fish food supply shops near this area as well which make obtaining fish food easier.



**Image 3:** Ranong Canyon  
Source: <http://travel.mthai.com>

In winter, tourists can see a foggy sea, and sunrise in the morning and enjoy the beautiful scenery of nature on Hat Sompan Dam.



**Image 4:** The Scenic Point on Hat Sompan Dam

## OTOP Products of Hat Sompan Village

OTOP products and selling sources: Hat Sompan Sub-district is the source of best white clay in Asia. In B.E 2550, Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi undertook a co-research of Hat Sompan white clay and searched for a formula of clay to be applied to other sites. The knowledge transfer of clay mixture methods, free-form sculpting and slip-casting was later passed on to people there until they learned how to make ceramics from white clay. The ceramic group of producers was then set up and the ceramic products were further

developed to be OTOP one's coming from the local community. Apart from these ceramics, there are also other types of products such as tourists' souvenirs including salted eggs, and cattail brooms, etc.



**Image 6:** OTOP Products of Hat Sompan Village

In addition, when visiting Hat Sompan village, tourists can stop for a Thai dining experience at “Somchoke Restaurant” which is located at Hat Sompan Sub-district, Ranong’s Mueang District, Ranong Province. The restaurant is open from 09.00-19.00 hrs. The recommended menu consists of amongst other tasty items, stir fried sataw bean with shrimp and sour soup with lotus stems and yellow catfish.



**Image 7:** Restaurant (Authors)

The tourists visiting Hat Sompan Village can relax in nature at Khuen Homestay located at the riverside of Hat Sompan Canal, Ban Hat Sompan, Ranong's Mueang District, Ranong Province where the current daily room charge is Baht 590..



**Image 8:** Homestay at Hat Sompan Village (Authors)

Hat Sompan people have always participated in conserving their significant traditional festivals. The Hat Sompan annual festivals consist of the Ceremony of Covering Saffron Colored Sashes on the Stupa, in which the Buddha relics were enshrined and worshipped, and this is held once a year, the celebration of Luang Phor Khlai Statue held three times a year and the Worship Ceremony of Phor Ta Luang Kaew which is held annually.

### **Conclusion and discussion**

The community based tourism model of OTOP Village Champion (OVC) of Hat Sompan Village has been conducted under the 4P criteria: P: Place – Tourism Aspect, Hat Sompan Village was deemed by its potential, to be worthy of promotion as one of the key tourist attractions due to its unique identity including the tin mine or Ranong Canyon, Hat Sompan Reservoir and Wat Hat. This is in line with the research of Ekgnarong Vorasiha (2018) on the “Travelling Route for Gastronomic Tourism via Salt in the Western Region of Thailand” showing that in every province of Thailand, has its own particular identity and uniqueness to enable it to become a valued tourist attraction. Moreover, the identity of the food culture in western of Thailand could be divided into 2 groups: 1) the coastal cluster, and 2) the cluster relying on food resources from rivers, hills and agricultural lands.

After grouping each province based on its identity and uniqueness, the interesting new tourist attractions can be linked to the existing ones in each province for improving the tourism model, and offerings to tourists. P : Product Development Aspect: Hat Sompan Village has an outstanding OTOP product in its white ceramics that is based on the knowledge assets gained from the research result conducted based on the cooperation between the village people and the educational institute, in



efforts to developing its local white clay to become a local products. This would be together with the knowledge transfer in which people are taught to produce ceramics as a tourism product. This notion is also in line with the research of Atchara Srilachai and Phukruek Buasorn (2018) on the “Guidelines of Sustainable Tourism Management for Community-Based Tourism” finding that the community had its own potential for tourism management and the need to establish a learning center and local tourist attractions.

Moreover, according to the research of Bonggoch Sutas Na Ayudhya et al. (2018) on the “Development of Handicrafts to Promote Tawai Village Community – Based Tourism”, from which the findings revealed that the creation of a handicrafts’ identity into a brand storytelling exercise, increased products’ values, marketing support and creative ideas for Tawai Village’s handicrafts development and tourism in general. P: People – Community Aspect, the participation of community people in the village development was presented via the conservation and preservation of cultural arts, tourist attractions i.e. Wat Hat Sompan in which the stupa (Chedi) enshrined with the Buddha relics was established, the Buddha footprint, and the temple areas in the midst of nature. This was in line with the research of Atchara Srilachai and Phukruek Buasorn (2018) on the “Guidelines of Sustainable Tourism Management for Community-Based Tourism” who ascertained that the community had its potential to run tourism activities and was ready to establish a learning center and tourist attractions.

This was also in line with the study of Phithoon Thong-Chim (2014) on “Tourism Cooperation Management of Lan Ta Island Community in Krabi Province” where it was revealed that the tourism cooperation between government authorities and private sector stakeholders including the community is gaining tourism interest and has contributed to the community. The community leader’s role was significant for effective community tourism management to exist as well.

In addition, the findings are also in line with the research of Natthaporn Dokboonnak and Thapakorn Thongkhamnuch (2013) who revealed that in view of the community participation, local people played a much more important role in tourism management, especially for the place aspect, P: Preserve – Conservation Aspect. The village has been capable of maintaining its local identity and the ‘sufficiency economy philosophy’ has also been applied by the local people for their livelihood generation.

The village people have participated in conserving the important traditional festivals such as the Hat Sompan Annual Festivals, the Ceremony of Covering Saffron Colored Sashes on the Stupa enshrined with the Buddha’s relics held once a year, the Celebration of Luang Phor Khlai’s Statue held three times a year and Worship Ceremony of Phor Ta Luang Kaew which is held once a year which was then in line with the research findings of Suthee Sert-Sri (2014) on “Guidelines of Tourism Development and Management for Khlong Khone Community”. In this study



importance was placed on conservation of mangrove forests in the community by educating the local people to be more aware of forest conservation and its importance for biodiversity and ecological sustainability. They also learned to apply the 'sufficiency economy philosophy for' their daily living activities.

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