

GUIDELINES OF DEVELOPMENT FOR AGROTOURISM TO KOH LAD E-TAN, NAKHON PATHOM PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of the research entitled “Guidelines of Development for Agrotourism to Koh Lad E-Tan, Nakhon Pathom Province” are to investigate the potential of agrotourism in Nakhon Pathom area and to propose guidelines for developing agrotourism. This study was conducted as qualitative research by an in-depth interview with the stakeholders in agro tourism including local leaders, local people, government officers and entrepreneurs with [1] six components of tourism, that is, accessibility, attraction, amenities, ancillary service, accommodation, and activities, and analyzed the data by thematic analysis. The study found that this area had a strong potential for agrotourism, but it was not well-known. Therefore, Koh Lad E-Tan community should create activities which are considered as strengths of the community, such as promoting the bike tourism and the Thai Way of agriculture through river tourism to support their local agricultural products which could be successful by integrating with community-based tourism, business sector, government sector, eco-tourism, and various social media platforms to promote sustainable tourism.

Keywords: Agrotourism, Koh Lad E-Tan, community-based tourism, Nakhon Pathom province

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is one of the most significant industries in the country's economy, culture, society, and environment. Therefore, countries around the world are planning tourism development to enhance tourism potential. Sustainable tourism was the best choices to develop in every sector in tourism industry of Thailand, in various types of tourism such as agro tourism, which create the value of local communities and tourist's experiences.

Koh Lad E-Tan, Nakhon Pathom province, is one of the best agricultural destinations in the tourism sector. There are many tourism attractions in this area, such as a natural location, agriculture, and local wisdom promoted by the government sector as an agricultural tourism destination along with culture, but it is not well-known yet. Buaban et al. [6] found that a tourism marketing network is necessary for managing creative tourism over the long term, but local organizations and local people in this area lack tourism marketing knowledge. Therefore, the researcher would like to investigate the potential of agrotourism and to propose guidelines on agrotourism development in Koh Lad E-Tan, Nakhon Pathom province.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the potential of agrotourism in Koh Lad E-Tan area
2. To propose guidelines on agrotourism development in Koh Lad E-Tan, Nakhon Pathom province.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study was conducted as qualitative research. The data were analyzed from in-depth interview with the stakeholders in agrotourism including local leaders, local people, government officers and entrepreneurs as follows:

1. The six components of tourism theory to study the potential of agrotourism in Koh Lad E-Tan, Nakhon Pathom province, and
2. The criteria for the development of community-based tourism to propose guidelines on agrotourism development in Koh Lad E-Tan, Nakhon Pathom province

The results were analyzed by thematic analysis and content analysis.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The potential of agrotourism in Koh Lad E-Tan, Nakhon Pathom province were explained through six components of tourism theory (6As).

Attractions

All of participants confirmed that Koh Lad E-Tan, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand, was renowned for its agriculture and cultural attractions. Tourists were attracted to this place by their iconic landmarks, such as pomelo farm, Don Wai, one of the famous local markets, and Rai Khing Temple, which was highlighted by most participants as the key destinations attracting tourists to visit. A local participant who was the farm owner specified that the organic farm, such as pomelo plantation, was a landmark of this place and has received the Geographical Indications (GI) registration in Thailand. Tourists can learn how to plant organic pomelos and experience the local lifestyle. He said:

“Tourists often realize that Nakhon Chai Si district is home of the best pomelo plantations although expanding administrative district in the past wasn’t promoted by the government sector. Tourists just look around and take a picture at the plantation without asking for the details from me. That is the way of a good agrotourism.”

Accessibility

Koh Lad E-Tan is located in Sampran district. The travel takes about 1.5 to 2 hours, and it is easily accessible from downtown Bangkok. However, the most convenient way is by car because there are some public transportations available and not get insight the destination. There are rarely road signs and maps to help navigate these routes. The officer in the Tourism Department of Rai Khing Subdistrict Municipality provided further information that the owner of “stingless bee” apiary asked the government authorities to make more road signs to the apiary because the existing signs only directs to the apiculture learning center and do not attract the tourists to visit his apiary.

According to the researcher’s field visit, roads to the tourist destinations of Koh Lad E-Tan community were narrow and difficult for road expansion in the future. The roadside

environment were plantations leading trees to cover roads and obstruct travel. Besides, it should be equipped with the road lights sufficient for travelling at the nighttime.

Activities

There are a variety of activities. However, it requires for the stakeholders to promote and support these activities because Koh Lad E-Tan consists of a variety of cultures and environment, such as temple, local market, river view and farm.

From the field visit and interview, the program tours established by Koh Lad E-Tan community enterprise included Songkanong Temple, Rai San Rak, Rai Khing Temple, MADi Cafe and Bistro, Klong Phi Sua Circle of Lives Museum, and Bann Suan Bang Toei Homestay. The tourists would experience the local culture and environment in the area which was unique of the community on the basis of organic farming. Nevertheless, those tours were not attractive to the tourists, such as, just visiting the places, taking photos, eating food, listening to the community leaders in some places to share knowledge. It should divide the proportion of activities in every place equally. One of restaurant entrepreneurs informed that on weekend there were a larger number of visitors than weekdays; therefore, the leaders and people related with community tourism often organized the activities, i.e., the markets selling products from people in the community, and culinary demonstration from local products on weekends because on weekdays they did their routine job. Besides, there were not many tourists in the community on weekdays and there might be only working groups or education institutions making a reservation to do activities in advance.

Accommodation

From the study, there were limited accommodations in Koh Lad E-Tan community and most of them were homestays or small and medium resorts. One of the accommodation entrepreneurs said that most of the customers stayed at the place from seeing it by chance during a visit at Don Wai Market, and they made a phone call to ask for information and reserve a room. A few of them stayed at the place due to the tours of Koh Lad E-Tan community because they were often one day trip. Moreover, homestay was a goal of the program tours for having lunch and watching local culinary demonstration. Most of the income was from groups of visitors making a reservation in advance. The accommodation owner also said that he had a plan to improve and expand his accommodation to increasingly support seminar customers. According to the study, the researcher found that the accommodation organized the activities for customers staying at their place, i.e., offering food to the monks along the riverside, dining cruise, cycling around the island, etc. The interviewee also provided further interesting information that in April water hyacinth in the river was the great obstacle for cruise services causing travelling to be difficult, damages to ships, and danger during a cruise.

Amenities

Agrotourism often offers amenities to provide tourists with unique and immersive experiences while also supporting local communities such as homestay, restaurant, etc. From the survey, another outstanding of tourism in Koh Lad E-Tan community was “Rod-Rang” (tourist tram) used for picking up and dropping off the tourists, as well as guiding the community tours, which could create unique impression among the tourists. The tourists could access and stay close to tourist attractions conveniently, including listening to the information in the tourist tram. The driver and the speaker were people in the community.

It found that amenities during the travel were as follows: 1) most of the shops selling food and beverages were opened for a long time and there are a few decorated to attract and

support the tourists, 2) there are the shops selling souvenirs and products in the community informally, and 3) Koh Lad E-Tan community enterprise provided parking space at the nearby temples, such as, Rai Khing Temple, and Songkanong Temple. It was inconvenient in case of travelling in the community by car on their own because there were not many parking lots in each parking space.

Ancillary Services

The tourists experience community engagement, and they also have opportunities to interact with local people including learn the way of life with friendly local people. The community leader and people in the community gathered together and set up the Koh Lad E-Tan community enterprise to push forward and drive agrotourism of Koh Lad E-Tan community. According to the researcher's interview, the community enterprise leader said that part of people in the community gave importance to and was ready to support the tourists. However, those people might benefit from the activity with a small amount of income. The leader also added that the community enterprise organized the meeting consistently. Sometimes, the external agencies provided training for them which was consistent with the data acquired from the officers relevant to the Tourism Department of Rai Khing Subdistrict Municipality. This probably resulted in strength, positive attitudes, and a service mind among the leader and people in the community.

Tourist attractions in the community are located near the local administrative organization helping acquire amenities reinforcing tourism, such as, public health center, bus station, police station, etc. which were to create peace of mind to the tourists.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

1. The Potential of Agrotourism in Koh Lad E-Tan, Nakhon Pathom Province

According to the study, Koh Lad E-Tan community has a resource of tourism appropriate for agrotourism whether agricultural attractions, pomelo farm, jackfruit farm, or stingless bee apiculture learning center, where the tourists learn plantation and acquire agricultural wisdom and experiences from participating in tourism activities. Besides, tourist attractions are located near Tha Chin River enabling the tourists to experience the lifestyle of riverside community, the main factor of agrotourism principle consisting of natural tourist attractions and cultural lifestyle. The community is also ready for supporting the tourists at a satisfying level in participation with agrotourism and establishing Koh Lad E-Tan community enterprise. The community leader plays an important role in driving agrotourism, which agreed with the research of Maslin Buaban and Khaunyupa Srisawang (2018) [6] in that local opinion leaders were very important to lead to successful creative tourism management and these leaders could influence other people's opinion and behavior for creating tourism products and services in the long term.

Regarding accommodation, the researcher expressed that the entrepreneurs could attract more diverse groups of tourists if increasing facilities, such as, meeting rooms, banquet rooms, spa, Thai massage, creating uniqueness like the health and wellness accommodation, etc.

2. Guidelines on Agrotourism Development in Koh Lad E-Tan, Nakhon Pathom Province

The researcher analyzed and concluded the findings from the study and interview by modifying the criteria for the development of community-based tourism in Thailand to propose guidelines on agrotourism development as follows:

Management

Tourism management knowledge and skills comprise one of the important factors to achieving the goal of local sustainable development. It is not only the deep knowledge of local stories that is needed but also requires other knowledge and skills, for example, tourism activities management, the art of communication and sustainable tourism management [6]. The community holds administration in accordance with community-based tourism, that is, establishing the community enterprise and distributing income of people in the community. The interviewees provided the corresponding information that they needed support from the government sector which was not allocated sufficiently. Therefore, they had limitations on public utility improvement, such as improving or adding the road signs which the community leader needed to pay for by himself. The researcher thought it should have the agency to be responsible for these duties and provide support directly and establish the policy in the administration plan of the area. The local entrepreneurs should give more importance to agrotourism in the community by publicizing information of Koh Lad E-Tan community in their business advertising space to be well-known in the broader range.

Economy and Society

From the study, the community enterprise allocated the income from tourism to related people, but the income was not sufficient for agrotourism in the area to be the main income of people in the community. There was a small amount of central income for community development leading them unable to improve and develop tourism services sufficiently. Consequently, the researcher thought the community should increase the value of their tourism products, i.e., processing products into tourist souvenirs, selling package tour included tour guide fee, workshop activities, food and beverage fee. Normally, the tourists pay only for their food and beverages. To increase channels of distributing more diverse goods and products in the community, the leader might coordinate or cooperate with nearby networks, such as, Don Wai Market, selling online, i.e., Facebook of the community. This was consistent with [3] the research of Panruthai H. (2021) on The Tourist Behaviors of the Generation Z in Rattanakosin Area in that it would be more effective if business could tailor to the right content through the right channel to fit tourists' behavior through appropriate channel. In terms of the social condition of the community, it might increase the support and care for the elderly and disabled people both in the community and the tourists, such as, accessories for getting on and off the tourist tram and toilet for wheelchairs, which agreed with [5] In addition, Phada R., Supasak N., and Weera W. (2022) studied the guidelines for services and facilities for elderly people who used wheelchairs when traveling by plane on premium airlines and summarized opinions of elderly people using wheelchairs that they were more in need of assistance than passengers in general.

Conservation and cultural Management

It should convey the meaning of information on heritage of community and cultural wisdom which are unique and interesting for tourism, such as, using the local pomelo accredited by the Geographical Indications (GI) registration in Thailand as more selling points,

creating tourism activities to enhance tourists' experiences and learn local culture, community lifestyle through hands-on experience or doing at least one activity by letting people in the community who was the farm owner to participate in the activity. This would lead to pride of the local people, and it should cooperate with related networks, such as, Rai Khing Temple, organizing the well-known festivals annually connecting as one of the tourism programs in Koh Lad E-Tan community during organizing the festival of Rai Khing Temple.

Environment

Environment and natural resources are important factors of agrotourism. This readiness of the community has potential at the good standard criteria, the scenery of farming and rivers in line with the buildings leading agrotourism of the community to be more interesting. Both the government sector and the private sector should push forward and promote the environmental conservation activities for the tourists most of which were students to understand local resources and entrepreneurs, such as, restaurant to use packages from natural material in the community as a basis of sustainable tourism management.

Services

Tourism in Koh Lad E-Tan community for the tourists on weekend or groups of the tourists making a reservation in advance is operated by tour guides to care for and provide services closely, while the walk-in tourists on weekday encounter difficulty in accessing the tourist service counter to travel to the places determined by the community tour. The researcher perceived that the tourist service counter should be established at the visible place to provide information and advice for the tourists and update the information online consistently. Furthermore, the community enterprise should conduct the survey to evaluate satisfaction on services of the community in order to acknowledge and improve services and tourism activities to attract more tourists. This corresponded with the research of Chidchom K., and Panruthai H. (2023) [2] on evaluation and study of tourist's satisfaction to cover several aspects consisting of services, safety, access, accommodation and sanitation and hygiene.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Promoting to the Bike tourism

Koh Lad E-Tan, Nakhon Pathom province, offers opportunities for bike tourism, allowing visitors to explore the natural beauty, cultural activity, pomelo farm, river views and rural landscapes. However, stakeholders should develop cycling routes and its surrounding areas to be safe, clean, and more attractive, as well as promote eco-friendly transportation to appreciate the natural farm views without contributing to pollution degradation. It is recommended to provide bicycle rentals and tours organized by local people, which may include equipment, route planning to learn agriculture, and knowledgeable guides to enhance the cycling experience. Agrotourism of Koh Lad E-Tan should be sustainable in every way of tourism.

2. Promoting the Thai Way of agriculture with the river tourism.

Koh Lad E-Tan is located in Samphran district, Nakhon Pathom province. Tourists can access this place after visiting the nearest famous attractions, Don Wai Market, Rai Khing Temple with famous annual festival etc. Koh Lad E-Tan has a very good location to enjoy the

panoramic view of river. The program to learn the Thai Way of agriculture with the river tourism will make Koh Lad E-tan to be a strong destination to attract tourists, groups of seminar and one day trip tourists.

Overall, the bike tourism and the Thai Way of agriculture with the river tourism at Koh Lad E-Tan will offer a unique way to explore the agrotourism, connect with nature and experience the local culture while promoting sustainable tourism practices, and getting the new target tourist.

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