



The potential and strategy on tourism promotion and development in the Eastern Economic Corridor: A case study of the Eastern Province Cluster 2, Thailand

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Abstract

This research was conducted to respond to the direction of Thailand tourism driving the future which requires an effective tourism development plan, making a contribution to income gain and bolstering the economic strength of Thailand. Tourism must also meet tourists' needs without causing any negative impact on society, and the environment. In addition, tourism trends in the global market with increasing market share, creating a tourism balance with inclusive income distribution to local communities and also increasing potential and competitive advantage for Thai tourism personnel and operators is required. The research objective was to examine tourism potential and development of the Eastern Economic Corridor and also to design a strategy for tourism promotion and development in this focus area. The research methodology was conducted through data collection from a documentary literature study and in-depth interviews aimed at exploring the tourism potential and development including conversations with the focus group. This was to create participation for analysis of the environment and determine the strategy on tourism promotion and development in the case study. The research findings revealed that the strategy on tourism promotion and development comprised 4 SO strategies, 1 WO strategy, 1 ST strategy and 1 WT strategy, respectively.

Keywords: Tourism potential/strategy on tourism promotion and development/Eastern economic corridor.

Introduction

The direction of Thailand tourism in the future is required to be developed to a stable, prosperous and sustainable level. Stability means a capability to drive tourism effectively even in cases of domestic and international crises. Prosperity means the tourism can create income and strengthen the national economy, whereas sustainability means the development responding to tourists' needs without causing any impact to society, environment and communities and in a long-lasting manner. Consequently, for qualified and sustainable growth, the tourism direction focus should be able to respond to the global tourism trends with



an increase of market share, creating a balance of income distribution and higher expenditures including increasing tourists' longer stays with tourist distribution to tourist attractions of various regions. This will enhance an inclusive income distribution to local communities and help solve an urgent problem which is a significant obstacle against the tourism development (Nicolaidis, 2020) so as to increase potential and competitive advantage for Thai tourism personnel and operators.

The 20th National Strategic Plan (B.E. 2560-2579) aims to stably lead the country to major development in 3 aspects: social, economic and environmental ones. The proposed six strategic issues playing a vital role for driving and developing Thailand tourist attractions in sustainable direction appear in the 2nd strategy and include: Creating competitiveness, 3rd strategy: Creating capacity, 4th strategy: Creating opportunity, equality and equity in society, 5th strategy: Creating growth on the basis of quality of life that is friendly to the environment and the 6th strategy: Maintaining balance and development of processes in the management of government affairs. As per the National Economic and Social Development Plan Vol. 12, the goal involving tourism stated that Thailand shall earn income from tourism not lower than 3 trillion Baht and the tourism competitiveness should not be lower than at the 30th of ranking. The national plan proposes various methods including promotion on creating income gain from tourism through value added product and services based on Thainess, development of tourism clusters, recovery of confidence in the image of the country, a proactive and reactive marketing strategy both within and also outside the country, integration of tourism development and marketing with neighbor countries, development of tourism personnel and development of a telecommunication network integrated with tourism (Department of Tourism, 2017). In addition, the National Strategic Plan in the 20th year (B.E. 2579) is intended to be undertaken to achieve the vision of "Thailand as a qualified leading tourist attraction growing with equality based on Thainess so as to promote the economic and social development and also sustainable distribution of income to people of all sectors".

As per the plan for tourism development in the eastern region, tourism promotion and development, this is one of the programs under the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) Development Plan to achieve the objective of upgrading tourism quality to be sustainably a truly 'global tourism' which can accommodate the affluent and medical and wellness tourists to increase income gained for local people in such areas. The basic infrastructure of transportation and logistics have been developed to link transportation systems with tourist attractions to support commerce and services in tourism to be increasingly convenient and secure, including creating confidence and image building on transportation and tourism by domestic and international tourists and investors. The concept of the tourism development and promotion comprises using marketing and tourism trends as a conductor in parallel with deploying the benefits gained from the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) Development and sustainable tourism promotion efforts. The Eastern Province Cluster 2 consists of Chanthaburi, Trad, Nakhon Nayok, Prachinburi and Sa Kaeo which are 5 of 8 provinces in the Eastern Region. The Eastern Province Cluster 2 was newly grouped according to the announcement of the Provincial Administration Policy Committee and Integrated Provincial Groups on establishment of provincial groups and assigning provinces as the operational center of the provincial groups (Vol. 3) dated November 16, B.E. 2560 by General Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister.

The case study of this research was conducted in order to accommodate finding the direction if driving Thailand tourism into the future which requires effective development of tourism motivation. It can create national income gains and economic prosperity, meet tourists' needs without causing any impact to society and the environment, and also accommodate tourism trends in the global market with an increase of market share. Also benefitting will be a balance of tourism creating an inclusive income distribution to local communities and enhanced potential and competitive advantage for Thai tourism personnel and operators.



Research Objectives

1. To examine tourism potential and development in the Eastern Economic Corridor with a case study of the Eastern Province Cluster 2.
2. To design the strategy on tourism promotion and development in the Eastern Economic Corridor based upon a case study of the Eastern Province Cluster 2, Thailand.

Research Methodology

Data collection was applied for this research with an analysis of pertinent literature and in-depth interviews to examine the tourism potential and development together with a conversation with a focus group for participation to analyze the environment and thus determine the strategy to promote and develop tourism in the focused area of the case study. The data was obtained from respondents consisting of tourism operators in private sector, government officials concerned, executives of local administration organizations, representatives of tourism authorities in the Eastern Province Cluster 2, 5 provinces; Chanthaburi, Trad, Nakhon Nayok, Prachinburi and Sa Kaeo, totally 30 persons. Ethical aspects were considered carefully.

Data validity and credibility were conducted to verify the correctness and the method applied for validity and credibility as follows: 1) Validity: to ensure validity of data, the questions prepared by the researchers were brought to the attention of the advisory committee for review prior to further interview with the respondents and collection, 2) Credibility: the proceedings are 2.1) An arrangement of an agreement/declaration of research and methodology made among the researchers as a guideline of data collection to be undertaken in the same direction to protect from any deviation incurred during data collection. 2.2) Collection of multiple sources of evidence such documentary data, facts, academic papers, individual interviews and different opinions. 2.3) Creation of a database based on data collected from various sources for comparison of similarity and difference of each area: 2.3.1) The database was classified by community areas of which concerned issues were name-list of interviewed respondents from the government sector and social sector. 2.3.2) A database gained from an interview classified by community areas of which concerned issues were questions, description, interview results, interviewed respondents, interview dates, and 2.4) Undertaking of triangulation based on data gained from the interviews with different key informants. Data analysis: 1) After data collection, the data gained from an in-depth interview, analysis of documents and questionnaires were combined to be used as the database for data analysis represented in a form of the proposed table of data synthesis. 2) The data reduction was applied to screen only issues concerned with the study and the table of data system was classified into categories as per the study issues for further analysis and interpretation. 3) After the interview data was systemized, the data recorded from the incident during field activity was considered together with the table of interview data from key informants. 4) All documentary evidence gained from data collection were categorized and organized to see which part was concerned with the study issues in chronological order and a frequency table for analysis with other data gained. 5) Determination of presentation patterns was made to represent the research findings report which was mainly descriptive in style reflecting an integration of data that had been organized under the conceptual framework for further analysis and discussion on the result of data validity.

Results

The Eastern Province Cluster 2 is the potential area for development in which there are many diversified famous tourist attractions such as cultural, ecotourism and medical tourism. Moreover, the tourism operators in this focused area have developed and introduced their



tourism activities in diversified models in line with tourists' needs in each targeted group, especially family group, business group and international investment.

1) Eco-tourism means tourism to natural resources having specific local identity and cultural sources involved with the eco system and with participation processes among all concerned under the environmental management concept. It is community-based tourism undertaken with the objective of building an awareness of sustainable eco-system conservation. In this focused area, there are many famous tourist attractions in each province; Khun Dan Prakarn Chon Dam in Nakhon Nayok , Tup Lan National Park in Chanthaburi, Pang Sida National Park in Sa Kaeo, and Khao Khitchakut National Park in Chanthaburi.

2) Agro-tourism means travelling to agricultural areas, agroforestry, herbal gardens, livestock farms to see beautiful scenery, have sense of achievement and enjoy agricultural areas in which tourists can gain knowledge and enjoy new experiences under the concept of responsibility and awareness of environmental conservation of such visited areas. The famous agricultural tourist attractions in each province of the focused area are inter alia Suan Salika Agriculture in Nakhon Nayok, Flowering-Ornamental Plant Group Dong Bang in Prachinburi, Rai at the Border in Sa Kaeo, Ban Pattawee Health Garden (9 Rathai Organic Agriculture Park) in Chanthaburi and Khao Saming Agriculture in Trad.

3) Historical tourism means travelling to archeological and historical tourist attractions to experience and gain understanding in local history and archeology with the concept of responsibility and awareness of cultural and valuable heritage conservation under community-based tourism management. The famous historical tourist attractions in this focused area consist of inter alia the Ancient City of Dong Drama in Nakhon Nayok., Meaung Si Mahosot in Prachinburi, Prasat Saddok Kok Thom in Sa Kaeo, Noen Wong Camp in Chanthaburi, and the Historic Resident Campo in Trad.

4) Cultural and traditional tourism means travelling to experience authentic traditional and festive events of local communities (Nicolaidis, 2014) with enjoyable and extraordinary moments to learn beliefs, respectfulness and rites, with knowledge and understanding of the social and cultural condition of local communities. This is in tandem with gaining more new experiences with the concept of responsibility and awareness of environmental and cultural heritage conservation under community-based tourism management initiatives. The famous cultural and traditional destinations in each province of this focused area are inter alia the Folk Museum of Wat Fang Khlong (Thai Phuan) in Nakhon Nayok, Yusuksuwan Museum in Prachinburi, Ceramic handicraft Weaving Village in Sa Kaeo, Gems Street in Chanthaburi and Ploy Market in Trad.

5) Rural tourism/village tourism means travelling to villages, local areas having distinguished and unique lifestyle and creativity where tourists experience creative works and local wisdom, understand local culture with the concept of responsibility and awareness of cultural heritage and valuable environmental conservation under community-based tourism management (Nicolaidis 2020, 2014). The significant rural tourist destinations in each province of the focused area are; Dong Village in Nakhon Nayok, Muang Village in Prachinburi, Ban Huay Chan Village in Sa Kaeo, Landless Village in Chanthaburi and Baan Nam Chiao Village in Trad.

6) Health tourism means travelling to tourist attractions in natural and cultural resources for relaxation and learning how to maintain physical and mental health with enjoyment and aesthetics, experiencing how to maintain quality of life, having an awareness of environmental and local culture conservation under the sustainable



community-based tourism management (Nicolaidis & Zigiariadis, 2011). However, this type of tourism in some provinces can be arranged in a form of tourism for health, beauty and spa. The famous tourist attractions in this type of tourism in each province of this focused area are; Salika Waterfall in Nakhon Nayok, Kaeng Hin Phoeng in Prachinburi, Khao Fifteen Story Waterfall in Sa Kaeo, Namtok Phlio in Chanthaburi and Trad Island in Trad, etc.

The research findings

Analysis results on internal and external environment: SWOT Analysis

Analysis of Internal Environment

Strengths

- S1. The number of hotels and accommodation are sufficient for tourists.
- S2. There are famous tourist attractions in every province of the Eastern Province Cluster 2.
- S3. The eco-tourist attractions are diversified where tourists can travel inland, by boat and In marine areas with a network of travelling route between the main city and secondary ones.
- S4. The medical tourism in Prachinburi is distinctive with a network to Sa Kaeo and Chanthaburi in line with the herbal city strategy.
- S5. The Eastern Province Cluster 2 has potential productivity of qualified fruits i.e. durian, purple mangosteen, and rambutan which are the important fruits of Thailand.

Weaknesses

- W1. The income gain of the Eastern Province Cluster 2 is lower than the average income of Thailand.
- W2. Tourism human resources in medical tourism are disqualified and insufficient for the demand.
- W3. The environment and friendly design are not ready to support and cope with the medical tourism.
- W4. There is no readiness of infrastructure and facilities in tourist attractions.

Analysis of External Environment

Opportunities

- O1. In 2040, the portion of over 60-year people of global ones will increasingly reach from 20 to 21 % whereas in 2013, the elder tourists spent their money on tourism - 3 times higher than other groups of tourists.
- O2. Low cost airlines are highly popular among middle-class tourists representing by 24% of all international flights to Thailand and 64 % of all domestic flights.
- O3. A number of middle-class people will rise over than 5% until 2030 especially in Asia Pacific region i.e. China and India, which are the main groups of tourists in Thailand.
- O4. At present, most tourists place importance on exploring newer experiences of the tourism model by really experiencing local lifestyles and traditions.
- O5. Social media plays a vital role in fulfilling and facilitating tourists along their trips.

Threats

- T1 International tourists' confidence is lower due to security error and accident arising which caused death to be in high numbers.

The results of determining the development issues by TOWS Matrix

After an environmental assessment by SWOT analysis to find out strength, weakness, opportunity and threats of the Eastern Province Cluster 2, all data gained was analyzed by the TOWS matrix technique to explore the matrix correlation to further determine alternatives for development issues.



<p>Development Issues: To promote and develop tourism to be standardized so as to support the eco, medical and cultural tourists.</p>	<p>Strengths S1 A number of accommodations are sufficient for tourists. S2 There are tourist attractions in every provinces of the Eastern Province Cluster 2. S3 The eco-tourist attractions are diversified where tourists can travel by inland, boat and marine with a network of travelling route between the main city and secondary one. S4 The medical tourism in Prachinburi is distinctive with a network to Sa Kaeo and Chanthaburi in line with the herbal city strategy. S5 The Eastern Province Cluster 2 has potential productivity of qualified fruits i.e. durian, purple mangosteen, and rambutan which are the important fruits of Thailand.</p>	<p>Weaknesses W1 The income gain of the Eastern Province Cluster 2 is lower than the average income of Thailand. W2 Tourism human resource in medical tourism is disqualified and insufficient for demand. W3 The environment and friendly design are not ready to support and cope with the medical tourism. W4 There is no readiness of infrastructure and facilities in tourist attractions.</p>
<p>Opportunities O1 In 2040, the proportion of over 60-year people of global numbers will increasingly reach from 20 to 21 % whereas in 2013, the elder tourists spent their money on tourism 3 times higher than other groups of tourists. O2 Low cost airlines are highly popular among middle class tourists representing by 24 % of all international flights to Thailand and 64 % of all domestic flights. O3 A number of middle- class people will rise over than 5% until 2030 especially in Asia Pacific region i.e. China and India which are the main groups of tourists in Thailand. O4 At present, most tourists place an importance on exploring newer experience of the tourism model by experiencing local lifestyles and traditions. O5 Social medias play a vital role in fulfilling and facilitating tourists along their trips.</p>	<p>SO Strategy 1. To promote and develop the eco-, cultural, health & beauty, sports & adventure and agriculture tourist attractions. (S2,S3,S4,S5+O1,O2,O3,O4.O5) 2. To standardize the tourism of the Eastern Province Cluster 2 to enhance its tourism potential. (S1,S2,S3,S4,S5+O1,O2,O3,O4.O5) 3. To upgrade the quality of OTOP food products and tourism SMEs. (S5+ O1,O2,O3,O4.O5) 4. To develop infrastructure of tourist attractions and tourism facilities. (S1,S2,S3,S4+O1,O2,O3,O4.O5)</p>	<p>WO Strategy 1. To create the network of tourism route among the 5 provinces. (W1+ O1,O3,O4,O4.O5)</p>
<p>Threats T1 International tourists' confidence is lower due to security error and accident arising which cause death to a high number of them.</p>	<p>ST Strategy 1. To publicize and promote the tourism of the Eastern Province Cluster 2. (S1,S2,S3,S4,S5+T1) 2. To provide information and public relation medias for tourism promotion. (S1,S2,S3,S4,S5+T1)</p>	<p>WT Strategy 1. To establish tourism confidence and security of the Eastern Province Cluster 2. (W3,W4+T1)</p>



The result of determining issues for development and strategy

Development Issues: To promote and develop tourist attractions to be standardized to support the eco-, medical and cultural tourisms – SO Strategy

1. To promote and develop the eco, cultural, health & beauty, sports & adventure and agriculture tourist attractions. (S2, S3, S4, S5+ O1, O2, O3, O4. O5)
2. To standardize the tourism of the Eastern Province Cluster 2 to enhance its tourism potential. (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5+O1, O2, O3, O4.O5)
3. To upgrade the quality of OTOP food products and tourism SMEs. (S5+ O1, O2, O3, O4.O5)
4. To develop infrastructure of tourist attractions and tourism facilities. (S1, S2, S3, S4 + O1, O2, O3, O4, O5)

WO Strategy

1. To create the network of tourism route among the 5 provinces. (W1+ O1, O3, O4, O4. O5)

ST Strategy

1. To provide information and public relation medias for tourism promotion of the Eastern Province Cluster 2. (S1,S2, S3, S4, S5 +T1)

WT Strategy

1. To establish tourism confidence and security of the Eastern Province Cluster 2. (W3, W4+T1)

Conclusion and Discussion

The research findings revealed that the strategy for tourism promotion and development in the Easter Economic Corridor 2 consisted of 4 SO strategies, 1 WO strategy, 1 ST strategy and 1 WT strategy. The results matched with a wide range of studies including Suthiwetin (2016) on "Tourism Marketing Promotion Strategies Which influence Generation Z in Bangkok Metropolitan Region", Boromsamlee (2017) on "The Marketing Strategy Model for Sustainable Floating Market Tourism, Sangkhawan (2017) on "The Strategies for Developing Ecotourism Attractions in Samut Songkhram Province", Arwatchanakarn (2015) on Marketing Factor and Behavior of Sustainable Cultural Tourist in Lablae District, Uttaradit Province", Warunsukhasiri & Promsit (2014) on "Strategy for Developing Business in the MICE Industry", Phumworamune, Wongmonta & Techakana (2019) on "Guidelines for the Promotion of Cultural Tourism Marketing in Nakhon Phanom Province", Srinakharinwirot University (22014) on "Guidelines for Integrated marketing Media in Promoting Cultural Tourism, Wang Somboon District, Sa Kaeo Province", Jariyachamsit & Wongleedee (2012) on "The Study of Malaysian Tourists' Traveling Routes in Thailand: A Case Study at Hat-Yai District", Ekgnarong Vorasiha (2018) on "The Travelling Route for Gastronomic Tourism via Salt in Western Region of Thailand", Zuniga (2019) on "Developing Community-Based Ecotourism in Minalungao National Park", Bravo & Castaño (2019) on " Communities' Support for Tourism Development and Environmental Conservation Programmes in Ipo Watershed, Philippines", Simangunsong & Hutasoit (2019) on "A Strategic Framework of Good Governance, Infrastructure Development and Community Empowerment in Indonesian Public Sector Management", and Tangtatswas, Sornsaruht, & Pimdee. (2019) on "Fast-Food Restaurant Customer Satisfaction in Thailand", respectively.

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