Article

Unpacking Key Sustainability Drivers for Sustainable Social Enterprises: A Community-Based Tourism Perspective

Trin Thananusak and Suparak Suriyankietkaew *

College of Management, Mahidol University, Bangkok 10400, Thailand
* Correspondence: suparak.sur@mahidol.ac.th

Abstract: This study unpacked the key sustainability drivers for successful social enterprises or community-based tourism enterprises (CBTEs), based on a study of a Thailand's Best Responsible Tourism award-winner at Sapphaya Community in Chai Nat Province. Using a grounded-theory qualitative case study, our key research objective is to gain insights into how community and enterprise leaders of a national award-winning CBTE in Thailand can generate value by revalorizing its cultural heritage and local assets to achieve sustainable community-based tourism. The research also explores how the CBTE can increase local engagement with multi-stakeholders. Our findings indicated two key sustainability drivers, including leadership and local engagement, for sustainable social enterprises. An emergent model of leadership and local engagement in driving the sustainability of CBTEs is proposed. It implies an importance of CBTE leadership as a critical factor that helps preserve community endowments (e.g., historical sites and cultural heritage) as well as develops social capital. The local engagement with a good sense of ownership and community participation is the key enabler toward sustainable tourism. The results also suggest how-to processes in cultivating sustainable social enterprises in practice and toward policy implications.

Keywords: sustainable enterprise; sustainable entrepreneurship; social entrepreneurship; community-based tourism enterprise; community-based social enterprise; social enterprise; community-based tourism; sustainable tourism; sustainable development; sustainability; SDG

1. Introduction

Worldwide, corporate sustainability has become an essential topic among academics and businesses. Previous research mainly focused on large corporations [1–3], yet studies in small enterprises, such as community or social enterprises, are still underdeveloped [4,5]. Moreover, the COVID pandemic has severely hit these small community and entrepreneurial enterprises the hardest [6]. The pandemic crisis had adversely put tourism, a fast-growing socio-economic enabling sector in many countries, to a halt [5]. Additionally, sustainability in this sector toward sustainable tourism is questioned.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defined "sustainable tourism" as "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" [7] (p. 12). Since then, the literature in the field of sustainable tourism has been growing [8]. A distinct form of tourism toward sustainability is named community-based tourism, or CBT. Community-based tourism (CBT) emerged as an alternative means of promoting local community development and social empowerment while driving sustainable economic growth through tourism.

Largely, CBT is considered one type of sustainable tourism that aims to support sustainable development within the community and county to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG). At the international level, CBT has gained much interest, as it can help grow rural and sustainable tourism that purposefully helps to generate incomes and create jobs for near and far-reaching communities or rural areas in

the bottom of the pyramid [9,10]. In many developing countries, such as Thailand, CBT has gained popularity and acceptance due to the importance of the tourism sector in the emerging markets [11,12].

Moreover, CBT supports the development of community-based tourism enterprises (CBTEs) and social enterprises, particularly in the small- and medium-business sector [5]. The latest literature highlights that these CBT enterprises may be the most crucial driver for community development and social transformation toward socio-economic sustainability [13]. Yet, studies on the future development of social enterprises, such as CBTEs, have been lacking with little research [14,15]. The topic has become an important global issue with rising attraction.

The sustainability of community-based tourism enterprises (CBTEs) results from various factors such as leadership, utilization of local assets, local ownership, community participation, and engagement [5,16]. Among these factors, the literature emphasizes the importance of leadership and community participation as the key success factors of CBTE, since local people are "embedded" and are part of tourism products [17,18]. Previous studies in CBTEs have examined how CBTEs utilize local social capital and network with external stakeholders to sustain their organizations [19,20]. However, they tend to focus on sustainability at the macro, organizational level, while the fine-grained level study and research insights of how individuals (i.e., enterprise/community leaders and entrepreneurs) in CBTEs mobilize resources and engage with local and external parties is limited [21].

This study aims to unpack key sustainability drivers for successful CBTEs, using a grounded-theory qualitative case study. Our key research objective is to gain insights into how community and enterprise leaders of a national award-winning CBTE in Thailand, called Sapphaya Community in Chai Nat Province, can generate value by revalorizing its cultural heritage and local assets to achieve sustainable community-based tourism. In addition, we intend to explore how the CBTE can increase local engagement with multi-stakeholders. Therefore, our key research questions focus on:

(1) How can community and enterprise leaders of a national award-winning CBTE in Thailand at Sapphaya Community generate value to achieve sustainable community-based tourism?
(2) How can the CBTE increase local engagement with multi-stakeholders?

In total, our paper aims to contribute to the limited knowledge in this emerging field, particularly in the CBSE research context, in a fast-developing country such as Thailand. Later, we will provide the relevant literature review and a research methodology used in the study. Finally, we will discuss insightful findings, implications, limitations, and future research directions in turn.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Overview of Community-Based Tourism Enterprise (CBTE)

In the literature, community-based tourism (CBT) is considered as an alternative to socio-economic and environmental sustainability, and balance in communities and society [14,15]. The concept of CBT dates back to 1985 by Peter Murphy's *Tourism: A Community Approach Reference* (1988). Murphy used systems theory to explain that there is interdependence between the socio-cultural, environmental, and economic components of tourism, which are essential factors in formulating a successful CBT strategy [22]. CBT is a form of tourism development that emphasizes community participation in the planning, management, implementation, and evaluation of tourism services [23,24].

Scholars identify many definitions of CBT, as follows. Inskeep [25] mentioned that community-based tourism focuses on community involvement in the planning and development process, and developing the types of tourism which generate benefits for local communities. Leksakundilok and Hirsch [26] defined CBT was whereby tourism was managed and controlled by the community. Simpson [27] provided definitions and interpretations of community-based tourism centered on the question of ownership, management, and/or control of tourism projects. Hence, the definitions of CBT center on community,

whereby the community becomes the owner of tourism services provision. CBT enactment increases local communities' sense of belonging and pride by "sharing their stories" of cultural heritage and traditions with visitors [28]. CBT generates meaningful income for the community while sustaining cultural heritage [29]. In summary, these CBT definitions share commonalities, such as the local ownership of the community development, local involvement in planning and management processes, plus fair and equitable benefits sharing within the community.

Historically, the concept of social enterprises (SE) has been popularized worldwide based on 2006 Nobel Prize winner Muhammad Yunus's introduction to the social business concept. Yunus's social microfinance for poverty alleviation has increased the growth of the SE concept. The topic has interested international researchers, practitioners, and policymakers [30]. Iyengar [31] defines SE as businesses or organizations that primarily focus on delivering social or environmental benefits in a self-sustaining way. Compared with other non-profit organizations, which have a heavy reliance on philanthropic charities and donations, SE is a more sustainable approach toward sustainability [32].

A community-based enterprise is a form of SE. It is "a community acting corporately as both entrepreneur and enterprise in pursuit of community common good" [18]. In contrast, a Community-based Tourism Enterprise (CBTE) is a tourism enterprise that is managed by the community (e.g., local entrepreneurs and businesses). Their goals are to provide economic benefits (e.g., reducing poverty [33]), social purposes (e.g., empowering local communities), and environmental benefits to the community via entrepreneurial activities [16,34]. For instance, CBTEs can provide additional sources of income for villagers and allow communities to control tourism activities (e.g., Ban Maekampong, Thailand) [35]. Residents can manage their resources (e.g., environmental and cultural assets) and promote the local economy and well-being [17]. CBTEs can also support local businesses and entrepreneurs, serving as role models for community and rural development for CBTs in other regions [18,36].

2.2. Key Drivers for Corporate Sustainability in CBTEs

Previous studies identified several factors that underlie the success of CBTEs. These include leadership [16,37], local ownership [27,38], community participation, and partnership support from within and outside the community [39,40]. In the literature, the local ownership and community participation and partnership can be renamed as local engagement [16]. The literature suggests that these factors are key drivers for corporate sustainability in CBTEs. However, evidence-based case study research that uncovers insights into how a CBTE can drive corporate sustainability to achieve sustainable community-based tourism is still lacking. Therefore, this paper intends to unpack key drivers for sustainable social enterprises, particularly exploring how leadership and local engagement drives sustainability for sustainable tourism.

2.2.1. Leadership

Previous research addresses the importance of leadership and corporate sustainability in diverse contexts. A bibliometric review by Hallinger and Suriyankietkaew [41] reveals the growing significance of sustainable leadership worldwide over the past three decades. The leadership concept identifies how leadership is a critical factor towards sustainability in firms and societies. Leadership can also drive sustainability in large organizations [2,3] and small and medium enterprises, or SMEs [3,5]. In the context of CBTEs, the literature identifies vital factors leading to success and sustainability. Leadership is one of the most critical factors differentiating successful and non-successful CBTEs [5,42].

Community leaders need to align community values with the sustainability goal of CBTEs and build the capacity of their CBTEs [16,43]. They may lead entrepreneurial ventures and seek opportunities for their CBTEs. For example, Olmedo et al. [44] found that leaders of rural social enterprises in Ireland "revalorized" community material settings and infrastructure (i.e., their old and derelict police building) for local benefit. Leaders

can act as facilitators for sustainable development in tourism regions. For instance, tourist operators in Tasmania, Australia, promoted ethical employment and created economic benefits in the area [45].

Moreover, community development success depends on community leaders' ability to create local narratives and obtain resources from stakeholders. Many entrepreneurs utilize knowledge about their places for their marketing, creating value for their local community. For example, rural food-based entrepreneurs need to use local resources (e.g., their heritage, culture, and tourist venues) and communicate the uniqueness of their food and tourist sites to attract customers [46].

Since CBTEs operate in communities, they are embedded in local social networks [19]. Apart from being local entrepreneurs, leaders of CBTEs frequently function as network spanners (or "embedded intermediaries" [20]) that bridge the local resources of the community with external resources. To get extra support (e.g., for capital, knowledge, and marketing), community leaders need to bridge local resources with external ones. Korgsgaard et al. [46] found that rural entrepreneurs in Scandinavian countries relied not only on the pre-existing network resources and social capital, but also built new resources with external parties after they operated their social enterprises in the community. Although more research on CBTEs and social entrepreneurship have increasingly shed light on how social enterprises utilize their networks to generate benefits for community, these studies tend to focus on the entrepreneurial activities at the organizational level of their social enterprises. The fine-grained level explanation and insight into how community leaders and social entrepreneurs engage with their communities, while using their local and external networks, are still lacking [19,20].

In this paper, we postulate that leadership is a critical success factor in CBTEs, as suggested by previous studies. Moreover, the literature supports the idea that community leaders should act as social entrepreneurs and network spanners. Therefore, this study aims to explore insights and broaden our currently limited knowledge.

2.2.2. Local Engagement

Local engagement is another factor for the success of CBTEs [16] because CBTE operations need cooperation from their community. According to Peredo and Chrisman [18], the success of CBTEs depends on the high level of community-orientation. Community-oriented members would consider the needs of the community while regulating their individual needs and freedom of choice. Moreover, a sense of ownership needs to be instilled among community members [47].

Many studies suggest that when local community members have ownership rights, they are collectively responsible and emotionally committed to their CBTEs. More awareness of tourism's positive and negative consequences on both society and the environment tends to increase emotional commitment [48]. When the local community members have a strong sense of belonging to their CBTEs, they likely participate fully and have strong collective responsibility. As a result, such local ownership and being emotionally committed to the community can lead to long-term sustainable tourism development.

The locals need to have pride in their heritage and local assets, and develop a sense of local ownership so that the local engagement with the CBTE will be increased and sustained. Apart from pride and local ownership, the proper governance structure and fair profit sharing are essential for the sustainability of the CBTE. Mohammad and Hamzah [49] found that the shareholder of tourism co-operatives in Malaysia increased the engagement of members, developed social cohesion, and gained support from communities by distributing incomes fairly.

Since local engagement is crucial for CBTE's success, many studies examined the role of a "highly committed community" and how it affects the performance of CBTEs. For instance, a case study of CBTEs in China by Yang et al. [50] found that the "participation ability" of members moderated the relationship between the participation willingness of community members and tourism psychological empowerment. However, few have

explained how local engagement and a committed community are created, nurtured, and maintained [17]. The ability to engage residents is necessary for sustaining the CBTE in the long term [16,18].

In light of the literature, our study proposes that local engagement is another critical success factor in CBTEs. Yet, insightful knowledge about how local engagement that comprises local ownership and community participation may enable sustainable development in the tourism sector is still underdeveloped. This paper aims to provide an insightful discovery that expands our inadequate understanding of this realm.

2.3. Case Setting: Sapphaya Community in Chai Nat, Thailand

Sapphaya is a small town located in the Chai Nat province in the central region of Thailand (about 200 km from Bangkok, Thailand) (see Figure 1). The community comprises 3000 residents. The village of Sapphaya is either a one-day trip or a weekend getaway for Bangkok residents. The community's way of life is associated with the Chao Phraya River. It is a strong community with many cultural capitals. The village of Sapphaya's strength lies in its long-inherited and cultural roots. There are various sightseeing spots, such as the Sapphaya old police station, old town market, Sapphaya temple, and ancient chapel (Figure 2a,b). The old police station building was constructed in the reign of King Rama V about 100 years ago, and now serves as a community museum and landmark of the town. This building was awarded the "Best architectural preservation project" by the Association of Siamese Architects under Royal Patronage in 2018 (Figure 3). The Sapphaya temple and a small ancient chapel are the centers of archaeological sites and Buddhism artifacts (Figure 4).

Figure 1. Map of Thailand (Creative Commons license). The star indicates the location of Chai Nat province in the map.

(**a**)

(**b**)

Figure 2. (**a**,**b**) Map of Sapphaya and the Old market walking street. Source: authors' photo ((**a**) Map of Sapphaya's cutural heritage and national resources for main tourism attractions).

Sapphaya's local community and sub-district municipality decided to develop the old town market toward a community-based tourism initiative in 2015. The community's young generation, who work in both the public and private sectors, have collaborated and set up the "Sapphaya Old Market Restoration Club", which aims to revive all the old community's attractions and preserve traditions. The Restoration Club has foreseen the value of history, culture, and practices that have transcended from the past to the present, which will fade away if not well preserved. The club aims to nurture and promote cultural capital, enhancing social and economic value. Their youth and the public can learn and be proud of the community's history by following the guidelines for fostering sustainable CBT.

Figure 3. The old police station of Sapphaya. Source: authors' photo.

Figure 4. The walking street over the Chao Praya riverbank. Source: authors' photo.

The Sapphaya's CBT leader and club members have worked together with good harmony and understanding. At the first stage of CBT development, the local community did not have much tourism management knowledge, so they required know-how assistance from many external agencies. The Sapphaya sub-district municipality cooperated with the local community in utilizing the government budget for its Sapphaya historical research. The Sapphaya historical research project, which received support from the academic team from Suan Dusit University, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, Sripatum University, and International College of Mahidol University, contributes values to the community, such as a knowledge base, local awareness and conscience, and CBT project. The historical data educate and visualize the local community on how much the Sapphaya cultural heritage is valued, especially the old Sapphaya police station building. The findings of the Sapphaya historical research reveal the historical knowledge of their local people and Sapphaya areas. This research finding breeds local awareness and concerns about how to conserve their heritage and culture for the next generation's sustainably.

The Sapphaya Old Market Restoration Club collaborated with the Sapphaya sub-district municipality to organize the walking street over the Chao Praya riverbank from 2015 to 2017 (Figure 4). The street is about 500 m long—many tourist attractions along the routes start from Wat Sapphaya Wattanaram to the old Sapphaya house Building. In February 2018, many agencies, tourism personnel, and community members introduced the flea market along the walking street (Figure 5). The weekend flea market uses the concept of the green market, which refrains from using disposable foams and plastics, turning to environmentally friendly materials which are not harmful to health. In September 2018, the village of Sapphaya received a funding budget from Chai Nat province to organize a night market.

Figure 5. Flea market on the walking street. Source: authors' photo.

The village of Sapphaya is one of the successful CBT models newly developed in less than five years. It is a tourist destination promoted as cultural tourism, and attracts tourists who like history and culture to visit throughout the year. Before the CBT was introduced in 2015, residents of Sapphaya worked mainly in the agricultural sector. They had a minimal income to sustain their family without much savings. After the Sapphaya old market was launched, sellers and business owners in this area generated revenue of around 50,000 Thai baht per day (=1500 US dollars). The number of tourists visiting Sapphaya reached 1000–1200 per day before the pandemic. The Sapphaya old police station was awarded the Best Architectural Preservation Project in the Institute and Public Building category, organized by The Association of Siamese Architects under Royal Patronage in 2018. Sapphaya old market won the second prize in the Best Rural Tourism Award in the category of Best Responsible Tourism, organized by the Tourism Authority of Thailand in 2020. In 2022, Sapphaya was awarded one of the top 100 stories of Green Destinations from the Green Destination Foundation, The Netherlands.

Here are tourism products and services offered in Sapphaya. Tourists can choose services according to their interests:

1. The green market refrains from using disposable foams and plastics, turning to environmentally friendly materials that are not harmful to consumers' health.
2. Cultural walking tour along the Chao Praya riverbanks.
3. Community products include herbal tea from white shrimp plants, local Thai desserts, and food made from toddy palm.

3. Research Method

Qualitative case study is suitable for examining rich contexts and understanding multiple sources of data [51,52]. Qualitative research can be used to build theory when the theory in that area is in a nascent stage [53]. Over the past two decades, research in tourism and hospitality mostly used a quantitative approach; however, more recently, there have been increasing numbers of qualitative case studies in this field [54–58]. This study adopted a qualitative case study research design to provide insights into the leadership and local engagement of CBTE. Before entering the fieldwork, we reviewed the literature on CBTEs, and critical success factors of CBTE to gain theoretical sensitivity [59,60] of factors (e.g., leadership, local engagement, stakeholder management) in the award-winning Sapphaya community-based social enterprise (CBSE). The literature helped us plan the in-depth interview guidelines and data collection.

In general, a multi-data collection method was adopted to answer the research inquiries. The primary data were derived from various interviews with the community stakeholders, including the community leaders, local entrepreneurs, and residents. Moreover, we collected the primary data from in-depth interviews with its related external stakeholders from the CBTE award committees of Thailand Rural Tourism Award 2020 and tourists. The primary data were derived from a total of 20 voluntary participants. The study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021), using both online and onsite modes.

We also collected data from participative and non-participatory observations through an actual field visit to understand the real-life context [61]. The research was conducted according to the international ethical standard approved by the Mahidol University Central Institutional Review Board (MUCIRB). All participants were informed of the study objectives.

For the secondary data, we collected data from publicly available publications, such as newspapers and publicized social media (e.g., YouTube, Facebook pages, and official websites of Sapphaya) from reliable sources and institutes (e.g., the Tourism Authority of Thailand). The data were triangulated with in-depth interviews and observations for further analysis.

In the analysis phase, we used the qualitative data analysis software MaxQDA 2020. We analyzed the data using the grounded theory approach by coding data into open codes, selective codes, and core categories [60,62,63] (see Table 1 and Figure 6). We constantly compared data with our emerging codes and categories. For instance, one informant commented that they "*discussed among residents, village leaders, and municipality officers and decided to fund the historical research project to study the history of us [Sapphaya]*". We coded this data as one of our open code—"A1.1.1 Researching their cultural roots" (see the first row of Table 1). When we had many open codes, we grouped and regrouped them into a selective code. For example, the open codes A1.1.1 Researching their cultural roots and A1.1.2 Discovering historical data were grouped under the selective code of A1.1: Appreciate the value of heritage. Then, we tried to find relationships among our selective codes and formed core categories. For instance, the selective codes A1.1 Appreciate the value of heritage and A1.2 Revalorizing local assets into tourism resources are linked because these codes are about using the heritage and local assets of Sapphaya to build its tourism capability. Thus, we grouped these codes as a core category—A1 Using opportunities from local resources.

After finishing the coding and creating core categories, we have seven core categories. They are: A1 Opportunity from local resources, B1 Leadership ability of Sapphaya, C1 Local engagement, D1 Pride in their community, D2 Local ownership, D3 Engaging with future generations, and D4 Sharing benefits to stakeholders. Table 1 shows examples of codes and our core categories, A and B. Then, we started to build our grounded theory model of key success factors to sustain CBTEs. The core categories become the key factors in the model. We grouped and regrouped these factors and derived the relationship among

these factors. We then checked and finetuned the model against our research memo and the literature to tease out the contributions and implications of our study.

In summary, the described research method helped us gain insights and knowledge about the CBTE's contextual development from the evidence-based case study.

Table 1. Examples of open codes, selective, and core categories.

| Data	Open Codes	Selective Codes	Core Categories
"We discussed among residents, village leaders, and municipality officers and decided to fund the historical research project to study the history of us [Sapphaya]."	A1.1.1 Researching their cultural roots	A1.1 Appreciate the value of heritage	A1 Using opportunities from local resources
"Our community and the Sapphaya Wattanaram temple wanted to celebrate the discovery of the ancient reclining buddha image in 2013. This Buddha image is one of the rarest." "Our old police station was built around 120 years ago during King Rama V's reign."	A1.1.2 Discovering historical data		
"We want to use the old police station for the learning center to teach us about our history, how our community evolves, how our religions and monarchy are linked with our community."	A1.2.1 Using historical site as learning center	A1.2 Revalorizing local assets into tourism resources	
"We decided to renovate our old police station because it is one of the kind that still exists in a very good condition."	A1.2.2 Renovating sites		
"Our CBT started from zero. We did not have any tourism knowledge" "We visited many tourist sites such as Sukhothai and Chiang Rai to broaden our perspectives and to convince ourselves that even though we are a small community, we can develop it into a CBTE."	B1.1.1 Bridging the gap in tourism ability	B.1.1 Creating tourism ability for Sapphaya	B1 Leadership ability of Sapphaya CBTE
"We want to differentiate ourselves from other CBTEs, and we thought that our traditional food such as Kang Bon [curry], Choochi Pla, Laab Plara, authentic Thai dessert such as Med Kanoon is our distinctive feature. Sapphaya is, in fact, a place that produces traditional Thai desserts."	B1.1.2 Differentiating its tourism offering		
"The community leaders fortunately attended a workshop offered by a tourism professor, Dr KT, from Mahidol University. We liked her training style, and thus we decided to hire her as a consultant. She provided us with the guideline for improving Sapphaya tourist offerings." "We, fortunately, received support from professional consultants. It gave us the shortcut from each lesson learned and helped us quickly develop our own Sapphaya Model."	B1.2.1 Seeking advice and expertise from experts	B1.2 Networking with external parties for opportunities and knowledge	
"We received help from many parties, both government and non-government. Sapphaya sub-district municipality, Sapphaya district community development office, and Chai Nat Provincial office helped initiate the renovations at Sapphaya old market."	B1.2.2 Seeking support from external sources.		
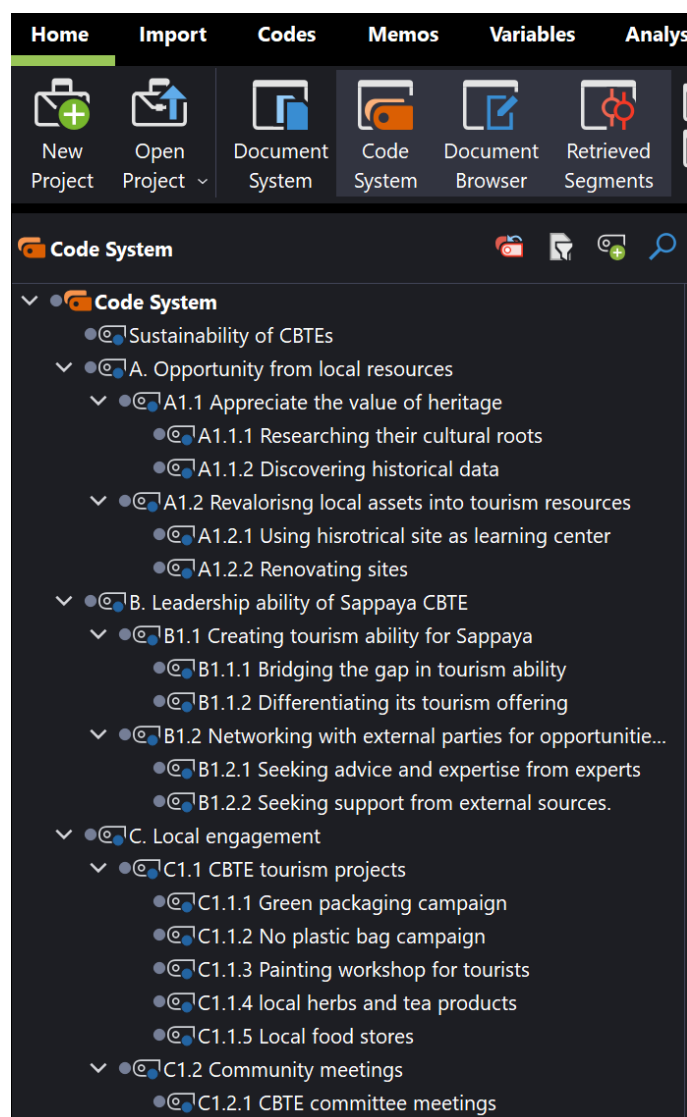
Figure 6. Coding structure of the case in MaxQDA 2020.

4. Findings

Our analytical findings are based on the grounded theory approach. This section also identifies the key sustainability drivers, namely leadership and local engagement, and its process to develop the Sapphaya social enterprise toward sustainable tourism. Section 4 starts with how the Sapphaya community discovered the community-based tourism opportunity from the government-funded historical research project (Section 4.1). Then, we elaborated on the leadership and local engagement process (Sections 4.2–4.4) in developing Sapphaya into an award-winning national CBTE of Thailand.

4.1. Opportunity from Local Heritage

Before 2013, the community had no interest in tourism since they thought they had no natural tourism assets. One resident commented, "*We didn't think that Sapphaya had any tourism potential*". However, the goal to develop their community into a community-based tourism site was initiated after they had serendipitously uncovered the history of their community from funded historical research from the government. The residents were surprised to learn about the history of the ancient reclining buddha image (see Figure 7), which is relatively rare. A community leader recounted the origin of the Sapphaya CBT: "*Our community and the Sapphaya Wattanaram temple wanted to celebrate the discovery of the ancient reclining buddha image in 2013. This Buddha image is one of the rarest. . . . We got*

government funding that allowed the community to specify what was best for our community. We discussed among residents, village leaders, and municipality officers and decided to fund the historical research project to study the history of us [Sapphaya]".

Figure 7. The reclining buddha image of Sapphaya. Source: authors' photo.

Furthermore, the research suggested that the old police station (Figure 3) was built in 1901 A.D. during King Rama V's reign, and this style of police station (with good condition) is scarce in Thailand. The Sapphaya old police station is not only a landmark of the community but also a catalyst to create a sense of place and local ownership among villagers. Thus, the residents utilized the historical knowledge of Sapphaya and set up the Sapphaya "learning centre" project to make locals appreciate their community's history. A community leader shared the objective of this learning center: "*We want to use the old police station for the learning center to teach us about our history, how our community evolves, how our religions and monarchy are linked with our community. . . . We want to make the future generation realize the importance of our heritage through CBT activities*".

4.2. Leadership and CBTE Initiative

The community and municipality leaders wanted to promote these sites as part of their tourism spots. However, they were not confident they could become a successful community-based tourist site because they had no tourism experience, skills, or knowledge. "*Our CBT started from zero. We did not have any tourism knowledge*", said a resident. Thus, they visited other community-based tourist provinces and observed how these CBTEs operated. A CBT leader commented: "*we visited many tourist sites such as Sukhothai and Chiang Rai to*

broaden our perspectives and to convince ourselves that even though we are a small community, we can develop it into a CBTE".

The residents then agreed to form the Sapphaya Old Market restoration club. This club committee aimed to revitalize Sapphaya's old market areas (Figure 8) and promote their ways of life, local food, and history to differentiate its marketplace from other CBTs in Thailand. A community officer noted that the cultural and heritage advantage creates uniqueness for the Sapphaya tourism site: "*we want to differentiate ourselves from other CBTEs, and we thought that our traditional food such as Kang Bon [yellow curry], Choochi Pla [coconut curry], Laab Plara [spicy fish salad], and an authentic Thai dessert such as Med Kanoon [caramelized jackfruit custard] is our distinctive feature. Sapphaya is, in fact, a place that produces traditional Thai desserts*".

Figure 8. Sapphaya old market and walking street. Source: authors' photo.

Since they realized they had no tourism knowledge, the residents sought advice and expertise from external experts. During the CBTE forming/exploration stage, the sub-district municipality and academic researchers played essential roles in guiding and managing sustainable tourism in the community. The community committees hold meetings with academics to discuss improving entrepreneurial skills and managing tourism business operations. The municipality leader mentioned that the community leaders "*fortunately attended a workshop offered by a tourism professor, Dr KT, from Mahidol University. We liked her training style, and thus we decided to hire her as a consultant. She provided us with the guideline for improving Sapphaya tourist offerings*". The consultant provided a checklist on what to improve based on the World Tourism standard. "*We, fortunately, received support from professional consultants. It gave us the shortcut from each lesson learned and helped us quickly develop our own Sapphaya Model. The model is how to create, manage, and evaluate our community-based tourism activities*"—Head of Sapphaya community-based tourism enterprise. The committee also sought advice from other academics and tourism experts (e.g., what tourist products and services should be improved, how to do marketing, and how to communicate their uniqueness to attract tourists). Community leaders and municipality officers also attended workshops and training in tourism development in Bangkok and other provinces. The knowledge from consultants and training is considered the catalyst for the success of the Sapphaya old market.

4.3. Networking with External Parties for Opportunities and Knowledge

The CBTE leaders and management team networked with outside stakeholders, such as local governments, business enterprises, and academics, to revive the Sapphaya old market. When the Sapphaya Old Market Restoration Club was set up in 2013, it received help from many parties, both government and non-government. Sapphaya sub-district municipality, Sapphaya district community development office, and Chai Nat Provincial office helped initiate the renovations at the Sapphaya old market to preserve the traditional values and historical heritages. Scholars from many universities, including Suan Dusit University, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, and Mahidol University, encourage learning and provide advice, information, and workshops for conducting CBT. The Tourism Authority of Thailand offers funding and advertising to promote the destination. Sapphaya community-based tourism enterprise's committee (B) commented on the role of external support: "*A lot of the external cooperation and partnership has taken place to develop Sapphaya community-based tourism. Sapphaya sub-district municipality helped us connect with experts in each field, such as history, community tourism, marketing, and management. We also partner with the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Lopburi office, to promote the tour program, combining it with other attractive communities nearby*".

4.4. Local Engagement

This section discusses the role of local engagement in Sapphaya, which is another crucial factor underlying the success of this case. Sapphaya community members have active participation in revitalizing and restoring their community. The members help protect and conserve their cultural heritage from rapid urbanization and modern development pressures.

4.4.1. Pride in Heritage

Before the Sapphaya Old Market Restoration club was set up and historical research was conducted in 2013, not many people in the community knew how essential and invaluable the long history of the old police station and Buddha sculpture in Sapphaya Temple was. After the project was completed, the community leaders appreciated the historical information about Sapphaya. The committee realized how important it was. Thus, they aimed to utilize sociocultural and historical heritage as a community asset. They also sought to promote these sites' cultural significance to residents and tourists.

The Sapphaya Old Market Restoration Club committee is essential in creating pride among community residents and driving local engagement. The term of community committees is every two years to allow everyone to participate and experience managing tourism. The local market leader, Mrs. Ngeklang, works with the rest of the residents in the community. She is one of the key persons in consulting, guiding, and motivating community members to participate and be involved in decision-making about the change or improvement processes. "*Our management team must be responsible for all decisions we make. We must think carefully of both the positive and negative consequences of each action for the community*". *Head of Sapphaya community-based tourism enterprise.* An informant further commented on the strength of the committee's leadership: "*The enterprise committee does not have any conflict of interest. Everyone voluntarily joins the committee as they want our Sapphaya to develop and make our own decisions on tourism activities that enhance our community's well-being*".

The people of Sapphaya are proud of their community's authentic culture and heritage, especially the old police station, which was awarded the "Best architectural preservation project" by the Association of Siamese Architects under Royal Patronage in 2018. Traditional Thai food and desserts are well preserved beside traditional wooden shophouses, temples, and old local cuisine. They represent the authenticity of the community that has been attracting many visitors. The Head of Sapphaya community-based tourism enterprise noted the importance of their social capital and heritage: "*Our community has substantial social capital. This social capital derived from ancestors in the past and passed through the young generation, whether it is an old building, an ancient house, a hundred-year-old market, or Buddhist*

temples are our social capital". Residents in Sapphaya are aware of their cultural and natural resources, which are the primary tourist attractions. Visitors come to the market to shop, find something to eat, and discover and learn more about traditional lifestyles and old values.

4.4.2. Local Ownership

After people in Sapphaya perceived cultural and historic resources, particularly historic buildings and architecture, as valuable and irreplaceable, they were happy to preserve the community's culture, old buildings, and architecture. These are essential assets that attract visitors. They accepted the shared responsibility of developing, organizing and managing community-based tourism activities to remain attractive destinations for future visitors. "*When we ask for help in community initiatives, we do not have to wait long for residents to accept. They never hesitate to help. Instead, they respond quickly and are eager to solve those issues*"—commented Sapphaya community-based tourism enterprise's committee (A). For instance, every shop in the old market follows the rules not to use plastic bags. It encourages using recyclable materials (e.g., green packaging of desserts) to make the green market. An officer noted that it took a three-year effort to teach community members to recognize the importance of green consumption, waste management, and the sustainability of Sapphaya: "*for the green market initiative, we have the campaign to reduce [and ban] the use of plastic bags and foam. Everyone in the community comes to help. They keep an eye on each other and help spot something wrong. So, there is no need to have any dedicated inspector from the local official*".

Sapphaya community members set up community committees consisting of the shop owners in the market and the number of residents elected as representatives of the community. The annual meeting held at the sub-district municipality office encourages community members to participate, cooperate, and participate in decision-making processes related to sustainable tourism. Because each resident represents the community's image, they take care of the heritage assets, including keeping their buildings and pavement clean, and improving hospitality to enhance the tourist experience. "*The old market was restored through strong cooperation of local people in preserving their cultural and natural heritages. The subdistrict municipality helped with some funding and promoted our old market revitalization project. Community members cooperated and worked with them to reconstruct and repair wooden shophouses and surroundings to attract visitors*"—commented the Head of Sapphaya community-based tourism enterprise. Moreover, almost every household can provide tourist information, such as the history of the community, the attractions nearby the market, and the locations of famous shops and public toilets. Each household is encouraged to have responsible and sustainable use of cultural heritage and natural resources to maintain long-term viability.

4.4.3. Engaging with the Future Generation for the Sustainability of CBT

The community leaders realized the importance of engaging every segment of community residents (from young to old) to ensure the sustainability of the Sapphaya CBT. They paid more attention to training the future generation of residents of Sapphaya and aimed to inculcate a sense of pride and local ownership among them.

> "*We want to preserve our long history and culture. So, we think about how to pass it on to the next generation. So, we integrated this information and content into the school curriculum. We got support from the local primary education office in developing the course that talks about Sapphaya's long history, local way of life, unique traditions and cultures that might only be found in the area. Finally, our Sapphaya modules are put in the elementary school program.*"—Head of Sapphaya community-based tourism enterprise

With the support and partnership from both government and academics, the Sapphaya course was developed to educate the younger generations and children in schools. The course consists of two modules. The first module is on the history of Sapphaya. The second module focuses more on social study, focusing on the traditional culture. The Sapphaya course is integrated into the primary school curriculum from Grades 1 to 6 in the area. A

representative from the education office explained the details of the two modules: *"The first module on the local history link to the main Thai history class required by the ministry of education. At the same time, the second module on tradition and culture (such as the traditional of burning "Khao Lam" dessert [sweet coconut sticky rice in bamboos]) will link with the social studies and vocational workshop"*. The high-school students are encouraged to act as "communicator" or local tour guide to help give tourist information to tourists.

4.4.4. Sharing Benefits

Community participation in CBT allows members to gain more benefits from tourism. All participants agreed that benefits accrued from the success of CBT in the Sapphaya old market are being shared equitably among community members. The benefit-sharing scheme enhances community members' involvement and participation in tourism planning and development in their respective areas and specialty. When the community revives and revitalizes, everyone survives. Tourism brings sustainable incomes for households and restores the values of the traditional home-grown market. Local people are willing to participate in community projects. They contribute their time, labor, and money to those projects.

"The Sapphaya old market CBT introduces the development to every household regarding social and economic improvement. The benefits of tourism are shared and passed through local people. Moreover, when more tourists visit the market, our community increases its reputation, and local governments provide an additional budget for road improvement and direction signs in and around the neighborhood."—Head of Sapphaya community-based tourism enterprise

In summary, the success of Sapphaya CBT was driven by the active role of community leaders, residents, and municipality officers who spotted the potential of their historical sites and traditional ways of life. They also equipped themselves with tourism knowledge, and made use of external networks (consultants, businesses, and government agencies) to develop the CBTE quickly. Based on the Butler's Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) [64], Sapphaya is in the development stage. The external partnership and support from local government, universities, and NGOs significantly contribute to its success. Academic researchers from Suan Dusit University, Mahidol University, and King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, have played a role in supporting the development of Sapphaya as a CBT community. Government agencies and NGOs are the most critical external enablers leading to Sapphaya's success. Sapphaya has received research funding, marketing, and training support from several government agencies. As a result of a solid development network from the government, academics, NGOs, and private sectors, Sapphaya's CBT can enjoy the FastTrack of CBT development and shorten the learning curve.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sapphaya green market and walking street were heavily affected by the outbreak. The travel restriction made it difficult for tourists to visit the market. Moreover, when the number of COVID-19 infections increased exponentially, the market was closed to comply with the preventive measures imposed by the government. The number of visitors sharply decreased compared to when the market was open before the COVID-19 outbreak. Since then, the number of tourists has been declining, and the amount of money they spend has been reduced. The leader and committee came up with selling the products online and on social media. The Tourism Authority of Thailand, Chai Nat office, together with the subdistrict municipality and scholars from universities, provides some funding, advice on online marketing, open shops in the e-marketplace, and operation process after the customer's order until the products are delivered.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have the opportunity to attend professional workshops and new online and social media skills training by the government. In compliance with COVID-19 preventive measures imposed by the government, our walking street has been closed. So, the training helps our community to find another sales channel through online and social media. These new channels are an alternative sales channel

that can support the lost income."—Sapphaya community-based tourism enterprise's committee (B)

4.5. The Underlying Model of Leadership and Local Engagement Factors in CBTEs

From the analysis of the Sapphaya case, we derive the model of how leadership and local engagement factors lead to success in CBTEs (see Figure 9). Firstly, communities spot tourism and social entrepreneurship opportunities from their local resources. These resources may be in the form of their natural resources (e.g., scenic landscapes, lush forests, and beautiful beaches) or social and cultural resources (e.g., unique histories, artefacts, or tourist venues). This factor is shown in Box A of Figure 9. In the case of Sapphaya, the opportunity for their community-based social entrepreneurship arose after the community discovered its history, heritage, and rare buddha image.
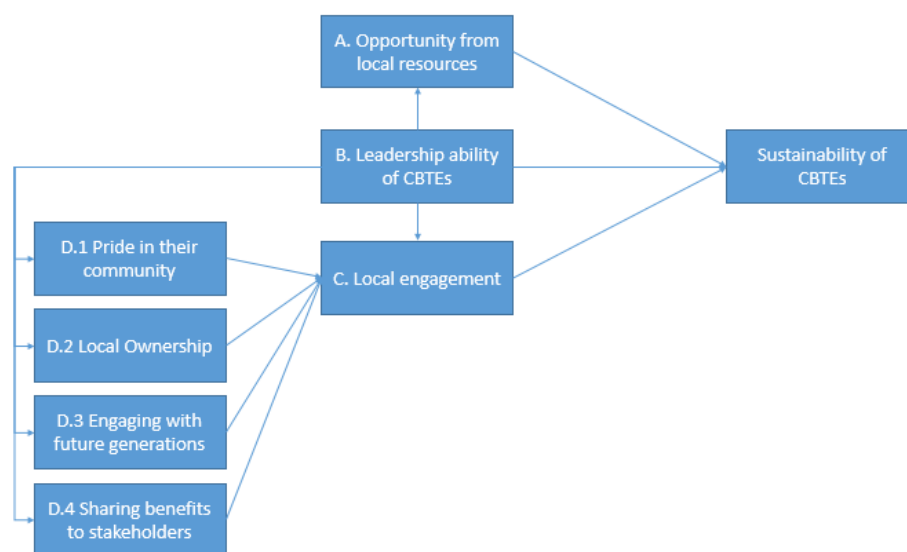
Figure 9. Emergent Model of Leadership and Local Engagement in driving the sustainability of CBTEs.

Secondly, the CBTEs have the leadership ability to marshal support from local communities and external networks (see Box B in the model). Leadership ability is crucial for the success of CBTEs because the leading team of CBTEs needs to address the issue of limited economic, social, and cultural capital in their communities by seeking help and bridging support from external bodies. Without enough external support (e.g., funding, knowledge, and skill development from NGOs, businesses, and governmental bodies), CBTEs may struggle to start or sustain their entrepreneurial activities. As for the Sapphaya CBTE, the leading team sought consulting advice from academics, and actively sought grants for training and financial support from local governments to build its tourism activities.

Thirdly, besides the leadership factor, CBTEs need to boost local engagement (Box C in Figure 9) to obtain support from residents in various entrepreneurial projects and activities (Box E). Local engagement may increase when the residents have developed a sense of pride in their community (Box D.1). The locals may be proud of their communitys' assets, such as environmental, social, and cultural capitals. For instance, Sapphaya residents were proud after learning about their cultural roots and the unique story of their Buddhist artefacts. The sense of pride may, in turn, boost local ownership (Box D.2). For example, the residents of Sapphaya also feel that they are the owner of the heritage and culture, and are motivated to preserve this cultural capital for future generations. The local ownership factor leads to a willingness to participate in CBTE's activities. For example, the residents of Sapphaya realized the importance of using green packaging and the "no plastic bags" campaign because they want to reduce waste from tourism activities.

Moreover, CBTEs should engage with various generations in their community in entrepreneurial activities, especially the young ages. By engaging with future generations (Box D.3), CBTE would guarantee the sustainability of their operations because younger generations would have opportunities to appreciate their heritage in various tourism activities. The engagement with the future generation allows CBTEs to prepare and nurture their future community leaders. Finally, residents would be demotivated to engage with CBTE's activities unless they were adequately rewarded for their contributions. Thus, CBTEs would need to develop fair profit-sharing schemes (Box D.4) to attract and engage residents. In the case of Sapphaya, residents and local businesses are happy to welcome tourists since their visits generate secondary income. When they feel they are the direct stakeholder in the success of CBTEs of Sapphaya, they are motivated to be a good host and make the community look attractive and welcoming for tourists.

5. Discussion

This study has unpacked the key sustainability drivers for a sustainable social enterprise at the Sapphaya CBTE. Our paper identifies that leadership and local engagement are critical success factors, and unpacks the essential process for developing successful CBTEs. Importantly, our study addresses the two research questions about (1) how the community and enterprise leaders of a national award-winning CBTE in Thailand at Sapphaya Community can generate value to achieve sustainable community-based tourism, and (2) how the CBTE can increase local engagement with multi-stakeholders.

We examined how community leaders of an award-winning national CBTE in Thailand (Sapphaya) generate value by revalorizing their heritage/historical assets for CBT tourism. Additionally, we studied how they increase engagement and develop local ownership in their CBTE. We found that the leaders of this CBTE (Sapphaya) were motivated to create a CBTE to provide secondary income for residents and preserve their community endowments (e.g., historical sites and cultural heritage). They have entrepreneurial roles in revalorizing historic buildings/sites for tourist attractions for the CBTE. The community leaders used local social capital (in entrepreneurial planning and aligning community goals) and marshalled support from external supporting parties (e.g., provincial and governmental offices, experts, and NGOs). The historical data about their community were incorporated into tourism activities, and local education and these initiatives created pride in their heritage and identity. The pride, in turn, promotes community participation and local ownership.

First, the findings suggest the active role of leaders of CBTEs is creating value, revalorizing local assets, and shaping the entrepreneurial activities of the CBTE. The community leadership team spotted the entrepreneurial opportunities (e.g., preserving the historical site of the 100 year-old police station of Sapphaya). They took risks and marshalled social capital (i.e., unity, sense of belonging, and reciprocity of community residents, family and friends, experts, and government officers) to build the community ventures. Thus, our findings align with previous studies on community-based enterprises that strong social capital in the community provides a solid foundation for community entrepreneurial activities [18,20,65]. The utilization of social capital in communities (e.g., social support, community reciprocity, goodwill, and community orientations) in this case has also been found in Relegan Siddhi, India. Their community leaders used social support, strong and weak ties, and goodwill among residents to fight economic hardship successfully [18,66,67].

However, our empirical case provides an interesting point that may enhance the previous theoretical model on the emergence of community-based enterprises [18]. Previous literature suggested that CBTEs typically build on their strengths (e.g., skills available locally) in the tourism offering [18,68]. However, we found that in Sapphaya, initially, the community lacked experience and knowledge in tourism. We saw the creation and development of tourism skills initiated by leaders and the communities (e.g., setting up a local tourist market and training craft skills in Sapphaya). The community did not own or have these skills, but they built and strengthened them and achieved the national award

in tourism. Hence, our study highlighted the vital role of leaders and the community in shaping and creating tourism value. They need not just rely on their pre-existing skills and resources [46]. They need to spot potential from their resources, take calculated risks to form ventures, combine old and new skills, and develop missing skills to achieve the success of CBTEs [69–71].

Second, the findings highlight the role of local engagement in the sustainability and success of the CBTE at Sapphaya. Although these results may confirm that local engagement is a crucial success factor of the CBTE [72–74], our paper unpacks the local engagement components (e.g., pride, local ownership, engagement with future generations, and sharing benefits). It emphasizes the agency of community leaders who saw opportunities in tourism income and the potential of their local endowments (e.g., heritage, traditional way of life). The local engagement is thus the result of the effort that leaders actively communicate the visions, goals, heritage, and benefits of CBTE to community members in formal and informal meetings. We found that communication and shared information boosts residents' sense of community-orientation and local ownership. The communities feel proud of their cultural heritage and feel they benefited from preserving their local endowments (e.g., cultural identity). This local ownership, in turn, increases the willingness to participate in the CBTEs [75,76].

However, our case study is still in its early stage of CBTE development; Sapphaya CBTE was set up in 2013. Previous studies in other regions (such as in Latin America and South Africa [77,78]) suggest that the governance structure, economic, and social relationships within communities would evolve. For instance, some members would want to pursue their entrepreneurial interests by setting up their own businesses and choose not to work for or help the CBTE. Thus, the change in social capital and economic activities in CBTE would raise the issue of local participation. Suriyankietkaew et al. [5] found that the case of the Thung Yee Peng CBTE in Thailand, the first winner of the Thai CBTE award, has seen the evolution of local entrepreneurship, leaders, and the governance structure of CBTE.

Moreover, Peredo and Chris [18] argued that the bigger the size of the CBTE, the more complex it would be for the leaders to mobilize local engagement. This difficulty is because the network structure of the community will comprise fragmented and independent social networks, instead of strong ties and close-knit networks of family and relatives. Hence, our findings raise an important issue of leadership succession, local engagement, and adaptation of the CBTE structure that matches changes in the local economy and social relations [20,79,80].

Third, our research responds to the call for more empirical studies, and examines how corporations achieve their organizational resilience and sustainability [81]. The theoretical model of organizational resilience put forward by Kantabutra and Ketprapakorn [82] suggested that organizational resilience is derived from a shared vision, values, and sustainability mindset. Since their model focuses on resilience at the organizational level, the micro-level view within organizations is not fully discussed. Significantly, the process of how actors within organizations create and shape shared values, visions, and mindsets is not elaborated. Hence, in our case studies, we provide insights into the actions of leaders and residents, and processes underpinning the resilience of CBTEs.

From the micro-level view, we found that although sustainability visions and sharing purposes may motivate organizational members to build resilience competence, the sense of pride and ownership of organizational members is also important. For instance, the residents of Sapphaya are proud to learn about their past heritage, and are more motivated to pass on this heritage to the next generation. Once the organizational members are convinced about the benefits and goals of the organization, they will develop ownership and be more motivated to develop organizational resilience and sustainability. Moreover, in their model, the factors leading to organizational resilience seem to suggest a linear relationship between factors. For instance, sustainability mindsets result in sustainability-related practices in organizations. However, our cases indicate that the practices in sustainable

tourism of residents of Sapphaya instill and boost their confidence and sustainability mindsets. Thus, our findings suggest the addition of a reiterative relationship between factors in the organizational resilience. Our study contributes to a more refined model of organizational resilience.

Regarding the managerial implications, our findings emphasized the two crucial factors (leadership and local engagement) driving the sustainability of CBTEs. Leaders of CBTEs who aim to improve the operations of their social enterprises should reassess or research their local assets (e.g., natural, cultural, and social resources in the area) to increase tourism potential. The case of Sapphaya is exemplary, in that the community lacks traditional tourism assets (such as beautiful beaches and scenic landscapes). However, the leaders of the CBTE managed to use their creativity and problem-solving skills to utilise their culture and heritage for tourism purposes. Moreover, our case also suggests that when the community discovers the value of their resources, it can use these assets to create a sense of pride and local ownership. Thus, leaders of CBTEs should actively promote the value of their resources and sense of ownership to their communities. Effective local engagement would unite the whole community and support the operations of their CBTEs.

Moreover, leaders of CBTEs should marshal support from their local communities by sharing benefits and seeking external funding to promote and sustain the CBTEs. Thus, leaders of CBTEs and social enterprises should expand their networks by engaging with business sectors, NGOs, academic institutions, and government agencies. Partnering with external organizations would bring in additional resources and knowledge to help develop their enterprises. Finally, we recommend that policy-makers focus on cultivating the resultant key sustainability drivers, specifically, strong leadership and local engagement in CBTEs, to develop social capital, grow sustainable social enterprises, foster sustainable tourism, and achieve our common goals of UN SDG.

6. Limitation and Suggested Future Research

The study provides a grounded-theory insightful analysis and results. However, the result is derived from a single case study within the critical time period (during the COVID-19 pandemic when the lock-down policy and travelling control were enforced). The contextual findings and understandings may fit the CBTE setting only. Thus, the CBTE results may not be generalized to other businesses in non-tourism sectors, or other types of social enterprises. Additional case studies in other regions should be conducted for further comparison to expand our limited knowledge and understanding of developing sustainable social enterprises in the CBTE context. Since each region and country have different local assets (e.g., natural resources, social heritage, and cultural resources) for tourism, we expect to see different strategies of CBTE leaders, and communities utilize their resources to create value and attract tourists.

Moreover, the cross-sectional data were only collected during the severe COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in Thailand. The researchers needed to collect data mainly through online video conferencing with limited numbers of stakeholders. Nevertheless, our team visited the location and experienced the tourism activities (e.g., local café, temple, old police station, local stores, and food shop) to validate the interview data and secondary data about the Sapphaya CBTE. Future research may collect more data from interviews with voluntary residents and tourists during the normal touristic seasons for comparisons. The insights into the tourists' and residents' perspectives would help the CBTEs develop their tourism offerings and better engage with residents in the community. This knowledge would also ensure the sustainability of CBTEs in the long run.

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