



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Research

Cultural tourism is one of tourism types that has been popular among tourists all over the globe. It is involved not only such tangible cultural attractions as temples, monuments, museums, or ancient things, but it is also concerned with intangible culture such as festivals, farming, ways of life, and beliefs. According to Doug Donaldson in his electronic article<sup>1</sup> 'Cultural Tourism', the World Tourism Organization in 1997 concluded, in a study called 'Tourism: 2020 Vision', that cultural tourism would be one of the hottest travel trends for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Cultural tourism section plays a significant role in the tourism industry by making up around 20 percent of the total volume in the whole industry. In Canada, for example, Canadian tourists put cultural purposes into their travel plans as one of the top five reasons of travels.

Although cultural tourism can be managed by several forms of concerns, such as by local communities, local administration organizations, government agencies, private bodies, temples, foundations, or even academic institutions, co-operative based cultural tourism management is rarely seen. In Japan, the United States of America, Canada, and India, tourism co-operatives are doing well in mass tourism but very few are involved in cultural tourism.

Co-operative based cultural tourism management approach is relatively new for co-operatives in Thailand. Many co-operatives, which are located in the area with the abundance of cultural resources, are being interested in doing cultural tourism business on top of the current businesses that they are operating. Nonetheless, no co-operatives have started such a new business as seriously as Mae Gum Pong Royal Project Electricity Co-operative, Limited in Mae On District, Chiang Mai Province.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.connectionsmagazine.bc.ca/sum00/out\\_cult.html](http://www.connectionsmagazine.bc.ca/sum00/out_cult.html)

The Co-operative has just established cultural tourism business in December 2000 with supports of not only its members, but also of the villagers in Mae Gum Pong community and the local agencies, including Wat Mae Gum Pong (temple), local primary school, Huay Kaew Sub District Administration Organization, the local forestry office, the community development district office, and the provincial co-operative office. Cultural tourism products offered by the Co-operative incorporate homestay, in which tourists can learn and appreciate local ways of life, local dance shows, local music shows, forest tour guiding, farming activities, herbal production, Miang (tea leaves) collecting and processing, etc.

The inspiration of conducting this thesis is that much research work has revealed about the stories of community based tourism management with a focus on sustainable development of communities, which in effect the sustainability can appear either successful or failed. In the case of cultural tourism in Mae Gum Pong community, it is quite unique as managed by the co-operative system. Also, it is interesting in exploring whether the co-operative based tourism management will bring about the sustainability to its respective community and whether the Co-operative can survive by operating only the tourism business. Findings of the exploration can be applied to not only management practices of other tourism co-operatives, but also of tourism communities.

This thesis, therefore, aims to explore the characteristics, values, and significance of the co-operative based cultural tourism management practices by using Mae Gum Pong Royal Project Electricity Co-operative, Limited in Chiang Mai Province as a case study. Furthermore, to make a comprehensive understanding on other bodies implementing culture related tourism management in a rural area, this thesis also looks at case studies of Kanchanaburi Ecotourism Co-operative Company, Limited (KECC) in Kanchanaburi Province, Plai Phongpang tourism community in Samut Songkram Province, Khiriwongse tourism village in Nakorn Sri Thammarat, and Ban Huay Hee tourism community in Mae Hong Son Province. The lessons learned from these cases are useful for the case of Mae Gum Pong as they show that tourism can bring positive and negative impacts to communities. Since the Co-operative is young in the area of tourism management, scenario building for the projection of its tourism business is imperative. In this regard, the thesis also looks ahead by studying about risk factors to the sustainability of the tourism business.

## 1.2 Justification for the Research

Although roles played by co-operatives in the field of rural development in Thailand are enormous, tourism promotion particularly rural tourism management has been rarely run through the co-operative approach. Most rural tourism activities are conducted by community basis or local administration organizations. Actually, the Thai government has to promote, support, and protect the co-operative approach, according to the present Thai Constitution, Article 85, by making full use of co-operatives as a key mechanism for economic, social, and political development in both urban and rural societies. At the same time, many co-operatives in the rural areas that possess cultural and natural resources have much potential and readiness to the rural tourism management. Hence, they should have had a greater degree of playing a significant role in the local tourism management.

Moreover, when searching for written work regarding co-operative based tourism management in comparison with other kinds of tourism management bodies in particular such a local body as the community based tourism management, it is found that the community based management is much more studied than the co-operative based management. This phenomenon is regarded as a research gap that needs to be filled. Therefore, the researcher takes this matter into account by initiating a research study chiefly engaged in the co-operative based management with a focus on cultural tourism.

In addition to the research gap, the Royal Thai Government has encouraged the co-operatives to take part in the tourism promotion policy. The Government has planned to allocate certain budgets to be used for promoting tourism through co-operatives, especially those in rural areas<sup>2</sup>; nevertheless, studies on how to use the co-operative based tourism management are scarce. In this regard, this thesis was created to advocate such a policy so that at least relevant parties involved in making plans of tourism promotion through the co-operative system can use it as a prototype and develop it into their own desired way. All of the above reasons form the justification for this research.

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<sup>2</sup> Reported by Co-op News, vol. 1, no. 4, August 2001, pp. 1, 4. Co-op News is a monthly newspaper for the Thai co-operative movement, which is published by the Co-operative League of Thailand. An amount of 4,334,000 bahts arranged in the 2002 Budget Act by the Thai Government will be spent on tourism promotion through the co-operative system.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

1.3.1 To study about cultural tourism management of Mae Gum Pong Royal Project Electricity Co-operative, Limited, Chiang Mai Province

1.3.2 To discover manners of cultural tourism promotion and development by means of the co-operative approach

1.3.3 To create a model of cultural tourism management for co-operatives

1.3.4 To make a research and development initiative for co-operative based cultural tourism management practices

### **1.4 Research Propositions**

1.4.1 Co-operative based cultural tourism management is suitable for the economic, social, and cultural developments of the local community.

1.4.2 The Co-operative is the principal institution of the community for cultural tourism management.

1.4.3 The Co-operative is viable by operating only the cultural tourism business.

1.4.4 The Co-operative emphasizes on local participation when making cultural tourism management plans.

### **1.5 Scope of Research**

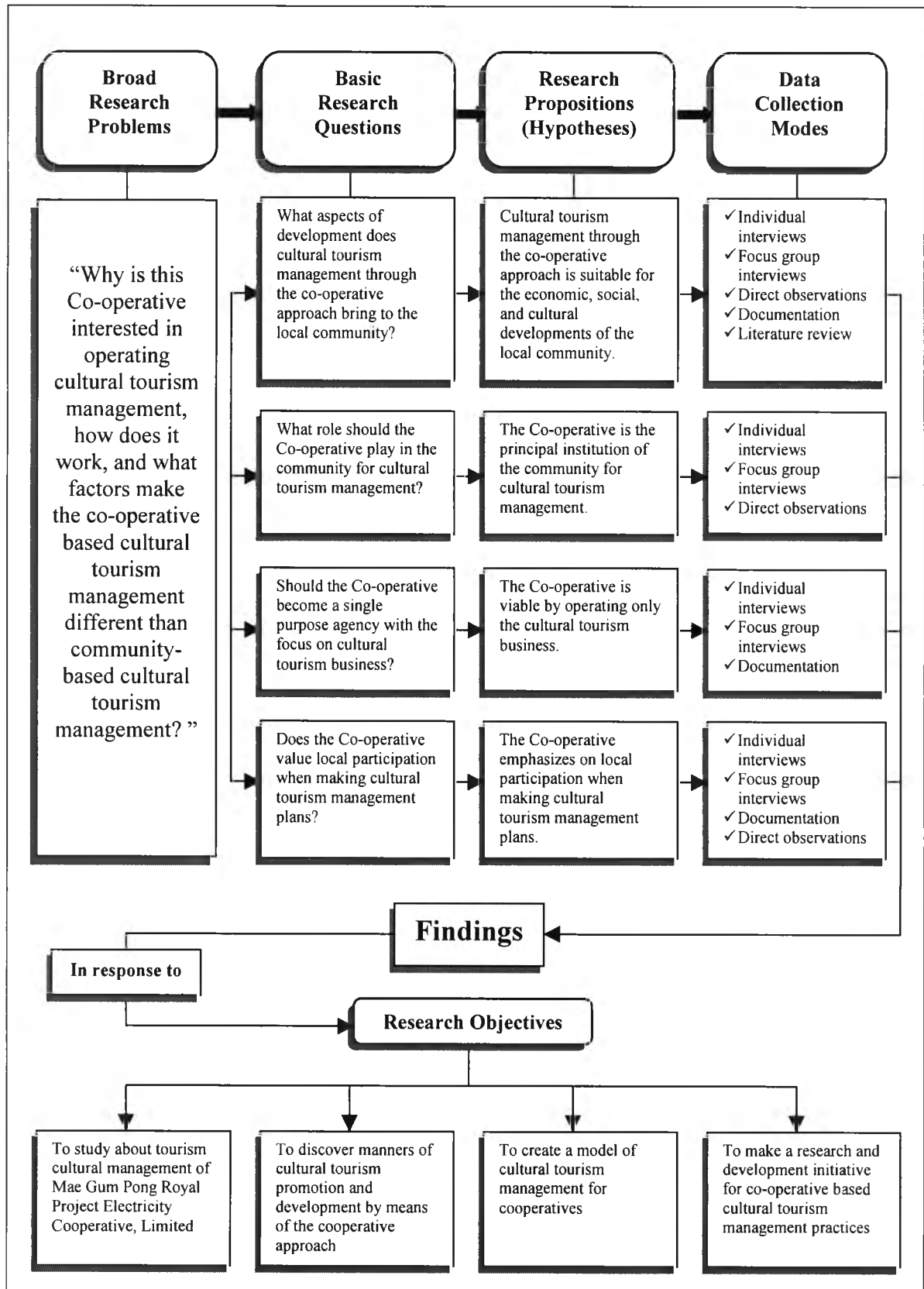
This thesis has a clear scope of research by focusing only on exploring cultural tourism management practices of Mae Gum Pong Royal Project Electricity Co-operative, Limited in Mae On District, Chiang Mai Province.

## 1.6 Research Methodology

Based on qualitative method, this thesis used the case study research methodology as the research strategy. Data collections were divided into two modes. The first mode was implemented in the real settings of Mae Gum Pong Royal Project Electricity Co-operative, Limited and the community of Mae Gum Pong Village in Mae On District, Chiang Mai Province during 5 - 10 November 2001 and 10 – 14 March 2002. This mode employed individual interviews, focus group interviews, and direct observations. The other mode was undertaken during 1 October 2001 – 15 January 2002 by using documentation, and literature review, including exploring management practices of Kanchanaburi Ecotourism Co-operative Company, Limited (KECC) in Kanchanaburi Province. KECC is a prototype of tourism co-operative in Thailand and its story has been studied and published by certain academic and professional people.

Triangulation, in which three sources of the data collected were interdependently analyzed, was used for data analysis. Interpretation of the data analyzed was reported in the discussion part of chapter 4 while the conclusions of the findings were described in chapter 5 where recommendations are also given. Also, a research framework has been sequentially designed. It contains four main elements that encompass broad research problems, basic research questions, research propositions (hypotheses), and data collection modes (see Figure 1.1 in the next page).

Figure 1.1: Research Framework for This Thesis



Source: Prepared for this thesis

## 1.7 Definitions

Some key terms are frequently used in this thesis. These terms include cultural tourism, co-operative, and management. It is appropriate to define such terms in order that the holistic contents in this thesis can be understood in the same manner.

### 1.7.1 Cultural Tourism

Stebbins (1996: 948) writes, 'Cultural tourism is a genre of special interest tourism based on the search for and participation in new and deep cultural experiences, whether aesthetic, intellectual, emotional, or psychological'. This definition is comprehensive as it incorporates a variety of cultural forms, including museums, galleries, festivals, architecture, historic sites, artistic performances, and heritage sites, as well as any experience that brings one culture in contact with another for the specific purpose of that contact, in a touring situation<sup>3</sup>.

Harrison (1998)<sup>4</sup> outlines cultural tourism that it relates to travel that seeks to experience a society; way of life. This can embrace a very wide range of things. It can include, for example, study tours, performing art festivals, visits to historic or archaeological sites and monument, museums, natural heritage such as gardens and wilderness areas, folklore or art, and religious festivals.

Jamieson (1994)<sup>5</sup> states that cultural tourism can be seen to have a number of the following dimensions; handicrafts, language, gastronomy, art and music, architecture, sense of place, historic sites, festivals and events, heritage resources, the nature of the work environment and technology, religion, education, and dress.

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<sup>3</sup> Cited in <http://www.sccs.swarthmore.edu/users/00/ckenned1/definition.html>

<sup>4</sup> Australian Tourism representative Jenny Harrison made her presentation titled 'Cultural Tourism in Australia' at 12th Meeting Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Tourism Working Group (TWG) held in Cheju Island, Republic of Korea 11-15 May 1998. The presentation can be seen in the website address '<http://www.mct.go.kr/conf/apec/124.html>'.

<sup>5</sup> Professor Dr. Walter Jamieson is the Director of the Center for Livable Communities at the University of Calgary. He is also Professor of Planning and Director of the Historical Resources Intern Program within the Faculty of Environmental Design at the University of Calgary. His article titled 'The Challenge of Cultural Tourism' was published in ICOMOS Canada Bulletin, Vol. 3 No. 3 Momentum 1994 and can be electronically read through [http://www.icomos.org/canada/bulletin/vol3\\_no3\\_jamieson\\_e.html](http://www.icomos.org/canada/bulletin/vol3_no3_jamieson_e.html)

From the mingled ideas of all the definitions above with preference to Jamieson's view, cultural tourism in this thesis means all forms of travel related to experiencing culture comprising tangible things such as sites, festivals and objects and intangible things such as traditions, religion, beliefs, and way of life.

### **1.7.2 Co-operative**

This thesis uses the definition of co-operative officially defined by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA). A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.<sup>6</sup> This definition has been officially adopted by the Co-operative Promotion Department under the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives and has been acknowledged by the Thai co-operative movement (CPD, 1999: 3).

### **1.7.3 Management**

Herriot (1999: 2) defines management as practices of using available resources in a particular situation to achieve personal or organizational goals. It can be an art when dealing with subjective situations and a science when dealing with systematic circumstances. Graham (1997: 14) states that a good management system is expected to include planning, implementing, and evaluating processes.

Since this thesis is focused on cultural tourism management of Mae Gum Pong Royal Project Electricity Co-operative, Limited, management in this sense means use of cultural resources for tourism purposes. It studied on how it is managed and carried out. Also, the management practices learned from the case have led to designing a comprehensive model of cultural tourism management for co-operatives.

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<sup>6</sup> The definition is part of the Statement on the Co-operative Identity. The Statement was adopted at the 1995 Congress and General Assembly of the International Co-operative Alliance, held in Manchester to celebrate the Alliance's Centenary. Recommended to the Congress by the ICA Board, the Statement was the product of a lengthy process of consultation involving thousands of co-operators around the world. The process was chaired by Ian MacPherson of Canada, who prepared numerous drafts of the Identity Statement and its Background Paper in an effort to understand the state and needs of the co-operative movement at the end of the twentieth century. All the contents of the Statement can be read in <http://www.wisc.edu/uwcc/ivic/def-hist/def/what-is.htm>



## **1.8 Expected Benefits**

1.8.1 Cultural tourism management practices conducted by Mae Gum Pong Royal Project Electricity Co-operative, Limited is made known to publics.

1.8.2 Promotion and development directions suitable for co-operative based cultural tourism management can be established.

1.8.3 A comprehensive model for co-operative based cultural tourism management can be developed.

1.8.4 An initiative of research and development concerning the co-operative based cultural tourism management can firmly take place.

1.8.5 Other co-operatives possessing cultural tourism opportunities pay more attention to the conduct of cultural tourism activities, which will bring to their members and communities economic and social prosperity.

## **1.9 Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1: Introduction portrays the overview of the thesis features. Chapter 2: Literature Review describes theories, notions, and any written work related to the potential disciplines concerning this research work. Chapter 3: Research Methodology pictures the methods of research conduct as well as the design and tools of collecting data. Chapter 4: Analysis of Data depicts the dissections of the data collected in relation to each research proposition. Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations is the final chapter that draws the findings for each proposition and provides appropriate directions for practical applications as well as for further research.