

# SWOT Analysis of Local Tourism Entrepreneur for Strategic Planning: A Case Study of B.M. Travel Buddy Company, Thailand

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**Abstract**---This study aims to study strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) for B.M. travel buddy company. Using a qualitative approach to consider situation of tour company. Semi structure interview was used to collect data from key informants including manager, assistant manager and staffs of B.M. travel buddy company, academics and representatives of government organization. The result shows that potential of B.M. travel buddy company 5 main aspects including (1) organizational commitment (2) quality service (3) responsibility and accountability of employees (4) customer relationship (5) push and pull strategies while weaknesses comprised of (1) human resource problem (2) lack of creative and diversity of tour program (3) policy on responsibility for community and society. However, B.M. travel buddy company also has opportunities in management because of supporting of government policy, uniting the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015, location of Khon Kaen province and Khon Kaen MICE city. To achieve competitive potentials B.M. travel buddy company should focus on strategy on human development, adding value of tour program and responsibility for community and society activities.

**Keywords**---Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

## I. INTRODUCTION

The World Tourism Organization (2007) states that a tourism destination is a physical space in which a tourist spends at least one night. It includes tourism products such as support services and attractions and tourist resources within one day's return travel time. Agreeing with this idea, Buhalis (2000) states destinations are amalgams of tourism products, offering an integrated experience to consumers. Buhalis (2000) also suggest that a destination comprise a core of the following components called the six as framework including attraction, accessibility, amenities, available package, activities and ancillary. On the other hand, we can conclude that a destination is not a single product. It is comprised of elements to attract tourists, otherwise called attributes of destination. As Kim et al. (2003) states, attractions or attributes of destinations are pull factors which can lead individual tourists to select one destination over another once tourism decisions have been made (Zhou, 2005). So, entertainment, infrastructures, physical environment, natural resources or historical and cultural resources, or festivals and events can be considered as pull factors (Kim & Lee, 2002).

In conclusion, attributes of destinations or tourism resources have a significant impact on tourists' decision processes. Thus, creating and improving a tourism destination should be considered in tourism management.

Over the past decades, leisure travel has become increasingly popular in older segments of the world population, as a consequence of global factors such as a rise in life expectancy, improved health conditions, a higher disposable income and increased availability of time in retirement age due to changes in family structure (e.g. the increase in empty nesters). Consequently, age aspects of tourism have received a great deal of attention in social science research. Early studies – especially on senior tourism and on travel life cycle can be found, among others, in Blazey (1992), Faranda and Schmidt (2000), Hong et al. (1999), Lawson (1991), Oppermann (1995) and Zimmer et al. (1995).

In terms of Khon Kaen province, it is a major city in northeastern Thailand that attracts many travelers who come to visit and sightseeing. The city has the potential to serve as many activities and businesses are related to the service sector, including big shopping malls, 4 star hotels, several restaurants, night markets, and MICE activities for MICE city. (Kantawateera et al., 2013). Thus, at present, Khon Kaen development plan on 2014 – 2017 has focused on strategic of trade and tourism to incorporate the center of tourism and service in the region.

In additionally of direct benefits from tourists, tourism businesses also have many positive benefits on economic through increasing new investigates and job's creating (Bosworth & Farrell, 2011). It can be said that entrepreneurship quality, entrepreneurial leadership have been identified with positive influence on the business performance of a tourism enterprise. It is important to identify the specific factors that influence success in small tourism businesses, as well (Taskov et al., 2011).

Therefore, researcher would like to investigate local tourism entrepreneur in Khon Kaen province through SWOT analysis of B.M. travel buddy company – a quality and long experience tour company to identify potential, weaknesses and opportunities of local tourism entrepreneur in Khon Kaen province.

## II. OBJECTIVES

To study the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for B.M. travel buddy company.

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### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Background of B.M. travel buddy company*

B.M. travel buddy company is one of a good company tour in Northeast of Thailand. This company operates based on quality and benefit of customer. There are diversity tour program suitable for many budget and travelling purpose. Nowadays, this company has only one branches in Khon Kean. With more than 14 years' experience, this company create a good image for customer about credible and safety. B.M. travel buddy company always improves itself to responds customer's demand on tour program, seminar or holiday trip.

B.M. travel buddy company is a one-stop-service local travel agency. The company emphasizes quick responsive service with technology aid to ensure the highest efficiency. The company is expanding its business to other businesses related to tourism. Also, the company would like to project the image of one stop service agency and efficient after – sales service. In a parallel manner, the company runs its marketing strategies consonant with the rapid changes in political and economic circumstances in the world.

#### *Push and pull factors in tourism*

Push and pull factors provide useful awareness of tourist's motivation and behavior in travelling (Kim at al., 2003). Push factors relate to motivate and create a desire on travel (Crompton, 1979). These are psychological needs which play a significant role in causing a person feel a disequilibrium that can be corrected through a tourism experience (Dann, 1977; Kim & Lee, 2002). Iso-Aloha (1982) suggested two basic motivational dimension of travel to leisure are escaping and seeking while Ryan (1991) explained that the motivation factors explain why tourists make a trip and what type of experience, destination or activities they want. Therefore, push factors seem to be an internal force which represents the benefits sought by the tourists for going on a holiday or taking alternative activities (Zoltan & Masiero, 2012).

Pull factors, on the other hand, are contrast with push factors. Pull factors relate to attractions or attributes of the destination itself (Kim at al., 2003; Zoltan & Masiero, 2012), which can lead an individual tourists to select one destination from another once tourism decisions have been made (Zhou, 2005). Tourism resources normally considered pull factors such as natural attractions, cultural resources, recreation activities, special event or festival, and so on (Kim & Lee, 2002).

Therefore, in terms of logic and time, push factors is antecedents of pull factors (Zoltan & Masiero, 2012). It is consistent with Dann (1977) noted that "once the trip has been decided upon, where to go, what to see or what to do can be tackled". In conclusion, attractions or tourism resources in destination have significant impact on tourists' decision process. Thus, Creating and improving tourism destination should be considered in tourism management.

#### *Strategic management and SWOT analysis*

Nowadays, because, globalization, mature market, rapid technological change and intense competition are some of the factors affecting business, long term survival has always depend on efficient and effective management response to internal and external threats (Athiyaman, 1995). Thus strategic thinking and strategic management are the most important activities undertaken by any business or public sector organization. How skillfully these activities are carried out will determine the eventual long-term success or failure of the organization (Evans, 2003).

Focusing in natural resource management, strategic planning is based on adjustment to changes in the operational environment subject to the goals set for the use of resources and the development of these resources (Kajanus et al., 2012). It seems to be the development of a long term plan that best utilizes the resources of an organization within the domain of the organization's mission (Moutinho, 2000). In terms of planning, scanning internal and external environmental factors is an important part of a strategic planning process (Reihanian et al., 2012), so SWOT analysis is popularized.

SWOT analysis is a commonly-used tool for analyzing environment to attain both a systematic approach and support for a decision situation (Wheelen & Hunger, 1995). It consists of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis in which strengths and weaknesses are internal to the entity under evaluation whereas opportunities and threats refer to the broad context or environment in which the entity operates (Lawhead et al., 1992). SWOT analysis is not a new tool in management but it has been developed to assess the status and prospects of businesses (Collins - Kreiner & Wall, 2007) and used to evaluate alternative strategic in order to determine the best one for given business setting, widely (Sevкли et al., 2012).

### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research used qualitative research method to meet research objective

#### *Key informants*

The key informants were 10 participants including manager, assistant manager and staffs of B.M. travel buddy company, academics and representatives of government organization.

#### *Tool*

The semi structure interview was used to collect data. The interview guide was created by focusing on the elements of profile and strategic management plan of B.M. travel buddy company

#### *Data analysis*

Content analysis was used to identify the data elements and a matrix table was used to analyze the qualitative data.

## V. RESULT

Data collection from semi structure interview in which manager, assistant manager and staffs of B.M. travel buddy company, academics and representatives of government organization were key informants. Researcher can divide potential of B.M. travel buddy company as below.

### *Potential of B.M. travel buddy company*

Potential of B.M. travel buddy company can be pointed out with 5 main aspect, as below.

#### *1) Organizational commitment*

Employees are considered as one of the most important assets for most organizations, in particular tourism industry. At present, keeping employees enables is crucial to be successful organization in competitive business environment (Colakoglu et al., 2010). That why B.M. travel buddy company focus on establish good relationship among staff – staff and manager – staff in company through staff party, sport relationship in company or health service to take care staffs. It helps to increase relationship between individual and workplace and membership maintenance.

#### *2) Quality service*

Widespread recognition if the interdependence exists between quality and long term business success. Certainly, quality has grown in significance for tourism business. It is the need to retain or increase competitive advantage that underpinned the drive for quality in tourism (Sharpley & Forster, 2003). With regards to B.M. travel buddy company, quality is core of services. It brings credible image of company products to customer and provides a competition position of B.M. travel buddy company more than 14 year experience in Khon Kaen province by using concept local company.

#### *3) Responsibility and accountability of employees*

B.M. travel buddy company has emphasized on responsibility and accountability of employee during direct interaction with customers, because core of production in tourism industry is service which is intangible product (Yeh, 2013). Thus responsibility and accountability is crucial element which employees should consider. Tourism product based on responsibility and accountability will identify quality and credibility of service.

#### *4) Customer relationship*

Customer relationship is a part of quality service which B.M. travel buddy company provides to all customers. B.M. travel buddy company brings a holistic service to customers before, during and after selling tourism products. It also tracks and keeps customers comments to improve its service and products to meet and memorable customers. Customer relationship helps B.M. travel buddy company to retain and expand loyal customers. It is consistent with Ozgener & Iraz (2006) states that customer relationship is the key competitive strategy businesses need to stay focused on the

needs of the customers and to integrate a customer – facing approach throughout the organization.

#### *5) Push and pull strategies*

Push and pull strategies are systems approach can enable managers to account for interconnections and long-term effects of their decisions (Senge & Sterman, 1992). The systems approach guides decision makers in an organization to learn from existing information to cope with the uncertainties and complexity of decision-making scenarios. The essence of the systems approach lies in a shift of mind that enables managers to see interrelationships rather than linear correlations and the processes of change rather than snapshots (Senge, 1990). B.M. travel buddy company brings these strategies to gain in terms of benefit for obtain multiple inputs from several customers on a particular problem or issue.

On SWOT analysis of B.M. travel buddy company showed in table 1 in which weakness and opportunities of B.M. travel buddy company can be identified as below:

TABLE 1. SWOT analysis of B.M. travel buddy company

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High security in the area</li> <li>- Responsibility and accountability employees</li> <li>- Building organizational commitment</li> <li>- Impressive and quality service</li> <li>- Company's image</li> <li>- High technology to approach customers</li> <li>- Value of the tour program</li> <li>- Advantage of location</li> <li>- Safety of all road trips</li> <li>- Effective customer relationship program</li> <li>- Clearly and fair price of packages</li> <li>- Strategic partnerships from business oriented to destination and community oriented include other sectors, such as infrastructure and transportation</li> <li>- More cross marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uninteresting official website of company</li> <li>- Communication in organization</li> <li>- Lack of creative and diversity tour program</li> <li>- Lack of tourism staff with foreign language skills</li> <li>- Lack of skill tour guides</li> <li>- Study in cultural and language of ASEAN Economic Community</li> <li>- Cooperation with educational institutions</li> <li>- Business development with responsibility for the community and society</li> <li>- Lack of human resource in key positions</li> <li>- No network connection among local company in provinces</li> <li>- Lack of public service vehicles management to local company in provinces</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Khon Kaen is a city center for the northeastern region</li> <li>- Highway passes through Khon Kaen city and connect to Laos and Vietnam</li> <li>- TAT campaign to attract domestic tourism for Thai people</li> <li>- Uniting the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)</li> <li>- Cooperation among the countries in the Great Mekong Sub region (GMS) for tourism</li> <li>- The development of technology in communication</li> <li>- The promotion of the tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quality control of the implementation of business-related travel</li> <li>- Management issues within the tourism destination in Thailand</li> <li>- Issue of fuel price increases</li> <li>- Competitiveness of the tourism industry at the local level</li> <li>- Competitiveness of the agency in the region</li> <li>- The responsibility for the local community plan in enterprise business</li> <li>- Economic crisis</li> </ul>

<p>industry association in the province to develop quality tourism service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The support of financial institutions in promoting small and medium enterprises</li> <li>- Development of land transport links within the region as North South Corridor/ East West Corridor/ Southern Economic Corridor</li> <li>- Development of infrastructures to support tourism</li> <li>- Local communities have a positive attitude towards tourism development</li> <li>- Development tourism via Thainess in National agenda</li> <li>- Trend of tourism to cultural and religious sites</li> <li>- Khon Kaen International Airport is convenient for tourists travelling there</li> <li>- Diversity of tourists' activities such as MICE, Spa and Medical Tourism</li> <li>- A paradise of international shopping</li> <li>- Khon Kaen province has the potential to promote tourism trade and MICE city</li> <li>- Increased competition for private funding</li> <li>- Event for tourism is a policy of local government in Khon Kaen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prolonged political conflicts</li> <li>- The lack of supporting and maintaining infrastructure to facilitate the parking zone in front of the local company</li> <li>- Changes in national and global economies</li> <li>- Governmental regulation was identified as a key force</li> </ul>
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*Weaknesses of B.M. travel buddy company*

The weaknesses of B.M. travel buddy company is comprised of 3 aspects, as below.

*1) Human resource problem*

Improving the quality of human resource is a key factor of the tourism competitiveness (Milic et al., 2011). But B.M. travel buddy company is facing problems on tour guides who has ability on foreign languages such as Chinese or English. Apart from that, lack of some key positions also has effect on the workload of the remaining parties.

*2) Lack of creative and diversity of tour program*

Nowadays, B.M. travel buddy company has a main range of loyalty customers with old program tour and services. The company has no new and creative program tour or service to attract new customers. This is also a limitation in management. Destinations will be better able to orchestrate and control the tourist experience through technological advances such as geographic information systems (GIS). Technology will also serve to provide more personalized services to customers through the use of database systems that keep a record of customers' past preferences and choices.

*3) Policy on responsibility for community and society*

Corporate Social Responsibility is an approach to business administration where, in addition to the more traditional issues of profitability and other shareholder concerns, closer voluntary consideration of ethical, social and environmental issues as well as the organisation's varied stakeholders is taken in operations and value creation (Coles et al., 2013). Therefore, corporate social responsibility should be considered to increase value and image of B.M. travel buddy company.

Tourism decision makers could consider the scenarios presented here as a base to assess their future strategic decisions. The selected forces and their impact could represent the building block for developing a decision support system specifically geared toward the needs of tourism executives. The content of this study provides answers to those interested in building competitive strategies based on future forces instead of past events.

*Opportunities of B.M. travel buddy company*

*1) Supporting of government policy*

Thai government proposed policy development based on tourism and related business development to support in national economic social development plan from 4th to 11th. Tourism policy focused on 2 issues as 1) Integration of tourism policy to suit the situation and trend of tourist market, 2) Emphasizing on adding value and enhancing the quality of tourism activities in business related fields as transportation, accommodation, souvenir, tour operator. It will force tourism entrepreneurs to increase income and expand tourists market in the near future.

*2) Uniting the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)*

Uniting the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) provides positive impacts on Thailand tourism in general (TAT, 2013). In particular, Khon Kaen province is located on highway of East West Corridor to connect Laos and Vietnam. This is an opportunities to tour company in Khon Kaen province expand customer from ASEAN member states.

*3) Location of Khon Kaen province*

Khon Kaen is a major city in northeastern Thailand that attracts many travelers who visit and sightseeing. The city has the potential to serve as many activities and businesses are related to the service sector, including shopping malls, hotels, restaurants, night markets, and MICE activities (Kantawateera et al., 2013). It is one of important factors to support tourism in Khon Kaen in general.

*4) Khon Kaen MICE city*

Events and trends affecting the tourism industry are becoming more complex and fast-paced. In response to these radical changes in the external environment, destination managers are striving for new approaches to predict future forces driving change. With this goal in mind, the current study was conducted to determine future forces that are likely to affect the future of tourism in Khon Kaen province. Dill (1962) states that every change or development in the external

environment creates signals and messages that an organization may need to heed. Nowadays, Khon Kaen is become to a MICE city by government policy. This is the new opportunities for local tourism entrepreneur for strategic planning in terms of MICE tourists.

## VI. CONCLUSION

From a practitioner's perspective, motivation is critical for marketing tourism experiences (Ateljevic, 1999), designing and planning tourism attractions, and evaluating service delivery for a vacation experience. This study aims to investigate SWOT analysis of B.M. travel buddy company. SWOT analysis identified potential of B.M. travel buddy company 5 main aspects including 1) organizational commitment 2) quality service 3) responsibility and accountability of employees 4) customer relationship 5) push and pull strategies while weaknesses comprised of 1) human resource problem 2) lack of creative and diversity of tour program 3) policy on responsibility for community and society. However, B.M. travel buddy company also has opportunities in management because of supporting of government policy, uniting the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), location of Khon Kaen province and Khon Kaen MICE city. Therefore, to achieve competitive potentials, B.M. travel buddy company should focus on strategy on human development, adding value of tour program and responsibility for community and society activities. And, if at all possible, the selection of benefit items should be theoretically grounded. If, however, researchers are interested in the link between push and pull factors, then motivational structures and benefit structures should be developed independently in separate factor analyses. Then the emerging taxonomies could be cross-tabulated or correlated to examine relationships. This research approach would address how core tourism motives link with benefits from a vacation experience too.

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