

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation Marketing Strategies for Thai Gastronomic Tourism Promotion
Author Mr. Termsak Singsomboon
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The study on marketing strategies for Thai gastronomic tourism promotion comprises 3 objectives; 1) to study foreign tourists' behavior in Thai gastronomic tourism, 2) to study foreign tourists' needs for Thai gastronomic tourism, and 3) to suggest marketing strategies for Thai gastronomic tourism promotion. The target population was 400 foreign tourists who took Thai cooking classes in Thailand and 77 partakers in Thai culinary tourism, selected from the government sector, private sector, citizen sector, and local administrative organizations. Mixed research methodology was used in the study. The following statistics were used in the data analysis; 1) descriptive statistics, to explain general description of the sample and the level of needs such as percentage, mean, standard deviation, and 2) inferential statistics, to test the hypotheses, such as t-test, F-test, and differences comparison with LSD. Data were processed by SPSS program. Qualitative data were processed using logical analysis, grouping, classification, association, and interpretation.

Results

1) The objective of the majority of the sample in taking Thai cooking classes was to gain new experience. Most of the respondents had never taken Thai cooking classes before. All respondents preferred a half-day course and two third of the respondents preferred a group class with the step-by-step teaching method. Most of the respondents thought that the course length, course structure, and teaching methods were appropriate. More than half of the respondents thought fruits and vegetable carving should definitely be included in the course and most of the respondents were interested in learning how to make Thai desserts and wanted to learn how to make Kao Niew Ma Muang (sweetened sticky rice with mangoes). Most of the respondents thought it was necessary to learn to cook Thai food with authentic Thai flavors. Almost all of the respondents found February to be the most appropriate period to

learn Thai cooking. Pad Thai (Thai-styled stir-fried noodle), Panang Curry (mild flavored curry), and Massaman Curry (mild flavored curry with cumin and potatoes) were the top 3 Thai dishes the respondents wanted to learn. Most of the respondents found that flavor was the most distinctive point of Thai food that impressed them. The most influential resource affecting foreign tourists' decision to learn Thai cooking was closed friends. More than half of the respondents purchased cooking classes directly with the school and two third of the respondents chose the school because of the reasonable price. The appropriate learning period was in the morning (9.00-12.00 hrs.). Two third of the respondents thought Thai food was very different from other food and two third of them would take Thai cooking classes again.

2) It was found that needs of foreign tourists taking Thai cooking classes in marketing mix factors were in a relatively high level. Foreign tourists had the highest need in the people attribute followed by physical evidence, product, productivity and quality of service, process, place, price, and promotion attributes.

3) For the hypotheses testing, 15 out of 16 hypotheses tested were accepted and 1 was rejected which was the number of time visiting Thailand factor. This did not affect foreign tourists' needs.

4) There are 8 marketing strategies for Thai gastronomic tourism comprising; personnel development strategy, physical evidence development strategy, product development strategy, productivity and quality of service development strategy, process development strategy, place development strategy, price development strategy, and promotion development strategy.

5) The following recommendations derive from the study. The government should have clear and successive strategic plans and policies for Thai gastronomic tourism by allowing the private sector, citizen sector, and local administrative organizations to participate in the integration of strategic plan for Thai gastronomic tourism. Also, the government should set up standards for Thai restaurants and Thai cooking schools and publicize information on Thai cooking activities among tourists as well as develop both online and offline database of gastronomic tourism and make it practical and up-to-date. For Thai cooking schools, they should develop their skills, knowledge, and expertise in Thai food among their instructors; develop foreign language communication skills and image among their instructors and personnel as well as manage their place and environment, focusing on the cleanliness and pollution-free environment.