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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Influence of Trang Community Participation in Enhancing Tourism Potentials: The Moderating Effect of Community Members' Roles

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Abstract Tourism and hospitality constitute a key driving force of Thailand's economy, with community-based tourism ubiquitously recognized as a crucial element for improving a community's economic status. This study aimed to determine the influences of community participation and the moderating effects of the community members' roles on tourism potential. Quantitative research methods were used. A total of 436 participants were selected using purposive sampling. The sample size was proportionally related to the population of each district in Trang Province. Face-to-face questionnaires were administered and PLS-SEM was employed to test a statistical model to determine the influences of community participation on tourism potential. Results revealed a positive influence by some elements of community participation on the tourism potential and a significant moderating effect by the community members' roles. The findings of this study confirm that community participation is an integral component of tourism development for enhancing both internal and external tourism potential of a community. This study addresses a research gap by providing empirical evidence on the influence of community participation on tourism potential in Trang's communities and highlights the importance of community members' roles as a key factor in enhancing tourism potential, thereby offering valuable implications for community-based tourism development.

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1. Introduction

A key driving force of Thailand's economy is the tourism and hospitality industry, in general and locally, across many varied tourism resource bases. The benefits of tourism, such as employment, local infrastructure development, and promoting and preserving cultural heritage and traditional local wisdom spread across the regions and communities throughout the country (Wondirad & Ewnetu, 2019). Communities are ubiquitously recognized as a key element of tourism that can be utilized to improve a community's economic status (Dodds, Ali, & Galaski, 2018). For example, local communities which attract an increasing amount of interest from tourists due to their traditional cultures and societies can leverage them to provide tourism experiences and bolster their local income, business opportunities, and infrastructure. Tourism and hospitality in Thailand has also raised the demand for, and development of, new tourism locales, especially in rural areas, that will attract both domestic and foreign tourists (Chatkaewnapanon & Lee, 2022). That is, the community is a resource base that is a keystone for generating changes in the value and structure of an entire community. Community participation is also a vital driver to continuously and sustainably increase tourism potential through the roles the stakeholders, such as the people, entrepreneurs, and the government, play in the community. It is an issue that tourism and hospitality providers must be concerned with because rural tourism destinations, which have strongly enhanced community participation, not only act in the manner that best ensures continuity of development, but also operate in ways that protect and preserve the community's resources (Ghahramani, McArdle, & Fatorić, 2020). Therefore, examining how community participation's influence can help community stakeholders to continuously and sustainably develop and increase their tourism potential is essential.

Trang Province was chosen as the location for this case study analysis focusing on the role community participation plays as a factor that may enhance the tourism potential of Trang's communities. Community participation reflects the collaborative efforts of community stakeholders to reach mutually-beneficial goals, improve their local area, and pursue personal objectives (McCloskey et al., 2011). Prior research has shown that community participation can improve and develop local tourism destinations and potential (Aly, Hamid, Suharno, Kholis, & Aroyandini, 2021; Muhamad, Baiquni, & Wiryanto, 2024). Although the ability of community participation to drive tourism potential development has been previously confirmed, there is ambiguity regarding how community participation enhances tourism potential and what elements of the community's participation play a role in developing tourism in the context of localities within Trang Province. Additionally, although community members' roles are a key element, there is a dearth of information on how community members' roles affect tourism development. In respect to Thailand's communities, some of the people's contributions to their communities are related to promoting community-public health. They are called "village health volunteers" (VHV). VHVs are an integral part of public health initiatives to improve local health and provide a clear picture of how community involvement impacts the overall community, making them a potential analogue for how community

involvement can impact tourism development. These are the primary knowledge lapses addressed by this research.

The participation of community stakeholders, such as local residents, workers, businesses, educational institutions, government agencies, and officials, is relevant to community development, especially in the context of community tourism (Chatkaewnapanon & Lee, 2022; Esichaikul & Chansawang, 2022). Based on stakeholder theory as applied to tourism, sustainable tourism development requires the orderly participation of all stakeholders and that the attitudes and interests of the various stakeholders related to tourism development should be considered in an integrated manner. Furthermore, their active response and participation should be encouraged (Byrd, 2007). However, several studies have determined that there is insufficient participation in community tourism by relevant stakeholders in Thailand due to a lack of involvement among local people, younger generations participating in local development projects, and understanding the reasons community participation is imperative (Chatkaewnapanon & Kelly, 2019; Polnyotee & Thadaniti, 2015). For this reason, in recent years, especially in communities within the Andaman coastal provinces, locals and the private tourism sector have placed more emphasis on increasing the awareness of the communities' resources. Additionally, the government sector has been turning their attention towards developing and upgrading the tourism potential of each community within the area to accommodate target tourist groups. Therefore, if the level of community participation and its effects on tourism development in Trang province, which was the focus of this study, were widely known, it would be possible to find hidden key developmental factors and generate suggestions that could be effective in the management and enhancement of the area's tourism potential. To this end, the present study was conducted to examine community participation's influence on enhancing tourism potential. Additionally, the study was conducted to investigate the moderating effects of the community members' roles, e.g., village health volunteers (VHV) and general community members, on the influence of community participation on tourism potential. The theoretical aspect of this research will ascertain whether stakeholder theory explains why increased community participation is able to improve tourism potential. From the managerial perspective, it should generate guidelines for communities regarding which participation components are related to enhancing their tourism potential. Additionally, this research will provide information about the members' roles in the community, which will provide a clearer, deeper understanding of local tourism development.

The development of tourism at the local level requires the involvement and participation of the local community, as previously pointed out, because it is an effective avenue for gaining an intimate understanding of the various stakeholders' needs and expectations (Tseng, Lin, Lin, Wu, & Sriphon, 2019). The importance of local community participation to the enhancement of tourism through its generation of attentiveness and participation in the process of developing local tourism potential and maintaining local business enterprises among the local populace, such as the preservation of natural resources and culture, has been emphasized by many researchers (Osman, Shaw, & Kenawy, 2018; Sakata & Prideaux, 2013). Previous studies indicate community participation leads to better approaches to building local tourism potential (Khalid, Ahmad, Ramayah, Hwang, & Kim, 2019; Sebele, 2010; Tseng et al., 2019). Moreover, tourism potential can be enhanced through the participation the people living in the community in several ways. For example, when people within the community are actively involved in the improvement efforts from the inception of a project, the community can be on the lookout for any anticipated negative impacts to help discover and take action to mitigate them at an early stage, and their participation will also help to generate grassroots support of the activities and projects throughout the community (Akama & Kieti, 2007; Akama, Maingi, & Camargo, 2011). In addition, community participation is also reflected in the community's engagement in decision making, benefit sharing, resource conservation, and implementation of the relevant tourism development activities (Osman et al., 2018; Rahman, Masud, Akhtar, & Hossain, 2022).

The evaluation of tourism potential is an important facet in the development of a destination which assesses the various components which determine the ability of a site to attract and receive tourists (Yan, Gao, & Zhang, 2017). Modern tourism researchers have identified multiple intrinsic and extrinsic factors that have a myriad of impacts on tourism (ISLAM & Chaudhary, 2020). Extrinsic factors are those which are out of the local community's control or not directly related to their location, such as demographics, social changes, motivation for travel, technological changes, and travel safety. Conversely, intrinsic factors are those which are directly or intimately connected to a specific destination, or that are controllable by the local populace, such as geographic location, information, resources, infrastructure, and personnel. Community participation will result in increased positive behavior and support throughout the community for tourism. It is logical that maintaining a thriving tourism industry can happen if the community's support for tourism is excellent. In contrast, if the residents' aspirations and needs are not considered or included in tourism planning, it can generate hostility towards any tourism development that may occur which, in turn, may harm the industry itself (Reindrawati, 2023; Ridho, Paisal, Mellita, & Roseno, 2021). In the context of Trang's communities, Jantamaneechot, Thaothampitak, Wongsuwatt and Aunyawong (2023) studied the people of the Tasaba, community in Trang Province and how their participation influenced tourism potential through four key elements of the concept of community participation, including decision making, implementation, benefit sharing, and evaluation. Their study determined that differences in the internal and external factors affecting the community might mean that different approaches to the steps of promoting community participation may be required. Similarly, we have focused on exploring five components of community participation which may influence internal and external tourism potential in Trang Province.

Across the spectrum of community members' roles, differences in an individual's roles and responsibilities within the community may lead to them having different duties and outputs related to community management. In other words, people living in the community have different roles depending on whether they are general members or members with specific duties and responsibilities and this may lead to dissimilarities in how they participate in the community's activities. In the context of Trang's communities, one group of village members who play an important role as agents of change in public health development activities are called "village health volunteers", and they actively participate in many aspects of their

communities. The involvement and actions of community members like VHVs is probably part of what leads toward different outcomes in terms of tourism potential, which is the nucleus of this research's exploration of the moderating effect of the community members' roles on enhancing tourism potential. Previous studies have inferred that the moderating effect of the member's role varies according to their situation. For example, hotel staff's perceptions of risk and firm financial performance were influenced by their roles (Thaothampitak & Wongsuwatt, 2019). In addition, Kumar (2019) stated that a community member's role type has a moderating influence on the members' participation intentions, members' brand purchase intentions, and positive word of mouth (WOM) about the community. This study proposes that the roles of Trang's community members, whether general members or village health volunteers, will have a moderating effect and that the community members' participation will help the community enhance the community's tourism potential in different ways when they participate in the development and implementation of the community's activities.

2. Methods

Quantitative research methods were used to test the proposed hypotheses. To examine the influence of community participation on tourism potential partial least squares structural modeling (PLS-SEM) was chosen because it determines what effects independent variables exert on dependent variables. The examination of moderation of the member's role applied PLS-SEM to test the statistical model. Additionally, descriptive statistics were chosen to describe the sample's demographics.

Sample Selection and Data Collection Procedures

The data was gathered in Trang, Thailand based on the following participant criteria: (a) aged over 18-years-old, (b) living in the community at least one year, and (c) attending at least one activity provided by the community. There were no accurate statistics regarding the size of the target population, thus determining an accurate sample size was impossible. However, 436 participants would generally be seen as an adequate sample pool for PLS-SEM analysis as it exceeds the minimum sample size of 100 participants specified in prior studies (Reinartz, Haenlein, & Henseler, 2009). Thus, we can conclude that a sample size of 436 was acceptable. Purposive sampling was used and Trang's ten districts were proportionally represented to ensure equal representation. In addition, the proportion of VHVs and general community members reflected the communities' demographics.

The center for social and behavioral sciences institutional review board (PSU IRB 2021-LL-CM 042 (Internal)) provided ethical approval. Thereafter, data was collected between January and March 2023 via questionnaire survey. The questionnaires were directly distributed to respondents and the primary objective of the data collection was explained. The questionnaire had three sections. The initial section consisted of items measuring community participation. The following one contained questions evaluating tourism potential from the participants' perspectives. The last portion was questions on the respondents' demographics. Prior to signing the consent form, the participants were allowed to make inquiries before data collection and advised of their right to withdraw without giving a reason at any time. Following the signing of the consent forms, the participants were requested to return their questionnaires directly to the researchers upon completing the survey. Four-hundred and thirty-six fully filled-in surveys were returned during the collection period. Table 1 contains the respondents' demographic profile.

Measures

The community participation dimension was separated into five dimensions and measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (least) to 5 (most). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they had participated in their communities. The five dimensions included participation: at the inception (3 items), in decision making (3 items), in benefit sharing (3 items), in conservation (3 items), and in

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

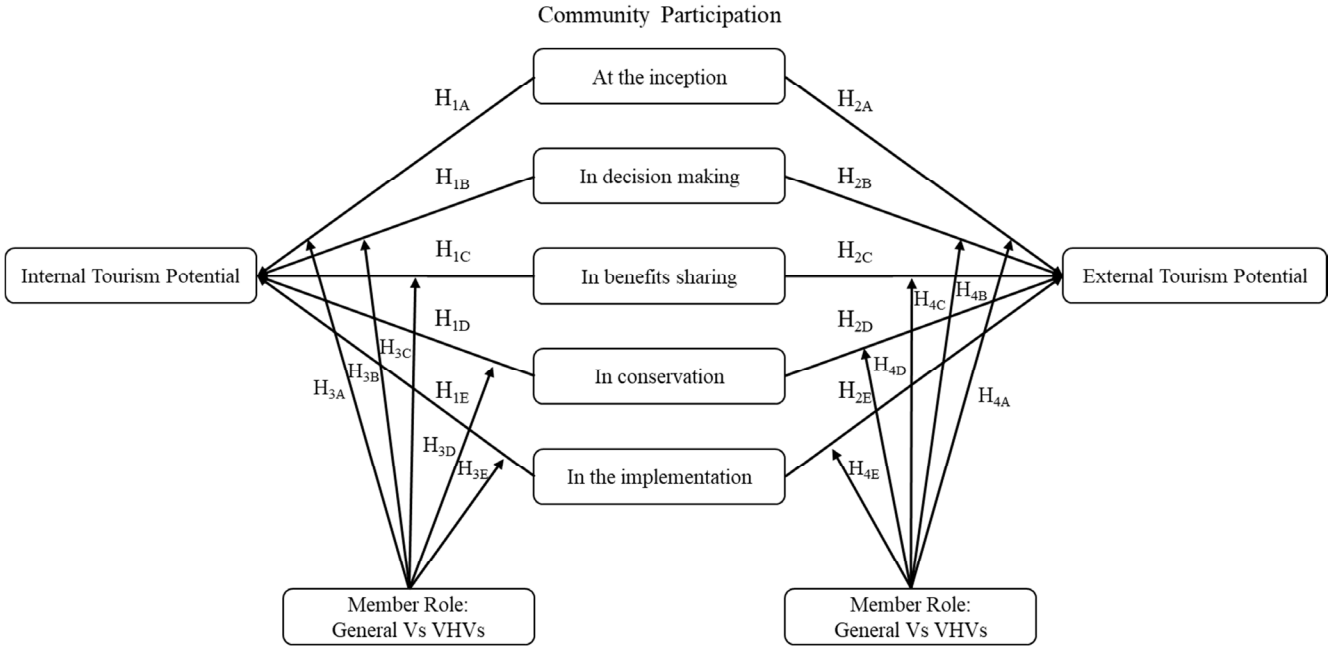


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (n=436)

Demographic Factors	Items	n	%
1.Gender	Male	119	27.3
	Female	317	72.7
2.Educational Level	Below Bachelor' degree	300	68.8
	Bachelor' degree	113	25.9
	Above Bachelor' degree	23	5.3
3.Community Member Role	General Member	262	60.1
	Village Health Volunteer	174	30.9
4.Age	Mean: 42.36, S.D.: 13.758		

implementation (3 items), which were adapted from previous studies (Jantamaneechot et al., 2023; Kihima & Musila, 2019; Tosun, 1999). Two sample questions are: "You have participated in planning and guiding community activities at the inception of a project." and "You play an important role in protecting and preserving the natural resources of the community.". These variables were utilized as an interval scale derived from the primary data and the average value of each dimension was used for hypotheses testing.

The tourism potential dimension was separated into two main perspectives and measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (least) to 5 (most). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they had an opinion regarding tourism potential in their communities. The two perspectives were: internal tourism potential (8 items; e.g. aesthetic and art value, entertainment value, and cultural-historical value) and external tourism potential (10 items; e.g. links with other tourist sites, potential accessibility, accommodation quality, and service quality), which were adapted from previous studies (Bahar & Kozak, 2007; Cetin & Sevik, 2016; Hoang, Truong, Nguyen, & Hens, 2018). These variables were converted into an interval scale developed from the primary data and the average value of each dimension was used for hypotheses testing.

Hypotheses

Considering concepts and the related empirical evidence, the following hypotheses are presented:

Hypothesis 1A: Community participation at the inception has a significant influence on internal tourism potential.

Hypothesis 1B: Community participation in decision making has a significant influence on internal tourism potential.

Hypothesis 1C: Community participation in benefits sharing has a significant influence on internal tourism potential.

Hypothesis 1D: Community participation in conservation has a significant influence on internal tourism potential.

Hypothesis 1E: Community participation in implementation has a significant influence on internal tourism potential.

Hypothesis 2A: Community participation at the inception has a significant influence on external tourism potential.

Hypothesis 2B: Community participation in decision making has a significant influence on external tourism potential.

Hypothesis 2C: Community participation in benefits sharing has a significant influence on external tourism potential.

Hypothesis 2D: Community participation in conservation has a significant influence on external tourism potential.

Hypothesis 2E: Community participation in implementation has a significant influence on external tourism potential.

Hypothesis 3A: The influence of community participation at the inception on internal tourism potential is moderated by the community members' roles.

Hypothesis 3B: The influence of community participation in decision making on internal tourism potential is moderated by the community members' roles.

Hypothesis 3C: The influence of community participation in benefits sharing on internal tourism potential is moderated by the community members' roles.

Hypothesis 3D: The influence of community participation in conservation on internal tourism potential is moderated by the community members' roles.

Hypothesis 3E: The influence of community participation in implementation on internal tourism potential is moderated by the community members' roles.

Hypothesis 4A: The influence of community participation at the inception on external tourism potential is moderated by the community members' role.

Hypothesis 4B: The influence of community participation in decision making on external tourism potential is moderated by the community members' role.

Hypothesis 4C: The influence of community participation in benefits sharing on external tourism potential is moderated by the community members' role.

Hypothesis 4D: The influence of community participation in conservation on external tourism potential is moderated by the community members' role.

Hypothesis 4E: The influence of community participation in implementation on external tourism potential is moderated by the community members' role.

Data Analysis Method

This study used the SmartPLS algorithm to conduct partial least squares structural modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the data and complete the research objectives. This study is an exploratory research and PLS-SEM is a suitable approach for such studies. Community participation was the independent variable, while community members' roles was the moderator between community participation and both internal and external tourism potentials. PLS-SEM technique contains various statistical tools for analyzing data, such as factor loading analysis, path analysis, and composite reliability (Suthatorn & Charoensukmongkol, 2022). PLS-SEM also

generates more robust outputs than other SEM estimations because it reduces bias associated with non-normal data (Hair Jr, Matthews, Matthews, & Sarstedt, 2017). Additionally, it is excellent at estimating models with moderating variables. Thus, these advantages make PLS-SEM the ideal choice for analyzing the conceptual model of this study which contains a moderating variable that influences multiple constructs.

3. Result and Discussion

Measurement Model Assessment

Prior to structural model assessment, it is necessary to test the quality of the data to evaluate the study's internal consistency. First, factor loadings were assessed to determine whether convergent validity was within the 0.70 threshold (Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2021). Thus, the lower loading was reduced until the internal consistency loading value was between 0.40 – 0.70, as prior studies have stated that it can be lowered to attain an acceptable Average Variance Extracted (AVE) threshold (Sarstedt, Hair Jr, Cheah, Becker, & Ringle, 2019). The study's internal consistency was assessed using factor loadings and any low loadings were reduced to improve the correlations among the constructs until all indicators' values were greater than 0.70, except items ETP_1 and ETP_3. Second, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were chosen to measure composite reliability (CR), which required a minimum threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1975). The analysis revealed that all alpha-values were above 0.70. Thus, the reliability of the model was satisfied. Finally, assessment of the CR and AVE revealed they had significance levels of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively, meeting the acceptability level for convergent validity (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Thus, convergent validity was confirmed.

The results in the Fornell-Larcker criterion led to the decision to test discriminant validity, wherein each latent variable's square root of the AVE should be higher than the related correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In addition, we examined the cross-loading values of the constructs to evaluate discriminant validity, which revealed that all items' loadings on their variables were high, demonstrating acceptable discriminant validity. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratios (HTMT) were also performed to confirm discriminant validity with a 0.90 threshold and that the HTMT ratio did not exceed the threshold (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). The results confirmed all outcomes met the HTMT criterion of 0.90, satisfying the discriminant validity requirements. Thus, the discriminant validity of this study is acceptable. Moreover, multicollinearity was analyzed using full variance inflation factors (VIF) to confirm that the correlation among independent variables was not too high (Petter, Straub, & Rai, 2007). The full VIF values, which must not exceed 3.3, were between 1.054 and 3.241, indicating there was no issue with multicollinearity.

Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypotheses 1A – 1E proposed that community participation, specifically participation at the inception (H_{1A}), in decision making (H_{1B}), in benefits sharing (H_{1C}), in conservation (H_{1D}), and in implementation (H_{1E}), would positively influence the internal tourism potential. The results indicated that Trang communities' participation at the inception (β=0.184, $p<0.01$), in conservation (β=0.235, $p<0.001$), and in implementation (β=0.190, $p<0.01$) had a statistically significant positive influence on an internal tourism potential, as shown in Table 2. Therefore, H_{1A}, H_{1D}, and H_{1E} are supported. These results showed that when Trang people participated more at the inception, in conservation, and in implementation in their communities it enhanced the internal potential of their tourism communities. Whereas, community participation in decision making and in benefits sharing did not have a significant influence on internal tourism potential. Thus, H_{1B} and H_{1C} are not supported. Regarding the model's predictive accuracy, the coefficient of determination (R-square) value of 0.350 for internal tourism potential denotes that 35.0% of the variability is predictable by the model.

Hypotheses 2A – 2E proposed that community participation, including participation at the inception (H_{2A}), in decision making (H_{2B}), in benefits sharing (H_{2C}), in conservation (H_{2D}), and in implementation (H_{2E}), would positively influence the external tourism potential. The results reported in Table 2 indicate that Trang communities' participation at the inception (β=0.145, $p<0.05$), in conservation (β=0.174, $p<0.01$), and in implementation (β=0.321, $p<0.001$) had a statically significant positive influence on external tourism potential. Therefore, H_{2A}, H_{2D}, and H_{2E} are supported. These results show that when Trang people participated more at the inception, in conservation, and in implementation for their communities it enhanced the external potential of their tourism communities. Whereas, community participation in decision making and in benefits sharing did not have a significant influence on external tourism potential. Thus, H_{2B} and H_{2C} are not supported. The model's R-square value of 0.362 means 36.2% of the variability is predictable by the model.

Hypotheses 3A – 3E proposed that the community members' roles would moderate the influence of community participation on internal tourism potential. The results shown in Table 2 revealed that the interaction of the community members' roles had a significant moderating effect on the positive influence of community participation at the inception (β=-0.263, $p<0.05$) and in conservation (β=-0.361, $p<0.05$) related to internal tourism potential. Therefore, H_{3A} and H_{3D} are supported. Thus, the findings suggest that participation by general community members at the inception and in conservation will have a greater effect on enhancing internal tourism potential than the participation of VHVs in Trang's communities. Whereas, it was revealed that the moderating effect of the community members' roles had no significant influence on the influence of community participation in decision making, in benefits sharing, or in implementation relative to internal tourism potential. Thus, H_{3B}, H_{3C}, and H_{3E} are not supported.

Hypotheses 4A – 4E proposed that the community members' roles would moderate the influence of community participation on external tourism potential. The results from the final step revealed that the interaction of the community members' roles had a significant moderating effect only on the positive influence of community participation at the inception (β=-0.357, $p<0.05$) with regard to external tourism potential. Therefore, H_{4A} is supported. Thus, the findings suggest that participation by general community members at the inception will enhance the external tourism potential more than the participation of VHVs in Trang's communities. Additionally, it was revealed that the moderating effect of the community members' roles had no significant influence on the influence of community participation in decision making, benefits sharing, conservation, or implementation related to external tourism potential. Thus, H_{4B}, H_{4C}, H_{4D}, and H_{4E} are not supported.

Table 2. Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

No.	Hypothesis	Coefficient	t-value	Decision
H_{1A}	CP_Incep > ITP	0.184**	3.051	Supported
H_{1B}	CP_Dec > ITP	0.045	0.575	Rejected
H_{1C}	CP_Ben > ITP	0.066	0.779	Rejected
H_{1D}	CP_Conser > ITP	0.235***	3.899	Supported
H_{1E}	CP_Imp > ITP	0.190**	2.631	Supported
H_{2A}	CP_Incep > ETP	0.145*	2.492	Supported
H_{2B}	CP_Dec > ETP	-0.068	0.898	Rejected
H_{2C}	CP_Ben > ETP	0.100	1.180	Rejected
H_{2D}	CP_Conser > ETP	0.174**	2.933	Supported
H_{2E}	CP_Imp > ETP	0.321***	4.995	Supported
H_{3A}	VHVxCP_Incep > ITP	-0.263*	2.119	Moderation
H_{3B}	VHVxCP_Dec > ITP	0.077	0.547	Rejected
H_{3C}	VHVxCP_Ben > ITP	0.013	0.099	Rejected
H_{3D}	VHVxCP_Conser > ITP	-0.361*	2.341	Moderation
H_{3E}	VHVxCP_Imp > ITP	-0.090	0.780	Rejected
B_{4A}	VHVxCP_Incep > ETP	-0.357*	2.450	Moderation
H_{4B}	VHVxCP_Dec > ETP	0.206	1.480	Rejected
H_{4C}	VHVxCP_Ben > ETP	-0.147	1.271	Rejected
H_{4D}	VHVxCP_Conser > ETP	-0.051	0.464	Rejected
H_{4E}	VHVxCP_Imp > ETP	0.062	0.554	Rejected

Notes: Community Members' Roles were coded as 1=General Member and 2=Village Health Volunteer, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$.

Abbreviations: VHV=Village Health Volunteer

As shown in Figure 2, the scatter plot revealed a significant moderating effect by community members' roles. Firstly, in the initial stages of the process, community participation at the inception of VHVs members had a greater effect on enhancing internal tourism potential than that of general community members. Later, when the level of community participation at the inception by general members increased and became higher than that of the VHVs, it resulted in a significantly greater effect on enhancing internal tourism potential. Secondly, initially community participation at the inception by VHVs had a greater effect on enhancing external tourism potential than the participation of general community members. Later, when the level of community participation at the inception by general members had increased and was higher than that of the VHVs, general community member participation resulted in a significantly greater effect on enhancing tourism potential in external contexts. Lastly, at the begining point, community participation in conservation by both general and VHVs members had quite semilar effect on enhancing internal tourism potential. Later, when the level of community participation in conservation by general members had increased and was higher than that of the VHVs members, it resulted in a significantly greater effect on enhancing internal tourism potential. Thus, at the inception, participation by the VHVs had a greater effect on enhancing both internal and external tourism potentials than the participation of general community members in Trang's communities until the participation level of the general community members surpassed that of the VHVs. Additionally, the participation by general community members had a greater effect on enhancing internal tourism potential than the participation of VHVs only in the conservation step in Trang's communities.

Discussion of the Findings and Research Contributions

This research was designed to determine the influence of Trang's communities' participation on internal and external tourism potential and to investigate the moderating effect of the community members' roles related to tourism potential development. The results obtained from the model's estimations confirmed the positive influence of community participation on internal and external tourism potentials at the inception, in conservation, and in implementation in the context of Trang's communities. This suggests that high levels of community participation helps communities to enhance both internal and external tourism potential. Community participation's influence on tourism potential in the context of this study appears to correlate with the results from prior investigations demonstrating the positive influence of community participation on tourism potential, sustainability, and development (Cheng, Wu, Wang, & Wu, 2019; Jantamaneechot et al., 2023; Osman et al., 2018; Rahman et al., 2022; Rasoolimanesh, Ringle, Jaafar, & Ramayah, 2017; Tseng et al., 2019). However, in Trang's context, some elements of community participation, including participation in decision making and the benefit sharing process, had no influence on tourism potential because only a specific group of community members were involved in them, such as village leaders, the Subdistrict Administrative Organization (SAO), and another related government sectors.

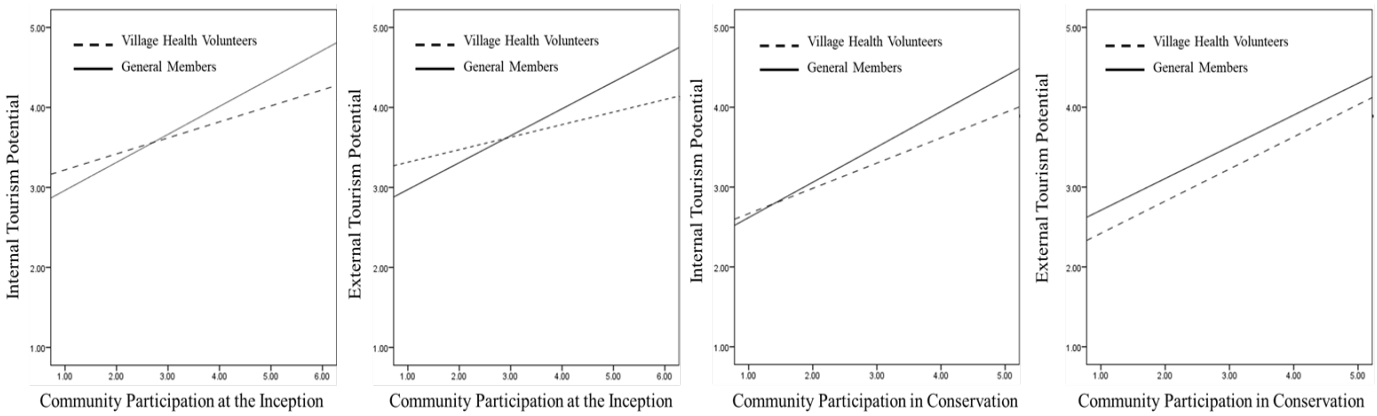


Figure 2. Scatter Plot of Moderating Effect of Community Members' Roles

In terms of the effect of the community members' roles, the analysis found evidence that the community members' roles played a moderating role in regard to some elements of community participation (specifically participation at the inception and in conservation), in addition to being significantly correlated with internal tourism potential. The findings suggest that general members (local people living in Trang community) demonstrated more influence on enhancing internal tourism potential when they had high levels of involvement at the inception and in conservation than village health volunteers. Whereas, in terms of Trang's communities' external tourism potential, the analysis found evidence that community members' roles only have a moderating role in regard to community participation at the inception. The findings also suggest that general members had more influence on enhancing external tourism potential than village health volunteers when they had high levels of participation at the inception of community projects. In the context of the community memmbers' roles, the results correllate with prior studies that have supported the moderating role of member type in community participation which revealed differrences between active community members and lurker groups (members of online communities)(Kumar, 2019).

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

4. Conclusions

Many previous studies regarding community development have been conducted to explain the importance of the elements which enhance a community's potential for development and sustainability. Additionally, the roles of the local people within the community can be a crucial part of improving the level of development within their communities. Thus, this study aimed to examine community participation's influence on Trang's tourism potential and investigate the moderating effects of the community members' roles. PLS-SEM testing of the data and hypotheses in this study revealed that people in Trang were most involved during the inception, implementation, and conservation of projects in relation to enhancing both the internal and external tourism potentials of their tourism communities. In addition, the evidence also showed that enhancing tourism potential requires participation from everyone in the community, not only those who have responsibilities related to the community's operations.

Several recommendations that should be taken into consideration by the communities in Trang Province and their related stakeholders regarding managerial issues related to enhancing the communities' internal and external tourism potential arise from this research. First, it is imperative for Trang's communities to encourage the active participation of community members to increase their level of involvement during the inception, conservation, and implementation stages of community activities. Sufficient participation by community members is beneficial to the promotion of the community's cultural-historical value, aesthetic and art value, and entertainment value, as well as preserving the community's natural resources in accordance with the philosophical focus of sustainable tourism development. Second, the stakeholders related to Trang 's communities can improve their community development activities by providing local people the opportunity and authority to participate in the community's development process. For example, village leaders can collaborate with village members at the inception and during the implementation phases of the development of a homestay project. Third, even though village health volunteers are community members who play important roles in the context of Thai communities, this study revealed that tourism potential is more likely to be effectively developed through the active participation and collaboration of all community members. Finally, an in-depth understanding and knowledge of community participation and its influences on tourism should be promoted and enhanced among the community stakeholders from all sectors (e.g., the government, private, and academic sectors).

While several significant contributions to the field have been generated by this study, there are some limitations that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the study used a cross-sectional design for data collection, so we are unable to draw causal inferences. Thus, we can merely proffer insights on the associations among the variables. Secondly, the research sample only included local people from Trang, Thailand's communities. Therefore, the study's outcomes may not be generalizable to communities elsewhere, whether domestic or international. In order to verify and increase generalizability of the results from our study, we suggest future studies implement

our model with samples of community members drawn from other domestic or international locales. Additionally, future research should seek out additional factors and study their influences on tourism potential and development, as well.

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