



A Study to Assess the Readiness of the Tourism Destinations in Namom District, Sonkhla Province

Thiyada Kaewchana^{1*}, Praman Tepsongkroh², Thanyasuparng Soponsiripakdee³,
Kwanrudee Prachaseree³ and Supaporn Taebanpakul³

¹ Lecturer, Tourism Industry Department, Didyasarin International College, Hatyai University.

² Assoc. Prof. Dr., Tourism Industry Department, Didyasarin International College, Hatyai University.

³ Lecturer, Department of Business Chinese, Didyasarin International College, Hatyai University.

*Corresponding author, E-mail: thiyada@hu.ac.th

Abstract

This study aimed to examine the readiness through tourism potential of some selected tourism destinations in Namom District, Sonkhla Province, which were (1) Kan Lao Hill, (2) Lungphan Garden, and (3) Father's Farm. The destinations were assessed for their attractiveness, accessibility, amenities, and tourism activities. The sample consisted of 31 tourists who visited the selected destinations in a one-day trip. The checklist items questionnaires, Likert's 5 rating scales, was employed in this study. The statistical tools, which were mean, percentage, standard deviation, F-value and T-test analysis; were applied. The findings revealed that the tourism destinations readiness assessment of Father's Farm was at the very high level, while Kan Lao Hill and Lungphan Garden were at the high level. The readiness assessment results of all three tourism destinations showed that the respondents rated on the attractiveness and activities at the very high level. However, there were statistically significant differences at .05 between the attractiveness and activities. Accessibility was rated at the high level and there was no statistical difference among the three tourism destinations. Amenities of the three tourism destinations were rated at the high level and there were statistically significant differences at .05.

Keywords: Readiness, Tourism Destination



Introduction

Tourism is one of the most important sectors driving the Thai economy, which can continuously generate high income for Thailand. Tourism trend of Thailand in year 2019, increasing popularity in secondary provinces would be attributed from the government's policy to promote less visited areas and distribute revenues generated from tourism more evenly across the nation. (Kasikorn Bank, 2019) Thus, tourism development policy is a main driver to develop tourism in the country. Tourism development policy is also included in provincial development plan, as well as Songkhla Province Development Plan year 2018-2022. The plan aims to develop services infrastructures and logistics system to promote and develop tourism potential (Songkhla City Hall, 2020). Songkhla's main tourism destinations are Hatyai District and Maung Songkhla District which are well-known to tourists.

Namom District is one of sixteen districts of Songkhla province. 80 percent of population do farm. Tourism development in Namom District is in the keen interest of local people and the local government. There were several meetings held by Namom's local government and the Office of Tourism & Sport Songkhla participated to drive tourism in the area. Namom District is interesting to develop as a new tourism destination because of its location were connected to Hatyai District, not far from Malaysia border and near Hatyai International Airport. Namom District has various tourism resources such as natural tourism attraction, agro-tourism attraction, and cultural tourism attraction. However, the forms of tourism in Namom District are still needed more development to strengthen the tourism potential in many aspects.

Objectives

To study the readiness of tourism destinations in Namom District, Songkhla Province through tourism potential assessment in attractiveness, accessibility, amenity, and tourism activity

Literature review/ framework

The review of the literature provided some theories about the factors that attract tourists to tourism destinations.



Tourism Destination Attributes

The elements that attract tourists to a particular destination and that set it apart from others are called attributes. A previous study by Echtner and Ritchie (2003) compiled a list of the attributes frequently used to measure destination image by various researchers. The attributes that commonly measured were (1) scenery/natural attractions, (2) friendliness/hospitality/receptiveness, (3) costs/price levels, (4) climate, (5) tourist sites/activities, (6) night life/entertainment, (7) sports facilities and activities, (8) Local infrastructure/transportation (9) architecture/Buildings (10) Historic Sites/museums, (11) personal Safety, and (12) accessibility. Destination attributes play an important role in tourists' evaluation of the attractiveness, image, and satisfaction of a particular destination. Attribute factors such as attractiveness of facilities and quality of services have been proven to influence the tourist contentment. (Fang Meng et al., 2008).

Evaluating Destination Potential and Readiness

The preparation of a community for tourism is an important factor in determining the success or failure of tourism management in the area. It begins with an analysis of the potential of the community through a preliminary feasibility study. (Nattapat Manirochana, 2017). Boonlert Jittangwattana (2005 cited in Kanlaya Sawangkong, 2015) gave a definition of the potential of tourism that it refers to the readiness of tourist destinations in providing tourism services to visitors and each destination should have four important features: 1) attraction of the place, 2) ease of access, 3) impression, and 4) service. Because tourism comprised of different components to achieve success, various criteria were used to identify tourism potential of tourism destinations. Nongluck Popichit et al. (2013) stated that the assessment of tourism destination potential includes the examination of destination value or equity, physical aspects of destinations, readiness of destinations in terms of infrastructure, accessibility, environment, reputation and safety.

According to Edward and George (2008 cited in Slehat, 2018), two approaches were provided for evaluating potentials: 1) study the potential for tourism activities; and 2) explore tourist preferences and perceptions of a destination's attractiveness. In addition, Slehat (2018) also stated that determining destination potentials can be accomplished by inventorying and summarizing indicators which represent tourism resources and infrastructures. A dynamic method to evaluate destination potential is assessment the destination's components which suggested by Dickman (1997) on 5 A's. The 5 A's are:

(1) Attractions, (2) Accommodation, (3) Accessibility, (4) Amenities, and (5) Activities.

This may assume that the potential of tourism destinations means the readiness to provide good experiences to meet tourists' needs and satisfaction. The assessment of destinations attributes can realize necessary adjustments then lead to the quality improvement of tourism products and services by implementation of effective destination management strategies. As the level of overall satisfaction increases, it will positively influence tourists' loyalty.

Research Framework

The author surveyed tourism destinations in Namom then selected three places which were considered suitable for learning local experiences were 1) Kan Lao Hill, 2) Lungphan Garden, and 3) Father's Farm, then set up a group of tourists to visit the selected destinations to study the readiness of the tourism destinations in terms of attractiveness, accessibility, amenities, and activities.

The Three Selected Tourism Destinations

There were three tourism destinations in Namom District selected for a one-day trip shown in Figure 1, 2 and 3 as follows.



Figure 1 Kan Lao Hill



Figure 2 Lungphan Garden



Figure 3 Father's Farm

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative survey to find out the level of the potential of three tourism destinations in Namom District in order to study the readiness as tourism destinations. To get the data, the questionnaires were distributed to 31 tourists who joined a day trip to the selected destinations in November 2020. The questionnaires composed of three parts; 1) information about the respondents, 2) the questions applied the Likert scales with 5 levels of potential on attractiveness, accessibility, amenities, and tourism activities. that ranging from 5 to 1, and 3) suggestions from the respondents. The attributes of tourism destinations accessed were.

1. Attractiveness:

1.1 Physical aspect; Beautiful landscape/environment, the integrity of the natural/original state, quality of roads/routes,

1.2 Environmental aspect; air quality, good environment management, suitability of solid waste management

1.3 Value; tourist attractions are worth sightseeing, hospitality of the community/host, there is a way of life learning and interesting local culture

2. Accessibility:

2.1 Safety in traveling to tourist attractions

2.2 Clarity of route signs and signs that convey meaning in tourist attractions

2.3 The suitability, convenience and quality of access to tourist attractions (routes, roads or waterways, including vehicles for providing services)

2.4 The nature of the area in the site is a coherent area. It is easy to do tourism activities.



3. Amenities:

- 3.1 Readiness of personnel to provide services
- 3.2 There is enough space for parking.
- 3.3 Basic utilities such as toilets, electricity and water are sufficient.
- 3.4 There is a telephone signal and internet signal.
- 3.5 There are restaurants, shops, souvenir shops

4. Activities:

- 4.1 Tourism activities reflecting the uniqueness of the area
- 4.2 Diversity of tourism activities in tourism spots
- 4.3 Activities create learning for tourists
- 4.4 The duration of the activity is appropriate.

The average of 5 levels were.

Score range	Description
4.21-5.00	Very high level
3.21-4.20	High level
2.61-3.20	Moderate
1.81-2.60	Low level
1.00-1.80	Very low level

The analyses of the data were carried out with SPSS statistics software. Descriptive statistics with percentage, frequency, means, standard deviation, F-test and T-test were used to analyze the obtained data.

Results

The analysis of the data obtained through the questionnaires revealed that most of the sample group of tourists were female (51.6%) and 48.4 % were male. 61.3% of the respondents were Buddhist and 35.5% were Muslim. When comparing the results of the evaluation of the readiness of tourism destinations classified by gender and religion, the results shown in Table 1 and 2 as follows.



Table 1 Comparison of the tourist destinations readiness assessment results classified by gender

Readiness of the destinations	Gender				t-value	sig
	Male		Female			
	(\bar{x})	SD.	(\bar{x})	SD.		
Attractiveness	4.14	0.46	4.35	0.59	-1.132	.267
Accessibility	3.64	0.82	4.09	0.60	-1.778	.086
Amenities	3.76	0.72	4.09	0.75	-1.224	.231
Activities	4.25	0.56	4.29	0.64	-0.174	.863
Overall	3.97	0.56	4.22	0.61	-1.191	.243

From Table 1, the results showed tourists assessment of the readiness of all four aspects of tourism destinations classified by gender. There was no statistical difference between males and females (sig = .243) in overall, females had opinion at very high level (\bar{x} = 4.22) and males at a high level (\bar{x} = 3.97). When considering the potential of each aspect of various tourism destinations, the attractiveness showed no statistically significant difference (Sig = .267), females had very high level of opinion (\bar{x} = 4.35) and males had opinion at a high level (\bar{x} = 4.14). There was no statistical difference on accessibility (sig = .086), females had a high level of opinion (\bar{x} = 4.09) as well as males (\bar{x} = 3.64). There was no statistically significant difference in amenities (Sig = .231), females had opinion at high level (\bar{x} = 4.09), also males (\bar{x} = 3.76). There was no statistically difference in tourism activities (Sig = .863), females and males had opinion at very high level (\bar{x} = 4.29), and (\bar{x} = 4.25), respectively.



Table 2 Comparison of the tourist destinations readiness assessment results classified by religion

Readiness of the destinations	Religion				t-value	sig
	Islam		Buddhism			
	(\bar{x})	SD.	(\bar{x})	SD.		
Attractiveness	4.43	0.45	4.15	0.58	1.36	.184
Accessibility	4.22	0.57	3.74	0.75	1.85	.740
Amenities	4.19	0.72	3.80	0.75	1.37	.180
Activities	4.49	0.52	4.15	0.66	1.49	.149
Overall	4.34	0.50	3.98	0.61	1.65	.111

From Table 2, it was revealed that there was no statistical difference (Sig = .111) on tourism destinations readiness assessment results classified by religion in overall, the Muslim tourists had overall opinion at very high level (\bar{x} = 4.34) and the Buddhists scored at a high level (\bar{x} = 3.98). When considering the potential of each aspect of the three tourist destinations, attractiveness showed no statistical difference (sig = .184) between two religions, Muslim tourists had very high-level opinion (\bar{x} = 4.43) and the Buddhist tourists had opinion towards attractiveness at a high level (\bar{x} = 4.15). There was no statistical difference (Sig = .740) in accessibility, the results from Muslim tourists showed very high level (\bar{x} = 4.22) while the Buddhist tourists had opinion on accessibility at a high level (\bar{x} = 3.74). Amenities were not statistically different (sig = .180), both Muslim and Buddhist tourists had opinion at a high level (\bar{x} = 4.19 and \bar{x} = 3.80, respectively). As well as activities, there was no statistical difference (sig = .149), Muslim tourists had very high level of opinion toward activities (\bar{x} = 4.49) while Buddhist tourists rated at a high level (\bar{x} = 4.15).

The results of assessing the opinions of tourists towards the readiness of tourism destinations, including attractiveness of the destinations, accessibility, amenities, and activities of three tourist attractions, namely Kan Lao Hill, Lungphan Garden, and Father's Farm, are shown in Table 3 as follows.



Table 3 Comparison of readiness assessment results of the three tourism destinations

Readiness of the destinations	Destinations								F-value	sig	Different
	Kan Lao Hill (1)		Lungphan Garden (2)		Father's Farm (3)		Average				
	(\bar{x})	SD.	(\bar{x})	SD.	(\bar{x})	SD.	(\bar{x})	SD.			
Attractiveness	4.08	0.64	4.22	0.58	4.45	0.52	4.25	0.54	4.555*	.013	1-3
Accessibility	3.74	0.82	3.79	0.90	4.09	0.72	3.87	0.74	1.643	.199	NS
Amenities	3.73	0.90	3.77	0.89	4.30	0.68	3.93	0.74	4.531*	.013	1-3, 2-3
Activities	3.96	0.94	4.35	0.56	4.45	0.61	4.27	0.59	4.068*	.020	1-3
Overall	3.94	0.69	4.09	0.57	4.36	0.53	4.10	0.59	3.969*	.022	

* Statistically significant at the .05 level, NS; had no statistical difference.

From Table 3, the results demonstrated tourists' opinions on the readiness of three tourism destinations. Kan Lao Hill (1) had high level of overall opinion (\bar{x} = 3.94), high level of attractiveness (\bar{x} = 4.08), high level of accessibility (\bar{x} = 3.74), high level of amenities (\bar{x} = 3.73), as well as the activities were rated at high level (\bar{x} = 3.96). Lungphan Garden (2) was rated at a high level in overall (\bar{x} = 4.09), very high level of attractiveness (\bar{x} = 4.22), high level of accessibility (\bar{x} = 3.79), high level of amenities (\bar{x} = 3.77), and very high level of activities (\bar{x} = 4.35). Father's farm (3) was rated at very high level toward overall readiness (\bar{x} = 4.36), very high level of attractiveness (\bar{x} = 4.45), high level of accessibility (\bar{x} = 4.09), very high level of amenities (\bar{x} = 4.30), and very high level of activity (\bar{x} = 4.45).

When comparing the assessment results of the readiness of the three tourism destinations, it was shown that the respondents rated the attractiveness at very high level (\bar{x} = 4.25); Lungphan Garden was rated at very high level (\bar{x} = 4.22), Father's Farm was rated at the very high level (\bar{x} = 4.45), and Kan lao Hill was rated at a high level (\bar{x} = 4.08). There were statistically significant differences at .05 in attractiveness. The accessibility of the three destinations was rated at a high level (\bar{x} = 3.87) and there was no statistical difference in accessibility. The result of amenity potential was rated at a high level (\bar{x} = 3.93); Father's farm was rated at very high level (\bar{x} = 4.30) and the other two destinations were rated at a high level. There were statistically significant differences at the .05 level in amenities. According to activity potential, it was rated at very high level (\bar{x} = 4.27); Father's Farm was at very high level (\bar{x} = 4.45), Lungphan Garden was very high level



(\bar{x} = 4.35), and Kan Lao Hill was at a high level (\bar{x} = 3.96), There were statistically significant differences at .05 in activities.

Table 4 Suggestions on the readiness of the tourism management of the destinations

No.	Suggestions	Percentage
1	Provide clear directions and tourist attractions signs	17.38
2	Provide facilities such as souvenirs shop, accommodation, public transportation access to tourist attractions.	17.37
3	Develop a safe route to access tourist attraction	15.20
4	Increase activities for tourists to participate	13.12
5	Provide enough parking space	13.03
6	Provide clean and adequate restrooms	10.86
7	Provide more restaurants	6.52
8	Promote tourist attractions in various channels	6.52
		100

Conclusions and Discussion

Tourists assessed the readiness of three tourism destinations in Namom District. When considering by gender, males and females paid the very high importance to the activities provided in the tourism destinations and very high with the readiness of the activities provided. While the tourism readiness in attractiveness, accessibility, and amenity were rated at high level. It revealed that the tourism destinations must organize activities for tourists to participate in order to get impression whether it is a recreational activity, production practicing activities such as soap making, herbal juice making, cooking, homemade pizza cooking, those mentioned activities can be considered as creative tourism. Tourists were allowed to take part in activities, and they could bring the products back home. This finding is consistent with earlier research of Jiratchaya et al. (2018) on ability of tourist destination management which stated that a high level of ability of tourism management included high level of readiness and attractiveness of tourism activities, which impress tourist. Consequently, tourism activities are regarded as another important component of tourism. If tourists hold favorable and pleasant attitudes towards tourism



activities, the future intention to visit the tourism destinations will be elevated (Nongluck Popichit et al., 2013).

When classified the assessment of readiness by religion, both Islamic and Buddhism tourists assessed the readiness for tourism attractiveness and tourism activities quite very high, while accessibility and the amenities of the tourist attraction needed to be improved. When comparing the results assessing the readiness of those three destinations, accessibility was rated less than the other aspects. Therefore, tourism destinations need to provide clear directions and attraction signs. Provide amenities such as souvenir shops, accommodation, public transportation that access to tourist attractions. Develop quality of roads, increase activities for tourists to participate in accordance with the suggestions to improve the tourism destination readiness.

Besides, due to the pandemic of COVID-19, the safety from spreading of virus must be aware, and it will be a very important factor to attract tourists. As the geography and environment of of Namom district is natural and not crowded. It would be a good chance to compete in the market. However, it needs more preparation of the tourism destinations, host community, and local government to become a new tourist destination.

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