



# Tourism Micro-Cluster Model for Sustainable Community Development:

## A Case Study of Kubua Subdistrict, Ratchaburi Province

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Received: 30 June 2025; Revised: 28 October 2025; Accepted: 3 November 2025; Available Online: 18 December 2025

### Abstract

The Kubua community in Ratchaburi, Thailand, is a tourism-based village currently facing a decline in visitors as the community development drives with small group of local leaders, lacks infrastructure development and has little effort to create value-added to products. This study aimed to assess the village's situation and develop a tourism micro-cluster model to revitalize the local economy. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources and analyzed using the Resource-Based View (RBV), PESTEL, SWOT, and TOWS frameworks. This study utilized a qualitative approach, proceeding semi-structure interviews with 33 key informants based on purposive sampling. The main key informants were local entrepreneurs, community leaders, civil servants and government officials from the Kubua Subdistrict Administrative Organization. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, participatory observation, and secondary sources. The findings revealed that the model comprises seven integrated local businesses, centered around homestay as the primary income-generating activity. These main businesses are complemented by other key activities including: storytelling cultural tour, Kubua textile weaving workshops, wooden product workshops, cooking class, art class and organic farming tour, which is recommended for use in village development planning. Successful implementation will require support from local government, particularly in providing technical assistance in areas such as training, marketing, and financial management.

**Keywords:** Tourism Micro-Cluster, Resource-Based View, Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, Clustering Theory, Community Development

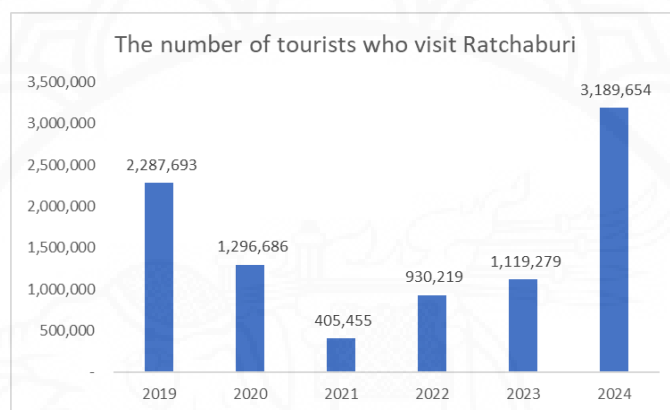
### Introduction

The 13<sup>th</sup> National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023–2027) serves as a key mechanism to realize the vision of ‘Thailand as a stable, prosperous, and sustainable country, developed under the philosophy of the Sufficiency Economy’. The plan aims to transform Thailand into a developed society with a sustainable, value-driven economy. In the tourism sector, Thailand is identified as a strategic priority, with a focus on enhancing quality and promoting sustainability. Historically, tourism has played a vital role in generating both direct and indirect national revenue. However, in terms of income distribution, tourism remains highly concentrated in major cities—accounting for approximately 98% of all tourism activity—resulting in inefficient income distribution to secondary cities” (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, Office of the Prime Minister, 2023).

In the tourism sector, the Department of Local Administration has introduced four key government policies: 1) enhancing goods and services by upgrading local residents’ capabilities, restaurants, and community-based tourism activities to meet Thai tourism standards, while also developing the potential of tourism personnel to align with these standards, 2) developing tourist attractions through creative network integration, promoting world heritage sites and ancient cities, and exploring lesser-known or “unseen” destinations, 3) creating tourism routes that reflect local identities, forming package tours, and promoting travel from urban areas to rural communities to offer new experiences rooted in local history, culture, and ways of life, and 4) improving infrastructure and

facilities by developing transportation systems that support increasing tourist numbers and enhance connectivity between key destinations (Department of Local Administration, 2024).

Ratchaburi, located in western Thailand, is a key center for agricultural and processed agricultural products, which form the backbone of its economy (Ratchaburi Provincial Office, n.d.). Geographically, the province features a diverse landscape of mountains, plateaus, and plains, rich in natural resources that support tourism development and income generation. According to the Ratchaburi Data Catalog, Ratchaburi Provincial Statistical Office (n.d.), the number of tourists—both domestic and international—has shown a fluctuating trend over the years. Notably, in 2021, tourist numbers dropped significantly to a low of 405,455 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, by 2024, tourism in Ratchaburi rebounded, reaching a peak of 3,189,654 visitors, as illustrated in the figure below:



**Figure 1** The Number of Tourists Who Visit Ratchaburi.

**Source:** Ratchaburi Data Catalog, Ratchaburi Provincial Statistical Office (n.d.)

Kubua, a historically rich community, is located in Ratchaburi, Thailand. It is an ancient city dating back to the Dvaravati era, once serving as a port city in the Mae Klong River basin and a hub for economic trade. Around 200 years ago, in 2345 B.E. (1702 CE), King Buddha Yot Fa Chulalongkorn the Great (Rama I) ordered the relocation of Chiang Saen residents to Ratchaburi after the Burmese army sought refuge in Chiang Saen to launch attacks on northern cities (Wichiranon, 2021). Kubua represents the northern cultural influence in the region, reflected in its local wisdom, language, traditional attire, and especially in its renowned textile craft, “Sin Teen Chok” weaving—a symbol of Tai-Yuan identity and uniqueness (Ratchaburi Community Development Provincial Office, 2024).

The community hosts the popular Kubua Market (Kad Kubua) at Khlong Suwannakhiri Temple, where tourists can enjoy authentic northern Thai culture, observe local ways of life, and experience traditional Thai dance. However, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kubua has seen a significant decline in tourism, leading to an economic downturn. Several factors have likely contributed to this challenge:

1. Tourism development has largely been driven by a small group of local leaders, with limited broader community involvement.
2. The government has faced challenges in implementing effective tourism management strategies, and there remains a lack of adequate infrastructure to support sustainable growth.
3. There has been little effort to enhance the value of local products, leading to a decline in tourism-related income. This decline has brought significant economic challenges to the local community. With fewer visitors, businesses that once thrived on tourism are now struggling, and the stable income that previously supported local

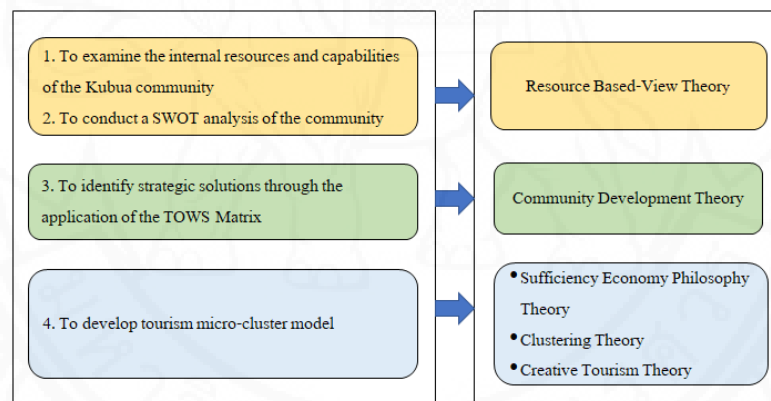


livelihoods has sharply decreased. To address this, it is essential to promote community-based tourism by encouraging active participation from local residents. Developing tourism activities that reflect the community's cultural and natural heritage, traditional ways of life, and local wisdom—elements that embody the community's unique identity and charm—can help generate sustainable income and revitalize the local economy. This research selected Kubua Subdistrict in Ratchaburi province as a case study because Kubua is a historical city possessing a unique identity and culture. Furthermore, Ratchaburi province is dominant in agriculture and boasts diverse tourism resources. Nowadays, the Kubua community is confronting an economic recession, particularly among local entrepreneurs. Therefore, the researchers are interested in community development and the development of a tourism micro-cluster model.

Therefore, this study aims to: 1) examine the internal resources and capabilities of the Kubua community, 2) conduct a SWOT analysis of the community, 3) identify strategic solutions through the application of the TOWS Matrix, and 4) develop a tourism micro-cluster model based on the case study of Kubua Subdistrict. Drawing on the concept of tourism micro-cluster models for rural development, this study integrates community activities with available resources under the philosophy of the Sufficiency Economy. This approach aims to establish sustainable tourist attractions that generate income and help reduce poverty among local villagers (Tapachai, 2019).

### Conceptual Framework

Based on the four objectives and five theories, the researchers synthesized the research conceptual framework, as illustrated in Figure 2.



**Figure 2** Conceptual Framework Diagram.

Source: Authors.

### Literature Review

#### 1. Resource-Based View Theory

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory defines resource management within organizations as a means to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Resource readiness is a critical factor, with emphasis placed on leveraging unique and hard-to-imitate resources to create distinctive value. This enables entrepreneurs to maximize resource utilization in response to changes in the external environment (Kraiwong, 2021, p. 12). According to Barney (1991), RBV serves as an economic tool for analyzing organizational performance through business strategy and strategic management. He identifies four key characteristics of resources that contribute to sustained competitive advantage: 1) valuable resources, 2) rare resources, 3) imperfectly imitable resources, and 4) non-substitutable resources.

Moreover, the Resource-Based View (RBV) emphasizes internal resources and capabilities as the foundation for achieving sustainable competitive advantage. A firm's ability to add value within the customer value chain is a key determinant of this advantage (Madhani, 2010). Resources and capabilities are generally classified into two categories: tangible—including financial, physical, technological, and organizational assets—and intangible, such as human capital, innovation, and reputation (Madhani, 2010; Barney, 1991). Additionally, in the context of tourism, tangible cultural resources can be transformed into intangible cultural assets through interpretation and experience, further enhancing their value (Kitiwinit et al., 2023; Richards, 2009).

Applying the Resource-Based View (RBV) to rural development, community-based tourism serves not only as a mechanism for transforming rural villages into tourism destinations but also as a strategic approach to addressing key challenges such as poverty alleviation, cultural heritage preservation, and environmental conservation (Wardana et al., 2020; Ertuna & Kırbaş, 2012). Furthermore, well-organized tourism destinations can enhance competitiveness through the following advantages: 1) generating tourist expenditure, 2) attracting and sustaining tourist interest, 3) providing satisfying visitor experiences, 4) prioritizing environmental sustainability, and 5) contributing to the welfare and development of the local community (Wardana et al., 2020; Ferreira & Castro, 2020).

## **2. Sufficient Economy Philosophy (SEP)**

The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), established by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand (King Rama IX) in 1981, is a development framework derived from his extensive experience in addressing the needs of the Thai people. SEP serves as a guideline for behavior and decision-making at all levels—individual, family, community, governmental, and national. It promotes a balanced and sustainable path to development, particularly in the context of globalization and rapid change (Prasongthan, 2024; Srisakaew & Vichairum, 2019). At its core, SEP emphasizes a holistic and balanced approach to well-being and quality of life. It is founded on three key principles: moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity, and it is guided by two essential conditions: morality and knowledge.

In the tourism sector, the national strategy integrates the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) as a core development approach, aiming to enhance Thailand's global competitiveness. This vision focuses on five key areas: 1) increasing value-added in agriculture in terms of both quantity and quality, 2) promoting advanced innovation and technology in industry, 3) creating new value through diverse and future-oriented tourist attractions, 4) developing infrastructure and digital networks, and 5) supporting modern entrepreneurs to adapt to rapidly changing market demands (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, National Strategy Secretariat Office, 2018). When applied to rural community development, SEP emphasizes balance, stability, and sustainability across economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions. This approach fosters self-immunity and self-reliance among community members, ultimately creating long-term benefits and resilience for local communities.

## **3. Clustering Theory**

Clustering theory refers to a geographically concentrated network of interconnected firms, related entities, and institutions that collectively foster the development of specialized knowledge, shared resources, support services, a skilled workforce, and a reliable supplier base (European Commission, Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry, 2008). This theory emphasizes collaboration among entrepreneurs and communities located within close proximity. The clustering concept promotes the strategic development of resource supply, infrastructure,



marketing, information, and labor skills to stimulate regional and local development, reduce operational costs, and enhance competitive advantage. According to Michael (2007), there are three main approaches to clustering:

1) **Horizontal Clustering:** This involves the co-location of similar firms—often competitors—that offer identical or comparable products or services. As more companies operate within the same area, customer choice increases, driving sales, while the shared labor market helps reduce operational costs.

2) **Vertical Clustering:** This type of clustering integrates firms along the production and distribution chain, from suppliers to consumers. It enables the consolidation of processes to reduce distribution and labor costs and encourages specialization.

3) **Diagonal Clustering:** Diagonal clustering brings together complementary firms that enhance the overall value of the tourism experience. Each business contributes unique, value-added services, creating a bundled offering that tourists consume as a single, integrated product. This approach maximizes synergies between different sectors and increases the collective advantage of co-location.

In this research, the tourism micro-cluster model for a small community is based on the concept of diagonal clustering. For localized economic development and small-scale tourism growth, the model leverages existing community resources by organizing tourism-related activities and businesses into a co-located network of complementary services. These activities are integrated along a diagonal value chain, adding value through collaboration rather than competition. As such, the tourism micro-cluster focuses on enhancing the overall visitor experience and stimulating economic growth within a specific geographic area by fostering synergy among diverse, yet interrelated, tourism-related enterprises.

#### 4. Creative Tourism Theory

According to creative tourism theory, Crispin Raymond and Greg Richards define creative tourism as a form of tourism that offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential by actively participating in learning-based experiences in specific cultural settings. These experiences may include activities such as cooking, arts and crafts classes, and hands-on engagement with local lifestyles, allowing tourists to gain a deeper understanding of cultural identity through direct experience (Prasongthan, 2024). Moreover, creative tourism emphasizes value creation through local history, culture, community ways of life, and the unique identity of a place. Unlike traditional tourism, its primary focus is not on maximizing revenue but on enriching community-based activities (Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017). This approach represents a new direction in tourism that promotes cultural exchange and serves as a means of fostering appreciation for cultural diversity. By encouraging interaction between communities and tourists, creative tourism supports the conservation of local uniqueness, stimulates the consumption of cultural and creative products, and showcases the community's strengths to the outside world (Prasongthan, 2024).

Creative tourism contributes to transforming tangible cultural resources into intangible cultural assets, serving as a foundation for innovation. Therefore, creative tourism is essential for community-based tourism, as it involves designing engaging, participatory activities that allow tourists to develop their potential through meaningful learning experiences and cultural exchange.

#### 5. Community Development Theory

Community development theory provides a foundational framework for creating models, guidelines, activities, and projects that foster active community participation in self-directed development, with support from the government. The theory emphasizes building the capacity of local people and establishing appropriate criteria



through democratic processes. Furthermore, the government plays a key role in encouraging community engagement by creating opportunities for villagers to brainstorm, express their ideas, and identify development priorities based on the community's genuine needs and strengths (Setkij, 2020; Puangngam, 2010).

Sustainable development is built upon three interrelated pillars: social, economic, and environmental sustainability, commonly referred to as ESG. The social dimension focuses on human development by promoting knowledge, competency, increased productivity, social equity, and the establishment of a socially engaged, learning society. The economic dimension emphasizes improving the quality of life for employees and stakeholders, ensuring fair income distribution, and enhancing opportunities for low-income populations to benefit from economic growth. The environmental dimension prioritizes ecological sustainability through the conservation and restoration of natural resources, reducing environmental degradation, and promoting eco-friendly practices, including minimizing pollution (Setkij, 2020; United Nations, 1987).

Drawing on the concepts of RBV, SEP, cluster theory, creative tourism theory, and community development theory, the tourism micro-cluster is defined as a network of interconnected businesses and activities that collaboratively utilize local resources and capabilities to generate income and promote sustainable community development.

## Methodology

This research adopts an action research methodology, a practical and participatory approach aimed at solving problems and improving practices within real-world settings. The study seeks to connect local skills and community products through collaboration among villagers, community leaders, and government agencies. The methodology is aligned with the study's objectives: to serve as a guideline and develop a business model that promotes cultural tourism in the Tai-Yuan ethnic community. This model aims to attract tourists to a secondary city, thereby stimulating the local economy and generating sustainable income for the community.

### 1. Research Operation

This research was conducted to develop a tourism micro-cluster model for the Kubua community in Ratchaburi Province. The research process followed these steps:

**Step 1:** Conducted semi-structured interviews with local entrepreneurs and community leaders, and organized a focus group with village health volunteers to explore the community's resources and capabilities. Additionally, interviews were held with civil servants and government officials from the Kubua Subdistrict Administrative Organization. The researcher also engaged in participatory observation to gain deeper insights into the community's context, including archaeological sites, local hospitality, and the surrounding environment.

**Step 2:** Performed data coding from the interviews and categorized the responses by identifying themes and relationships in the key informants' wording.

**Step 3:** Analyzed the data using the Resource-Based View framework, along with PESTELI analysis, SWOT analysis, and TOWS matrix to assess internal and external factors.

**Step 4:** Developed the tourism micro-cluster model as a guideline for integrating local businesses and tourism-related activities.

**Step 5:** Presented the research findings to the Kubua Subdistrict Administrative Organization to receive feedback and suggestions for refining the model.



## 2. Key Informants

Data collection is from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews using purposive sampling with a total of 33 key informants, consisting of 20 community entrepreneurs, 2 community leaders, 1 officer from the Ratchaburi Provincial Development Office, 6 village health volunteers, and 4 civil servants and government officials from the Kubua Subdistrict Administrative Organization. Secondary data were obtained from government documents, community annual reports, academic journals, websites, and theses.

## 3. Research Tools

Research tools for collecting primary data included: 1) semi-structured interviews, and 2) participatory observation. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with community entrepreneurs and leaders, as well as focus group discussions, following the research objectives to synthesize the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for developing creative tourism activities. Additionally, participatory observation was conducted by the researcher during the interviews and through direct observation of the community's environment.

## 4. Data Analysis

The researcher used records from semi-structured interviews and participatory observation as primary sources in the community, applying a qualitative synthesis process through content analysis. Moreover, the study was enhanced by documentation as a secondary data. To ensure the credibility and validity of the data, the researcher employed triangulation methodology, comparing multiple data sources to verify the accuracy and reliability of findings within the context of qualitative research. As a foundational concept in social science and behavioral research, triangulation is essential for ensuring the validity and trustworthiness of findings (Bootnoi et al., 2024; Blaikie, 1991). Specifically, data source triangulation was executed by collecting and verifying information through six dimensions: 1) observation and semi-structured interviews, 2) cross-checking public versus private accounts from informants, 3) evaluating temporal consistency in participant responses within the same context, 4) comparing perspectives among various involved stakeholders on the studied phenomena, 5) triangulating data between participant interviews and official documents, and 6) validating identical data points across different research participants (Thinganjana, 2015; Nopkesorn, 2005).

Furthermore, participant feedback plays a crucial role in validating and refining the data gathered through triangulation. It identifies gaps and misinterpretations by comparing interview data with observation and document analysis, thereby pinpointing flaws in the original data source and suggesting the inclusion of new data for triangulation. Thus, this process highlights any phenomena that may have been initially overlooked.

## 5. Data Timeframes

The researchers conducted four site visits to Kubua Subdistrict, Ratchaburi Province, to collect data. The data collection sequence, which included semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, a focus group, and the presentation of research findings, is detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1** Timeframes of Data Collection

| Date  | Data Collection Methods and Participants  |
|---|---|
| 23 <sup>rd</sup> – 24 <sup>th</sup> November 2024 | Semi-Structured Interview and Participatory Observation with<br>1) local entrepreneur, 2) community leaders, and 3) health village volunteers |
| 14 <sup>th</sup> December 2024                    | Semi-Structured Interview with Ratchaburi Provincial Development  |
| 27 <sup>th</sup> December 2024                    | Focus Group Discussion with the executives<br>and civil servant of Kubua Administrative Organization  |
| 14 <sup>th</sup> March 2025                       | Presentation of the Tourism Micro-Cluster Model Findings<br>to Kubua Administrative Organization to examine the possibility                   |

Source: Authors.

## Results

The researcher concludes four objectives merging with outcomes and expected impacts of tourism micro cluster-model as follows:

**Table 2** Summary Table of Objectives, Outcomes and Expected Impacts

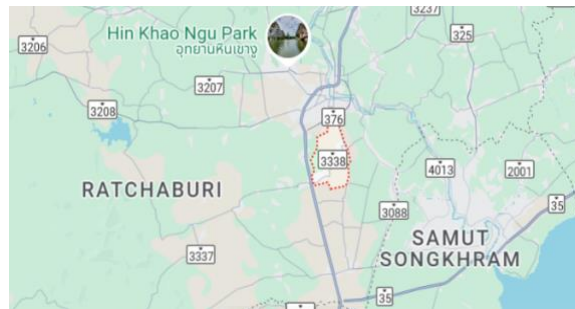
| Objectives  | Outcomes  | Expected impacts  |
|---|---|---|
| 1.<br>To examine the internal resources<br>and capabilities of the Kubua community                            | The researchers analyzed the data<br>using the Resource-Based View<br>(RBV) and PESTELI framework.      | To analyze the community's tangible<br>and intangible resource and using<br>PESTELI analysis to assess<br>the macro – environment factors           |
| 2.<br>To conduct a SWOT analysis<br>of the community  | The researchers analyzed<br>the internal and external factors<br>via SWOT analysis.                     | To comprehend the community's current<br>situation through the analysis of internal<br>and external factors   |
| 3.<br>To identify strategic solutions through<br>the application of the TOWS Matrix                           | The researchers formulated strategic<br>recommendations using<br>the TOWS Matrix                        | To generate various strategic options<br>for promoting and addressing<br>the community's challenges.  |
| 4.<br>To develop the possible tourism micro-<br>cluster model based on the case study<br>of Kubua Subdistrict | The researchers created a model<br>to serve as a guideline for the<br>Kubua Administrative Organization | To facilitate the creation of a tourism<br>micro-cluster model based on local<br>wisdom and community identity<br>to distribute income effectively. |

Source: Authors.

### 1. Geography and Location of the Village

Kubua village is nestled in Mueang District, Ratchaburi Province, in the western region of Thailand. It is located approximately 117 kilometers from Bangkok and is bordered by neighboring provinces in a clockwise direction: Kanchanaburi, Nakhon Pathom, Samut Sakhon, Samut Songkhram, and Phetchaburi. To the west, it shares a border with Myanmar. The village comprises 15 communities, 3,764 households, and a total population of 11,101 people. It falls under the jurisdiction of the Kubua Subdistrict Administrative Organization, which oversees local social infrastructure, including 5 schools, 7 temples, 2 healthcare centers, and 1 police patrol station. Approximately 80 percent of the population is engaged in agriculture, while the remainder work in various occupations such as entrepreneurship and general employment (Kubua Subdistrict Administrative Organization, 2022).





**Figure 3** Location of the Studied Village.

Source: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/fthVNo19vShqUJCg8>

## 2. Resources of the Community

Primary and secondary data were analyzed using the RBV, PESTELI, and SWOT frameworks to identify the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Following this analysis, the TOWS Matrix was applied to formulate strategic recommendations, as follows:

### 2.1 Tangible Resources

**2.1.1 Agriculture:** In Kubua Subdistrict, most villagers are engaged in rice farming, with some also cultivating coconut. Notably, there is one organic farm in the area that grows vegetables and fruits and produces bio-extracts for use as natural fertilizer.

### 2.2 Intangible Resources

**2.2.1 Culture:** Kubua retains cultural identity and traditions influenced by its historical connection to Chiang Saen. The area is rich in archaeological heritage from the Dvaravati era, with 44 archaeological sites identified as significant evidence of this ancient civilization. However, only 23 of these sites were excavated in 1963 (2506 B.E.) by the Fine Arts Department (Ratchaburi Fine Arts Department 1). Based on observation, most of the sites are in a state of decay, with the exception of Archaeological Site No. 18 at Khlong Suwankhiri Temple and Site No. 8 at Kubua Temple, both of which have been reconstructed and are accessible for visitors.

**2.2.2 Leadership:** Village leaders in Kubua possess a broad vision and are committed to proactive community development.

**2.2.3 Craftsmanship:** The village is known for two significant forms of craftsmanship: Kubua-style textiles and wooden products. Nearly every household owns a loom for weaving textiles, a skill passed down from mothers to their children from a young age. In addition, some villagers craft wooden kitchenware and local musical instruments, continuing a tradition that has been handed down through generations.

**2.2.4 Artists:** Two households in the village offer drawing and painting lessons to children and interested community members. Another household specializes in making textile mobile decorations in the shape of *Jasmine Jungle Flame* flowers, which are believed to bring good fortune when displayed in temples or homes.

**2.2.5 Human Resources:** Local residents possess tacit knowledge rooted in local wisdom. They are known for their hospitality and strong work ethic. However, to enhance their roles as community entrepreneurs, training is needed in areas such as marketing, customer service, technology, and communication. The community holds a positive attitude toward tourism and recognizes its potential to generate additional income.

**2.2.6 Community Identity:** The village reflects the northern cultural heritage of the Tai-Yuan people, expressed through traditional Thai dance, the use of a local dialect, and the preparation of local cuisine.



### **3. PESTELI Analysis of the Macro – Environment Factors**

#### **Politics**

- 20-Year National Strategies: The Tourism Authority of Thailand is responsible for implementing goals under the national master plan, with KPIs focusing on three main objectives: 1) increasing tourism's contribution to GDP, 2) boosting tourism revenue in secondary cities, and 3) enhancing Thailand's tourism competitiveness.
- The 13<sup>th</sup> National Economic and Social Development Plan: This plan identifies four tourism-related goals: 1) establishing Thailand as a destination for quality and sustainable tourism, 2) positioning Thailand as a hub for medical and high-value healthcare tourism, 3) developing a high-performance workforce that continuously learns and adapts to future needs, and 4) creating a modern, efficient tourism system that meets tourists' evolving expectations.
- Tourism Authority of Thailand Enterprise Plan 2023–2027: This plan focuses on upgrading tourism standards to enhance tourist confidence and perceived value. Key components include ensuring the safety of life and property, delivering high-quality services, and promoting environmental responsibility.
- Enhancing Tourism Industry Competitiveness: The strategy aims to restore tourism as a key driver of national economic growth by increasing industry competitiveness. A strong emphasis is placed on equitable income distribution, particularly in secondary cities, with a focus on reducing inequality and promoting sustainable development to ensure tourism that is safe, enjoyable, and reliable.

#### **Economy**

- Tourism Stimulus Measures – “Half-Half Thailand” Project: This initiative involves cost-sharing between the government and the public, where the government subsidizes 50% of tourism expenses, encouraging domestic travel and boosting local economies.
- The tourism sector remains a major contributor to Thailand's economy. In 2024, the increase in foreign tourist arrivals, supported by visa exemptions and government-led tourism promotion, resulted in a 34% rise in national income driven by tourism demand.
- The government and private sector have collaborated on policies and marketing plans aimed at stimulating the economy by encouraging tourists to increase their spending.

#### **Social**

- Event tourism attracts special interest groups and serves as a hub for gatherings, stimulating local economic activities, promoting income distribution, and significantly contributing to economic growth at the community level.
- Wellness tourism is gaining popularity, particularly in the post-COVID-19 era, and shows strong growth potential as more travelers seek health-focused and rejuvenating experiences.
- Both Thai and foreign tourists increasingly engage in religious and cultural tourism, which enhances the potential for sustainable community tourism.

#### **Technology**

- Digital marketing tools are used to better analyze and target specific tourist groups, allowing for more precise and effective promotional strategies. Technology is also integrated throughout the Tourist Journey to enhance service quality and the overall tourist experience.
- The development of multiple digital platforms enables easier access to tourism information, resulting in more effective public relations and faster communication with a broader audience.



### **Environment**

- In response to climate change, there is increasing emphasis on sustainable energy use in transportation and tourism, aligning with long-term environmental sustainability goals.
- As awareness of climate change grows, tourists are becoming more conscious of their environmental impact and are adjusting their travel behavior toward more sustainable and eco-friendly practices.
- Ecotourism plays a key role in raising awareness and fostering responsibility among tourists, local communities, relevant agencies, and stakeholders. It encourages the protection and sustainable management of both natural and cultural attractions.

### **Legal**

- The Community Enterprise Act of 2005 (2548 B.E.) supports the formation and operation of community enterprises. This law promotes the use of local resources for developing products and services that respond to market demands and community needs, thereby enhancing grassroots economic development.

### **Industry**

- TAT is encouraged to advance the tourism industry toward high-value and sustainable tourism by setting gold standards and promoting environmental consciousness among tourism operators.
- Intense competition—both direct and indirect—from surrounding urban trade businesses has resulted in declining sales for local community vendors.

## **4. SWOT and TOWS Analysis of the Community**

**SWOT:** SWOT analysis is an analytical tool used to identify internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats). In this study, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and engaged in participatory observation within the Kubua community to assess both its internal resources and environmental context, as well as external influences from government documents, national strategies, government policies and community reports. The analysis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the community's current situation, summarized as follows:

**Table 3** SWOT Analysis

| <b>Strengths</b>                        | <b>Opportunities</b>   |
|---|--|
| 1. Rich cultural heritage               | 1. National tourism strategies emphasize attracting quality tourists and diversifying tourism experiences.                           |
| 2. Abundant local wisdom                | 2. Government soft-power policies promote the 5Fs—Food, Film, Fashion, Fighting, and Festival—as key drivers of the tourism economy. |
| 3. Proximity to Ratchaburi city         | 3. Promotion of homestays offers an avenue to showcase local culture, traditions, and wisdom.  |
| 4. Hospitable and hard-working people   | 4. Unique community identity can be leveraged by adding value to natural products and local cuisine.                                 |
| 5. Strong community openness to tourism | 5. Digital transformation and innovation initiatives create opportunities for enhanced service and outreach.                         |
|   | 6. Use of social media platforms and influencer marketing can effectively increase the visibility of local tourism offerings.        |

**Table 3** (Cont.)

| Weaknesses  | Threats  |
|---|--|
| 1. Decrease in the younger generation inheriting local wisdom | 1. The economic recession is reducing the purchasing power of the population.  |
| 2. Limited involvement from community leadership              | 2. The government's policy of increasing the minimum wage may lead to higher production costs, lower product quality, and reduced employment opportunities in the agricultural sector. |
| 3. Lack of recognition as a tourism-based community           | 3. The expansion of modern trade businesses has intensified competition, resulting in a decline in sales for local community convenience stores.                                       |
| 4. Limited understanding of tourist expectations              |  |
| 5. Insufficient budgetary support                             |  |
| 6. Absence of integrated tourism efforts                      |  |

Source: Authors.

**TOWS:** TOWS is a strategic planning tool for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, which combines the factors to develop strategic options. The researcher uses TOWS analysis following SWOT because the TOWS matrix uses the insight from SWOT analysis to generate different strategic options by using internal factors to take advantage of external factors as follows:

**Table 4** TOWS Analysis

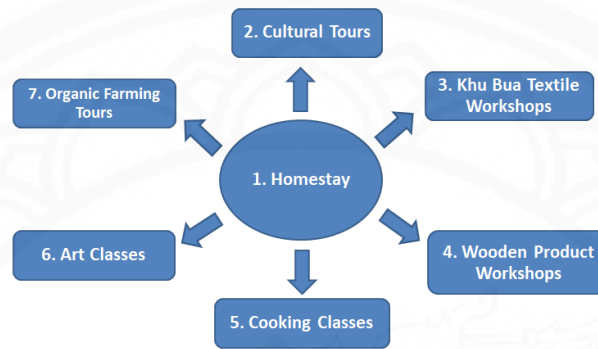
|   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (S5, O3, O4)<br/>Improve the landscape of the Kubua Community to attract tourists.</li> <li>• (S1, S2, S5, O1, O2)<br/>Organize local cultural activities as part of integrated tourism.</li> <li>• (S1, S2, O6)<br/>Collaborate with government sectors to engage influencers in promoting Thai tourism through social media, in line with national tourism promotion policies.</li> <li>• (S3, S5, O3, O6)<br/>Promote local homestays that offer immersive cultural experiences, including local ways of life, by leveraging social media platforms for wider reach.</li> <li>• (S4, O4, O5)<br/>Develop human capital in the Kubua textile industry to provide one-stop services, supported by digital tools and innovation initiatives from the government sector.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (W3, O1, O2)<br/>Develop a strategic positioning plan for the Kubua Community to establish it as a tourism destination and increase household income.</li> <li>• (W5, O2, O5)<br/>Implement social media marketing campaigns to attract international tourists.</li> <li>• (W2, W4, O1, O4)<br/>Enhance the capacity of community leaders and villagers in tourism management and identity presentation.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (S3, T2)<br/>Create a unique identity for the community business through a differentiation strategy.</li> <li>• (S4, S5, T2)<br/>Form business networks by grouping community activities to generate income.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (W3, T1)<br/>Apply RBV principles to create value-added products that effectively meet customer needs.</li> <li>• (W5, T2, T3)<br/>Seek government support to establish a central marketplace for textiles and souvenirs, enabling community members to compete with modern trade businesses and offset rising costs.</li> <li>• (W3, W4, T3)<br/>Develop a community website and social media channels to serve as an information and marketing hub, promoting products and tourism.</li> </ul> |

Source: Authors.



## 5. Tourism Micro-Cluster Development in the Village

Regarding tourism resources and the TOWS analysis, there are seven tourism activities/businesses, which consists of 1) homestays, 2) cultural tours, 3) Kubua textile workshops, 4) wooden product workshops, 5) cooking classes, 6) art class, and 7) organic farming tour, as illustrated in Figure 4. These activities are initiated by community leaders and members, who organize into groups based on their capabilities and interests. To successfully implement and sustain these initiatives, collaboration and support from various government sectors are essential for policy alignment and operational execution.



**Figure 4** Tourism Micro-Cluster Model for Kubua Village.

Source: Authors.

Here are seven businesses/activities that could be developed to generate income within the tourism micro-cluster at Kubua Village as follows:

**5.1 Homestays:** Establishing homestay accommodations offers tourists an immersive experience of local life and culture. Homestays serve as the central point of activity and are ideally located in a natural setting. A pilot “village homestay” model can be tested in one village to learn through trial and error. Currently, university student groups often stay at temples in the area, such as Khlong Suwankhiri Temple, Kubua Temple, and Khae Sai Temple. One household in Village No. 8 currently offers a homestay; however, the villager lacks business and marketing knowledge.

**5.2 Cultural Tours:** Cultural tourism is the central theme of Kubua’s tourism offerings. Activities include visits to archaeological sites, temples, a tour of the ancient Kubua House, and learning local history at the Jipatha Ban Kubua Museum. The largest archaeological site (Site No. 18) is located at Khlong Suwannakhiri Temple. At present, the Kubua Subdistrict Administrative Organization oversees and hosts government sightseeing tours in the community.

**5.3 Kubua Textile Workshops:** This activity offers textile weaving classes where tourists can learn the traditional craft directly from skilled local villagers. The workshops introduce participants to the fabric-making process, including natural dyeing and simple weaving techniques. Loincloth designs for both children and adults are offered in easy-to-make styles suitable for tailoring. These Kubua textiles and loincloths can be creatively crafted into products such as purses, handbags, backpacks, fabric pen cases, and more.

**5.4 Wooden Product Workshops:** These workshops feature demonstrations and the sale of locally made wooden products, including kitchenware and traditional musical instruments. Local artisans produce items such as Thai flutes and Thai bamboo organs. However, due to potential safety concerns, the community must carefully select which woodworking activities are suitable for tourists. This workshop not only highlights local craftsmanship but also serves to preserve and share traditional woodworking knowledge with visitors.



**5.5 Cooking Classes:** Cooking classes are offered to tourists staying in homestays or visiting the Kubua market. These classes focus on basic Thai menus such as Thai pudding with coconut topping, deep-fried bananas, and Thai chili paste. Additionally, Thai toffee—a signature dessert of the Kubua community—can be featured during festivals, as it requires around six hours to prepare and involves multiple participants. Through these classes, tourists gain essential cooking techniques and meal preparation skills, fostering cultural appreciation, hospitality, and a sense of community.

**5.6 Art Classes:** Art classes are offered for tourists to learn drawing and painting from local artists. Currently, two individuals in the village teach art to children. Kubua artists have also proposed organizing an art exhibition at the Kubua Market, featuring street art that tells the history of Kubua—an ideal attraction for tourist photography. Additionally, hands-on activities such as painting and doll coloring can be arranged to enhance cultural engagement and provide visitors with a memorable, interactive experience.

**5.7 Organic Farming Tours:** Organizing tours of organic farms offers tourists the opportunity to learn about sustainable agricultural practices while enjoying fresh local produce. Although most villagers primarily engage in rice farming, one village leader has established a model organic farm based on the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, serving as an inspiration for others. It is recommended that the Kubua Subdistrict Administrative Organization support the development of additional organic farm models to help attract more tourists. Moreover, some villagers raise cows for Ox Racing—a traditional Central Thai game typically held at night during the dry season or after the rice harvest—which could also be promoted as a distinctive cultural experience.

It can be clarified of the research findings by presenting seven businesses proposed within the tourism micro-cluster model assumed as the table:

**Table 5** Businesses Proposed in Tourism Micro-Cluster Model

| Business                      | Description  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Homestays                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developing the villager-operated homestay model.</li><li>• Providing tourism management knowledge to villagers.</li></ul>                                    |
| 2. Storytelling Cultural Tour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Organizing visits to archaeological sites, temples, and the ancient Kubua House.</li><li>• Learning local history at the Jipatha Ban Kubua Museum.</li></ul> |
| 3. Kubua Textile Workshops    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arranging modern design pattern classes.</li><li>• Learning natural dyeing techniques.</li></ul>   |
| 4. Wooden Product Workshops   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visiting sites and learning wooden product crafting methods.</li><li>• Sharing traditional woodworking knowledge with tourist.</li></ul>                     |
| 5. Cooking Class              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learning Thai food and dessert techniques.</li></ul>   |
| 6. Art Class                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Providing drawing and painting activities for tourists.</li></ul>  |
| 7. Organic Farm Tour          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visiting and touring an organic farm.</li><li>• Watching and experiencing Traditional Central Thai Games.</li></ul>  |

**Source:** Authors.

After developing the tourism micro-cluster model, the researcher created a business plan for community development. This business model was proposed to the Kubua Subdistrict Administrative Organization, aiming to promote, support, develop, and conserve local wisdom through community participation and network partners, thereby creating value-added products and sustainably distributing income within the community. During focus group discussion interviews with the Kubua Subdistrict Administrative Organization, seven policy directions were outlined as follows: 1) creating a community development project to secure funding from the Provincial





Administrative Organization and improve the landscape and environment of the archaeological site, 2) cooperating with relevant academic departments to jointly develop tourism, 3) connecting with tourism networks in nearby areas as part of a marketing strategy to offer alternatives for tourists, 4) driving policies to support major marketing campaigns for Kubua textiles and redesigning them to be modern and contemporary using a one-stop service approach, 5) rebuilding the Kubua Market at Khlong Suwankhiri Temple to serve as a center for textiles, souvenirs, and food, 6) building homestays in collaboration with the Kubua Subdistrict Administrative Organization and private village entrepreneurs in a model village to attract tourists interested in local life and culture, and 7) developing and supporting traditional sports such as Muay Thai and seasonal Ox Racing practices. For proposing the research results to the Kubua Subdistrict Administrative Organization, the implementation is considered feasible by following the tourism micro-cluster model and beginning with addressing the existing weaknesses, gradually progressing toward the strengths, with the goal of creating a positive impression and encouraging repeat visits to Kubua Village.

### Discussion

Tourism micro-cluster model was created to conduct the village situations through resource-based view by using SWOT analysis and generate the alternative strategies by applying TOWS Matrix for developing tourism micro-cluster model in Kubua Subdistrict, Ratchaburi Province. The resulting model consists of seven components and is substantiated by five core theories to provide a concrete framework as follows: 1) Resource based-view Theory establishes the foundation for social capital by identifying Kubua's internal resources and capabilities, encompassing both tangible and intangible assets. These resources are the dominant factors for organizing tourism activities, ultimately ensuring the maximization of resource utilization, 2) Sufficiency Economy Philosophy Theory serves as a practical guide for development, emphasizing a balanced way of life and a sustainable approach to enhance the community's well-being and promote sustainable tourism, 3) Clustering Theory demonstrates the benefits of co-location and tourism integration coupled with governmental support in terms of human capital, budgeting, and resources. This collective effort allows for the maximization of community advantages, 4) Creative Tourism Theory provides a framework for integrating creativity with local identity and culture to create new opportunities for development, planning, and goal-setting. This integration is designed to attract both new and repeat visitors, and 5) Community Development Theory enables the creation of model guidelines which can be effectively applied to the specific local situation by the Kubua Subdistrict Administrative Organization.

It is noted that a related study, entitled "Model of Creative Tourism Management in Khu Bua Community, Ratchaburi Province", aimed to investigate the creative tourism potential resources and management model of the Kubua community. This prior work shares similarities with the current research by: 1) studying internal and external factors through SWOT analysis, and 2) organizing a model where visitors participate in tourism activities with the local community. However, the related study highlighted several challenges, including: 1) tourists spending no more than half a day traveling in the community, 2) limited public relations across various channels for creative tourism, and 3) arranging activities for tourist participation in learning about the local identity and archaeological sites (Wichiranon, 2021).

The current research differs significantly in its methodological approach and scope. This tourism micro-cluster model adopts a structured, multi-stage analysis as follows: it begins by examining community resources using the RBV to assess the internal environment. It utilizes the PESTELI framework to determine current external challenges



and influences. The SWOT analysis is then conducted to synthesize internal and external factors from primary and secondary sources. Finally, the TOWS Matrix is applied to generate strategic solutions and create the tourism micro-cluster model for integrating the Kubua community's resources and capabilities.

In terms of theoretical contribution, this study is exploratory research that develops a tourism micro-cluster model underpinned by five integrated theories, thus offering additional academic knowledge. Specifically, the model centers on creating a homestay-based tourism cluster for visitors, which provides various supplementary activities. Critically, the model emphasizes building community participation with the RBV Theory serving as the foundation for utilizing community assets. Furthermore, the findings are intended to support managerial tourism by providing a comprehensive model and practical guidelines directly applicable to responsible governmental sectors and other similar communities.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

The studied village seeks to develop a potential micro-cluster that brings together valuable items from the local community to integrate with tourism businesses, applying the concepts from five theoretical frameworks. The tourism micro-cluster model, developed through action research, serves as an alternative approach for economic improvement in small communities, leveraging strengths and opportunities to enhance the quality of community life. This model applies diagonal clustering by grouping separate goods and services to create value-added tourist experiences. Moreover, co-location with tourism integration and networking maximizes the benefits by encouraging repeat visits to the Kubua community through the promotion of its unique identity, culture, and local wisdom.

In recommendations, effective cluster development requires technical assistance, including training programs to enhance technical and business skills, along with marketing support via various social media platforms. Several government sectors also play a supporting role by promoting local cultural conservation and implementing policies and projects that support an integrated tourist journey, led by the Kubua Subdistrict Administrative Organization. Thus, develops a practical model and guidelines applicable to tourism management in both the studied area other communities.

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