FACTORS OF GASTRONOMY TOURISM EVENT OF KHONKAEN "MICE CITY" ACCORDING TO TAI I-SAN AUTHENTICITY GEO-SOCIAL VALUES

Thirachaya Chaigasem¹, Alissara Thammabutr²
¹KhonKaen University, ²Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Thailand

ABSTRACT

Research on factors of gastronomy tourism event of KhonKaen "MICE CITY" according to Tai I-SAN authenticity Geo-Social values aimed to 1) analyze the environment and current situation in terms of gastronomy tourism event of KhonKaen "MICE CITY" based on social geography values and authenticity of Tai I-SAN style and 2) consider the behavior and needs of tourists towards gastronomy tourism event of KhonKaen "MICE CITY" based on social geography values and authenticity of Tai I-SAN style. This study was a survey research. The sample group was divided into 3 groups: government agencies, private sector agencies and business operators in the relevant tourism industry. This was to answer the research objectives. The research team classified the tools for data collection, namely questionnaires and interviews. The research results showed that factors supporting gastronomy tourism activities of KhonKaen "MICE CITY" based on social geography values and authenticity of Tai I-SAN style were: the taste of food was identity based on social geography and Tai I-SAN style, quality ingredients that could be found locally were a good reflection of the local way of life and culture and presentation of story telling with dood and facts based on social geography and the source of the ingredients or food attractions would be the factors that made the traveler a real impression on a food trip.

Keywords: gastronomy tourism event, social geography values, KhonKaen “MICE CITY”

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the first chapter or the Introduction it shows that tourism is an industry that generates income continuously to countries around the world; tourism industry revenue is the income that is widely distributed to the population for creating jobs and build careers. Moreover, it also helps to support the restoration and conservation of arts, culture, and traditions which attract the attention of tourists for creating prosperity to different regions when traveling from region to region. With this case, tourism is one of the businesses that influence the economy of the world, and according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) with the growth study of tourists found that in the year 2030 it showed that the growth rate of global tourists arrivals increased to 1.8 billion people with the continuous growth of the tourism industry. [1] Then, the industry’s MICE (MICE) is recognized increasing as a key mechanism in the region's tourism industry with growth and it is important to generate income and employment for the country. Additionally, MICE travelers have specific business goals with high purchasing power, and there is a demand for good quality products and services, such as food and beverages, airlines, hotels, freight forwarding businesses, domestic travel and others. [2] Therefore, the average expenditure of the MICE group is higher than the general tourists, however, due to the COVID-19 epidemic situation in December 2019, to be spread widely, according to the UNWTO report, the outbreak of this epidemic has affected the society in all levels. Thus, in terms of the economy, it causes the slowdown in tourism with the most risk, and 80% of small and medium-sized enterprises of the population are at risk, so this is a shared challenge for everyone to be part of a solution and adaptation, [3] for the COVID-19 epidemic in Thailand. With this case, Thais and foreigners are reducing, as well as the less purchasing power for both Thais and foreigners. Furthermore, social distancing measures and various sanitation measures have increased the cost of operators and higher tourism prices because many people may not have sufficient money to spend on tourism. In addition, the overall atmosphere of tourism will change after people don’t spend much due to the “New Normal” that travel is less with the banning on group activities with the delaying for crossing into another province areas.[4] On the contrast, Thailand's tourism situation from now on must depend on the cooperation of various sectors that still need to be watched and maintained strict standards by preventing the spread of Covid-19.
with the reducing chance that the Covid-19 will come back to spread again which will affect the competitiveness and opportunities in the tourism market.[5]

Thailand MICE tourism is continuous to grow, and according to the report of the World Association of International Conferences (International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) now Thai MICE industry is ranked 4th in Asia [2] for international conferences. Thus, it is the second only for Japan, China, and Korea, but is ranked number one in ASEAN while Thailand is ranked 5th in Asia. Then, KhonKaen is one of the five provinces chosen as the meeting city or a center of transportation, trade, investment, education, health, innovation, especially the city of tourism with diversity for both of natural attractions, historical attractions, traditions, lifestyles, arts and culture including of local food culture. [6] Besides, it is a cultural heritage in tourism for each area, and the knowledge of food in the local area is consistent with the geographical, social and intellects of ancestry, and in the large hotel it has a large convention center, restaurants and shopping centers.

Furthermore, it is also one of the five provinces to be chosen as a meeting city with the rewarding including of the Travel International Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE – Meetings, Incentive, Conventions/Confereencing, Exhibitions/Event) to be known as MICE City or the fifth province of Thailand and the first province of the Northeast region. Then, this is part of the key strategy under the Thailand 4.0 policy to manage the economy with convenient transportation, such as in the area of car, train, plane and free Wi-Fi in public areas, and it is a medium to deal with the international business events, such as the APEC Ministerial Meeting, International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences and Thai-ASEAN Trade Fair.

Gastronomy Tourism is a supportive tool that encourages tourists to visit the attraction because local food is unique, and it has been passed to the next generation which is essential to present identity and culture to a traveler's destination. Moreover, it can make interest in tourist visiting for the first time impressed with the taste of the food until they would like to come back to visit again in the future, [4] especially for the good food in each area, and it creates a contribution to the conservation of local food identity as well as adding value and value to local food, hen, the distribution of income to the community in a sustainable way for supporting. [7] With this case, MICE industry is a medium of communication knowledge of food culture in the community, [8] especially for Northeast food, and from the above reasons, the students are interested in studying environment analysis and current situation in gastronomy tourism. Moreover, According to the values of social landscape, it is involving with the authenticity of the Northeast of KhonKaen MICE City and the behavior with the needs of tourists towards gastronomy tourism. In this case, according to the values of the real Northeast landscape of KhonKaen MICE City it presents to the Northeast food that is the authentic and traditional identity of KhonKaen province which is regarded as cultural wisdom heritage including of the supporting as the center with the tourism development strategy of KhonKaen Province.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the environment and the current situation of organizing food tourism activities with the values of the social landscape, and the true authenticity of the Northeast of KhonKaen MICE City and 2. the behavior and needs of tourists towards organizing activities Food tourism with the values of the real Thai I-SAN landscape of KhonKaen MICE City.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this case, it is involving with:

A. the event or the event management with the different objectives, except with these activities that is the need to create or influence the individual experience or the shared experience [9] of the audience and the participant with the conceptual classification in four main types with the special event characteristic[10] according to Figure 1:
Fig. special event characteristic

1) Special events related to sports and entertainment or Leisure Event that is relevant for sporting events and entertainment or consisting of various recreational activities  
2) Special individual activities or Personal Event that is a personalized event or a special marketing event organization to celebrate or commemorating on important occasions.  
3) Cultural special events that are special marketing events involving with rituals, culture art or religious beliefs  
4) Special events related to organizations or institutions or Organizational Event with the most activities of organizations or institutions.

B. Environment Analysis or SWOT Analysis of environment and potential that is a tool to assess the situation for organizations or events.

Then, it can determine the strengths and weaknesses from the internal environment with opportunities and obstacles of the external environment, and it is involving with the potential impact of these factors with the functioning of the conceptual activity to be described [11] as SWOT stands for S (Strengths) means strengths or strengths which is a result of internal factors. Besides, W (Weaknesses) means Weaknesses as a result of internal factors or a problem or defect caused by various internal environments while O (Opportunities) means chance caused by external factors with the result of the company's external environment favoring or promoting its operations and T (Threats) with the meaning as barrier caused by external factors. Additionally, it is a limitation caused by the external environment and tries to eliminate obstacles.

IV. RESEARCH METHODS

This research study uses survey research by using questionnaires as a research tool to explore the variables used in research. In this case, the three sample groups are government agencies, private sector and business operators in the tourism industry involved. Means of sampling (purposive Sampling) in the province of 30 studies with data collection from observations or Observation Participation, discussion groups or the Focus Group and the in-depth interviews and semi-structured interviews on gastronomy tourism as Northeast culture values according to the social landscape.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Tools</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Key Informants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-depth Interview</td>
<td>30 people</td>
<td>- Government agencies</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Private sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Entrepreneurs in the relevant tourism industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
<td>The groups were divided into 3 groups</td>
<td>- Government agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and 5 people each, a total of 15 people.</td>
<td>- Private sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Entrepreneurs in the relevant tourism industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation Participation</td>
<td>10 people</td>
<td>- Experts and experts in Isan food culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Data Collection

Therefore, it makes analysis with the examining of the data with concepts, theories, and data from in-depth interviews; descriptive presentations and conclusions as the requirements.
V. RESEARCH RESULTS

1) The results of the analysis of the environment and current situation in tourism activities food according to the values of the social landscape, the authenticity of the Northeast of KhonKaen, MICE City with the study result on marketing mix (7 P's) of food tourism activities according to the values of the social landscape. Besides, it is involving with the authenticity of the Northeast KhonKaen's MICE City with the following products or services as follows: 1) food self-identity, 2) a clean, hygienic 3) lecturer with expertise and 4) Exhibition with the adding value for local food price: 1) the price of products or goods that is not too high and not too low; 2) the clear point to set a fixed price; 3) the attractive local food tourism program with the interest organizing events as follows: 1) The location to be easily accessible 2) The parking place to accommodate a large number of participants 3) The closeness to the city 4) The convenient location with cleanliness, neatness. 5) Location near amenities that the marketing promotion (Promotion) to be as follows: 1) Organize activities that attract attention on a regular basis 2) Provide special strategies to attract attendees 3) Organize challenging activities to arouse the interest of tourists 4) Setup for interesting promotion, such as a package program with accommodation, air ticket and tourism programs with Personnel or People to be follows: 1) Organize training for personnel to increase their potential in organizing events 2) Personnel with cleanliness, neat dress with suitable place by speaking gently 3) The public relations agency to recommend activities 4) Employees accept for the presentation of local food and value, except for Latta conservative local cuisine or the Physical Evidence and Presentation: 1) average 2) the colors of the food 3) food containers and 4) the story or the source of food. Then, the planning process is as follows: 1) selection of the venue for the event 2) selection of local food items 3) setting the duration of the activities and 4) positioning the personnel to perform their duties in each activity segment.

With this case, it is involving with the analysis of the potential strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats of the KhonKaen Province:

Strengths

This province has the advantage in geography, and it is the transportation hub of the Northeastern region located along the EWEC and NSEC economic corridors with the connection to the East Sea. Besides, it is the center of government administration and services in the Northeastern region as the resident of the consulate generals in China, Vietnam and Laos: 1. The important food or renewable energy crop production source, such as rice, sugar cane, cassava plants, and important animal production sources no matter of beef cattle or the 4th in the upper northeastern region, chicken and meat as well as a food or beverage processing source 2. A medical and public health and education service center 3. The location of central government agencies, regions, and local authorities, totaling more than 450 units which is an important tool to serve people and develop the province. 4. The Ubonrat Dam or a multi-purpose dam used for electricity, irrigation, aquaculture, and tourist attractions. 5. The Power plants from waste energy for urban areas by creating the energy security for the urban area. 6. The standardized exhibition center and seminars. 7. The transport traffic system in the city that is connected to the network. 8. Educational center that are both public and private higher education institutions with fifteen.

Weaknesses:

1. The most population with low-income with the proportion of the poor ranked 0th in the country, 3rd in the region, 2nd of the group, mostly in the agricultural sector. 2. The production of labor without the meeting of the market demand and a shortage of skilled and unskilled workers in the industrial and service sectors. 3. The 18th dirty ranked province of the country with the 8th highest accumulated residual waste in the country for 1,224 tons/day of waste with the efficiency of waste disposal as only 328 tons/day by being disposed technically just 206 tons/day. and 4. Rapid urbanization causes congestion in communities and traffic as well as causing security problems in life and property with the public infrastructure to be insufficient for supporting with the expansion of the town. 5. Most government personnel still lacked development in English and ASEAN languages. 6. The utilization of air transport is not yet able to reach its full potential.

Opportunities:

1. Green Economic Development or UN 2. Thai Kitchen to the World's Kitchen Policy with the promotion of people's access to capital 3. The Smart City for 1 in 7 cities of Thailand 3. The SEC approved in principle on February 22, 2012) with the establishment of a green industrial estate in KhonKaen Province 4. The entry into the ASEAN Community increases the consumer market with the increased demand for goods and services and tourism. 5. Demand for safe food consumption. 6. Policy to promote the cultivation of renewable energy crops. 7. Investment in infrastructure development. Thus, according to the strategy of developing the transportation
infrastructure of Thailand in 2015-2022, such as double-track railway, land port and expansion of KhonKaen Airport. 8. Agricultural promotion policies in zoning areas with the promotion of organic agriculture. 9. An increase for visitors and tourists. 10. The establishment of a Sister City relationship in Fu Jian and the People's Republic of China.

**Threats:**

2. The expansion of the industry or service sector with the change to use of land from the agricultural sector, living and service business.
3. The modern and fast technological progress with applying for the Western culture into everyday life affects the lifestyle of people in society and the quality of education with quality of life to be decreased.

2) The results of the analysis of behavior and demands of tourists towards organizing activities for gastronomy tourism according to the values of the real Northeast landscape of KhonKaen, MICE City.

In terms of the image of the city, KhonKaen Province, it has the potential for entry into a smart city and a meeting city of Mice City that is the center and location of government agencies. Besides, the regional state enterprises are the location of the consulate of the People's Republic of China or Socialist Republic of Vietnam Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Republic of Peru with having schools, hospitals and medical centers that is modern.

Then, according to the venues and facilities, it is including with a place in the event of MICE to accommodate in groups, and the event has received Thailand MICE Venue Standards (TMVS) certification from the Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) of seven locations with the large number of tourists and a wide variety for degree that are in workshops on food and organic agriculture.

As for restaurants and souvenir shops, there is a central market where you can eat, travel, shop all days, and there is a souvenir shop with the variety of restaurants and prices.

In terms of transportation or infrastructure, it is the center of the region with quick and convenient access as being the convenient transportation in the areas of cars, trains, planes and free Wi-Fi in public areas with 661 points.

There is a communication infrastructure network connected to neighboring countries and communication systems, but the traveling by plane still has the needs to be developed, such as the few airlines connecting between countries.

In terms of tourist attractions and activities, it is one of the main tourist destinations in Thailand, and there are the cultural attraction agritourism OTOP Tourism Community, NawatWithi, Community Learning Center in KhonKaen Province and museums in KhonKaen Province with the food festival activities of KhonKaen Province.

According to the safety and sanitation, it has seen that KhonKaen has a high security system for the MICE events, but there are still some outdoor venues with unsafety, so it should have the health care facilities and modern hospitals.

**VI. DISCUSSIONS**

The above study, it shows of the behavior and demands of tourists towards gastronomic tourism activities to be regarded as a hallmark of quality with the goods of festival exhibition including of the consumer culture to be organized regularly from time to time in each area with the regional, national and international level. In addition, according to the concept of Hall and Sharples [12] it shows that food also creates a basic experience for tourists who travel in that tourist attraction for doing the local food activities with attraction or tourist attraction engagement. Then, food can create a diverse local tourism experience according to the concept of Everett and Aitchison [13] by organizing food tourism activities with the values of the social landscape and the authenticity of the Northeast of KhonKaen MICE City. In addition, it is involving with the analysis result of the environment and current situation in organizing food tourism activities including of the values of the social landscape and the authenticity of the Northeast of KhonKaen MICE City to find that the marketing mix (7P's) affecting to the organization of activities. Thus, the product or service value adding of local food price or place for organizing events, marketing promotion and personnel or the People) and the presentation of local food and value, except on Latta look vernacular cuisine or Physical evidence and presentation) and the planning process.
VII. CONCLUSION

KhonKaen is the center province of the northeastern region, and it is the main tourist city in the central northeastern provinces with the readiness to be a big economic city trade and investment center of KhonKaen Province. Besides, it is ready to support tourism by organizing meetings, seminars, and exhibitions for supporting both the domestic and international level. As a result, KhonKaen Province has the potential to be a center of the tourism development strategy with the meetings and exhibitions that is ready to support both national and international tourism and meetings. Besides, the government agencies and the private sector have the continuous provincial development plans, especially for the public transport system that has developed the expansion of KhonKaen Airport to the international airport for accommodate with the tourists’ flights including of the MICE travelers who travel to KhonKaen Province which are in line with the strategic plan of the KhonKaen Provincial Development Plan in the Year of 2018 – 2021 under the vision of the pleasant city for KhonKaen, and the trade and investment linkage center and service of the Mekong Sub-region consists of 3 main missions as follows:
1. Strengthening communities with the people in the community to have a well-being. 2. Develop to be a sustainable city. 3. Develop the capability of goods and services to raise the standard of goods and services for meeting with the market demand. 4. Develop the potential of the province to be the center of the Mekong sub-region, and in selecting the area of KhonKaen MICE City for organizing food tourism activities.

Thus, it is one way to support MICE tourism in KhonKaen by relying on community participation in exercising land ownership rights and culture [14] holder which makes it possible to determine the direction of community development for being a tourist attraction that is totally unique to the community. Besides, it can organize food tourism activities with the convey meaning and present part for the conservation process by promoting and developing for local food tourism activities in the Northeast. Then, it can express with Northeast identity that conveys from the way of life, tradition, wisdom and local culture including of the knowledge in Northeastern food through the presentation of the food culture of Northeast people with the new management innovations to be known and showing with the naturalness, sincerity and expression of the identity, and it can be presented through the food tourism activities of KhonKaen province for applying to other tourism areas in Thailand Next.

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