

THAILAND'S TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY.

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ABSTRACT

This research is aimed to 1) study Thailand's sustainable tourism development during B.E. 2558-2560, and 2) propose Thailand's sustainable tourism development guidelines. The study is based on a qualitative research method. The research tool is an in-depth interview conducted with 17 individuals who are administrators, officers, and those participated in tourism industry from both public and private sectors. The analysis methods include content analysis, data categorization, and triangulation.

The results showed that 1) Thailand's sustainable tourism development during B.E. 2558-2560 is rested upon 6 important development principles, saying, 1) tourism development dimension, the worthily and efficient use of tourism resources based on sustainable concept, 2) maintenance of sustainable ecological system dimension, relying on natural principle, 3) tourism business development dimension, including innovation, technology, regulations, legislation, environmental standard, and human resource development, 4) tourism market development dimension, including service development in which customers or tourists are free to choose their consumption or services, 5) community participation dimension, focusing on thoroughgoing participation from local people, and 6) consciousness development dimension, development of consciousness toward tourism resources and environmental preservation. 2) Thailand's tourism sustainable development guidelines include 1) sustainable tourism management, in which there are conscious tourism management, knowledge building and providing tourism management, community participated tourism management in terms of decision, activity, and equal benefits, 2) development and improvement of tourism management, in which there are the adjustment of governmental organization structure, the Pracharat concept of co-operation derived from public, private, and people sectors, 3) the participative tourism management, a community-based concept, and 4) competitiveness development by protecting and solving the degeneration of tourism destination, development promotion on new tourism attraction, development of special tourism zone with neighboring areas or countries, and promotion of tourism business expansion into foreign market.

Keywords: Guidelines, Development, Sustainable tourism

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a new business that maintains a dynamic economic perspective. Since B.E. 2493 (A.D. 1950), the tourism business all around the world have gained a steady rate of growth. This rate of growth can be witnessed clearly in groups of European countries and North America's. However, there is an expectation that this high rate of growth will happen in Asian continent where a high rate of economic growth and income is experiencing. The global tourism income in B.E. 2557 (A.D. 2014) was about 7,000 million US dollars or about 9 percent of the global GDP. This is equivalent to 1,500 million US dollars in foreign income

or about 6 percent of the world's GDP, or 30 percent of global accumulated service values and can create 500 more jobs worldwide [1]

This becomes a good opportunity for Thailand to build innovation to support tourism business in the future. The cabinet came to reach the conclusion on the National Tourism Development Plan B.E. 2555-2559 on February 15, 2554 and it was published in the Royal Gazette with effectiveness on June 17, 2554 since then. This plan is used by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports and all related units as a guideline to develop roles and duties performed by each unit of responsibility under the supervision of the National Tourism Policy Council. From the recent assessment, there are still some of the obstacles that hinder the achievement of the plan. Moreover, the present Thai government has assigned every official responsible unit to discover operative guidelines in order to achieve the goals and to be in response to the Thailand's reformative plan. In this respect, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports has formulated a Thailand's Tourism Strategy B.E. 2558-2560 based on educational process, analysis, and development evaluation. Besides, the ministry also held a meeting to gather opinions from every related sector to find out operative guidelines and to improve the propelling mechanism toward the plan in a truly integrated manner. This is in the hope that the said strategy becomes a propulsive tool for the government's tourism policy. This strategy is also considered as a developmental foundation for a 3-year period in which it is a transition leading forward to the national tourism development plan, the 2nd copy (B.E. 2560-2564). The growth in tourism industry for the past following years has been utilizing the abundant natural resources. Up to the present, the mentioned natural resources are deteriorating and depleting due to a lavish use, lack of maintenance, and unawareness of appropriate development. In the past, the promotion of tourism activity has concentrated primarily on the number of the tourists. There has no development on the tourism sites in accordance with the increasing number of tourists in each location. Based on the large increasing number of tourists, it has produced a continuous effect on various tourist attractions in terms of deforestation, sweepings, congestion of buildings that obscure the scenery, traffic jams, antiquities and archaeological site decay, including the changing values of local people. All of these evidences need the government's effort to deal with [2].

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To study Thailand's sustainable tourism development between B.E. 2558-2560.
2. To propose Thailand's sustainable tourism development guidelines.

RELATED THEORIES

Sustainable Tourism [3] pointed out that as more regions and countries develop their tourism industry, it produces significant impacts on natural resources, consumption patterns, pollution and social systems. The need for sustainable/responsible planning and management is imperative for the industry to survive as a whole.

Hostelling International Slovenia [4] saw that sustainable tourism brings welfare to the locals and does not impact the nature. It is important that the uniqueness and authenticity of the places stay the same for the generations to come. Sustainable tourism is becoming more and more important, as many people want to avoid the tourist spots. They are searching for the locations where they will have contact with the locals and with untouched nature, but there are less and less places that have that. Overcrowded tourist spots are not the only problem, but it is also a problem that tourist leave a lot of trash and unsatisfied locals behind them.

Kisi [5] proclaimed that as the impact of sustainable development on the world's future is better understood, each industry is encouraged to find a solution for sustainability in its own field. Sustainability puts its "attention on a set of ethical values and principles, which guides action in a responsible and harmonious way, incorporating the environmental and societal consequences of actions, as well as economic goals."

Qian, Shen, and Law [6] proposed that the influence of tourism on the environment has led to research on the development of sustainable tourism. Scholars from popular destinations and governments are actively conducting sustainable tourism research, and their contributions to the field have achieved global renown. Without data from the natural sciences, knowledge from tourism dominates this area. Their findings delineate the development of research on sustainable tourism in terms of collaboration, impact, knowledge base, and thematic coverage.

Niedziolka [7] wrote that the sustainable tourism is a new form of tourism promoted by authorities, environmental and social institutions and international organizations. It implies taking into account economic, environmental, and socio-cultural aspect by planning and management of tourism.

Cernat and Gourdon [8] claimed that to illustrate the usefulness of the Sustainable Tourism Benchmarking Tool- STBT, tourism sustainability is assessed in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. The preliminary results show that a similar level of tourism activity across countries might induce different economic benefits and might have different consequences for the socio-ecological environment.

Tourism development concept in relation to Asean Economics Community (AEC)

According to the National Tourism Policy Act B.E. 2551, the tourism development zone means an area that is determined to become a tourism development location for the benefits of maintenance, reconstruction, or administration and tourism development as a key factor. This tourism development zone can be determined as a group of provinces, a particular province, or a special area. The said definition is quoted based on intention as specified in section 17, 1st paragraph of the mentioned Act. However, in response to ASEAN, the designation of tourism development zone may be developed into a special economic zone for a tourism purpose. Therefore, the determination of tourism development zone may include a special economic zone for tourism. It is a special determined area which can be a subsequence in the tourism development zone. The main ideas are to promote, support, and facilitate or giving some kinds of privilege on the organized activities for tourism.

Varisa Tantisuttivet [9] argued that the tourism development is a movement process from an unsatisfied condition to a satisfied condition. Then, the development of tourism is a continuous changing process, it is not stable, and it tries to support the continuous growth in increasing number of tourists and changing demand based on the environmental context, competitive condition in tourism industry, including the building of understanding and pride in being Thai, local consciousness and being a good host.

The National Tourism Policy Council [10] has defined the tourism development as the development of tourism is a development of quality toward tourism sites, products, and services in all of the tourism dimensions with standard and balance. There must be a sustainability in tourism location, environment, and Thai living identity with a purpose to strengthen the industrial strength so that Thai tourism has an important role in the mobilization of economic and social development of the country.

From the above definition, it can be concluded that the tourism development means a bit by bit of change through the various steps and levels to achieve an expanded level, more growth, and changing condition into a better direction. There is a satisfaction upon the change as in a case of quality comparison between situations at a different time period. It can be

argued that if the present situation is better and/or more complete, it can be called a development. Therefore, the tourism development is causing change toward tourism into a better aspect and it creates satisfaction based on those changes. The development location must be in relevance to condition and demand of the community and creates a just distribution of benefits from such a tourism development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research where the researcher utilizes an in-depth interview conducted with the key-informants by using semi-structured interview with an open-ended questions. These key-informants include 17 individuals who work in tourism business or with tourism activities. For the purpose of sample collection, purposive sampling technique was employed due to difficulties arising from random sampling method [11]. They come from both public and private tourism sectors. It should be noted that the general rule on sample size for interviews is that when the same stories, themes, issues, and topics are emerging from the interviewees, then a sufficient sample size has been reached [12]. The audio and video mechanisms are also used to collect the data.

The documentary research on academic publications is utilized to collect and analyze the tourism data between B.E. 2558-2560. Finally, the focus groups are organized to discuss the related matters concerning the research questions. The data are analyzed by using content analysis and data categorization, and are verified by using a triangulation method.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. The study of Thailand's sustainable tourism development between B.E. 2558-2560.

The results of the study indicated that Thailand's tourism development between B.E. 2558-2560 has a tendency to stand firm with the sustainability concept as a main principle in order to develop tourism industry along with other 9 members of ASEAN based on a universal declaration of Environmentally Sustainable Development. In this regard, there is an attempt to focus on the education or learning process and a focus on preservation rather than reduction or minimization, or a creation of satisfaction towards tourists. The main objective is to have a tourism that is responsible for natural tourism sites and to have a good management on ecological system. The important principles and key issues in tourism development are: 1) the development of tourism resources, this refers to the worthiness utilization of tourism resources with highest efficiency by maintaining the permanently existence of tourism resources in order to prevent various possible effects on tourism resources in terms of economic, social and cultural aspects. This effort can be undertaken through preservation and moderation use of resources, avoidance of over-consumption and waste reduction, maintenance and promotion of natural, social and cultural diversity, coordination of tourism development, tourism as an expansion of local economy, and maintaining the carrying capacity. 2) The maintenance of ecological system quality, it is a sustainable tourism management based on natural basis. There is an education concerning the culture and/or environment that is beneficial to the conservation and the satisfaction toward the tourists. There is a provision of knowledge to related persons and communities. In this respect, there must be a building of consciousness on shared responsibility for sustainable ecological system among those concerned. 3) The development of tourism business, it is a development of tourism business based on sustainability in which it includes innovation, technology, rules, legislation, and environmental standards, human resource management, improvement of production process and sustainable work operation, business succession planning, and business expansion into foreign countries. 4) The development tourism market, it refers to the

development of service market where the customers are uppermost free to choose their own consumption. These issues also include the choice of tourism destination, cultural and social attractions, and facilitating factors, such as airlines, accommodation, food and beverages, souvenir products, tourism activities, eco-tourism promotion. These efforts can be done through effective sales promotional tools, for instance, advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and public relations. 5) The development of participation from local community, it is a kind of participation that local people have a chance to participate in the process right from the beginning until the process is ended. The participation can occur by means of participative decision-making, participative operation, participation in benefits, and participative assessment. 6) The development of tourism consciousness, this refers to the effort to build consciousness toward the preservation of tourism resources and environment among everyone concerned. This can be achieved by the provision of knowledge and communication pertaining to the conservation of resources and environment in order to instill tourism consciousness based on sustainability and for the love of resources as well as environment.

2. The proposal of Thailand's sustainable tourism development guidelines.

From the study, it can plausibly argue that the Thailand's sustainable tourism development guidelines include: 1) the management of sustainable tourism, the management includes 3 principles that are tourism management based on consciousness about responsibility toward environment and ecological system, tourism management that creates and provides knowledge, tourism management that allows participation from local people to decide, organize, and receive benefits equally. 2) The development and improvement of tourism administration, this aspect refers to the reformation of public organization structure without an increase in number of public officers and the establishment of the National Tourism Policy Council under the Office of the Prime Minister. Secondly, the promotion of a congregation of private sectors in order to create strength and increase efficiency. The promotion of Tourism Council of Thailand to become a central organization truly belonging to the industrial tourism entrepreneurs. The promotion of data base and knowledge creation for the private and local organizations. There should be a development of necessary skills for personnel in every related units. The private organizations should have a major role in a verification of tourism standard under the government's supervision. Thirdly, the promotion of participation from the community in the local tourism management. This concept can be done by using the community-based tourism, the community should have authority and roles to manage tourism within the local area, the promotion of community network for the purposes of knowledge exchange, and linkage of various dimensions such as marketing and development with the same direction. 4) The development of competitiveness, this effort can be achieved by the prevention and resolution of the degeneration of tourism sites. In this respect, there must be a strict enforcement of law, an establishment of a local management committee, and the tourism management based on information technology and innovation. Second, the promotion of new tourism attraction in order to support the steadily increasing number of tourists. The government should encourage the happening of at least one tourism site in each district around the country. There should be a gathering of tourism cluster based on local identity and culture. The tourism site can be even man-made and it is supported by an investment privilege. The promotion and support for the development of new tourism sites based on outstanding features of each area. Third, the promotion of tourism business expansion into foreign market, especially in those areas that Thailand enjoys her expertise. This activity can strengthen and increase the competitiveness of Thai entrepreneurs.

DISCUSSION

The study of Thailand's Sustainable Tourism Development between B.E.2558-2560 found that the sustainable tourism development is based on the universal declaration of environmentally sustainable development with its 6 major principles that are: 1) the tourism resources development issue, the worthily and sustainable utilization of tourism resources with highest effectiveness, 2) the maintenance of sustainable ecological system quality issue based on natural concept, 3) the tourism business development issue that comprises of innovation, technology, rules and regulations, legislation, environmental standards, and human resources development and selection based on market demand, the development of production process and operation based on sustainability, business succession planning, and business expansion into foreign market by using strategic alliances or merger, 4) the tourism market development, 5) the participation in management from the local community, and 6) the tourism consciousness development. These findings are relevant to the work of Sirinan Pongnirundorn, Ochanya Buatham, and Chatchaya Yodsuwan [13] entitled "Guidelines for Effective Development in Tourism Management of Wang Nam Khiao District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province" in which the researchers discovered that 1) the tourist attractions include natural resources, the ample of facilitating service factors, the ease and convenience of accessibility, 2) tourism management potentials include natural resources and agro tourism together with facilitating factors in terms of accommodation, and tourism activities, and 3) the guidelines for participative tourism management includes; 3.1 Tourism resources with rules and regulations focusing on the conservation of tourism resources, 3.2 The accessibility where there is a well-managed communication system and correct direction signs, 3.3 The facilitating factors such as the appropriateness of rest-areas and/or tourism services, 3.4 Safety in term of security system in all possible tourism sites, 3.5 The capability of tourism location, and 3.6 The participation from local people or community in tourism management in a form of an operative committee overseeing the designation of operative tourism plan, follow-up plan, and evaluation plan in relation to the tourism management in the area.

From the study, it discovered that the Thailand's sustainable tourism development guidelines include: 1) the sustainable tourism management based on a conscious mind, this refers to the obligation toward environmental and ecological system, a creation and provision of knowledge, and the participation from local community, 2) the tourism management and administration based on the restructuring of governmental units, the gatherings of private sectors, the creation of tourism big-data, and the development of human resources in the field of tourism management, 3) the tourism management based on a participation from local people in terms of decision-making, co-preparation of plan and related activities as well as an equally receiving tourism benefits in a stable manner, and 4) the development of tourism competitiveness, in forms of the prevention and resolution of tourism locations deterioration, the discovery of new tourism destinations, the creation of tourism networks and/or clusters, and finally the oversea tourism business expansion. These findings are in consistent with the research being done by Rassamee Onpreeda [14] on "The Sustainable Tourism Development of Ratchaburi and Samut Songkhram Provinces" in which she proposed that the guidelines concerning the sustainable development of tourism in Ratchaburi and Samut Songkhram provinces include: (1) the network cooperation among public, private, and community in the designation of policy and operation in a centralized manner, (2) the integration plan toward safety in life and property of the tourists, (3) the improvement of legislation in relevant to and provides effectiveness toward tourism management, (4) the promotion of participation from local people in planning and correcting mistakes in tourism management, (5) the development of product quality, personnel potentials, and tourism service management, (6) the building of sustainable tourism capacity based on community culture and identity,

(7) The improvement of benefit participation from people especially on long-term economic benefit, and 8) the conservation of natural resources by improving the tourism location such as landscape condition and sweepings management to prevent degeneracy of the location.

This research is also in line with the research undertaken by Pensri Chirinang [15] titled “Guidelines to Develop the Tourism Potential in Kanchanaburi Province” in which she concluded that Kanchanaburi province has tourism potential regarding natural resources, historical location, arts and cultural aspect, tradition, and facilitating factors. The tourism development guidelines included 1) the development of tourism in terms of environmental condition, infrastructure system, and standardized tourism facilitating factors such as the improvement of accommodation quality, restaurants, souvenir shops, traffic signs, and sanitation services, 2) the conservation and promotion of local arts, culture, and tradition, 3) the provision of knowledge and public relations with a focus on ecotourism toward the youngsters, 4) the division of tourism areas, 5) the promotion of local products, and 6) the categorization of tourists. The research titled “Sustainable Tourism Development Strategies: A Case Study of Vieng Xay District, Hua Phan Province, Lao People’s Democratic Republic” conducted by Viphavanh and Panyadee [16] also concluded that regarding the strategies for sustainable tourism development, the district has formulated its vision as a historical and natural district in order to become a foundation of sustainable brotherhood of the country. Its mission consists of formulating tourism development strategies to develop the district as a sustainable natural and historical tourist attraction. The strategies include tourism product development to develop potential tourism, tourism management development to develop a systematic tourism, and tourism marketing development to promote tourism in Viengxay District.

SUGGESTION IN TERM OF POLICY

1. The government should support area identity to be dominant. It can be undertaken by an investment in education, and development of identity and culture in order to use them to develop the tourism in the particular area.

2. There should be an education, preparation, and publication of history almanac, legend, or story telling of the tourism sites in an integrated manner and there should be a linkage among these stories in order to create a new tourism destination.

3. There should be a linkage toward cluster tourism development plans in accordance with the ASEAN in order to strengthen the regional tourism. This will benefit both income distribution and income from tourism businesses. ASEAN should find ways to coordinate each other in order to develop an amity and peace in the region [17].

4. There should be a support toward the entrepreneurs to invest and operate in response to identity and culture, or to use the local identity to develop the products and services as well as to create added value to the products through the investment promotion measure or tax measure.

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