

Agricultural Tourism Route: Creating Sustainable Experiences in Khlong Bang Phra, Nakhon Chai Si District, Nakhon Pathom

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Abstract

This study explores the development and impact of agricultural tourism routes in Khlong Bang Phra, Nakhon Chai Si District, Nakhon Pathom, emphasizing their role in fostering sustainable community development. The research employs a qualitative approach, incorporating stakeholder interviews, field observations, and thematic analysis to evaluate economic, social, and environmental outcomes. Findings indicate a 22% increase in household income and the creation of 120 new jobs, driven by a 35% growth in agricultural product sales and additional revenue from tourism activities. Community engagement was a key success factor, with 78% of residents actively participating in organizing events and preserving cultural traditions. Sustainability efforts led to 68% of farmers transitioning to organic farming, reducing pesticide use by 20% and improving soil quality by 12%. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and limited marketing outreach were identified, highlighting areas for improvement. This study concludes that agritourism serves as an effective model for rural development, offering economic, cultural, and environmental benefits. Recommendations include strategic investments in infrastructure and digital marketing to enhance the program's scalability and long-term impact.

Keywords: Agricultural Tourism, Sustainable Experiences, Community Development

1. Introduction

Agricultural tourism, commonly known as agritourism, has emerged as a pivotal strategy for fostering sustainable rural development. By integrating agriculture with tourism, agritourism allows communities to leverage their natural and cultural assets to create diversified income streams, preserve traditions, and enhance environmental conservation (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008). This approach is gaining prominence globally, particularly in regions where traditional farming faces challenges from economic and environmental pressures. Agritourism offers a practical solution, enabling communities to showcase their agricultural heritage while meeting the growing demand for experiential and eco-friendly travel (Flanigan et al., 2014).

The Khlong Bang Phra area in Nakhon Chai Si District, Nakhon Pathom, represents a rural community with immense potential for agritourism development. Known for its rich agricultural practices, cultural traditions, and proximity to urban centers, the region has the foundational elements to become a thriving agritourism destination. However, its agricultural economy is largely underutilized, constrained by limited infrastructure, fragmented planning,

and insufficient market exposure. These challenges reflect broader issues faced by many rural communities transitioning from traditional agriculture to diversified economic activities (Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Addressing these gaps requires a systematic approach to developing agritourism routes that prioritize sustainability and community participation.

Research highlights the importance of structured planning and stakeholder collaboration in the success of agritourism initiatives. Wicks and Merrett (2003) argue that effective agritourism routes must be designed to balance tourist needs with the preservation of local culture and resources. Similarly, Pasandideh et al. (2018) emphasize the role of integrated models in managing agricultural and tourism activities, ensuring both profitability and sustainability. For Khlong Bang Phra, adopting such approaches can help align agritourism development with broader economic and environmental goals.

Community involvement is another critical factor for sustainable agritourism. Studies have shown that active participation by local residents not only strengthens community ownership but also enriches the tourist experience (Malkanthi & Routry, 2011). For example, participatory planning processes in agritourism have been associated with higher levels of community satisfaction and greater economic benefits (Carpio et al., 2008). In the case of Khlong Bang Phra, leveraging local knowledge and resources can foster authenticity in tourism offerings, such as organic farming workshops, traditional Thai cooking classes, and eco-friendly tours. These activities not only provide economic opportunities but also serve as platforms for preserving cultural identity.

Sustainability is central to the long-term success of agritourism initiatives. The adoption of environmentally friendly farming practices, such as organic cultivation and integrated pest management, can enhance the ecological resilience of rural communities (Thanapen, 2013). In Khlong Bang Phra, encouraging farmers to transition to sustainable practices will not only improve the environmental health of the region but also appeal to eco-conscious travelers, a growing segment in the tourism market (Rossi, 2021). Moreover, educational components integrated into tourism activities can raise awareness among visitors and locals about the importance of conservation.

This study aims to explore the development and impacts of agricultural tourism routes in Khlong Bang Phra. By employing a qualitative research approach, the study investigates the economic, social, and environmental outcomes of the initiative. It further examines the role of community participation and identifies challenges and opportunities for enhancing agritourism's contribution to sustainable development. The findings are expected to provide actionable insights for policymakers, local entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders seeking to replicate similar models in rural areas.

1.1 Objectives

1. To explore the process of developing agricultural tourism routes in Khlong Bang Phra, Nakhon Chai Si District.
2. To assess the economic and social impacts of agritourism on the local community.
3. To evaluate the role of community participation in promoting sustainable tourism.
4. To identify key challenges and opportunities for future agritourism development.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine the development and impacts of agricultural tourism routes in Khlong Bang Phra, focusing on economic, social, and environmental outcomes. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 50 stakeholders, including 25 farmers, 15 agricultural entrepreneurs, and 10 community leaders. Farmers provided insights into their participation and sustainable practices, while entrepreneurs discussed marketing strategies and challenges. Community leaders shared perspectives on policy and infrastructure support. Open-ended questions encouraged detailed responses and diverse perspectives.

On-site observations were conducted at five agritourism clusters, documenting operational practices, tourist interactions, and the integration of cultural and environmental elements. Field notes and photographs were taken to capture visitor behavior and infrastructure quality. Secondary data, including financial records, tourism reports, and community plans, were analyzed to validate primary findings and provide quantitative context.

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns across dimensions such as income generation, community engagement, and sustainability. Triangulation ensured reliability by cross-referencing data from interviews, observations, and secondary sources. Ethical considerations included informed consent and confidentiality, with local authorities approving all fieldwork.

This methodology provided a comprehensive understanding of the agritourism initiative's outcomes, offering actionable insights into its successes and areas for improvement.

3. Results

The study presents a comprehensive analysis of the development and impact of agricultural tourism routes in Khlong Bang Phra, Nakhon Chai Si District, with measurable findings in economic growth, community engagement, and sustainability.

The development process involved the participation of 50 stakeholders, including 25 local farmers, 15 agricultural entrepreneurs, and 10 community leaders. These groups collaborated on workshops and participatory planning meetings to create five distinct tourism clusters. Each cluster highlighted unique aspects of local agricultural and cultural practices, such as organic farming, fruit harvesting, traditional Thai cooking, herbal medicine preparation, and local crafts. Technology was also integrated into the initiative, with 65% of agritourism operators adopting digital tools like QR codes. These tools provided real-time access to information on farming techniques, crop lifecycles, and organic certifications, while online booking systems reduced ticketing errors by 15%.

Economically, the initiative significantly increased household income among participating families by 22%, from 15,000 THB to 18,300 THB per month. The primary drivers of this growth were a 35% rise in product sales, particularly for items like coconuts, mangoes, syrups, and souvenirs, alongside revenue from educational workshops, which contributed an additional 15% to total earnings. The program also created 120 new jobs, comprising 50 seasonal guide roles, 30 full-time tourism positions, and 40 support roles in logistics and marketing. Furthermore, the broader community economy benefited from increased tourist spending, positively affecting food vendors and local transportation operators.

Community engagement was a crucial aspect of the program, with 78% of residents actively participating in tourism activities. These contributions included organizing monthly cultural events, managing tours, and preparing regional delicacies, which 85% of surveyed tourists identified as a highlight of their visit. Additionally, the initiative facilitated cultural preservation by restoring two historical temples and reviving three traditional crafts, such as bamboo weaving and herbal balm preparation. Over 90% of tourists rated these cultural experiences as excellent, reinforcing the value of these efforts in preserving the local heritage.

Sustainability efforts were another significant focus of the initiative. Sixty-eight percent of participating farmers transitioned to organic farming, resulting in a 20% reduction in chemical pesticide use and a 12% improvement in soil quality, as measured by increased organic matter content. Environmental conservation was further supported through the designation of two wetlands as protected zones, complete with educational signage for tourists. The program also promoted environmental awareness, with 82% of surveyed tourists reporting a greater understanding of sustainable agricultural practices, and 45% committing to purchasing organic products in the future.

Despite its success, the initiative faced challenges, particularly regarding infrastructure and marketing. Forty-two percent of tourists reported issues with transportation, parking, and rest facilities. The lack of multilingual signage and route maps further limited accessibility for international visitors. Additionally, only 28% of tourists discovered the routes through formal promotional efforts, indicating the need for stronger digital marketing campaigns and partnerships with travel platforms.

These findings highlight the significant economic, social, and environmental benefits of the agritourism initiative in Khlong Bang Phra. They also emphasize the need for strategic improvements in infrastructure and marketing to maximize its potential and enhance the overall visitor experience. Wiriya boonmalert (2020). traveling, tourism attractiveness, servicing, facilities, and public relations

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the transformative potential of agritourism in Khlong Bang Phra, Nakhon Chai Si District, as a sustainable development strategy that integrates economic, social, and environmental benefits. The development of agricultural tourism routes, driven by active stakeholder participation, has not only enhanced local livelihoods through a 22% increase in household income but also created 120 new jobs, significantly boosting the community's economic resilience. Additionally, the initiative has revitalized cultural traditions, with community-led activities such as craft-making and cultural performances receiving high praise from over 90% of tourists.

The program's emphasis on sustainability has encouraged 68% of farmers to adopt organic farming practices, leading to a 20% reduction in pesticide usage and measurable improvements in soil quality. Furthermore, the integration of digital tools, such as QR codes and online booking systems, has modernized operations and enhanced the visitor experience. Despite these successes, challenges remain, particularly in infrastructure development and marketing outreach. Issues such as limited facilities and insufficient promotion have underscored the need for strategic investments in these areas.

In conclusion, the agritourism initiative has established itself as a robust model for rural development, offering a practical framework for balancing economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability. By addressing existing challenges, the program holds the potential to further enhance the community's socio-economic stability and set a benchmark for similar initiatives in other regions. Future efforts should focus on expanding digital marketing strategies, improving infrastructure, and fostering stronger public-private partnerships to ensure long-term success and scalability.

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