อาหารริมทาง: เสน่ห์เมืองไทย เปิดประสบการณ์ใหม่ในเอเชีย*

Street Food: Thailand's Charm for a New Tourism Experience in Asia

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิชาการนี้กล่าวถึง การท่องเที่ยวด้านอาหาร (Food Tourism) ซึ่งจัดเป็นการท่องเที่ยวแนวใหม่ที่สามารถสร้างรายได้จากนักท่องเที่ยว สร้างความเจริญแก่ชุมชน และสร้างความยั่งยืนทั้งทางด้านการท่องเที่ยวของประเทศไทย ในภาพรวมปัจจุบันการท่องเที่ยวในประเทศไทย ที่กำลังได้รับความนิยมในหมู่นักท่องเที่ยว คือ อาหารริมทาง (Street Food)เป็น อาหารที่มีการจัดวางและจำหน่ายอยู่ริมถนน ทางเท้า ทางเดินรถ ฯ อีกทั้งยังหมายรวมถึงอาหารที่ง่ายต่อการจัดหาหรือการบริโภคซึ่งมีอยู่อย่างมากมายในที่สาธารณะประเทศไทยสะสม ชื่อเสียงในเรื่องของการเป็นผู้นำในด้านอาหารริมทาง อาทิการที่ประเทศไทยได้รับการจัดอันดับที่ 1 ของการเป็นเมืองที่มีอาหารริมทาง น่าสนใจที่สุดในโลก หรือการที่อาหารไทย เช่น ผัดไทยได้รับ การจัดเป็นอันดับที่ 7 ของนักท่องเที่ยวโลกฯ ดังนั้นประเด็น อาหารริมทาง จึงเป็นสิ่งที่น่าสนใจและจัดเป็น food tourismรูปแบบใหม่ที่ผู้ที่เกี่ยวข้องจำเป็นต้องให้การตระหนักและมีรูปแบบการพัฒนาอย่างบูรณาการต่อไป ทั้งในเรื่องของการศึกษาถึงความต้องการที่แท้จริงของนักท่องเที่ยว การศึกษาถึงกระบวนการจัดการตาม STREET Concept เพื่อการพัฒนาการท่องเที่ยวด้านอาหาร อย่างยั่งยืนต่อไป

คำสำคัญ: การท่องเที่ยวเชิงอาหาร, อาหารริมทาง, การท่องเที่ยวอย่างยั่งยืน

* This article discusses Food Tourism, At present the Food Tourism trend that has become popular with tourist in Thailand is Street Food, Street Food is interesting and is becoming an up-coming trend that needs to be recognized and integrated into Food Tourism in Thailand in terms of the real needs of tourists with a management process that incorporates a "Street Concept" in order to maintain the sustainability of development in Food Tourism.

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Abstract

This article discusses Food Tourism, which is a new type of tourism, that can generate income from tourists, bring prosperity to the local community, and build overall sustainability to Thailand's tourism economy. At present the Food Tourism trend that has become popular with tourist in Thailand is Street Food, which is an array of food being sold on the street, pavement, or along the road; another meaning is the easy access to food channels. Thailand has become the leading street food marketplace ranking first in the most interesting food category; food such as Pad Thai ranks seventh in the world's most interesting food. Street Food is interesting and is becoming an up-coming trend that needs to be recognized and integrated into Food Tourism in Thailand in terms of the real needs of tourists with a management process that incorporates a "Street Concept" in order to maintain the sustainability of development in Food Tourism.

Keywords: Food Tourism, Street Food, Sustainable tourism.

Introduction

Tourism is an important and beneficial sector for Thailand's economy, as we can easily observe from the number of tourists arriving and the increase in tourism revenue.TAT reported that the record revenue amount was 776,217 million baht which indicates an increase of tourists by about 30% in 2011 (Department of Tourism, 2012)

At present, the Thai government realizes the importance and impact of the tourism industry as seen from the establishing of strategies of tourism from the Department of Tourism which aims to control, support, and plan for the arrival of tourists.The increase of revenue in 2015 from an expected 32 million tourists is estimated to be around two trillion baht (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2012)

One famous type of tourism is Food Tourism. This is because food is a necessity for humans and an irreplaceable source of survival. Whether tourists spend the night at the destination or not, they need to dine. At the present tourists are more concerned with healthy eating thus making food related businesses, especially food management businesses, aware of Food Tourism in order to increase profits and the GDP of the nation. Food Tourism is a kind of food management to support the tourism business which includes manufacturing, compliance, and consumption management. Nowadays, Food Tourism management in Thailand is displayed in various ways, for example, cooking classes, gourmet tours, and even Street Food for tourism, etc. These are a few popular activities of food management tourism and they

generate a great amount of income from tourists both directly and indirectly. Since Street Food has been with Thais for a long time and has been a part of people's lifestyle, it is not difficult for tourists to learn that Thais can easily get access to all kinds of street food and the tourists themselves are able to experience the taste, and fall in love with it. This lifestyle is so common that Street Food has become quite a common lifestyle everywhere in Thailand and has so much impact that it has unintentionally turned into a symbol of Thailand, as one can see from the fact that Bangkok was awarded for having the world's best Street Food in 2012 by Virtual Tourist Website (Reuters, July 2012.) which is an internationally well-known tourism website and has 1.2 million subscribers from 220 countries around the world. The website stated that five famous Street Food areas are Yaowarat Road, Silom Road, Rambutri Road on KhaoSarn Road, Sukhumvit 38, and Choakchai 4 respectively. This signifies the impact of Street Food tourism in Thailand. Therefore, the research and understanding of Street Food is necessary, especially in boosting up Thailand's tourism as well as promoting the unity between communities and the locals, managing effective systems, and gaining support from related public and private organizations.

Street Food, an alternative type of Food Tourism

Street Food is an array of food that is sold on the street, pedestrian roadway, etc. Moreover, it includes ready-to-eat food and food vendors in public places like markets, roads, or common places having hawkers or vendors selling from carts or sleighs. The charm of Street Food is mostly in being eat-on-the-spot, like on the road or pavement with bare hands and a fast manner of cooking. The report from WHO and FAO stated that in 2007, of the world's citizens, around 2.5 billion people consumed Street Food. This statistic indicates the extent of consumption of Street Food and the importance and growth of Street Food, especially in tourism sectors, which is becoming more and more popular. At present, Thailand is raising more awareness in Food Tourism by focusing on its tourism policies and strategy objectives so as to appeal to tourists in order to increase tourists' numbers and income received.The estimated number of tourists for 2015 is expected to bring in two trillion baht and one way to achieve this goal is by the seeking of alternative tourism to attract tourists and build a sustainable tourism. Food Tourism is ranked at the top list of methods that the government wants to develop, since food is a necessity for human life and food gives experiences that are more unique than other sources. Food Tourism doesn't need to be limited to only the luxury restaurants since the price doesn't always indicate the preference of tourists. However what attracts tourists is the impression they get about certain restaurants which have reasonable

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prices; those that are set on the street and not so well known could provide “an impressive experience” to the tourist. (Tourism Queensland, 2003) From this concept mentioned comes the interesting Thailand Street Food concept. Street Food is the part of Food Tourism in which every tourism sector expects to see fruitful profit. No one can deny we all have the urge to eat. Moreover, Food Tourism is a kind of repeated travel because humans like to consume the food they like repeatedly. (Thailand Destination Image, TAT.)

Currently, many researchers have attempted to analyze and study the real need of tourists toward Food Tourism and get a better understanding of how the mechanics work in order to develop a sustainable tourism.Richard C.Y. Chang (2010) tried to study the characteristics of how to charm tourists who travel abroad and dine to feel like they are still eating at home even though the food is different. This relates to the struggle of Food Tourism in Thailand as well. The host creates a supply to answer these needs. Most Asian food is quite similar and so is the culture of eating habits and the ingredients used. Moreover, many researches accept and recognize the importance of locality through Food Tourism such as Rebecca Sims (2010) who conducted a research that emphasized food locality through Food Tourism. Besides Food Tourism being an innovative idea, it drives the repeated travel that will lead to job opportunities for the locals making them cherish, and become more aware of preserving their community. In brief, Street Food can help to develop and make Food Tourism in Thailand to become more sustainable which will lead to the next step of having an overall sustainable tourism sector.

Literature Reviews

Using food as a marketing strategy for tourism

The purpose of marketing for tourism is not only to increase tourists’ numbers but also to seek a sustainable tourism. Buhalis (2000) stated that tourist’s attractions are significant factors that can draw some types of tourists and certain places have the ability to attract certain customers from their uniqueness whether the attraction is a tangible or intangible product. Hu & Ritchie (1993) said that Food Tourism is the fourth component to attract tourists and encourage them to travel further despite the weather, accommodations, and scenery.Jenkis (1999) also ranked food as the ninth component that affects the tourist’s choice of destinations.

The types of tourists

Many scholars define and categorize many different types of tourist characteristics; travel preference affects certain tourism and results in activities conducted to boost tourism. However, the meaning of 'tourist' in the norm of scholars is divided into two categories: (Institutionalized tourists and non-institutionalized tourists). Plog (1974) also suggested that tourists are separated into Allocentric and Psychocentric. These types of tourists are similar in terms of exotic travel, trending travel, and safety concerns. However, Food Tourism tourists are divided into four categories, Hjalager (2004): Recreational, Diversionary, Existential, and Experimental. Recreational tourists and Diversionary gastronomy tourists are types that have a low level of comfort in trying new stuff. They don't like to experiment with new things, unlike the Existential and Experimental gastronomy tourists who are inclined to experiment with new food and experiences.

Unique characteristics of Street Food in tourism

Street Food in Food Tourism is considered to be an innovative form of tourism in Thailand.It answers the need of tourists who seek a different way of traveling and a more creative aspect of tourism. Food is what humans need to consume to live and even though they have to travel abroad they may not like it. Food management is another value component that affects innovative tourism, Food Tourism management, and its reputation, especially in Thailand as shown in the appreciation survey. Moreover, Street Food in Thailand is unique, charming, and attractive in terms of tourism as shown in SWOT below:

Strengths

1. Thailand is notable for its food and is praised internationally for food such as Musaman, PadThai, and Tom Yum Kung.
2. The price is acceptable because the cost of living is quite cheap compared to others countries.
3. Thai food has a delicate taste and is usually made from healthy herbal ingredients.
4. Food access is convenient

Weaknesses

1. The food standard is not spread equally.
2. Unfair pricing for tourist.

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Opportunities

1. Growth in the tourism sector, domestic and global
2. Regional and international development (Tourism elevates product standards, service, information technology, and education)
3. Participation in the ASEAN Economics Community in 2015
4. Ecotourism and Cultural tourism will support innovative marketing tourism such as Healthy tourism which conforms to Thailand's Food Tourism development.

Threats

1. World and Thailand Economics Fluctuation
2. Terrorism, country conflicts, and political instability
3. Natural disasters and previous Asian epidemics
4. Obsolete laws and regulations

Street Food for Tourism Management

Street food is very important to Food Tourism in terms of Thailand's tourism development therefore every sector must collaborate and integrate in order to advance Street Food management so that it may pave the way for tourism sustainability as cited in the Visitor Experiential Model.

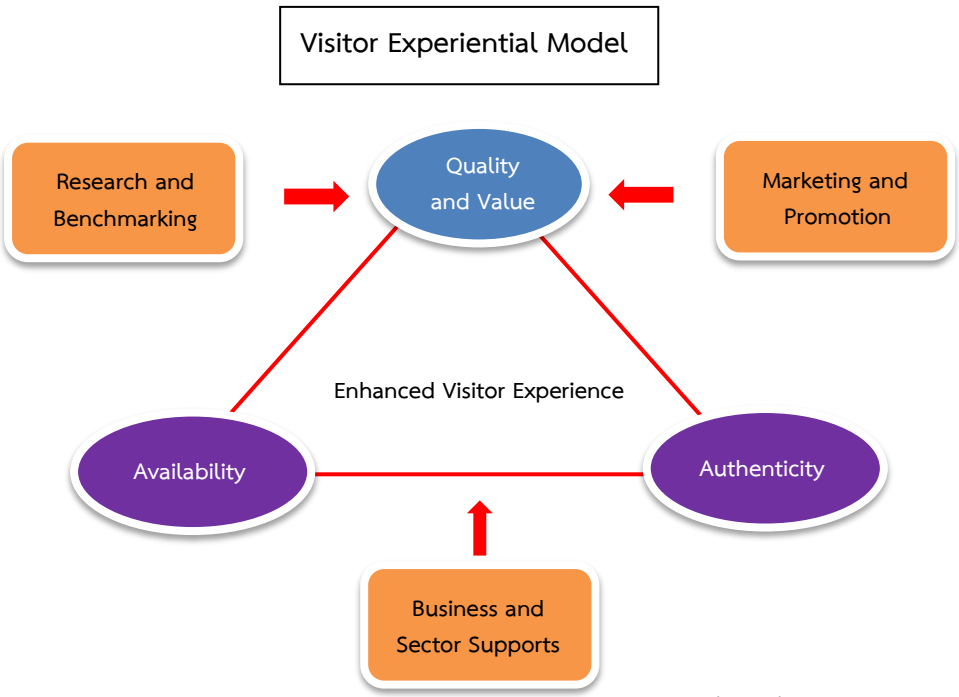


Figure1 : National Tourism Development Authority (2010)

This model was developed in order to improve Food Tourism in Ireland and it succeeded. Therefore, if Thailand uses effective management of its Street Food, it will surely enrich and broadens the knowledge for developing Food Tourism sustainably.

Visitor Experiential Model

The Visitor Experiential Model, which is from the National Food Tourism Implementation Framework, (2010) states that the most important aspect of Food Tourism development is first to study the experiences of tourists and attempt to create a model of Food Tourism, and then conduct an experiment to search for the experiences and awareness of tourists from certain events or situations. The model must consist of these three factors:

1) Quality and Value

Quality and Value means that the service provider must provide pleasing taste and quality service to tourists under current standards and with fair pricing. Moreover, the quality must be the same at festivals, food exhibitions, and other activities.

2) Availability

Availability is the expansiveness and varieties of experiences in food activities through community involvement to ensure that service is provided with a blend of charm which can add to the likeliness of tourists' eagerness to experience the local food, thus creating new business opportunities and marketing opportunities for local products.

3) Authenticity

Authenticity is confidence that the food experience will make tourists dare to try unique and different food and will reflect the image that nature is pure and friendly.

In order to achieve success authenticity needs to focus on three things: influencing consumers' expectations and decision making, strengthening the brand and marketing of Food Tourism, and broadening support to related sectors. The Visitor Experiential Model and the National Framework will direct all stakeholders and create a collaboration framework leading to a stronger and more connected collaboration in the following years.

Implementing Visitor Experiential Model as an approach to street food tourism in Thailand can be done in the following aspects:

1. Quality and Value

To assure that visitors will have the most pleasurable experience in consuming food with high quality and reasonable price, stakeholders in charge in these industrials need to specify street food experience which stimulates new kinds of consumption demands. They also need to improve product quality and standard of service together with putting support to

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new ideas that will improve negative awareness or decreasing the impact of any efforts made to develop street food tourism in Thailand. That is, the food quality related to experiences does not meet the expectation or it yields negative results in awareness of worthiness and pricing capacity. The more worthiness there is, the more satisfaction the visitors have.

2. Availability

The expansion of styles and variety of street food experience in Thailand can be made by enhancing educational projects and experiential trainings in order to develop individual's capacity one has collected and to pass on to the street food experience which is highly worthy and authentic to others. Passing on such experience is an approach to increase the number of street food entrepreneurs in Thailand. It is also a way for visitors to purchase and try the street food in Thailand, which creates new business opportunities for the producers and venders of street food in Thailand. This yields benefits in terms of the increasing number of visitors in the future, higher income, and increasing employment in street food tourism industries in Thailand.

3. Authenticity

To make sure that the visitors have gained true experience through tastes of authentic Thainess, brand development and marketing are ways to strengthen the foundation of street food tourism in Thailand. They can be done by enhancing integrative marketing strategies such as public relations to increase awareness and channels to information of street food for visitors. This is to inform the visitors and to invite them to the experience of street food consumption which is Thailand's identity. Moreover, branding that emphasizes the consumers in food tourism promotes the image of street food and food tourist attractions.

Street food tourism in Thailand can be improved following the Visitor Experiential Model. The model highlights the most important aspect of street food tourism management; that is, the study of visitors' experience or the food tourism model. Then, the experiment is conducted to look for the visitors' experience and awareness occurring in the particular situations. The experiment should consist of these three specific features: quality and value, availability, and authenticity. Finally, these features will contribute to the increase in local communities' income, profitability, and sustainability, including helping the stakeholders passing on the high-quality and valuable experience to the consumers.

Moreover, Thailand has held "Thailand Stylish Street Food Makeover Festival 2016" which aims to transform Thailand to become one of the Street Food Destinations that is outstanding in terms of both productions and services. It also aims to raise the development

of Thai street food to modern street food that has been in the application processes until it gives food innovations with quality and value. The event also attracts the visitors both from Thailand and other countries using food as a selling point to increase per capita income in visiting Thailand, gives the visitors good customer experience, and starts a new trend for the visitors. The main activities of this event are street food makeover and street stall makeover. The Tourism Authority of Thailand gives the opportunities for undergraduates to express their creativity. The competitors were opened for their submission of creative ideas and corporate identity design and the professionals from Thailand Creative & Design Center (TCDC) are the ones who made the decision. The selected team whose work has outstanding ideas will join the design knowledge seminar. In the end, the winner's work is going to be exhibited in the particular event.

So the Visitor Experiential Model can be summarized in saying that tourists' experiences are one of the main factors that needs to be studied and experimented with to understand their real needs since tourists are direct customers. Understanding tourists can add more value and directly satisfy the tourists' needs making them repeat tourists the next time.

Moreover, a good management of Street Food means the awareness of the STREET Concept for sustainable development as follows:

S – Sanitation

Good sanitation must be acknowledged by related parties and controlled by the right management. Food Sanitation is a management and controlled system and the human resources related to making food more clean and safe from bacteria, and other chemical substances that might harm the body's health, sanitation, etc. (Leelanuch Sutheparak, 2013) Good sanitation consists of food location, cookers, ingredients, food processes, kitchenware, food environment, preservation, etc. All parts must be controlled by good sanitation from both public and private sectors in order to develop Food Tourism and assure tourists about the Thai tourism industry.

T – Taste

No one can deny that taste is one of the most important aspects.CNNGo ranks the top 10 Thai Street Foods according to their popularity: Pad Thai, Papaya Salad and Grilled Chicken, Grilled Pork, Boat Noodles, Fried Rice with Crab, Dried Pork, Rice Noodles, Thai Tea, Mango &Sticky Rice, KhanomKrok, respectively.Besides CNNGo, Hotels.com (a popular hotel and tourism website) also ranks Pad Thai seventh as the most delicious food and Musaman

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ranks first with CNNGo (2012).As the popularity of Thai Street Food increases, so will the awareness of Thai vendors and their attempt to satisfy the customer, which will results in a change in the taste of Street Food. Therefore, food entrepreneurs must collaborate with each other to ensure the same standard of native taste for Street Food and avoid distortion in taste. Although food service providers may keep in mind that they can create alternative Thai food for the tourists' preference, such as Pad Thai which includes both Pad Thai and original Pad Thai.

R – Reaching

Street Food in Thailand is mostly ready-to-cook restaurants open 24 hours a day making it convenient for travelers.Most community areas provide Street Food management which is up to standard. However, making too much food with easy access can have negative results such as out of order food placement, and Street Food wasted by food vendors, traffic, and unsanitariness. These are all the results of operating 24 hours a day; but more importantly the quality of some the Street Food is lower due to the ingredients being placed outside all day.

Street Food management should consider having an easy access point yet keep aware of professional management in order to enable tourists to search for food easily and not reflect badly on other sectors.

E – Enjoy eating

Street Food in Thailand has as its charm a dining manner that attracts tourists and which can be a part of the food process, cooking, or even sightseeing. The chef's cooking process can enhance the experience of tourists toward Thai Street Food such as in KhaoSarn Road, Rambutri Road, Yaowarat, etc. They offer a cooking show that increases the mouth watering experience for tourists and stimulates them through five senses (sight, taste, smell, sound, and color) Public and private food organizations should be aware of these experiences and hold seminars to educate street food vendors in order to develop their capacities.

E – Economic

Normally street food has reasonable prices in the tourists' and the public's opinion due to its low cost and cheap or even free of charge locations. They don't hire many employees and they use local ingredients which are normally inexpensive.However, there are some food entrepreneurs who charge prices that are quite unreasonable even though they

don't use premium quality ingredients. Price control is also another factor that should be carefully viewed and taken care of in order to maintain the charm of Street Food for tourism purposes.

T –Thainess

Thainess is the most important matter that all sectors should be aware of since many times entrepreneurs tend to yield to the demand of tourists and forget the native aspects, such as taste, food process, decoration, etc. At present, some Thai Street Food is not limited only to Thailand but can be found internationally as well. Thai food should be a national representation in terms of taste, food arrangement, Thai symbolic decoration, and even the presentation of Thai food as it has existed until today, for example, using a banana leaf as a container or side dish.

The development of street food in Thailand into sustainability should consider three important components: economy, society, and environment. These three components should stand altogether in order to create sustainability at last. From the STREET concept, it can be seen that Sanitation is applied with the main component of environment by raising the standard of packaging—making packages safe for consumption and by giving knowledge of how to select suitable packages for food. The activities aim to make visitors' quality of life better and sustainable. Taste, Enjoy eating, Economy, and Thainess are applied with the main components of economy by highlighting Thai taste, representing distinguish and interesting food presentation, serving clean and standard food, using on-the-go containers, and giving importance to the frontage. This also includes implementing innovations that make the visitors feel like trying the food and start a social-media trend. Such trend takes place as new-generation visitors would like to share their experience when they are eating, drinking, or travelling to their friends and followers to see through their social media channels. This activity is one potential way to spread information. Thai food has advantages in terms of its deliciousness, variety, and popularity among visitors. This potential emphasizes the amenity of street food in Thailand with a new and more interesting image and also increases the number of visitors and the income to the country. Lastly, Reaching is applied with the main component of society by increasing the number of street food vendors. The stakeholders, whether they are supported by the government or by food business and food industries, should hold the trainings to give knowledge of food and develop people in the community to be able to turn local food to career and to use local raw materials. Moreover, all people in

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the community should also have a job. The increasing number of street food vendors allows more visitors to appreciate and try the food. All of the above mentioned can be applied to the enhancement of street food in Thailand into sustainability.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Street food is not only limited to locals. Nowadays, it has become one of the main components of Food Tourism that can attract many foreigners to experience the taste of Thai Street Food, which is well known internationally. Street Food in Thailand is ranked first on the Virtual Tourist website and Pad Thai is ranked the seventh most popular dish from the votes of tourists in hotels.com. (Daily News, August 2014) Moreover, Thai food characteristics, such as easy access points, reasonable prices, and good taste have produced the "Repeated Travel" phenomenon.

From the reasons mentioned above, support should be given to help Thai Street Food to develop and integrate into a more sustainable and advanced Food Tourism. Every tourism sector should embrace this opportunity to make Thai food move in the right direction. Street Food management consists of study in awareness of tourists which will make the service provider and related sections understand the needs of customer and develop suitable methods. Other components include understanding Thainess, local and community knowledge along with tourism as well. Moreover, the STREET Concept should be considered for sustainable development.

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