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The development model of agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province

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Article Info

Abstract

The research objective aimed to set a model for developing agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province. This research applied mixed-method research. Data were collected using multiple methods including questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus groups interviews. The targeted research areas were downtown and U-thong district of Supan Buri province. Sampling groups were selected from local people, tourists, and legal experts related to agro-ecotourism business from dominant communities as learning resources for agro-ecotourism which were (1) Dong Yen Agroforestry Enterprise Group, (2) Hom Khachorn Farm, (3) Thai Farmers Lifestyle and Spiritual Learning Center (Na Here Chai), (4) Suan Kluai U-Thong Community Enterprise Group, and (5) Thungthong-Yangyeun Community Enterprise Group. The research findings showed that a model for developing agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource of all 5 learning resources should be developed from the structural level to the people in the community in 4 main contexts which were (1) the local learning resources must level up the service quality in order to increase tourists' satisfaction; (2) setting up the marketing format to be suitable for different characters of learning resources; (3) increasing the capacity level of agro-ecotourism management as a learning resource; and (4) developing legal measures in promoting agro-ecotourism as a learning resource. In addition, it was found that the changing of technology was another important factor affecting the developing agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource. The key mechanism which helps the community to apply those technologies was government sector assistance.

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Introduction

The tourism sector creates various advantages that help the United Nations Organization achieve the target of sustainable development. It enhances the activities of agricultural products by promoting the production, consumption, and selling of local products in tourism areas. Then, this is completely integrated with the tourism value chain, especially in "agricultural tourism", which is growing and can promote traditional agricultural activities. It also helps the local community increase income, recover agricultural practices, and enhance the value of tourism experience. (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2015). Many international and domestic organizations consider that both ecotourism and agrotourism are a part of green tourism that can lead to sustainable tourism.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports established the first strategy to promote green tourism in the years 2017–2021 relevant to the Twenty-Year National Strategic Plan and the Twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017–2021). Therefore, Thailand had a continuous direction to develop green tourism for 5 years (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2021). In addition, this was relevant to the 2nd National Tourism Development Plan (2017–2021) (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2021) in the third strategy, which promotes the collaboration from people to manage the tourism. They also gain advantages from this tourism, ranging from the operation in policy level to community level. Moreover, the organizations relevant with tourism development should support people and community to take part in developing tourism of the country in an appropriate context, especially in developing infrastructure and tourism facilities that are related to the local community lifestyles. However, there were several weaknesses and threats, such as the discontinuity of the development and maintenance of the tourism resources or agro-ecotourism areas, the undifferentiated or undominant tourism from the neighboring countries at both provincial and national levels, and the entrepreneurs' lack of motivation to invest in this type of tourism. Furthermore, the fourth National Strategy focuses on creating the balance of Thai tourism though the niche market, promoting Thai lifestyles, and ensuring the tourists' trust. This niche promotion is able to motivate travelling and encourage tourist spending by using promotion for specific groups of tourists in potential areas. Also, they can create marketing for specific groups of special interests such as health-based tourists, environmental-base tourists, or ecotourists.

The fifth strategy: the integration of tourism management and international collaboration should be arranged in order to improve the various laws, regulations, and standards related to tourism, and they should be seriously enforced. The laws and regulations that are the obstacles to developing the tourism should be reviewed so they relate to the current situation and support the collaboration among government sectors. According to the law of agro-ecotourism, which is a part of green tourism, there are no specific laws in most countries, including Thailand.

According to the development plan of Suphan Buri province (2023–2027), Suphan Buri province has availability in tourism in many issues such as tourist welcoming, various tourist attractions (cultural, historical, custom, and local lifestyle tourist attractions), natural tourist attractions, agro-ecotourist attractions, and so on. However, they lack activities that promote tourism in Suphan Buri province, and the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in no tourists coming to Suphan Buri province. Therefore, many tourism businesses have been closed and people are unemployed and have no income. Thus, the current situation of Suphan Buri province is that it has no new tourism promotional activities that attract tourists to travel there. Consequently, Suphan Buri province is focusing on tourism activities to increase provincial income and the number of tourists. In addition, the provincial tourism economy will also be improved. (Suphan Buri Provincial Office, 2023). Therefore, this research study will provide a clear and up-to-date model for developing agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province, especially in all 5 areas which are (1) Dong Yen Agroforestry Enterprise Group, U-Thong district, (2) Hom Khachorn Farm, Khon Ko Tao, Muang district, Suphan Buri province, (3) Thai Farmers Lifestyle and Spiritual Learning Center (Na Here Chai), Muang district, Suphan Buri province, (4) Suan Kluai U-Thong Community Enterprise Group, U-Thong district, and (5) Thungthong–Yangyeun Community Enterprise Group, U-Thong district. They will have the development guideline and model to follow which will also assist them to realize their weakness and improve to be dominant agro-ecotourist attractions as a learning resource in the future. In addition, local people who have agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province will gain more income.

The researchers collected and analyzed all relevant issues as mentioned above to adjust them to be the strategies and formats of the development of potential competitiveness in agro-ecotourism as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupations

in Suphan Buri province. Such consisted of enhancing the management competency in agro-ecotourism, studying the guidelines of development legal standards, analyzing marketing format, and enhancing service quality of local learning resource. These would lead to the improvement, adjustment, and transferring to be the development strategy of agro-ecotourism competency for community leaders of agro-ecotourism in the future.

Literature Review

Presently, the government is promoting the tourism sector, especially in agro-ecotourism, which has been growing. It is also the business that has supported traditional agricultural activities and made the local community increase income. However, its development and agro-ecotourism resources had no continuity. The tourist attractions were not dominant and lacked the identity to show the selling points. It, therefore, was not a motivating factor for investment in this agro-ecotourism. The researchers searched for a suitable model for developing agro-ecotourism competitiveness by considering the existence of community culture and the consistency of learning resources and traveling.

The researchers have collected secondary data that serve as a basis for connecting important concepts in order to achieve the research objectives by focusing on the following concepts of agro-ecotourism.

Agro-ecotourism is like agricultural tourism and ecotourism in many aspects with concepts, objectives, meaning, types, components, format, and advantages. The agro-tourism concept is the expansion of the agro-ecotourism concept that provides activities for tourists to directly gain agricultural experience as well as to focus community or local people engagement in order to benefit from sustainable tourism development. Tourists have the opportunities to experience nature in rural areas and working in garden, farm, or fishing in the river or sea as agricultural occupation. Agro-tourism is similar to rural tourism, which is a part of eco-tourism, developed from the concept of sustainable tourism focusing environmental and ecological protection in order to cause the least impact on tourist attractions. Agro-tourism offers the opportunity for tourists to experience rural nature, especially in the agricultural area where tourists can engage in agricultural activities that create fun in the learning process through various methods that encourages tourists to be more conscious of conservation and awareness of the importance of nature and culture of local society resulting in creating sustainable tourism (Isichaikul, 2016)

The aims of agro-ecotourism management (Isichaikul & Chansawang, 2015) are as follows: (1) to increase agricultural tourists' satisfaction. This aim is to create motivation and stimulate tourists to travel; (2) to increase income and develop local economic conditions. This aim is that good planning and management of agricultural tourism attractions will be able to attract tourists to visit the tourist attractions at all times, creating additional income for farmers and also help create jobs and occupations for local people and households both occupations that are directly related to tourism or occupations that are indirectly related to the distribution of income in the local area, resulting in better living conditions and quality of life for local people; (3) to prevent damage that may occur to the local environment. This aim is to plan in which lack of planning and developing tourist attractions as well as consuming limited resources without restrictions will result in negative impacts to tourist area and resources of tourist attractions such as water sources, forests, climate, and ground conditions. Therefore, planning the development of tourist attractions will help prevent negative impacts that will occur on the environment, limiting the use of resources will also help develop the economic system of tourist attractions; (4) to connect tourism and community as one. This aim is the engagement of people in development planning and agro-tourism management, including sharing opinions and participating in the implementation resulting in smooth and efficient tourism development; and (5) to be a part of enhancing the local community's main occupation as well as helping to create the knowledge exchange process. This aim will provide alternatives for local people to pursue a second occupation in addition to the main occupation. It will help people to gain income and have better living conditions and quality of life. It also helps agriculturists to exchange knowledge with each other and adapt to develop the existing agricultural tourism attractions for the better.

Obviously, agro-ecotourism as a learning resource was spreading throughout Thailand and overseas, therefore, the competitive environment was the main factor. Creating better competitive advantage had to consider the differentiation in 3 areas, which were cost leadership, differentiate building, and niche marketing (Porter, 1990). To manage a more competitive advantage to survive, it must be above all competitors. It means creating valuable product to serve customers better than competitors which comprised of 4 components as follows: (1) cost competitiveness, as the advancement of technology is growing fast and easy to access the sources of information, it is not difficult for the customer to verify the product information before making decisions to buy the product or use the service. Therefore, the business that provides goods or services with low cost

has a competitive advantage. Consequently, the price of agro-ecotourism as a learning resource is lower than other tourism because its existing resource has low cost; (2) quality, as the customers' demand for goods and services of high quality is increasing, quality control is important to satisfy the customers' needs. Therefore, the administration of agro-ecotourism as a learning resource must have the mechanism of standard control which comes from the cooperation and support of government sectors and education institutions in identifying the format of an appropriate mechanism for tourist attractions; (3) innovation is about creating a new thing, not only new products or services but also a new working process. The innovation influences the capabilities of the competitiveness and makes the differentiation because the agro-ecotourism as a learning resource is tourism characteristic based on community culture of daily living and occupations. This point might make the community collaborate to think of value-added products or services and maintain the community culture value. This is the competitive advantage of the particular learning resource; and (4) speed, in addition to the price and quality, other customers' needs are the speed of new products' creation, speed of marketing launch, and speed of serving customer satisfaction. These speeds are the competitive advantages (Chomphukham, 2009).
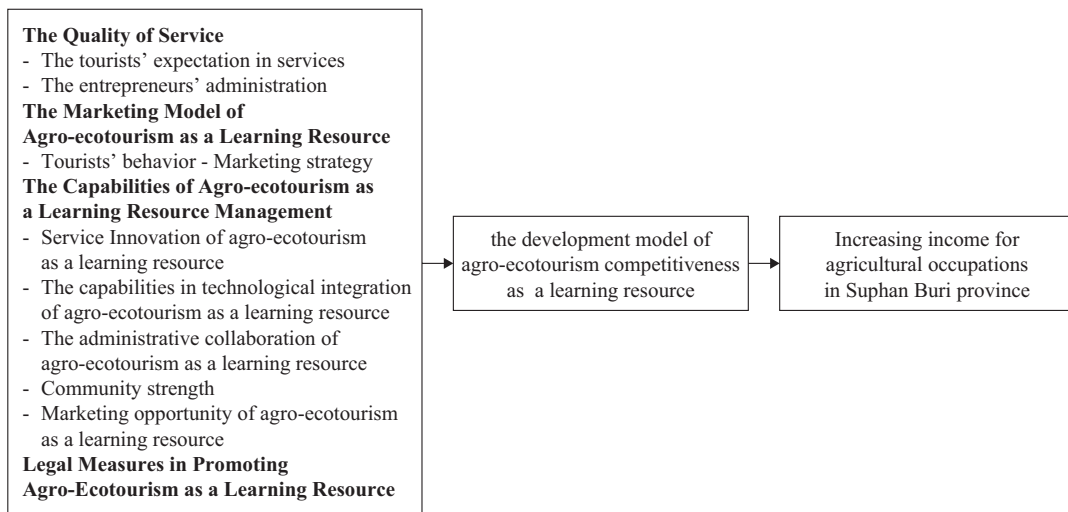
Research Framework

Research framework of the development model of agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province comprises of details shown in Figure 1 below.

Methodology

This research applied mixed-methods research that uses both qualitative research and quantitative research methods. Research methodology was conducted as follows.

Quantitative Research

Quantitative research involves collecting data from population and samples consisting of (1) people involved in the agro-ecotourism business in the area; (2) people in the agro-ecotourism area; and (3) tourists or people interested in agro-ecotourism, a total of 400 people, as details in Table 1.

Figure 1 Conceptual framework of the development model of agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province

Table 1 Number of informants groups for quantitative research

Informants Groups	Number (people)
1. People involved in the agro-ecotourism business in the area	100
2. People in the agro-ecotourism area	100
3. Tourists or people interested in agro-ecotourism	150
4. Experts and people involved in legality of promoting agro-ecotourism	50
Total	400

Research instruments were questionnaires with multiple-choice questions regarding the demands and expectations about ways to develop agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province. There were rating scale questions and open-ended questions for expressing opinions. The questionnaires comprised of 4 parts which were as follows.

Part 1 General information of informants (2 checklist questions)

Part 2 Service satisfaction from agro-ecotourism as a learning resource (19 rating scale questions)

Part 3 Suggestions for developing agro-ecotourism as a learning resource (1 checklist question)

Part 4 Other recommendations (2 open-ended questions)

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research will collect data from key informants by interviewing, consisting of (1) representatives of agro-ecotourism entrepreneur, (2) representatives of officials involved in promoting agro-ecotourism, (3) representatives of people in communities involved in promoting agro-ecotourism, (4) tourists or people interested in agro-ecotourism, and (5) representatives of experts and people involved in legality of promoting agro-ecotourism, totally 50 people as details in Table 2.

Such will collect information on opinions regarding the potential development model for agro-ecotourism in the form of a learning resource to increase income for the agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province and create a plan to develop the potential of business entrepreneurs to compete in the field of agro-ecotourism as a learning resource to increase income for the agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province.

Methodology

Quantitative Research

1. Research instrument used in collecting data was the questionnaire with rating scales and open-ended questions.

In order to create the questionnaire, the researchers studied the concept and theories from various documents, research papers, and questionnaire samples relevant to agro-ecotourism and community components. This questionnaire was used to collect data from 4 different informant groups, comprised of 4 parts as follows:

Part 1 Personal Data (2 check list questions)

Part 2 Service satisfaction from agro-ecotourism as a learning resource (19 rating scale questions)

Part 3 Suggestions for developing agro-ecotourism as a learning resource (1 checklist question)

Part 4 Other recommendations (2 open-ended questions)

2. For the validation of instruments, the researchers presented the questionnaires to 3 experts and the research ethics committee for content validity to assure that they answered the research objective. It was found that the reliability of Index of item objective congruence (IOC) was 0.86. Then, the researchers adjusted the questionnaire to be correct, appropriate, and effective. Finally, the researchers tried out the questionnaire for validity and reliability to use for collecting data with sample groups.

3. For quantitative research, the researchers analyzed data by using descriptive statistics which were means, and percentage.

Qualitative Research

1. Research instrument used in collecting data was the in-depth interview and focus group interviews. The questions in the interview came from studying documents regarding agro-ecotourism and other relevant research papers. The interview used to collect data from all five informant groups comprised of 4 parts as follows:

Part 1 Personal Data (4 questions)

Part 2 Opinion regarding the development model of agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province (2 questions)

Part 3 Arranging the development plan for agro-ecotourism entrepreneur competitiveness as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province (3 questions)

Table 2 Number of informants groups for qualitative research

Informants Groups	Number (people)
1. Representatives of agro-ecotourism entrepreneur	10
2. Representatives of officials involved in promoting agro-ecotourism	10
3. Representatives of people in communities involved in promoting agro-ecotourism	10
4. Tourists or people interested in agro-ecotourism	10
5. Representatives of experts and people involved in legality of promoting agro-ecotourism	10
Total	50

Part 4 Other opinions regarding the development model of agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province (4 questions)

2. For the validation of instruments, the researchers presented the interview questions to the experts and the research ethics committee to validate the content appropriateness and language used, including trying out the interview form to rehearse and adjust the interview questions before using it.

3. For qualitative research, content analysis was used to analyze data in color coding system.

Results

From the research framework, the researchers studied the main factors from both quantitative research and qualitative research to identify the development model of agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province to cover 4 concepts as shown in a diagram in Figure 2 with details as follows.

Results from Quantitative Research

Regarding the quantitative research, the questionnaire was distributed to sample group who were people involved in the agro-ecotourism business in the area, people in the agro-ecotourism area, and tourists or people interested in agro-ecotourism. The data in Table 3 showed that the respondents were satisfied with the services they received from agro-ecotourism as a learning resource overall at the highest level of satisfaction with an average of 4.24 (84.80%). When considering each aspect, the respondents were satisfied the most with activities received from agro-ecotourism and sustainability of agro-ecotourism at the average of 4.37 (87.40%). However, the respondents had the least satisfaction in the aspect of characteristics of agro-ecotourism attractions with an average of 4.00 (80.00%).

Figure 2 Factors involved in the development model of agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province

Table 3 Overview of scores and percentages of satisfaction scores regarding services received from agro-ecotourism as a learning resource.

Topics		People involved in the agro-ecotourism business in the area	People in the agro-ecotourism area	Tourists or people interested in agro-ecotourism	Overall
1. Characteristics of agro-ecotourism attractions	M	4.24	3.68	4.08	4.00
	Percentage (%)	84.80	73.60	81.60	80.00
2. Activities received from agro-ecotourism	M	4.55	4.28	4.28	4.37
	Percentage (%)	91.00	85.60	85.60	87.40
3. Management of agro-ecotourism attractions	M	4.47	4.16	4.25	4.29
	Percentage (%)	89.40	83.20	85.00	85.80
4. Marketing and Public Relations	M	4.43	3.96	4.04	4.14
	Percentage (%)	88.60	79.20	80.80	82.80
5. Sustainability of agro-ecotourism	M	4.52	4.31	4.29	4.37
	Percentage (%)	90.40	86.20	85.80	87.40
Overall	M	4.44	4.08	4.19	4.24
	Percentage (%)	88.80	81.60	83.80	84.80

When classified by people involved in the agricultural ecotourism business in the area, overall satisfaction was at the highest level with an average of 4.44 (88.80%). Considering each aspect, it was found that every aspect was at the highest level of satisfaction ranking in descending order as follows: (1) activities received from agro-ecotourism with an average of 4.55 (91.00%), sustainability of agro-ecotourism with an average of 4.52 (90.40%), management of agro-ecotourism attractions with an average of 4.47 (89.40%), marketing and public relations with an average of 4.43 (88.60%), and characteristics of agro-ecotourism attractions with an average of 4.24 (84.80%).

When classified by people in the agro-ecotourism area, the overall satisfaction was at a high level with an average of 4.08 (81.60%). When considering each aspect, it was found that (2) sustainability of agro-ecotourism has the highest average at 4.31 (86.20%), followed by activities received from agro-ecotourism with an average of 4.28 (85.60%), management of agro-ecotourism attractions with an average of 4.16 (83.20%), marketing and public relations with an average of 3.96 (79.20%), and characteristics of agro-ecotourism attractions with an average of 3.68 (73.60%).

When classified by tourists or people interested in agro-ecotourism, overall satisfaction was at a high level with an average of 4.19 (83.80%). When considering each aspect, it was found that (3) sustainability of agro-ecotourism has the highest average at 4.29 (85.80%), followed by activities received from agro-ecotourism with an average of 4.28 (85.60%), management of agro-ecotourism attractions with an average of 4.25 (85.00%), characteristics of agro-ecotourism attractions with an average of 4.08 (81.60%), followed by marketing and public relations with an average of 4.04 (80.80%).
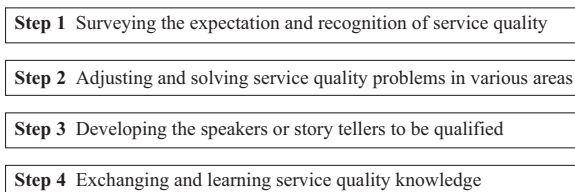
In summary, it was found that the service of agro-ecotourism as a learning resource should be improved in the aspects of characteristics of agro-ecotourism attractions. In addition, the marketing and public relations of agro-ecotourism attraction were also renewed. Tourists were satisfied the least with this aspect.

Results from Qualitative Research

The quality of the service

In order to upgrade the service quality of agro-ecotourism, the results from both quantitative and qualitative research methods also confirmed that the development process of service quality for entrepreneurs and employees in agro-ecotourism as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province comprised of 4 steps as follows in Figure 3.

Step 1	Surveying the expectation and recognition of service quality
Step 2	Adjusting and solving service quality problems in various areas
Step 3	Developing the speakers or story tellers to be qualified
Step 4	Exchanging and learning service quality knowledge

Figure 3 Steps for upgrading the service quality of agro-ecotourism as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province

Step 1 surveying the expectation and recognition of service quality

Step 2 adjusting and solving service quality problems in various areas, especially in characteristics of agro-ecotourism venues and marketing and public relations of agro-ecotourists attractions.
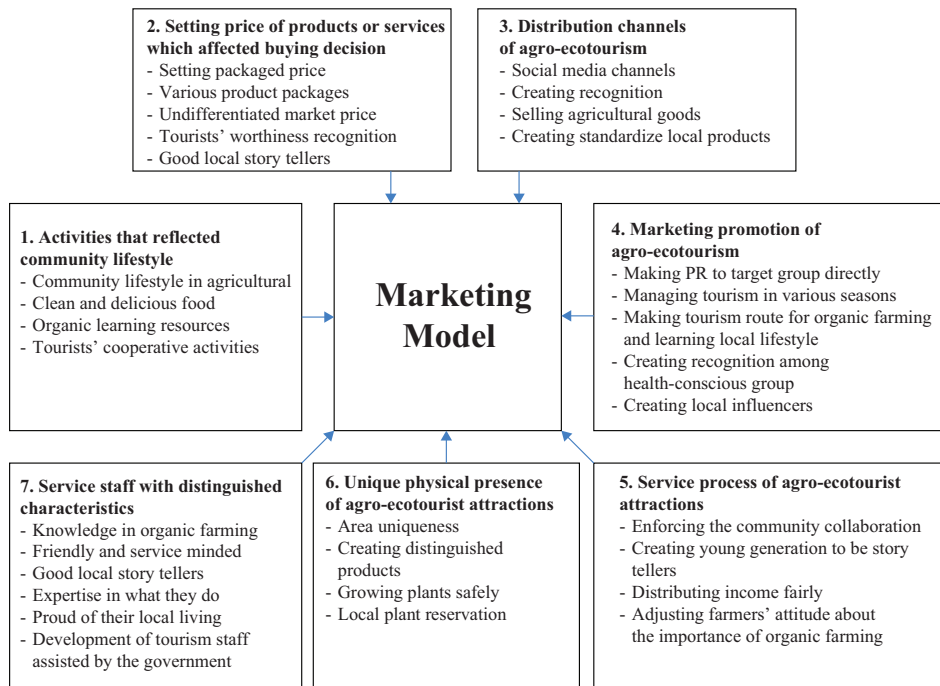
Step 3 developing the speakers or story tellers to be qualified to maintain the sustainability of agro-ecotourism.

Step 4 exchanging and learning service quality knowledge among people in the community, government sectors, universities, and other relevant sectors.

It was also found that learning resources applied technology into their activities. For example, they used Google Form as a tool to survey tourists' opinions. Applying technology was the strategy of increasing service effectiveness which enhanced quality level of local learning resources to increase tourists' satisfaction.

Marketing model of agro-ecotourism as a learning resource

The study showed that the marketing model of agro-ecotourism to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province should consider factors to specify an appropriate marketing strategy, which can be divided into 7 aspects as follows in Figure 4: (1) Activities that reflected community lifestyle, (2) Setting price of products or services which affected buying decision, (3) Distribution channels of agro-ecotourism, (4) Marketing promotion of agro-ecotourist, (5) Service process of agro-ecotourist attractions, (6) Unique physical presence of agro-ecotourist attractions, and (7) Service staff with distinguished characteristics.

2. Setting price of products or services which affected buying decision
- Setting packaged price
- Various product packages
- Undifferentiated market price
- Tourists' worthiness recognition
- Good local story tellers

3. Distribution channels of agro-ecotourism
- Social media channels
- Creating recognition
- Selling agricultural goods
- Creating standardize local products

1. Activities that reflected community lifestyle
- Community lifestyle in agricultural
- Clean and delicious food
- Organic learning resources
- Tourists' cooperative activities

Marketing Model

4. Marketing promotion of agro-ecotourism
- Making PR to target group directly
- Managing tourism in various seasons
- Making tourism route for organic farming and learning local lifestyle
- Creating recognition among health-conscious group
- Creating local influencers

7. Service staff with distinguished characteristics
- Knowledge in organic farming
- Friendly and service minded
- Good local story tellers
- Expertise in what they do
- Proud of their local living
- Development of tourism staff assisted by the government

6. Unique physical presence of agro-ecotourist attractions
- Area uniqueness
- Creating distinguished products
- Growing plants safely
- Local plant reservation

5. Service process of agro-ecotourist attractions
- Enforcing the community collaboration
- Creating young generation to be story tellers
- Distributing income fairly
- Adjusting farmers' attitude about the importance of organic farming

Figure 4 Marketing model of agro-ecotourism as a learning resource

Management Capabilities of Agro-ecotourism as a Learning Resource

The studies showed that the driving mechanism to upgrade the management capabilities of agro-ecotourism as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupation in Suphan Buri province comprised of three main steps in Figure 5 as follows.

Step 1 Implementing sufficiency economy agriculture with operations as follows: (1) farmers carried out household agriculture for self-reliance, (2) farmers formed groups in the area for self-reliance, and (3) created added value for agricultural products and find cooperation in product development.

Step 2 Developing added value of agricultural products in collaboration with universities, government agencies, and private agencies with operations as follows: (1) universities/government agencies and the private sector cooperate academically in bringing knowledge to help agriculturists in the area in developing and increasing the value of agricultural products; (2) analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) for the development of adding value to products from the community by (2.1) finding/developing problems from the needs to solve community problems, (2.2) setting plans and time periods to achieve the objectives of operational plan, and (2.3) data analysis

summarize the results of the findings to answer the needs of the community, develop products/services with the community; and (3) cooperation in product development whether it is knowledge, business concept, product/ packaging design development, marketing management and digital marketing, production management and support, service quality, and improving and developing community businesses towards sustainability.

Step 3 Upgrading to increase income for agricultural occupation with operations as follows; upgrade to become a smart farmer, apply management concept in agriculture together with digital marketing and production innovation, and develop farmers to be new generation agriculture entrepreneurs by choosing to focus on agricultural entrepreneurs who are in international level or who can take care of themselves sustainably.

Developing Legal Measures to Promote Agro-ecotourism as A Learning Resource to Increase Income for The Agricultural Occupation in Suphan Buri province

The studies showed that the development model of agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province should improve legal measures in various issues as follows: (1) There should be listening to the opinions of people in the community in order to create

standardized laws that can be strictly enforced with clear penalties under the same law; (2) There should be public relations for the community, to make the community aware of the importance of legal measures to promote agro-ecotourism and promote safety of tourist attractions; (3) There should be a law to cover the qualifications of tour guides to prevent infiltration of scammers who disguise themselves as tour guides to commit theft or illegally committing actions against tourists; (4) Provincial Administrative Organization should provide personnel with expertise in local laws for the benefit of administering local ordinances; (5) Provincial Administrative Organization should cooperate with educational institutions to communicate with those who have local expertise in specific issues of tourism law; and (6) The potential of officials at the local level who are already performing their duties should be increased by providing training on the topic of tourism promotion in the context of those tourist attractions.

The researchers synthesized all results and findings above and found that the development model of agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province should cover additional issues which were:

1. Be able to use the valuable local resource which is the major factor in an agro-ecotourism business.

2. Be able to pass on and share the knowledge to each other by emphasizing group activities, which encourage people to naturally share their thoughts and knowledge.

3. Create a tourism pattern that includes community area sightseeing. Tourists would be able to experience the agricultural resources and the agriculturists' way of life. In addition, there would be an area to sell local products and demonstrate the process of making products as a learning resource of the community.

4. Create the guideline of knowledge sharing for organic agriculture, which prioritizes people' health, community and environment. Also, the effective system of independent marketing and management, establishing the network between communities, morality model in community and environment preservation should be included.

5. Be able to connect between the community and state agencies related to the development of agricultural processes.

6. Upgrading to be an agricultural learning resource for relevant people.

7. Establishing the identity of a specific learning resource by emphasizing participation, which every department has to participate in and support on sharing the correct agricultural knowledge to both agriculturists and tourists. Agriculturists have to participate in organic agriculture to support and conserve local culture. Making the agricultural products to be the selling point.

8. Create the traveling path to be as clear as possible, especially traveling policies. In addition, create the full services of agro-ecotourism including the process of production, the learning resources and selling local products to tourists. Also, be able to access agricultural resources or emphasize on organic agriculture information in the community, which presents local knowledge to increase income for the community. Managing relaxing corner, food and beverage services with staff who are responsible for those areas to develop agro-ecotourism continuously.

9. Create various traveling programs to support all of the services. Starting from the source of production, learning resources, selling products area such as the circle of production for water chestnut in Wangyang district.

10. Ecology management has to be well prepared, including collecting data of local acknowledgement because sometimes farmers do not know how to sell their own agricultural products properly.

11. The whole community has to be acknowledged and participated in. Therefore, the community could share profits, which would be the additional income. We have to perceive that the profit from tourism is the minor income for the community.

12. Well-prepared for the community such as creating the management plan in Ecology pattern, marketing plan and plans that are set according to the demand of the community.

13. Meet the demand of BCG, which emphasizes environmentally friendly tourism that could be presented about using resources efficiently.

14. Support local community area tourism, organic agriculture and assemble the groups of communities to co-manage the projects.

15. Create various training programs for agriculturists to increase income by using appropriate technologies for each activity.

16. Manage agricultural products processing by using technology and create selling points in the future to support agriculturists to use online delivery.

17. Support and develop the quality of local products in the community. Food processing would be the solution for fresh agricultural products that could not be sold. This method assists agriculturists with this specific issue and increases income.

18. The learning resources have to be pleasant and convenient for tourists, but they should be located in safe community areas. Agriculturists should work in their household area.

19. Identify the selling point of each tourism area. All of them should have interesting stories and activities in the agricultural area. For instance, the safest natural food resource for people's health could be used as the selling point. Making the environment and landscape to be more pleasant while the community should still preserve their own culture. Choosing a vegetable or fruit to be a symbol for the community and developing food processing to create the iconic product of the community to increase income in the community.

20. Share agricultural knowledge to tourists and establish a natural learning center in the tourist area. Manage to have essential documents for learning and put more signs with information at tourist points. Create learning-travel paths and guide training programs to assist tourists with more information about agriculture.

Discussion

The development model of agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province is significant in strengthening the community and leads to finding guidelines of improving and developing model for agro-ecotourism competitiveness in the future. Therefore, the strategies are the primary factor that leads to permanent strength of the community, especially the communities that manage agro-ecotourism. As agro-ecotourism is about the tourism derived from the concept of agricultural activities through the community collaboration, the environmental factors are considered with various components for assigning the strategy of tourism development, such as resources, marketing, service, and tourist attractions. Relevant to the research by (Isichaikul & Chansawang, 2015), they confirmed that developing agro-ecotourism smoothly and effectively has to connect people in the community with tourism. In addition, increasing tourists' satisfaction is the key motivation that encourages tourists in agro-ecotourism. The researchers found the importance and benefit of agro-ecotourism as a learning resource which was worth creating development strategy of agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupations. This could help farmers gain income and improve the local economy and prevent all damage that could happen to the local environment, which is related to UNWTO (2015), which mentioned that the benefit of agro-ecotourism could promote agricultural activities by facilitating the productions and selling the local products in the tourism area. (UNWTO, 2015).

Similar to Wolfe and Bullen (2009), they also described the advantages of agro-ecotourism in that it created opportunities in increasing income and new business for next generations from existing resources. This could be the learning resource for anyone interested in agriculture, local products or even historical and modern agriculture knowledge.

Furthermore, the research results showed that the key factor of service quality is exchanging and learning service quality knowledge among people in the community, government sectors, universities, and other relevant sectors. This is relevant to the research study by Piyaphong Khetpradit (Khetpradit et. al., 2018) who explained the purpose of agro-ecotourism is to promote unique nature or agriculture tourism in each community, get tourists to experience the ecosystem and create cultural tourism areas while cultivating people to sustainably retain the ecosystem. Creating the identity by sharing and exchanging knowledge among entrepreneurs from different communities created the connection between entrepreneurs to develop agricultural activities. Therefore, the main agro-ecotourism uniqueness is the collaboration process in order to satisfy tourists' needs.

In addition, the research by Thaemngoen (2015) also supported the marketing model of agro-ecotourism to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province in the factor of 7Ps strategy. As Thaemngoen (2015) studied the model of marketing development of health tourism, spa business case study in Nakhon Ratchasima province, they found that the 8ps business strategy should be promoted for entrepreneurs because it created the differentiation by elaborating the local uniqueness, and studying customers' behaviors in order to satisfy the tourists' needs increasingly. Furthermore, a collaboration process that focused on brainstorming and exchanging ideas among relevant groups of people could connect the related organization to enhance knowledge and new development options.

All these research studies supported the indicator of business potential management for agricultural tourism, based on the capabilities of planning, controlling, monitoring, and managing tourist attractions to be able to maintain sustainably. The important factors that are relevant to these research findings were the community acceptance and collaboration, community enterprise participation, uniqueness and culture reservation, income earning in the community, and the government and private support. These also led to marketing promotion, product value adding, agricultural produce development, and enhancing the product standard to international level in order to increase consumption motivation for tourists and

visitors. This was also relevant to the capability indicators of agricultural tourism in the basic service readiness appropriately and tourist attractions environment in the points of local serviced staff.

The community and local people had to be well-prepared in welcoming tourists whether it was high or low seasonal tourism and conveying unique agriculturists' way of life to motivate and impress tourists.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, the development model of agro-ecotourism competitiveness as a learning resource to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province, especially in 5 communities which were (1) Dong Yen Agroforestry Enterprise Group, U-Thong district, (2) Hom Khachorn Farm, Khon Ko Tao, Muang district, Suphan Buri province, (3) Thai Farmers Lifestyle and Spiritual Learning Center (Na Here Chai), Muang district, Suphan Buri province, (4) Suan Kluai U-Thong Community Enterprise Group, U-Thong district, and (5) Thungthong-Yangyeun Community Enterprise Group, U-Thong district should consider these five issues as follows: (1) Agro-ecotourism as the learning resources should be developed to increase income for agricultural occupations in Suphan Buri province by promoting tourism throughout the year, creating various activities, and developing new various agricultural technologies to be suitable to the entrepreneurs. Landscapes should be adjusted or renovated in some areas as check-in points to appeal to more teenage tourists. In addition, building a main distribution center (Farm Shop) that sells unique souvenirs from every community in U-Thong district for tourists to conveniently visit and purchase from. This would draw attractions and save tourists' time from stopping by at every community; (2) Entrepreneurs, which engage in the agro-ecotourism business as the learning resources, should develop more necessary skills continuously in order to increase income for agriculturists in Suphan Buri province by the collaboration between the community and government, especially in the way of preservation and maintenance. There should be cooperation between the Department of Provincial Administration and the Department of Tourism; (3) Agro-ecotourism as the learning resources should be developed to meet the global standard and connected to the ASEAN network as a business partner not a competitor; (4) Landscapes should be renovated beautifully and well-managed to be ready to provide full services to tourists. Basic facilities such as lampposts, public roads and guideposts should be arranged and renewed by the government in the tourism area to allow tourists to travel conveniently; and (5) Agricultural products processing should be developed in various kinds such as dehydration, pickling and compote, especially seasonal products so the tourists can purchase such in every season. The unique souvenirs or products should be properly improved by the cooperation between the state agencies and community to create them as the symbol of the community.

For the recommendations from this study, it was revealed that; (1) the participatory action research should be conducted so the researchers, entrepreneur, and related official staff can improve their work together to gain the development of agro-ecotourism sustainably; (2) the research should be conducted by applying agro-ecotourism quality standard to assess the agro-ecotourism attractions. This can be shared among farmers in the community to recognize the framework or the quality standard measurement as a guideline to develop existing tourist attractions; (3) the researchers should continue to follow up the agro-ecotourism assessment as a learning resource in Suphan Buri province; (4) the researchers should study the carrying capacity (CC) of tourism community in order to prevent the problem of over carrying capacity (CC) of tourists; and (5) the researchers should arrange brainstorming of related participants such as local government sectors, researchers, and private sectors who gain advantages from promoting tourism in the area. They should also collect data from the official staff who work related to agro-ecotourism business. This information can be used for arranging tourist activities and creative tourism in the community and improve the administrative system to be more effective and successful.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Fundings

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