



## Potential for Developing Tourism in Banteay Chhmar, Cambodia

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**Abstract** Tourism in Banteay Chhmar have been growing gradually since early 2002 with the assistance of the Banteay Chhmar Community-Based Tourism (CBT), a service provider to the tourists who visit and stay in the ancient historical resort. In 2008, there were 924 tourists visited the Banteay Chhmar tourist site. Due to the slow increase tourists visiting Banteay Chhmar, a field study was done in 2009 to investigate the current management of tourism in Banteay Chhmar. The objectives of the field study are to determine the impact of tourism on the local livelihood and environment, to evaluate the potential of tourist attraction sites and to analyze the constraints and opportunities for increasing tourism in Banteay Chhmar. In order to achieve the objectives, 14 semi-structure interviews, 17 questionnaires, 60 evaluation data sheets, mapping, some participatory rural appraisal (PRA) tools, direct observation and a strength weakness opportunity threat (SWOT) analysis were conducted. The results showed that the Banteay Chhmar CBT plays important roles in tourism management. Since the tourism began, the share of tourism in employment contributes 12 % of the total income and improved people's living standard. Moreover, awareness of cultural and environmental value had also increased. However, the overuse of water from the moat, vegetable gardening and waste disposal inside the temple affects negative impacts in the tourist site. Cultural and historical sites and local traditional ways of life are the main tourist attractions. Aside from the main attraction which is the Banteay Chhmar temple, other CBT services were also enjoyed by many tourists such as exploring the satellite temples, cycling, ox-cart riding and visiting the villages. Opportunities for tourist development were identified, such as increasing tourism through widespread tourism information, new income from visiting the temple and the temple's registration as a World Heritage Site. In contrast, mass tourism versus of CBT be concerned about sexual trafficking issues, and drug smuggling could be constraints for future tourism development. In conclusion, the research suggested that any future tourism development must be balanced in all economic, social and environmental aspects.

**Keywords** Banteay Chhmar, community-based tourism, tourism development, SWOT, PRA

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism is considered as the major sector that contributes to the development of national economy in Cambodia. It provides additional income and employment opportunities that improve the living standard of local people and contribute on poverty alleviation (Tek, 2006).

Cambodia is among the countries in Southeast Asia and around the world that have plenty of natural and historical resorts with ancient culture across the country that plays an important role in tourism. The Banteay Chhmar temple which is located in Banteay Chhmar Commune, Thmor Pouk District, Banteay Meanchey Province depicting the Khmer Kingdom during the Angkorian Period is one of the greatest architectural masterpieces in Southeast Asia. Moreover, it is one of the

Cambodia’s top-listed historical sites being nominated for UNESCO’s World Heritage (GHF, 2009).

However, the lack of conservation and management results Banteay Chhmar’s temples and towers gradually collapse, disintegrated and overgrown with trees. In addition, looting is also occurring in Banteay Chhmar (GHF, 2009) which therefore conservation and proper management are necessarily needed.

The objectives of this study are to investigate the current management of tourism in Banteay Chhmar, to determine the impact of tourism on the livelihood and environment, to evaluate the potential of tourist attractions and to analyze the constraints and opportunities for increasing the tourism in Banteay Chhmar.

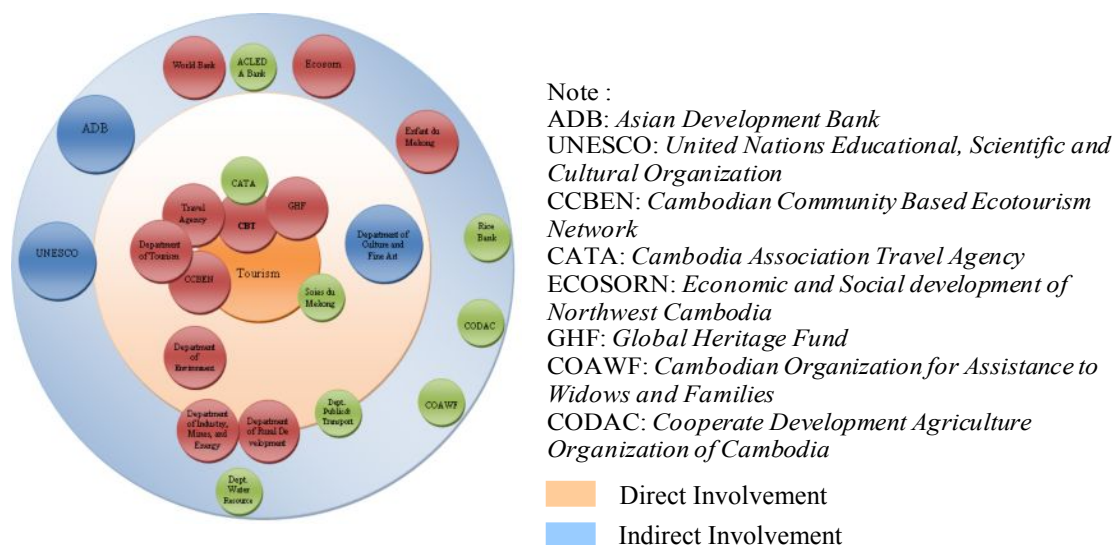
**METHODOLOGY**

In this study, several methods were carried out to achieve the above objectives that include; interviews, questionnaire surveys, participatory rural appraisal, mapping, direct observation and strength weakness opportunity threat analysis. The interviews were conducted with 10 households in which 5 households from CBT members while the other 5 households were non CBT members. Moreover, 4 key elderly people interviews and 21 informal interviews were also done to get better understanding on the tourism in Banteay Chhmar. To evaluate on the tourist attraction sites, 17 tourists were interviewed using the questionnaires and 60 samples of tourist evaluation datasheets from the CBT were used. In addition, Venn diagram was utilized to indicate regarding with the current management of tourism, Pie diagram was utilized to distinguish the impact of tourism on livelihood and environment, Seasonal Calendar, Dream map, and Snake and Ladder of the PRA were to evaluate the constraints and opportunities develop tourism in Banteay Chhmar. Furthermore, GPS mapping were also done to point out the tourist attraction sites during the observation in the studied area, as for SWOT analysis was done after collecting the data.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Roles of stakeholders on tourism management**

There are some stakeholders that are strongly involving in tourism development, tourism management and improving the tourism services in Banteay Chhmar such as CCBEN, GHF, CBT.



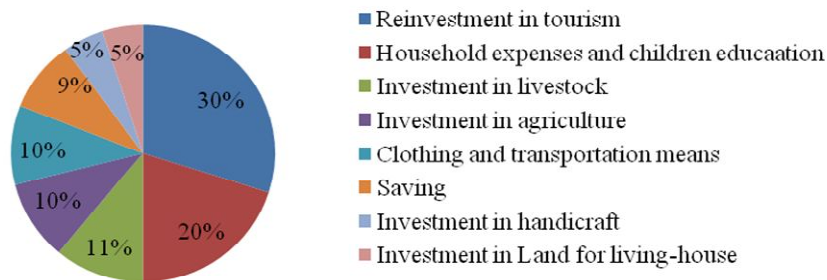
**Fig. 1 Diagram of stakeholders’ relationship in tourism development in Banteay Chhmar**

### Impact of tourism on livelihood and environment

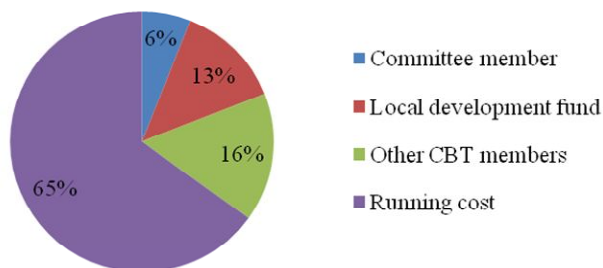
The impact of tourism on livelihood is the change of income sources of CBT members indicating a share of 12% in the total income after involving in tourism (Fig. 2). The income from tourism has played important role of CBT member’s expenses not only reinvestment in tourism but also investment in the existing activities (Fig.3). Moreover, CBT income from tourism also contributes 13 percent in Local Development Fund (Fig.4). Tourism in Banteay Chhmar is increasing the people’s awareness on the environment. Now the environment is not yet polluted because it’s under control of CBT, however, the main problem is the overuse of water from the moat, vegetable gardening and waste managing around the main temple. To prevent any problems, the zoning system has been proposed to manage future development effectively and efficiently.



**Fig. 2 Changes on daily activities of CBT members a) before and b) after involving in tourism industry**



**Fig. 3 The diversified expenditure on the income from tourism**



**Fig. 4 The benefit sharing from tourism income in Banteay Chhmar CBT**

### Tourist attraction scheme

Tourist attraction scheme was analyzed through the data sheet from CBT. General tourist attractions were ranked from 1 (lowest satisfy) to 5 (highest satisfy). Among those attractions as shown in Fig. 5, cycling, visiting the temples and ox-card riding are the most attractive activities for tourists.

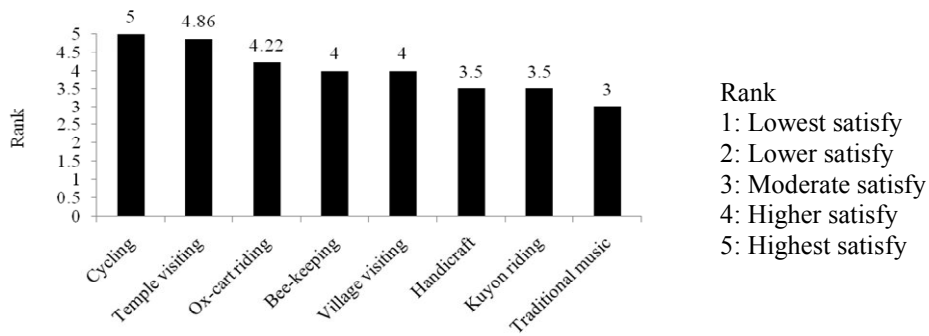


Fig. 5 Rank rating on different tourist attractions in Banteay Chhmar

### Tourist attraction mapping

The tourist attraction mapping helps to identify the specific areas for the tourists to enjoy in the tour offered by the Banteay Chhmar CBT. With this map, tourists will be able to discover the place where they prefer to visit firstly or where the local guide could accompany with them. The tourist attraction mapping consists of the cultural attractions (the main temple and satellite temples), historical attractions (Choeung Kruos Water Reservoir) and traditional attraction (bee keeping and silk handicraft). The main temple is Banteay Chhmar, which was built on the area of approximately 4.75 ha in over 800 years ago. Having the Bayon prototype and surrounded by forest, these are the main attraction for the tourists. Moreover, other 9 satellite temples such as Chenh Choem Trey, Yeay Korm, West Samnang Ta Sok, East Samnang Ta Sok, Ta Prum, Balang, Me Bun, Yeay Chour, and Ta Em, are also regarded as the tourist attraction in area. Most of the satellite temples are covered by forest and the most attractive temples are Ta Prum, and Me Bun temples.

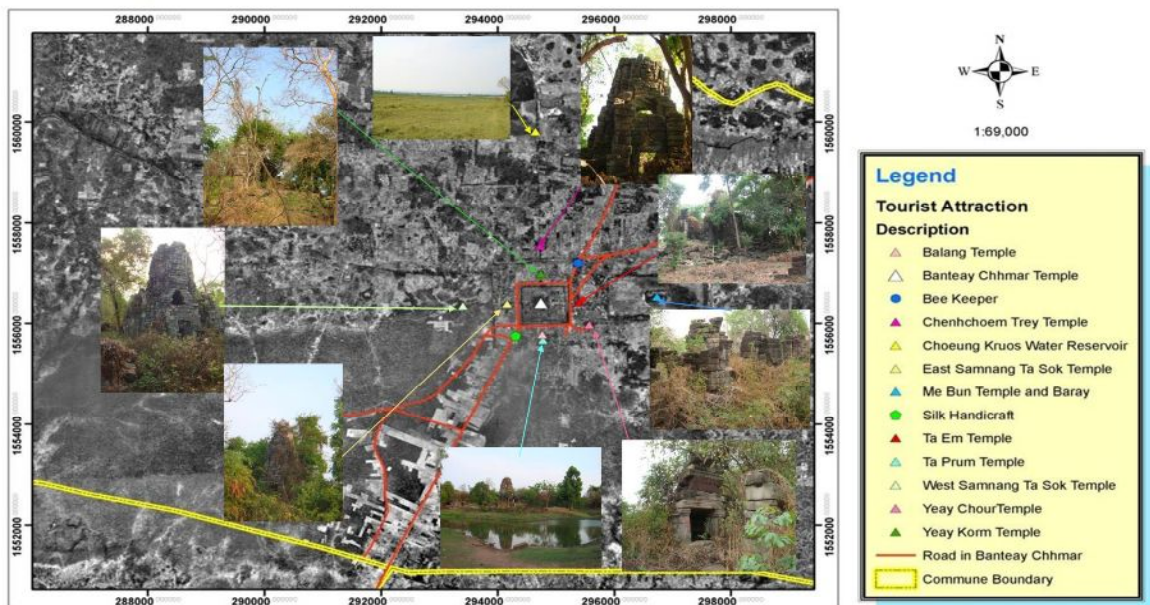


Fig. 6 Tourist attraction temple and landscape in Banteay Chhmar, Cambodia

Choeung Kruos Water Reservoir lies in large open green areas. It was built during the Pol Pot (Khmer Rouge) regime in the purpose of agricultural use. There is a great view of grassland and the Dangrek Range/Mountain that can be seen in the south-west to north-west of the areas.

**The Constraints and opportunities**

After all data and information in the field were collected and analyzed properly, the SWOT analysis was done to discover some suitable strategies to deal with the constraints and opportunities for developing tourism in Banteay Chhmar as showed in Table 1.

**Table 1 SWOT analysis for developing tourism in Banteay Chhmar**

	<b>Strength (S)</b>	<b>Weakness (W)</b>
<b>SWOT Analysis for developing tourism in Banteay Chhmar</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CBT provides services to tourists</li> <li>- Having support from GHF CCBEN, ECOSORN</li> <li>- More tourist attractions</li> <li>- Tourism site is close to the Cambodian-Thaiborder</li> <li>- Having master plan for Banteay Chhmar commune</li> <li>- Zone division</li> <li>- Commune development fund from CBT</li> <li>- Having some water resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CBT hasn't been recognized by the government</li> <li>- Infrastructure development hasn't done widely yet</li> <li>- Tourism services are not yet diversified and adequate</li> <li>- Lack of controlling on tourist who enter the temple</li> <li>- Limited advertisement of tourism in Banteay Chhmar</li> <li>- Low income from tourism in rainy season</li> <li>- High requirement of being member of CBT</li> <li>- Inadequate fresh water and electricity supply</li> </ul>
	<b>Opportunity (O)</b>	<b>Strategies for S&amp;O</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Banteay Chhmar temple will be included in world heritage</li> <li>- Tourist will be increased</li> <li>- Increasing of environment and cultural awareness</li> <li>- New tourist attractions</li> <li>- Increasing in CBT members and job opportunities</li> <li>- Increasing the advertisement of tourism in Banteay Chhmar</li> <li>- New income from visiting the temple</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effectively implement zoning system to ensure the environment preservation</li> <li>- Training more on the existing CBT members in tourist guide</li> <li>- Diversify food and homestay services</li> <li>- Better infrastructure development to meet the increasing of tourists and improving tourist attractions</li> <li>- More control on the tourists increase income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suggest the government to recognize the CBT officially</li> <li>- Increasingly advertise new tourist attractions in the area</li> <li>- Lessen the requirement of being member of CBT</li> <li>- Encourage to have more investment on fresh water and electricity services</li> </ul>
<b>Threat (T)</b>	<b>Strategies for S&amp;T</b>	<b>Strategies for W&amp;T</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited funds for CBT running process</li> <li>- Pollution on social, culture environment through migrants</li> <li>- Zoning can affect to people livelihood</li> <li>- Possible conflict between CBT member and Non-CBT member</li> <li>- Temple erosion</li> <li>- Mass tourism will affect on CBT</li> <li>- Losing agricultural labor</li> <li>- Sexual and drug smuggling</li> <li>- Time and money consuming in repairing the temples</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate the tourism development with CBT</li> <li>- CBT should prepare its own strategy in developing tourism, agreeing with the commune development plan</li> <li>- Local authority have to control carefully the tourists and private services in the area</li> <li>- Find and enable funds for developing the area</li> <li>- Transparency in income distribution to commune development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transparently assimilate the zoning division to local people</li> <li>- Urgently recognize the legality of CBT</li> <li>- Increase more job opportunity and availability</li> <li>- Increase seasonal cropping</li> </ul>

## **CONCLUSION**

Tourism management in Banteay Chhmar is increasingly improved from year to year through increasing in the tourists numbers. Banteay Chhmar CBT is the main institution which responsible for managing and providing the services to the tourists. However, it still needs more supports for it sustainable running process.

The main stakeholder that can improve sustainable tourism is Royal Government of Cambodia. Besides, some relevant institutions and NGOs such as GHF, CCBEN, CATA and other tourism agencies are also one catalyst in cooperating and advertising the tourism in Banteay Chhmar.

The quality of CBT services is recognized and given the high value by the tourists who welcomed by CBT; however, CBT also got some comments from tourist to improve the services.

Tourism in Banteay Chhmar has really benefited to local livelihood and environment since it's contributed to generate income. Income from tourism has contributed 12 percent of the total income, and by the income, people have enhanced their living standard through modernization of the services and daily expense. Moreover, environment consideration is gradually popular, increasing the awareness of the environmental maintenance; however, water using and waste managing are the main problem in the present.

There are many opportunities for developing tourism in Banteay Chhmar base on its tourist attractions and well-managed by CBT, having better coordination with many stakeholders. More advertisement of the tourist site, updating some services, increase the CBT members and awareness of environment, strengthen the existing tradition and development of the tourist attraction sites are also the opportunities. Only permanent traditional activities that can be the attractions to the tourists and these can also preserve the tradition and way of life of the people in Banteay Chhmar.

However, the constraint for developing tourism in Banteay Chhmar is the mass tourism which could have negative impact on environmental, social and economical aspects. Moreover, some threats have to be considered such as isolated management of tourism of the stakeholders, destroy the environment when developing come, pollution to social and culture, and sexual and drug smuggling.

In brief, the main problem that can affect to sustainable development of Banteay Chhmar CBT is mass tourism which will negatively impact on the water resources, waste control, and CBT's benefit sharing to the members. Therefore, avoiding this possible problem, all development aspects have to think of environmental, social and economical sustainability.

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