

Public Sector Approaches to Hospitality and Tourism Development in Thailand Using Information Databases

Panida Rakklin¹, Jakkawat Laphet^{1*}

¹ College of Tourism and Hospitality, Sripatum University, Thailand.

Correspondence Author: Jakkawat.la@spu.ac.th *

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Tourism is a rapidly expanding economic sector that plays a vital role in global GDP and foreign exchange. The United Nations World Tourism Organization projects a 3.3% annual increase in visitor numbers until 2030, highlighting both opportunities and challenges for sustainable development in the tourism industry.

Objectives: This paper aims to explore Thailand's strategic approaches to fostering sustainable tourism, emphasizing the importance of public sector involvement, community engagement, and compliance with international standards. It also seeks to identify emerging trends shaping the future of tourism in Thailand.

Methods: The study employs a qualitative analysis of government initiatives, policies, and emerging trends impacting tourism. It reviews recent projects initiated by the Thai government and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) aimed at promoting sustainable practices and enhancing the tourist experience.

Results: Key findings indicate a commitment by the Thai government to transform Thailand into a tourism hub through initiatives highlighting its cultural heritage, health services, and eco-tourism. The introduction of visa exemption measures enhanced digital access, and sustainability-driven projects are crucial in attracting a diverse range of visitors. Additionally, trends such as AI-driven travel planning, eco-friendly tourism, and wellness-focused travel are reshaping the industry.

Conclusions: To maintain its status as a leading tourism destination, Thailand must adapt to global trends while prioritizing sustainability and community involvement. Continued investment in infrastructure, service quality, and digital transformation will be essential in realizing its objectives, supporting the long-term growth of the tourism sector and enhancing the socio-economic fabric of local communities.

Keywords: Hospitality development, Tourism development, Government initiatives, Future trends

INTRODUCTION

One of the fastest-growing economic sectors globally, tourism significantly boosts world GDP and generates substantial foreign exchange value, claims the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Changing travel tastes and better accessibility could encourage a surge in local and international visitors, hence generating billions in annual travel activity. Forecasts show that visitor count would climb by 3.3% annually until 2030, adding extra 1.8 billion tourists by the end of the decade [1]. This continuous growth presents opportunities as well as challenges for legislators, local communities, and businesses involved in tourism. Along with economic growth, travel promotes social cohesiveness, understanding, and cross-cultural connection between people and countries. People pushing limits improve world communication, foster mutual respect among many people by sharing cultural experiences. Working in the industry, millions of people all around rely on travel as their primary source of income; many individuals and families also depend on it. Moreover, notably those aiming at poverty reduction, gender equality, and sustainable cities [1], tourism greatly helps to attain the 17 Sustainable progress Goals (SDGs)

established by the United Nations as a catalyst for progress in many domains. Accommodations for guests hotels, hostels, and vacation rentals also significantly impact local companies since they influence sustainable growth. These companies stimulate the local economy by means of local providers of goods and services, therefore creating jobs in addition to providing accommodation. Responding to the growing need for sustainability inside the hotel industry, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) developed a new worldwide standard for hotel facilities [2]. This advice is meant to assist owners and operators in assessing and improving their possible impacts on the environment and the community so facilitating the implementation of more sustainable practices all over the industry [2]. The essence of tourism is hospitality amenities, which can enhance social interactions by way of relationships between guests and local people thereby enhancing cultural understanding. By generating tax money and supporting growth in connected companies, they also significantly strengthen the local economy. While businesses and travel agencies all around support different sustainable tourism projects and initiatives, historically there has been a lack of objective worldwide standards regulating these activities. This has resulted in variances in the degrees of sustainability commitment and consistency among hotel and tourism industry players. Acknowledging this discrepancy, ISO has developed strong recommendations for hotels, therefore providing a complete new international reference for hotel locations. This guidance aims to assist owners and operators in effectively resolving their possible positive and negative impacts on the environment and local communities by way of informed practices and strategic planning [3]. Setting these standards will enable the group initiatives aimed to support environmentally friendly travel to be much more successful. Following ISO criteria enables hotels to join a larger movement towards sustainable development, therefore assuring that tourism benefits not only the company but also the social fabric of the society and the surroundings. In tourism, sustainability is not only a requirement but also a must for future expansion, which requires industry players to give eco-friendly approaches and community involvement top priority first importance [3].

PUBLIC SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE SERVICE AND TOURISM INDUSTRY IN THAILAND.

Under the theme of High Value & Sustainability, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) will prioritize quality and sustainability in tourism for 2024. This initiative brings together multiple sectors to emphasize year-round, sustainable, and equitable tourism. The TAT aims to create valuable experiences rooted in Thailand's rich culture and soft power, enhancing the country's appeal as a destination through the main strategy framework known as "PASS": **P**: Partnership 360 Degrees - This strategy promotes effective collaboration among government agencies, businesses, local communities, and travel associations. The TAT seeks to ensure that all stakeholders benefit from tourism activities, thus enhancing the quality and variety of travel offerings. **A**: Accelerate Access to Digital World - This approach emphasizes the importance of digital technology in marketing and developing the tourism sector. By utilizing data and digital platforms, the TAT aims to improve the tourist experience, enhance consumer engagement, and provide accurate information. Data analytics will play a crucial role in understanding tourist behavior and preferences, helping to tailor marketing strategies effectively. **S**: Sub Culture Movement - This pillar aims to identify and support various subcultures outside of popular travel routes, attracting a wider range of visitors seeking authentic cultural experiences through specific interests and unique local events. **S**: Right Now Sustainable - This component promotes ecologically responsible travel, supporting initiatives that reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Net Zero Tourism framework. The TAT is committed to ensuring that environmental quality is maintained, even as tourism increases. Additionally, other high-value tourism areas will be encouraged in 2024, such as traditional herbal massages, yoga retreats, and therapeutic modalities focusing on physical and mental well-being [4]. As more travelers seek holistic health experiences, services providing wellness programs and medical check-ups are increasingly in demand [5]. Sports tourism will include planning physically demanding events like marathons and triathlons to attract athletes and supporters [6]. Cultural tourism will promote visits to historically significant sites, museums, and art galleries, fostering cultural awareness [7]. Eco-tourism will offer experiences in natural areas to educate guests about ecosystems and human impact on the environment [8]. There is also rising interest in religion-based tourism that emphasizes spirituality and participation in local cultural activities [9]. Thailand's rich spiritual tradition presents many opportunities for specialized industry development.

PROJECTS RELATED TO PUBLIC SECTOR SERVICES AND TOURISM IN THAILAND

The Thai government has started various projects and campaigns to help the tourism industry flourish sustainably [3].

- **Visa Exemption Measures:** From September 25, 2023, until February 29, 2024, a visa exemption will be in force for visitors from China and Kazakhstan, therefore streamlining the arrival process and promoting visitor intake.
- **Extended Stay for Russian Tourists:** From 30 to 90 days, the length of stay for Russian visitors has been raised, therefore improving visitor convenience and extending stays from November 1, 2023, until April 30, 2024.
- **Exemptions from Submitting Form TM.6:** Travelers at the Sadao border post in Songkhla are excused from filling out the TM.6 form from November 4, 2023, to January 4, 2024, therefore enabling cross-border travel.
- **Visa-Free Access for Indian and Taiwanese Tourists:** Promoting more important visitor numbers from these areas, these travellers are now permitted to stay in Thailand for 30 days from November 10, 2023, until May 10, 2024.

Extended Operating Hours for Businesses: This project helps companies under the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) control to better meet the needs of visitors.

- **Thai Travel Thai Project:** Emphasizing domestic tourism through promotions and special events meant to inspire Thai nationals to explore their own nation, this project highlights local sites and so increases a respect for cultural legacy.
- **The 12 Must-Visit Cities Project:** By showcasing 12 chosen Thai cities with distinctive attractions and experiences, this project hopes to boost travel. Every one of these cities is selected depending on their cultural, historical, and natural value, thereby guiding visitors to vary their vacation plans.
- **Encouragement of Health Tourism:** The government is aggressively trying to draw visitors interested in health and wellness by especially stressing traditional Thai medicine and therapies. Using Thailand's reputation for high-quality healthcare, this project aims to establish the country as a top vacation destination for health-related travel.
- **Sustainable Tourism Management:** Here, the focus is on encouraging travel habits that support local communities and environmental preservation. This strategy entails encouraging environmentally friendly lodging and activities, therefore improving the whole travel experience and reducing the environmental impact.
- **Development of Quality Services for Travel Agents:** This initiative aims to raise the caliber of service providers in the travel industry. Workshops and training courses are given to equip travel agents with the required knowledge to provide premium services compliant with international criteria[3].

FUTURE TRENDS IN SERVICE AND TOURISM IN THAILAND

Several key trends emerging for 2024 will be essential for players in the hotel and tourism sectors as the travel scene evolves. Firstly, travelers are increasingly utilizing AI-driven tools for trip planning, accommodation searches, flight comparisons, and activity discovery [10]. These technologies offer personalized recommendations based on individual preferences, enhancing travel management efficiency. With rising summer temperatures, many tourists are actively seeking cooler climates, particularly in highland and coastal areas. This shift in preference indicates a strong demand for destinations that provide relief from the heat, necessitating that tourism businesses prepare for an influx of visitors seeking comfort in cooler environments [11]. Additionally, tourists are growing interested in the sources of local cuisine, ushering in opportunities for immersive gastronomic experiences that connect visitors with local cultures. Travel agencies can seize this opportunity by organizing culinary tours, cooking classes, and food festivals that emphasize regional flavors and traditional techniques. Budget-conscious consumers are also becoming more discerning, prioritizing "value for money" in their travel experiences. Hotels and service providers must adapt their offerings to meet these expectations, focusing on value-driven promotions and inclusive packages that enhance guest satisfaction. Among younger travelers, the trend of "Dry Tripping" is gaining traction, promoting holiday experiences centered on local culture and wellness rather than alcohol consumption. Tourism operators should consider offering events related to local arts and wellness activities, such as yoga retreats and hiking trips. Eco-friendly experiences are increasingly popular, with travelers seeking sustainable travel options. Businesses that

demonstrate a commitment to environmental sustainability, such as eco-lodges and conservation tours, will attract ethically-minded customers [12]. The rise of digital payment systems is also indicative of changing consumer behavior, with guests opting for cashless transactions. This shift enhances convenience and security for both guests and operators. Additionally, activity-based tourism focusing on local events and community engagement is gaining popularity, allowing visitors to learn about the areas they visit while enjoying local celebrations and cultural exhibits [3]. Finally, the "Woof-cation" trend caters to pet owners wanting to include their furry friends in their travels, highlighting the demand for inclusive travel experiences. These emerging trends underscore the need for stakeholders to remain adaptable and responsive to evolving traveler preferences in 2024 and beyond.

GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING SERVICES AND TOURISM IN THAILAND

Recognizing the vital role of tourism in national economic development and community well-being, the Thai government has established comprehensive policies to enhance the services and tourism industry. These policies address current challenges while maximizing new opportunities in travel. Improved transportation networks are essential for providing easy access to tourism destinations for both domestic and international visitors, which will strengthen the industry's infrastructure. This involves upgrading existing roads, railways [3], and airports, alongside developing new infrastructure projects while emphasizing environmentally friendly construction methods. Collaborating with local governments and businesses will streamline tourism logistics, enhancing the overall travel experience [13]. Establishing high service standards is critical for building credibility and trust among consumers. This includes implementing certification programs to support hotel quality and service excellence [14]. Ongoing quality control with regular audits and feedback systems will help identify areas needing improvement, ensuring customer expectations are not only met but exceeded, thus fostering repeat business through positive word-of-mouth. The government supports tourism initiatives that minimize environmental impact, protect cultural heritage, and promote community involvement through sustainable practices. This includes creating regulations and incentives that encourage businesses to adopt eco-friendly habits, such as waste reduction and resource conservation [15]. Partnerships with local communities to support cultural events and sustainable tourism projects are also key, as are educational initiatives to raise awareness about environmental concerns. Improving the visitor experience relies on all stakeholders in the tourism ecosystem, from hotels to service providers, adhering to high-quality standards. This includes providing training programs that promote professionalism and skill development, as well as workshops to share best practices among stakeholders. The government aims to create a reputation for excellence that attracts discerning travelers, establishing consistent quality across diverse sectors [16]. Furthermore, the government emphasizes digital transformation in tourism, aiming to enhance the readiness of digital technologies and data management systems. This includes funding smart tourism projects that leverage big data analytics to better understand travel preferences. User-friendly booking and consumer engagement systems will be developed to improve marketing strategies. Additionally, training in digital literacy for hotel staff will be essential to enhance the visitor experience. Ensuring visitor safety during their time in Thailand involves comprehensive emergency preparedness plans addressing security, natural disasters, and health emergencies. Crisis management training for travel agents will foster confidence in managing challenges. Clear communication with visitors regarding safety protocols, emergency contacts, and appropriate behavior will enhance their overall experience, promoting Thailand as a safe and appealing holiday destination [17].

DISCUSSION

The rapid expansion of the global tourism industry, highlighted by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), not only reflects a strong global economy but also emphasizes the importance of tourism in fostering social and cultural connections. Thailand finds itself at a turning point, with a forecasted growth of 3.3% in the number of tourists per year until 2030[18], creating both opportunities and challenges for sustainable development. The proactive involvement of the Thai government in policy and project initiatives demonstrates a commitment to leveraging tourism for economic development while ensuring social equity and environmental sustainability. The alignment with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) further underscores the necessity of a comprehensive tourism plan that addresses social and environmental impacts [1]. Developing opportunities for employment within the tourism sector is crucial, particularly in the service industry, which requires a higher quality workforce. Emphasizing high-value tourism, such as health tourism, sports tourism, and eco-tourism, represents Thailand's

strategy to attract discerning travelers seeking authentic experiences [20]. However, tourism also impacts the environment, making adherence to sustainable tourism practices essential. The development of ISO guidelines will encourage hotels to adopt environmentally friendly policies [14]. Furthermore, the digital evolution is becoming increasingly important [19], with the integration of digital tools and data analytics being vital for improving the tourist experience [21]. Finally, Thailand's tourism strategy must adapt to align with rapidly changing global trends. Initiatives like extending visa exemptions for specific tourist groups demonstrate the government's commitment to promoting tourism [22]. A focus on sustainable development, community collaboration, and clear policy formulation will help Thailand maintain its status as a leading tourism destination in Asia.

CONCLUSION

The first focus of Thailand's tourism is to transform Thailand into a tourism hub. The government promotes Thailand's soft power by showcasing its unique charm to the global community through "Five Must-Do Activities" (1) Must Beat (Thai Boxing) highlights four unique styles of ancient Thai boxing and presents the sport as a form of cardio exercise. (2) Must Eat (Thai food) promotes Thai kitchen to the world with 77 local dishes and 77 local desserts. (3) Must Seek (Thai culture) tells the story of a faith-based journey, cultural superstitions, and folklore culture. (4) Must Buy (Thai fabric) partners with world-renowned designers to turn Thai fabrics into fashion items. (5) Must See (Thai shows) showcases impressive traditional and contemporary performances. Moreover, Thailand unlocks the growth potential of secondary cities focusing on the long-term benefits of a more balanced approach to urbanization, highlighting Thailand's secondary cities' untapped potential and their critical role in supporting the country's future growth and economic prosperity. In the future, the government plans to push for the amendment of related tourism laws, including hotel regulations, alcohol restrictions, import duties on mega-event equipment, and VAT refund requirements. The second focus is to position Thailand to be the medical hub of Asia. With outstanding medical foundation that includes premium medical services, qualified healthcare specialists and various internationally accredited medical facilities, Thai medical services are renowned worldwide, resulting in a rapid growth in supporting industries such as pharmaceuticals, laboratory tests and clinical R&D. The government has progressive policies in place to help the country attain the position of "Thailand, a Hub of Wellness and Medical Services", within a ten-year time frame. The strategic ten-year plan, which will be executed from 2016-2025, proposes to turn Thailand into a medical hub in four major areas: wellness, medical services, academics and products. The third focus is to position Thailand to be the aviation hub of Asia. The solutions include: (1) Common Use Terminal Equipment (CUTE), which facilitates and manages passenger check-in access through Airlines Application. (2) Common Use Self Service (CUSS), which facilitates and manages passenger check-in access with a focus on self-service, eliminating the need for passengers to wait at check-in lines and allowing them to do their check-in in advance (subject to each airline's conditions). (3) Common Use Bag Drop (CUBD), which facilitates and manages baggage handling, allowing passengers to load their baggage onto the conveyor belt themselves. (4) Passenger Validation System (PVS), which verifies passenger travel information to enhance airport security and facilitate airline operations in verifying passenger information and screening passengers for having access to specific areas based on system-defined conditions. (5) Self-Boarding Gate (SBG), which streamlines the boarding process at departure gates for passenger convenience and speed. (6) Individual Carrier System (ICS), which is a high-speed baggage handling system with high accuracy in baggage tracking and tracing. (7) Auto Channel for e-Passport holders(ACEP), increasing the passport control capacity from 5,000 passengers per hour to 10,000 passengers per hour. (8) Automated People Mover (APM), an electric train connecting the passenger terminal to the SAT-1 building.

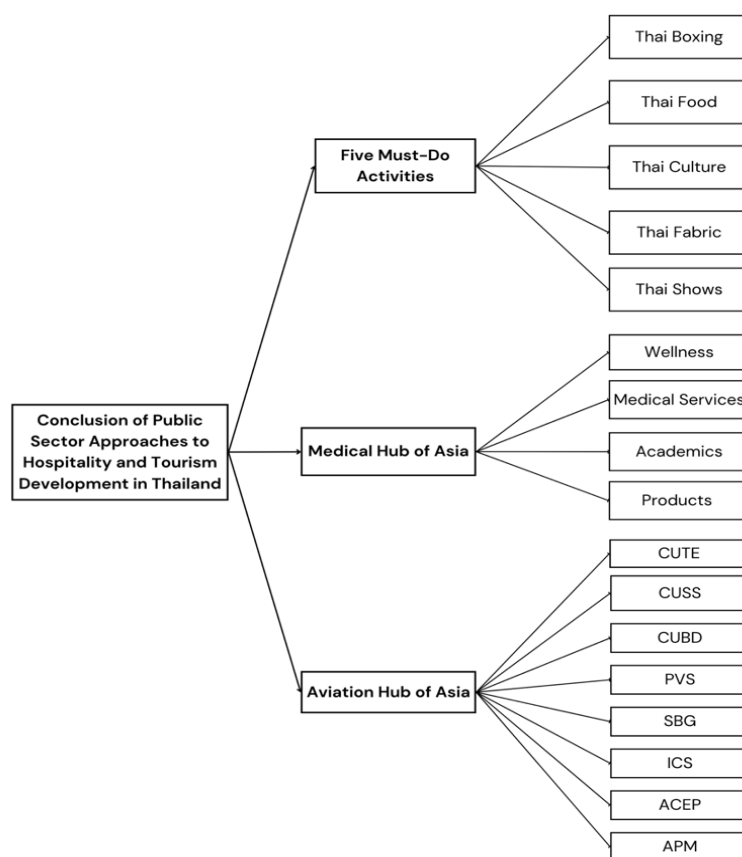


Fig. 1: Conclusion

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest

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