

AGRITOURIST TRAVEL MOTIVATION AND BEHAVIOR: A CASE STUDY OF ASEAN+6 TOURISTS VISITING THAILAND

Dr. Ranee Esichaikul* and Dr. Rochaporn Chansawang**

*Ranee Esichaikul, Associate Professor, School of Management Science, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Nonthaburi, Thailand,

E-mail Address: ranee.esi@stou.ac.th; esichai@gmail.com

**Rochaporn Chansawang, Assistant Professor, School of Management Science, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Nonthaburi, Thailand,

E-mail Address: rochaporn.cha@stou.ac.th; chansawangr@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The purposes of this research were (1) to examine agritourist travel motivation and behavior of ASEAN+6 tourists visiting Thailand; and (2) to propose development policies of agritourism of Thailand for ASEAN+6 tourists. Population were agritourists including Thai and ASEAN+6 tourists visiting Thailand. A self-administered questionnaire in three languages was collected from 433 agritourists from ASEAN+6 countries visiting Thailand. Statistical tools for descriptive and inferential analysis were employed including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and exploratory factor analysis. Research findings of travel behavior showed that the travel purpose of the majority of respondents were to visit agritourist attractions (72.75%). 32.33% of respondents had traveled for 4-5 days in Thailand and 49.88% had spent 1-3 days in agritourist attractions. 57.97% of the respondents arranged their own trips independently while 12.70% travelled with study tour. 34.87%, 21.02%, 13.86% and 12.02% traveled with friends, family, spouse, and travel alone respectively. Most of them (34.87%) preferred to stay in homestays, whereas 24% and 13.16% stayed in budget hotels and farm stays respectively. They traveled in private cars (39.03%), tour coaches (22.40%) and rental vans (21.25%). They preferred to visit flower/fruit demonstration farms and flower/fruit/herbal gardens the most. Their major reason to visit agritourism attractions was the beautiful nature and fruit/flower gardens. The results of the factor analysis showed that two dimensions of motivation among these agritourists included “agricultural experiences and skills” and “rest and relaxation”. Development policies of agritourism of Thailand for ASEAN+6 tourists include potential development of tourist services policy, and activity development for agritourist policy.

Keywords: Agritourist, Travel Motivation and Behavior, ASEAN+6 Tourists

INTRODUCTION

Tourism in Thailand has witnessed constant growth during last decade. In 2015, international tourism arrivals reached 29.9 million, representing a growth of 20.44%, and international tourism receipts reached US\$ 21.4 million during January-June 2015 (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2016). Being part of ASEAN Economic Community as a single economic community in 2015, ASEAN international tourist arrivals including Thailand became 107 million, representing a growth of 7-8% (ASEAN Economic Community, 2016). This creates tremendous tourism opportunities and competitiveness for Thailand by encouraging alternative tourism for international tourists.

Agritourism has been developed in Thailand because of its beautiful nature, a variety of agricultural products and rich agricultural ways of life. Agritourism was promoted as a tool for the augmentation of farming and rural areas as it can contribute to diversification of economic activities, additional income for farmers and employment of people in the rural areas (Koutsouris et al, 2014). Besides, agritourism was claimed to increase

farm revenues and enhance the quality of farmers (McGehee & Kim, 2004; Fleischer & Tchetchik, 2005; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Tew & Barbieri, 2012).

For agritourism to be successful, ongoing information about market behavior and demand is crucial. Despite the growing body of agritourism research, the literature remains limited regarding motivation and behavior of agritourists. The aim of this study is to examine agritourist travel motivation and behavior of ASEAN+6 tourists visiting Thailand; and (2) to propose development policies of agritourism of Thailand for ASEAN+6 tourists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Agritourism is a form of sustainable tourism development and multi-activity offered by farmers and agritourism enterprises in rural areas. Labels such as agrotourism, farm-based tourism, and rural tourism are often used interchangeably with agritourism and each other (Sharpley, 2002; Sharpley & Vass, 2006; Marques, 2006; Yang et al, 2010) but some have been used explicitly to denote similar but distinct concepts (Fleischer & Tchetchik, 2005; Philip et al (2010). Comprehensive literature examination by Philip et al (2010) reveals several labels and definitions for agritourism based on a variety of characteristics. They proposed agritourism typology by identifying key characteristics of agritourism in a working farm, contact with agricultural activity and authenticity of tourist agricultural experiences.

For the purpose of consistency, the term 'agritourism' will be used throughout this study to refer to the range of related labels, concepts, and products discussed in the literature as a whole. Agritourism is thus described in this study as a combination of agricultural tourism and products that encourages short or long-term visitors to farms or rural areas for the purpose of relaxation, enjoyment, education, and/or involvement in the activities of agricultural production and farming life.

RELATED WORK

Travel motivation relates to why people travel (Hsu and Huang 2008). Motivations for travel cover a broad range of human behavior and human experiences. There are several related studies that help understanding of travel motivations. Lundberg (1971) published one of the earliest studies on what motivates people to travel. Another earlier investigation of motivation for travel contributes to an understanding of tourism as a social and psychological phenomenon (Cohen, 1974). Crompton (1979) later identified nine motivations on the basis of in-depth interviews. Other researchers, such as Iso-Ahola (1982) investigated motivation in terms of seeking escape. Pearce and Lee (2005) concluded that a central travel motivation factors for most travelers include escape, relaxation, relationship enhancement, and self-development. However, there is generally a motivation for each travelling pattern since it guides activities of individual (Lee & Chen, 2005). For example, rural tourists in European countries tended to be attracted by a peaceful atmosphere and nostalgia for old ways of life as evidenced by studies of Kastenholz et al (1999) in Portugal and Frochot (2005) in Scotland. Korean rural tourists are more likely to be interested in the role of agriculture and its associated culture, such as the agricultural experience and rural life (Park & Yoon, 2009). In addition, agritourist motivations of Thai tourists were categorized into three groups namely 'agricultural experiences, 'quality of life, relationship, and adventure', and 'relaxations' (Srikatanyoo, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

Population were Thai and ASEAN+6 agritourists travelling in Thailand from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea and New Zealand. A self-administered questionnaire in three languages was used to collect data by simple random sampling method. The samples were 433 agritourists from ASEAN+6 countries travelled in Thailand. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: profiles of respondents, travel behavior and trip characteristics, and travel motivations. The questionnaires have been collected in major agritourist destinations in five regions in Thailand including Chiangmai and Chiangrai in the North Region, Rayong and Chantaburi in the East Region, Nakornsathasima in the Northeast Region, Kanchanaburi in the West Region and Krabi, Phangnga and Phuket in the South Region during December 2013 and March 2014. Statistical tools for descriptive and

inferential analysis were employed including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and exploratory factor analysis.

RESULTS

Profile of Responding Agritourists

The result showed that the demographic characteristics of more than half of the respondents (55.89%) were female. 29.79% of respondents were between 21-30 years old, 48.04% were married and 49.85% had a bachelor degree. Almost one-third (27.71%) of respondents worked as employees in the public sector while 24.25% were employees in the private sector. About one-fourth (24.25%) earned the monthly income of 9,000-18,000 baht. Most respondents were Thai (65.12%) while the rest (34.88%) were ASEAN+6 (Chinese, Myanmar, Indonesian, Vietnamese, Filipino, Australian, Laotian, Cambodian, Malaysian, Japanese, and Brunei respectively).

Agritourist Travel Behavior

Research findings of travel behavior showed that the travel purpose of the majority of respondents were to visit agritourist attractions (72.75%). One-third of the respondents (32.33%) had traveled for 4-5 days in Thailand and 49.88% had spent 1-3 days in agritourist attractions. More than half of the respondents (57.97%) arranged their own trips independently while 12.70% travelled with study tour. 34.87%, 21.02%, 13.86% and 12.02% traveled with friends, family, spouse, and travel alone respectively. More than one-third of them (34.87%) preferred to stay in homestays whereas 24% and 13.16% stayed in budget hotels and farm stays respectively. They traveled in private cars (39.03%), tour coaches (22.40%) and rental vans (21.25%). They preferred to visit flower/fruit demonstration farms and flower/fruit/herbal gardens the most, followed by picking up fruits, buying some organic products, and staying with farmers in homestays or farm stays. Their major reason to visit agritourism attractions was to experience the beautiful nature, fruit/flower gardens, local agricultural culture, agricultural products, as well as local cuisine. The major source of information motivating the respondents to travel to agritourism attractions was friends and family, followed by internet, media, travel books, travel agents and Thailand tourism offices respectively. For agritourism attractions, besides Thailand, most respondents would like to visit Vietnam, Singapore, Laos PDR, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Philippines and Brunei respectively. 97.35 of the total respondents will revisit Thailand, of which 39.07 will revisit Thailand next year.

Agritourist Travel Motivation

From the findings of motivation factors, most respondents travelled to agritourism attractions “to rest and relaxation” the most, followed by “to discover new places and new things”, “to learn and experience new things” respectively, as mean and standard deviation is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Agritourist Travel Motivation (N=433)

Agritourist Travel Motivation	Mean	S.D.
1. To rest and relaxation	4.23	0.79
2. To discover new places and things	4.20	0.82
3. To learn and experience new things	4.18	0.81
4. To get away from stress	4.10	0.79
5. To be together with family	3.95	1.01
6. To improve health and well-being	3.89	0.85
7. To be in an agricultural environment	3.76	0.88
8. To experience agricultural life	3.74	0.96
9. To escape from day-by-day activities	3.65	0.84
10. To improve agricultural skills	3.63	1.01
11. To meet people with similar interest	3.52	0.95

12. To exercise physically	3.51	0.92
----------------------------	------	------

This study employs factor analysis. Factor analysis is used to derive the underlying construct of motivation dimensions. Twelve motivation factors were used to analyze each factor for agritourists, using the maximum likelihood method with a varimax rotation procedure to derive some of the motivation factors. The eigenvalue of each factor was greater than one and only those items where the factor loading was greater than 0.4 have been used for each factor. Cronbach's alpha was applied to test the reliability of each factor so that only factors with alphas of greater than 0.6 could be employed. Factor 1 exhibited most of the variance (38.150) with a reliability coefficient of 0.733 in the data. This factor incorporated five items of motivation (experience agricultural life, meet people with similar interest, improve agricultural skills, be in an agricultural environment, and exercise physically). The relatively large proportion of the total variance for this factor leads us to conclude that among agritourists, experiences and agricultural skills represents a central motivational theme. This factor is best described as *agricultural experiences and skills*. Factor 2 focused on escape and relaxation components of motivation. This factor accounted for 16.07% of the variance with a reliability coefficient of 0.634 in the data. This factor incorporated three items of motivation (get away from stress, rest and relaxation, and escape from day-by-day activities). This factor rather reflects an intrinsic element is best identified as *rest and relaxation*. In conclusion, the results of the factor analysis showed that two dimensions of motivation among these agritourists included "agricultural experiences and skills" "rest and relaxation" Table 2 shows factor analysis of travel motivation items of agritourists.

Table 2. Factor Analysis of Travel Motivation Items of Agritourists

Factors	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained (%)	Reliability Alpha
Agricultural experiences and skills		4.578	38.150	0.733
Experience agricultural life	0.835			
Meet people with similar interest	0.822			
Improve agricultural skills	0.800			
Be in an agricultural environment	0.759			
Exercise physically	0.620			
Rest and relaxation		1.929	16.074	0.634
Get away from stress	0.814			
Rest and relaxation	0.807			
Escape from day-by-day activities	0.633			

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of travel behavior, it is clear that half of the respondents (49.88%) had spent 1-3 days in agritourist attractions but one-third (32.33%) of respondents had traveled for 4-5 days in Thailand. This result shows that it is rather difficult to promote agritourism by itself. Agritourism thus should be promoted increasingly as a counterpart to leisure, or package-type of tourism in destination areas. Tour operators should attempt to combine sun-sea-sand tourist destinations with agritourism activities in order to achieve a more balanced sustainable approach to tourism development.

The result showed that travel motivations of the responding ASEAN agritourists were *agricultural experiences and skills* and *rest and relaxation*. This is similar to findings of Park & Yoon (2009) that Korean rural tourists are more likely to be interested in agricultural experiences and rural life, and those of Srikanth (2007) that agritourist motivations of Thai tourists were 'agricultural experiences, 'quality of life, relationship, and adventure', and 'relaxations'.

The results of this research indicated that it is necessary to propose certain development policies and measures of agritourism of Thailand for ASEAN+6 tourists for public and private sectors in Thailand. Development policies should consist of potential development of tourist services policy, and activity development for agritourist policy. Measures for development of tourist services policy focus on development of farmers and their services staff, development of food and beverage, development of accommodation, and development of local transport for accessibility. The policy of activity development for agritourists covers various measures such as development of DIY (Do-it-yourself) activities for agritourists, development of agricultural learning and education programs for tourists, and continued development of agritourists activities for all year round.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors gratefully acknowledge financial support from the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) for this research project.

REFERENCES

- [1] ASEAN Economic Community. (2016), *ASEAN Statistics*, URL: <http://www.thai-aec.com>.
- [2] Cohen, E. (1974), "Who is a tourist? A conceptual clarification", *Sociological Review*, Vol. 6, Pp. 408-424.
- [3] Crompton, J.L. (1979), "Motivation for pleasure vacation", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 6, Pp. 408-424.
- [4] Fleischer, A. & Tchetchik, A. (2005), "Does rural tourism benefit from agriculture?" *Tourism Management*, 26, 493-501.
- [5] Frochot, I. (2005), "A Benefit segmentation of tourists in rural areas: a Scottish perspective", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 26, Pp. 335-346.
- [6] Hsu, C.H.C. & Huang, S. (2008), "Travel motivation: a critical review of the concept's development." In A.G. Woodside and D. Martin (eds), *Tourism Management: Analysis, Behavior, and Strategy*, Cambridge: CAB International.
- [7] Iso-Ahola, S. E. (1982), "Towards a social psychology theory of tourism motivation", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 9, Pp. 256-262.
- [8] Kastenholz, E., Davis, D., & Paul, G. (1999), "Segmenting tourism in rural areas: the case of North and Central Portugal", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 37, Pp. 353-390.
- [9] Koutsouris et al (2014), "The phantom of (agri) tourism and agriculture symbiosis? A Greek case study. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 12, 94-103.
- [10] Lee, Y. & Chen, T. (2005), "Travelling motivation and satisfaction of tourists: an empirical study of Taroka National Park in Taiwan", *The Business Review*, Cambridge, Vol. 4, No. 2, Pp. 175-182.
- [11] Marques, H. (2006), "Searching for complementarities between agriculture and tourism – the demarcated wine-producing regions of northern Portugal", *Tourism Economics*, Vol. 12, Pp. 147-155.
- [12] Lundberg, D.E. (1971), "Why tourists travel", *Cornell HRA Quarterly*, February, Pp. 75-81.
- [13] McGehee, N., & Kim, K. (2004). Motivation for agri-tourism entrepreneurship. *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 43, No. 2, Pp. 161-170.
- [14] Ministry of Tourism and Sports. (2016), *Thailand Tourism Statistics*, URL: <http://www.tourism.go.th>

- [15] Ollenburg, C., & Buckley, R. (2007), "Stated economic and social motivation of farm tourism operators", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 45, Pp. 444-452.
- [16] Philip, S., Hunter, C., & Blackstock, K. (2010), "A typology for defining agritourism", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 31, Pp. 754-758.
- [17] Tew, C., & Barbieri, C. (2012), "The perceived benefits of agritourism: the provider's perspective", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 33, Pp. 215-224.
- [18] Sharpley, R. (2002), "Rural tourism and the challenge of tourism diversification: the case of Cyprus", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 23, Pp. 233-244.
- [19] Sharpley, R. & Vass, A. (2006), "Tourism, farming and diversification: an attitudinal study", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 27, Pp. 1040-1052.
- [20] Srikatanyoo, N. (2007), "Agritourist needs and motivations", *Research Report*, Dhurakit Pundit University, Bangkok.
- [21] Yang, Z., Cai, J. & Sliuzas, R. (2010), "Agro-tourism enterprises as a form of multi-functional urban agriculture for peri-urban development in China", *Habitat International*, Vol. 34, Pp. 374-385.