

## Creative Tourism with “Food” Using the “GASTRONOMIC” Concept to Attain Sustainable Tourism\*

Nopparat Boonpienpon (นพรัตน์ บุญเพียรผล)  
Busarin Wongwiwattana (บุษริน วงศ์วิวัฒนา)\*\*\*

### Abstract

Food Tourism is considered one very interesting type of tourism these days because food is more than a nutritious substance for consumption. Food represents uniqueness, culture, preparation processes or production, eating manner, and it is also a part of Creative Tourism. The aim of this article is to study the overall picture of Food Tourism and the meaning of it in relation to Creative Tourism. Lastly, this article aims to propose ways to develop Food Tourism based on the ‘GASTRONOMIC’ concept which consists of 11 major components: G – Good Taste, A – Authenticity, S – Sustainability, T – Tourists, R – Reach, O – Organic, N – Need, O – Opportunity, M – Marketing, I – the Internet, and C – Clean Food Good Taste. If we have knowledge of and understand this concept, we will be able to develop Creative Tourism which takes the next step forward to a type of tourism which has sustainability.

**Keywords:** Gastronomic Tourism, Creative Tourism, Sustainable Development

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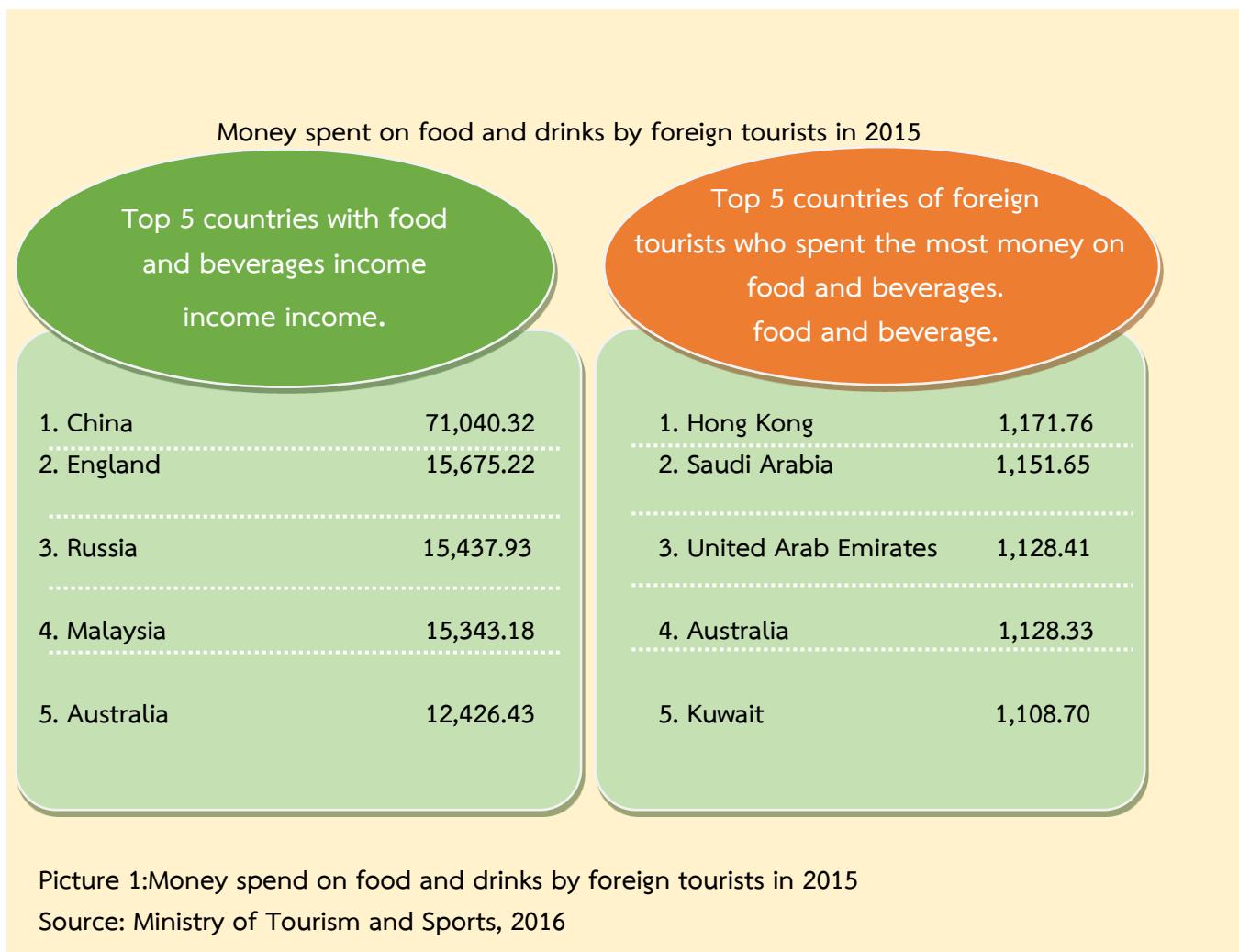
\*\* Nopparat Boonpienpon, Ph.D. in Tourism and Hospitality Innovation Management, Lecturer in Hotel Management, Faculty of Management Science, Silpakorn University - Phetchaburi IT Campus.  
(E-mail: [nopparat@ms.su.ac.th](mailto:nopparat@ms.su.ac.th))

\*\*\* Busarin Wongwiwattana, Lecturer in Hotel Management, Faculty of Management Science, Silpakorn University - Phetchaburi IT Campus. (E-mail: [busarin@ms.su.ac.th](mailto:busarin@ms.su.ac.th))

## Introduction

Based on the prediction made by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, which stated that Food Tourism would grow and generate five hundred billion baht by the year 2016. Ms. Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul, Minister of Tourism and Sports, stated that Gastronomic Tourism is another market that has high potential in increasing value and generating income. It can also boost the income of community and agricultural sectors as food represents societal and local cultures which emphasize the originality of the places. Moreover, using local food is a way to distribute income to the community in both direct and indirect ways.

Food can also become a source of motivation to travel by being shared on online media. According to the Global Report on Food Tourism 2015 by UNWTO, Food Tourism generated a total of 1.5 hundred billion USD or about 5.1 trillion THB. The countries which have the most food tourists in the world are Spain, France, England, and Italy, respectively. In Thailand, it was found that in 2015 the total income from the Food Tourism industry was 4.56 hundred billion THB or 20 percent of the entire tourism income. Tourists whose budget was spent mostly on food in Thailand were those from China, England, and Russia. The income gained from local people was 1.74 hundred billion THB. Ms. Wattanavrangkul added that in 2016 it was expected that the Food Tourism market in Thailand would increase by 10 percent of the value of five hundred billion baht. The primary product of such a market is food since many kinds of Thai food are well-known and are in the world's top ranking, such as Tom Yum Goong, green curry, Pad Thai, Pad Kraprao (fried meat with basil), grilled duck curry, Tom Khagai (spicy and sour coconut soup with chicken), Thai-style meat salad, Satay, fried chicken with cashew nuts, beef Panang curry, and a lot more.



Additionally, Food Tourism distributes income to local businesses and agricultural sectors both directly and indirectly; for example, food cooked with agricultural products as main ingredients; learning activities and agricultural products processing activities; and food souvenirs such as spices, seasonings, instant food products, fruits, etc. Including all of these are food festivals which are ones of the five activities that most food tourists enjoy. Food festivals are held around the world in many countries including wine & food festivals, local food festivals, street food festivals, etc.

Food festivals in Thailand are held across the country; for example, Thailand's Local Food Festival in Chonburi and Fruit Festival in Chantaburi. Moreover, there are also Thai food festivals outside Thailand such as the one in Japan. Thai food represented by celebrities also plays an important role in spreading information about interesting food and restaurants in Thailand to people. The celebrities who played important roles in representing Thai food to the world are Jamie Oliver, English and world chef; Mark Wiens, an American food blogger who

traveled around to try local food both domestically and internationally; also there was M.L. Parsan Svasti, Thailand's food and restaurant critic, and others.

Still, Food Tourism in Thailand has both opportunities and threats. One of the country's opportunities is that it is well-known to the world as a source of agricultural production. However, there is a lack of support for restaurants to reach a higher standard and to grow in popularity. Moreover, there is a lack in making a connection with value and the importance of Food Tourism in terms of income distribution from tourism. Therefore, Thailand should do more research on creating a Food Tourism development scheme to go along with the "Thai Food to World" project. Moreover, Thailand should support the connection of Thai food to the ASEAN Culinary. As mentioned earlier, it can be seen that Food Tourism can have an influence pertaining to culture, society, environment, and the economy. Food Tourism has gained public interest because the world's current trends are concerned with food in different cultures. Currently, there are many new and exotic places for food; further, marketing promotions using food as attractions are new methods which can increase the popularity of food among tourists. When tourists try new food coming from different sources, the foods create new experiences for consumers, more than those of dining indoors. There is an opportunity for cultural exchanges among tourists. Therefore, if we can use this principle as a basis to develop Gastronomic Tourism, such tourism will certainly and finally become another way to develop sustainable tourism.

### **Objectives**

1. To study the overall situation of Food Tourism
2. To explore the meaning of food in relation to Creative Tourism
3. To suggest ways to develop Food Tourism based on the "GASTRONOMIC" concept

### **Gastronomic Tourism**

Hjalgar and Richards (2002) reviewed articles on Food Tourism including a research of Boniface (2003) and that of Long (2003) which are collections of studies that talk about Food Tourism while the research of Cohen and Avieli (2004) and that of Hall (2000) mentioned food and wine. In these studies, there are many English words describing a relationship between food and tourism such as Cuisine Tourism, Food Tourism, Gourmet Tourism, Gastronomic Tourism, and Culinary Tourism. According to Ignator and Smith (2006), the concept of Food Tourism being used consists of preparation and eating patterns including social and cultural context: Therefore, Food Tourism may be defined as "a travel that involves purchasing and

consuming food (and drinks) in a particular location and also includes the observation and study of food productions (from agricultural sites to culinary schools) that are a stimuli or main activity.” An educational research mentioned the mix of Food and Tourism in four ways which are:

1. Food is an attraction and it promotes tourism in particular places.
2. Food is the product of tourism of which routes to wine tasting or food tasting are provided.
3. Tourists’ experiences in trying high-quality food
4. Local cultures in food or wine festivals

Apart from this, Food Tourism is one of the main components which can create feelings expressed through both tangible and intangible products. Hu and Ritchie (1993) stated that food is the fourth component for attracting tourists and to increase their demand to travel apart from climate, accommodations, and scenery. Similarly, Jenkins (1999) ranked food as the ninth component for attracting tourists.

From the literature review of Food Tourism, it can be concluded that food has become—more than something to eat – it represents uniqueness, culture, production processes, consumption procedures, and it is a part of Creative Tourism including the ability to develop sustainable tourism.

### **Food and Creative Tourism**

Creative Tourism is a form of tourism which offers tourists opportunities to develop their creativity and potential through participation in activities and through experiences from learning during the particular period of travel (Richards and Raymond, 2000). Moreover, many academics give different definitions of *Creative Tourism* similar to that of Wurzburger (2009). That is, Creative Tourism is a form of tourism that involves expectations to receive actual experiences, to be connected, and to participate in a particular moment in order to learn about the activities, cultural heritages, or even specific features of the particular areas.

In brief, Creative Tourism is a kind of tourism which gives tourists opportunities to experience, be connected with, and become part of the tourism activities of particular places. Finally, such experiences will create learning processes and develop creativity for the tourists themselves.

This concept is similar to that of The Creative Cities Network which divided tourism creative cities into seven categories: literature, crafts and folk arts, design, music, gastronomy, cinema, and media arts.

A clear example of Creative Tourism is presented in the way to manage food along with the idea of such a kind of tourism. This method consists of the concept of cooking local food by using local methods. It provides visitors with accessibility processes, learning processes, and finally, self-development. For example, staff from the Santa Fe School of Cooking taught visitors how to grill chilies and to prepare a meal of New Mexico people. The instructor explained the cooking process including how to grill chili and roll tortillas for visitors while they were cooking their meal. This activity included participation, a learning process, and self-development (Creative Cities Network Meeting, 2006).

At present, Thailand is unique and distinctive for its food cultures, including local food presentations, eating cultures, and seasoning and cooking cultures, etc. These distinctive points are shown through these awards:

- 1) Thai food and world food which are internationally popular
- 2) Thailand the Land of Street Food
- 3) “Thai Food to the World” project

The idea of Creative Tourism is relevant to the practice proposed by Tourism Authority of Thailand. Yuwadee Nirattrakool, Director of the Market Research Division, pointed out the importance of Creative Tourism, especially; it being a form of tourism that applies the concept of creative economy to tourism and services with objectives to increase value. Therefore, the value of Creative Tourism should not be based on modern technology or a large amount of labor, but it should include the four factors which add value to tourism products and services. The four factors include “capital” along with “creativity” together with “cultural assets” and “personal skills”.

The procedures which reinforce the concept of Creative Tourism are:

- 1) Natural/Cultural Assets, Identity Wisdom
- 2) Differentiation for Value
- 3) Value Creation
- 4) Redefining for Marketing
- 5) Thinking outside the Box

In addition, Ms. Nirattrakool (2008) added that Creative Tourism can be developed along with tourism marketing. This is the integration of marketing mix under the concept of Creative Economy or the 4 Ps which is the original formula. Moreover, when trying to explain Creative Economy, it must be clarified and be responsive to the market needs; marketing mix in the market of tourism and services under the concept of Creative Economy can be explained with three key concepts as follows:

1) Tourism Products: It is necessary to fulfill the needs of customers—both physical needs and emotional needs. Developing products and services is a way to respond to physical and emotional needs which leads to pricing. Such products and services will ultimately increase in price without basis or reasoning.

2) Distribution Channel: Technology development is stepping forward to a Digital World which makes the places become limited. Visitors are able to look independently for news, travel information, and tourism service without borders. They can manage the trip by themselves and design a kind of tourism based on individual interests. They tend to avoid popular attractions and turn their interest to travel activities which emphasize learning local lifestyles such as local markets, local food, local clothes, etc.

3) Promotion: Nowadays, it is not enough to use only the traditional techniques of promotions: demos and sampling, coupons, price reduction, and free products. Sales promotions of this era should respond to the sense of participation and social and environmental concerns. Sales promotions in the field of tourism which include awareness and which emphasize environmental issues, especially the green-house effect, are in the public interest, for example, Green Landing, Green Globe, Green Key, Ecotel, and Blue Flag.

Apart from this, creative cultural Food Tourism is also important. That is, it provides opportunities for the community to express creativity, share ideas, and use its ability to integrate knowledge or local wisdom along with managing creative cultural Food Tourism, which is considered a crucial path in creating sustainability in the community. It also is a representation of creativity of the community in terms of tourism management and food and culinary management as food is a key component for living and it is also specific knowledge and is applicable to creative Cultural Tourism. A clear example would be that of Khun Mon's Orchard (Manager Publishing, 2013). This orchard is not only open for visitors to purchase products like it has done in the past, but it also gives opportunities for them to learn about the local products while having the opportunity to try and learn how to cook local food, make local products, and enjoy the meal that they themselves have made, etc. Such activities

develop the learning processes of the visitors and they are able to participate in those activities from the start to the end. This is considered one of many ways to manage creative Cultural Tourism especially in terms of food, including local food.

### **Development methods for Food Tourism under the GASTRONOMIC concept**

In order to manage creative Food Tourism, it is necessary to consider the following factors to make it sustainable:

#### **G – Good Taste**

The taste of food is an aspect which needs to be emphasized because the taste of food is what most visitors place importance on. According to the report, street food is popular among visitors these days (CNNGO, 2012). The report summarized the top ten popular street foods in Thailand, namely, Pad Thai, Som Tum, grilled chicken, barbecued pork, boat noodles, crab fried rice, sun-dried pork, Kanom Chine, Iced milk tea, ripe mangoes with glutinous rice, and coconut rice cake, respectively. Moreover, many Thai dishes are well-known and popular around the world such as Tom Yum Koong, green curry, Pad Thai, Pad KraPrao, roasted duck curry, Tom KhaGai, spicy Thai beef salad, Satay pork, stir-fried chicken with cashew nuts, and Panang curry with beef, etc (PrachachatOnline, 2016). Thailand has obtained revenue from the Food Tourism business of which the total amount is 4.56 hundred billion baht or 20 percent of the entire income from the tourism business (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2016). In addition, it can be seen that the top three countries of foreign visitors who came to Thailand in the year 2015 and spent money on food were those from China, England, and Russia. Therefore, it is necessary for the entrepreneurs and stakeholders to give priority to and to be aware of management and control of the flavor of local Thai food in order to welcome more visitors to come and try out the food in the country.

#### **A – Authenticity**

In terms of reality and reliability, MacCannell (1973) stated that visitors not only like to have new experiences and try new things, but they also like reality, direct experiences, genuine contact with the local commodities and culture of the particular trip. They would like to make sure that the trip is real and is not available only for the purpose of travelling. For example, if they try some food, the food must have a local taste, etc. They need to have new experiences with the local food and traditional cultures which is opposite to food services they are familiar with. Cohen and Avieli (2004) said that, in general, more visitors dare to risk

trying local food. Some of them find it exotic and unfamiliar which makes the attractions more challenging and worth the visit. Food consumption can give visitors memorable experiences on the particular trip and it is a key part of the tourism experience. Food also represents ethnical uniqueness, beliefs, and origins. Therefore, it is a bridge that brings visitors to a variety of cultures.

Du Rand et al. (2003) and McKercher et al. (2008) explained that food has been used to create visitors' satisfaction and impact on local tourism as each society presents their food cultures (Ferguson, 1998). Haven-Tang and Jones (2005) added that food and wine can considerably create unique experiences. The research in Hong Kong done by Enright and Newton (2004) shows that food is the second most important thing to attract visitors where the most important is safety. It is more important than other factors.

In addition, SunheeSeo et al. (2013) studied the influence of informational and experiential familiarity with images of local foods. The study examined the perspective of visitors towards local Korean food, especially the relationship between familiarity gained from experience and others gained from information, images, satisfaction, and intention to consume. The study concluded that familiarity gained from experiences made a bigger difference in the visitors' perspective towards local Korean food, satisfaction, and in their intention to purchase. Furthermore, foreign visitors who had experiences with Korean food tended to perceive positive images. This points out that emotional perspectives or feelings for food can be used to attract foreign visitors and it also shows that visitors who have more experiences with food normally enjoy and tend to try the food more than those who have less experiences with local food. The findings point out that familiarity gained from experience has more influence than that gained from information about local food. It also shows that such kinds of information are necessary for creating an image of the product, visitors' satisfaction, and their intention to consume the food. In short, it is important to build visitors' confidence. That is, they should be encouraged to have experiences with food which are unique, different, and local. This activity will imprint an image which is a natural destination or the cultural essence of the food.

### **S – Sustainable**

The efforts to build economic sustainability in the countryside areas have focused more on tourism. In order to meet the goal, locality, countryside landscape, traditions, and cultural norms are identified and augmented to respond to visitors' preferences with the

expectation to increase the number of visitors which will increase the benefits to the local economy.

Using a mix of localities to respond to the tourism business has contributed to the efforts to learn and study challenges of the changes that may occur in sustainable local tourism. ‘Local’ food which directs visitors to food chains, starting with producers who make marketing products and distribute them to restaurant entrepreneurs and ending with visitors who are purchasers and consumers of those foods. Moreover, it can be said that local food is considered valuable in many aspects such as the social aspect, environmental aspect, and others. Especially, should visitors themselves be able to see the importance of local food in its many aspects including economy, the environment, health, etc.

### T – Tourists

Types of food tourists are defined and differentiated in many ways by academics. Different appearances and travel behavior affect the forms of travel and Food Tourism management of activities responding to the different needs of these tourists. Therefore, restaurant entrepreneurs or stakeholders involved in Food Tourism development should study these types of tourists in order to respond to their needs and make them satisfied as much as possible. Many academics such as Cohen (1972) have stated that tourists can be categorized into two groups which are *institutionalized* and *non-institutionalized* tourists. Plog (1974) said that tourists can be divided into *allocentric* and *psychocentric* groups. The concepts are similar to those of Cohen’s (1972). That is, they describe tourists who like adventure and uniqueness and those who follow the mainstream and prefer security.

According to Hjalager (2003), the types of Food Tourists are categorized into four groups: *Recreational*, *Diversionary*, *Existential*, and *Experimental*. He concluded that recreational and diversionary gastronomy tourists are those who do not like risks and dislike trying unfamiliar food while existential and experimental gastronomy tourists are those who like to try and look for new and exotic food or like to experience new ways of eating. Moreover, he added that visitors have different attitudes and preferences towards food. The terms Neophobics and Neopholics describe such attitudes and preferences. The term Neophobics describes people who do not like exotic or unfamiliar food while Neopholics are those who like exotic food. The academics pointed out that such differences are due to differences in cultures, environments, and experiences.

### R – Reach

Thailand provides tourists with the ability to reach or attain a number of food commodities, convenience in purchasing those products, and ease in reaching particular products and services. Moreover, Thailand has been praised as a country where there is convenience in getting food, especially street food. Most street food in Thailand is always available which is convenient for tourists, especially in the communities or the main tourist attractions. However, such ease, which seems to benefit tourists with convenience, has negative effects such as disorder at selling places, setting the stalls according to tourists' or consumers' wants which contributes to problems such as waste, garbage, traffic, and hygiene which are ignored because of the 24-hour selling time. Moreover, the quality of some kinds of food decreases because the food has been displayed on the street for a whole day. Therefore, ease and convenience in reaching food should be managed systematically and orderly to enable tourists to easily choose what to eat and to prevent further negative effects that may occur with other relevant parts. The expansion of quantity and variety related to experiences with food gained through activities should be supported by the community to make sure that there is a mixture of quality and attractive services which will increase the potential that tourists will try local food. This will create new business opportunities and ways to run local produce markets.

### O – Organic

Food in terms of being a component of tourism products and experience in food consumption can increase the value system or popularity occurring in the food culture of each tourist. Developing new products can also increase value, based on the organic concept or organic agriculture including low-calorie, low-fat, and low-sugar food. In addition, on the menu, there should be different types of food which are eco-food, ethno-food, fast food, slow food, exotic food, and hit food.

### N – Need

Food Tourism can be categorized based on needs and motivations following Maslow's theory. In his theory, the first stage in the hierarchy of needs is physiological needs which goes directly to food. The second stage, safety needs, is related to food safety, health, and hygiene. The third stage, social needs, means tourists' needs have interaction in terms of Food Tourism, for example, travelling to a wine orchard or to different food festivals, etc. The fourth stage, esteem needs, concern those of the tourists' which should be fulfilled such as

the study of Culinary Tourism, etc. The last and foremost stage is psychological needs which relates the tourists' need to be recognized by participating in trade shows or conferences to gain more knowledge of food.

### O – Opportunity

The current trend on Health Tourism creates opportunities for an international development of food and services based on local wisdom. Many Thai foods are well-known and have become popular worldwide such as Tom Yum Goong, green curry, Pad Thai, Pad Kraprao, grilled duck curry, Tom Khagai, Thai-style spicy and sour salad with beef, Satay pork, stir-fried chicken with cashew nuts, and Panang beef curry, etc. Based on the prediction made by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, of the goal for the year 2016, it is expected that Food Tourism markets in Thailand will grow 10 percent or have an estimated value of five hundred billion THB.

### M – Marketing

Marketing is also an important part of public relations and in spreading news and information about Food Tourism to promote it. Therefore, a study of the impact of public relations marketing on food is important to develop new kinds of tourism for food and it can create sustainability in tourism in the long run. According to the case study, the tourists' patterns of buying decision processes tend to place more importance on local food consumption through marketing activities. For example, Telfer (2000) found that the activity called *Taste of Niagara program* in the south of Ontario, Canada, was very popular in terms of food producers, entrepreneurs, hotels, restaurants, wine lounges, and famous chefs. Similarly, Boyne et al. (2002) who had done the study in Scotland found that tourists and visitors give precedence to guidebooks, spend more money on each meal, and are interested in food productions in the particular locals. So it can be stated that food becomes more than food. Food can be related to a representation of uniqueness, cultures, production procedures, and eating processes, including an increase in sustainability. Food can be advertised or promoted in many ways such as through media, pictures, pamphlets, brochures, photographs, etc.

### I – the Internet

Food Tourism marketing strategies are necessary. They involve marketing through media such as television, magazines, or the Internet, all of which have become highly influential nowadays. These days, websites are considered the main tool for tourists to look for

information about tourism based on their preferences, destinations, and relevant activities or festivals. Therefore, it is necessary for the government's websites channeled by any organizations such as tourism organizations or national tourism to be made interesting by using pictures, etc. However, different tourists have different needs. Earlier, the author mentioned four types of food tourists which are tourists who place importance on food and look for relevant information; tourists who place importance on food but do not usually find information about it; tourists who do not think that food is the main factor of tourism but they can participate in activities regarding food; and tourists who do not see food as the main factor of tourism and are not willing to participate in any relevant activities.

In terms of online tourism marketing, nowadays the Internet is considered the newest technology which tourists use to find information, make connections, share ideas, and exchange experiences. This makes the Internet even more important in the tourism industry in which tourists can access information easily. News and information sharing create tourism public relations and makes the tourists return to the same destinations. Therefore, the government's websites should give priority to website development, news and information, interest in the messages, and invitations to travel, so that the information is actually sent to the tourists.

#### **C – CFGT: Clean Food Good Taste**

The term *Clean Food Good Taste* (CGFT) first occurred in 1989. Not only has it protected consumers, but it also reinforces quality tourism. A certificate and logo of the project identify food service places that follow the specifications in the hygiene standard. Three objectives of the project are to reduce the risk of disease caused by food; to support hygienic businesses, especially tourist attractions; and to support local staff who work on consumer protection. The Food Safety Management (Kongchuntuk, 2002) in 2005 shows that 42.8 percent of restaurants were certified (Srithamma et al., 2007) and 30 percent of these restaurants were randomly checked annually and twice a year. If any of them were found to be not following the specification, it would be removed from the certified list.

In conclusion, Food Tourism nowadays is one of the best ways to promote and link with tourist attractions because tourists will keep learning more and more about food at the attractions. A number of tourists are motivated to travel to try food in exotic restaurants or to find new experiences and learn about local food. Therefore, all related organizations including the government and private sectors need to work together collaboratively in order to develop

Food Tourism to become complete tourism. The principles for Food Tourism management consist of the components of the study of tourists' needs, which is necessary to make entrepreneurs and related sectors better understand and be able to develop Food Tourism based on the goals set. Moreover, well-managed Food Tourism should incorporate the 11 key components of sustainability following the "GASTRONOMIC" concept: G – Good Taste, A – Authenticity, S – Sustainability, T – Tourists, R – Reach, O – Organic, N – Need, O – Opportunity, M – Marketing, I – the Internet, and C – Clean Food Good Taste.

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