

RESEARCHING THE DEVELOPMENT OF GASTRONOMIC TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

In a time of crisis the quest for reinventing the economy is intensified and adoption of appropriate reforms is at the epicenter of debate. Tourism is one of the fastest developing contributor of revenues yet a sector that also faces considerable challenges. In recent decades gastronomic tourism has drawn the attention of many destinations as an alternative form with favorable characteristics.

Key words: agrotourism, process, service, economy, food, location, restaurants, organizations.

INTRODUCTION

The definition of “Tourism” can be divided in 2 categories. The first category defines tourism based on activities tied with traveling that has destinations and objectives of the travel. However, this does not include travelling with the purpose to make a living or earn income (Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Davison, 1995: 2; Theobald, 1998: 6-7; Middleton, 2001; Suwan, 2011: 36-37). The second category defines tourism as the sum of phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, activities that create impressions, services and satisfactions (National Economic and Social Advisory Council, as cited in S. Wangpajit & L. Silanoi, 2014: 102-103; McIntosh & Goeldner, 1984; Mill, 1990:359; Peeters & Dubois, 2010; 447:457). From the above definitions, tourism is the sum of phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists and tourism partakers or organizations through activities that create impressions, services, and satisfaction for tourists.

2.2.2. Components of Tourism Based on the literature reviews, components of tourism comprise 1) visitor, tourist or excursionist, 2) tourist sites or attractions, 3) tourism infrastructure, facilities and services, 4) public organizations, 5) private organizations, and 6) local people in the communities or in tourism sites who own that tourism resources. Other external elements outside the country also help stimulate, support, and encourage foreign tourists to visit Uzbekistan such as travel agencies, airlines, cruises,

Thai restaurants, multi- national or joint-venture corporations, the business sector in other countries, and foreigners who lived and worked in Thailand as well as visitors returning to their countries (Figure 2.1) (Likorish & Jenkins, 1997; S. Wangpajit & L. Silanoi, 2014: 103; Department of Tourism, 2013: 2-4).

Types of Tourism

There are various types of tourism. Categorized by geography, there are 2 types of tourism; 1) international tourism and 2) domestic tourism. Categorized by traveling purposes, there are 3 types of tourism; 1) tourism for leisure and recreation, 2) tourism for business, and 3) tourism for special interests such as ecotourism, agrotourism, community-based tourism, adventure tourism, health tourism and historical and cultural tourism. In addition, tourism can be categorized according to 2 traveling characteristics; 1) group traveling –purchasing package tour from travel agencies and 2) independent traveling - tourists are being responsible for their own itinerary and transportation (Lew, 2008: 409-419; S. Jutakorn & J. Jaroensuksai, 2007) From the synthesis of definitions, components, and types of tourism, it is necessary that the concept of sustainable tourism be revised to be use as a guideline in the study of marketing strategies for Thai gastronomic tourism promotion. This will be mentioned in the following part.

Concept of Sustainable Tourism

The trend of global sustainable development arose from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) or the Earth Summit, held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. From this summit, the Agenda 21 was officially signed by 179 representatives from different countries (Merkel, 1997: 3; World Tourism Organization, 1998). This provoked 3 tourism development trends; 1) environment and natural resources conservation, 2) educational tourism, and 3) human development. These 3 trends influenced tourism system and tourism management. As a result, alternative tourism took place to respond to these needs and replaced conventional tourism. And so came 2 new types of tourism; 1) ecotourism - a form of tourism that involves visiting natural tourism sites with local uniqueness and cultural resources that have connection with ecosystem for pleasure purpose and for collaborative learning among partakers under an efficient environmental and tourism management with local participation and creating consciousness on sustainable ecosystem conservation such as natural-based tourism, adventure tourism, agro-tourism, geo-tourism and natural health tourism and 2) cultural tourism – tourism in cultural tourism resources or participation in traditional events held by local communities for pleasure purpose as well as understanding social and cultural beliefs in order to gain new experiences under an efficient environmental and tourism management with local participation and creating consciousness on sustainable environment and culture conservation such as historical tourism; traditions, art and cultural tourism; rural tourism; sport and recreation tourism, and cultural health tourism (P. Srisawad, P. Rangsiwong , & J. Yahuprom 1997: 10-11).

If gastronomic tourism is to develop, what are the reasons that might hinder this potential?

In order to direct the research question towards parameters that according to the literature constitute a strong basis for gastronomic tourism it is broken to further sub questions:

What is the state of the connection of the gastronomic offer with the local production, cuisine and community?

How is the gastronomic aspect of the destination promoted to (potential) visitors?
What is the state of cooperation amongst stakeholders as regards delivery of the local gastronomic offer?

What has been the impact of the AC initiative in these aspects?

Gastronomic tourism, destination image and local identity

Eating a natural or traditional product also entails the appropriation and embodiment of an area's nature, culture and identity and as such, food acts as a symbol and emblem (Bessiere, 1998). As "food can serve as a powerful vehicle for conveying deeprooted meanings and abstract concepts that express and reflect the uniqueness of a specific place" it can be assumed that "place-specific food can assist the development of a tourism destination brand" (Lin, Pearson and Cai, 2011; p. 33). The significance of the cultural dimension of food is evident in the inscription of relevant entries in Unesco's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, such as the Mediterranean diet and the traditional Mexican cuisine.

Despite the fact that national cuisines retain their distinctiveness, food tends to become more globalised and uniform, threatening the authenticity of experiences. On the other hand, tourists are more interested in local, authentic and original experiences connected to the places they visit and as such, foods can play a central role in re-inventing the brand image of places and creating distinctiveness, both at national and regional levels (OECD, 2012). According to Bessiere (1998) the construction of an "individual, collective and territorial identity" consists of culinary practices that are distinctive to a particular area and "promoting a specific gastronomic product by conserving skills and techniques leads to re-enacting history, re-approaching what has been lost and also helping to create, innovate and accept change" (p. 29).

Travel behavior means the process in which foreign tourists are involved in terms of purchasing, using or consuming products and services, opinions or experience regarding Thai gastronomic tourism so as to meet their own requirements, comprising characteristics of the target group (occupants), what consumers want to purchase (objects), objectives of purchase (objectives), roles of different groups (organizations) that influence purchase decision, purchase occasions (occasions), where the market buy (outlet) , and purchase decision process (operation). Need means attitudes towards desires and needs of foreign tourists that are expected to happen in Uzbek gastronomic

tourism, comprising product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence, and productivity and quality of service.

Based on the literature reviews, the importance of gastronomic tourism comprises:

- 1) Creating awareness of the importance of local culture among tourists
- 2) Being an element of tourism marketing promotion
- 3) Being an element of the local agricultural and economic development
- 4) Playing an important role in creating market competency among competitors.
- 5) Being an important local, national, and global development index
- 6) Being important goods and services for tourists

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