

ISSN 2730-2601

RICE Journal of Creative Entrepreneurship and Management, Vol.2, No.3, pp. 23-30,  
September-December 2021

© 2021 Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin, Thailand

doi: 10.14456/rjcm.2021.33

Received 17.08.21/ Revised 29.08.21/ Accepted 10.09.21

## **Promotion of Gastronomy Tourism in Thailand after the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Puri Chunkajorn

Culinary for Health Program, College of Integrative Medicine  
Dhurakij Pundit University, Bangkok, Thailand

Amphai Booranakittipinyo\*

International Creative Industry Entrepreneurship Program  
Rattanakosin International College of Creative Entrepreneurship  
Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

\*Email: amphai.boo@rmutr.ac.th  
Corresponding author

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this academic paper is to propose guidelines to promote gastronomy tourism in Thailand after the Covid-19 pandemic. The promotion plan includes (1) components of gastronomy tourism, (2) types of gastronomy tourism, (3) guideline for the development of gastronomy tourism in Thailand, and (4) measures of food service establishments for hygiene safety from COVID-19. As known, tourists have been halted worldwide by COVID-19 and they yearned for trips to their desired destinations. Since foreign tourists have viewed gastronomic tourism in Thailand as a good attraction, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) needs to look for cooperation from those involved in the tourism industry to develop promoting guidelines to bring back activities of gastronomic tourism for foreign tourists who wish to visit Thailand after the lift-up of lockdowns in various countries. Gastronomy tourism in Thailand offers a variety of herbal ingredients for cooking variety of famous dishes with hygiene safety standards of the gastronomic establishment. This paper reports the proposed guidelines to promote gastronomy tourism in Thailand as preparation in various dimensions for food business operators and tourists who particularly come for gastronomy attractions after the impacts of Covid-19.

**Keywords:** *Guidelines, gastronomy tourism, food service establishments, Covid-19*

### **1. Introduction**

Thailand's tourism started to decline from the end of 2019 with the Covid-19 outbreak in Wuhan, Hubei Province, People's Republic of China. As of now, the number of infected people in many countries has increased, and the death tolls fluctuated in different waves (Kasikorn Research Center, 2020). In May 2021, Thailand had only 40,447 foreign tourists visiting Thailand in January-June 2021, which was a decrease of 99.40 percent. Moreover, the number of domestic trips was 24.59 million people/time, which was a decrease by 38.45 percent, with a record of the hotel business occupancy rate dropped by 17.23 percent. In this scenario, Thailand has to wait until 2024 for Thailand tourism to pick up the aftermath of Covid 19 (Winaisathien, 2021).

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2021) revealed numerous projects stumbled over the Covid-19 pandemic. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has been assigned by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports to move forward with the development of new tourism measures and products. The purpose is to revitalize the Thai tourism sector from

2021 onward while keeping up with market demands in *five groups of domestic tourism products* as follows:

- (1) Health tourism
- (2) High-end tourism and creating new experiences such as yacht tourism
- (3) Tourism with special interests, such as the singles route, the faith route, and the like
- (4) Gastronomy tourism
- (5) Sports tourism

Preparations for tourism recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic require that tourism businesses be attractive in a variety of forms, especially the gastronomy tourism business which is part of the domestic tourism policies. To attract tourists to gastronomy tourism through activities, the Tourism Authority of Thailand has used the Michelin Guide which provides information on the ranking of the best quality restaurants to guarantee the quality of ingredients, taste, creativity and consistency of signature dishes to attract tourists.

## **2. Concept of Gastronomy Tourism**

“Food” is part of the UNESCO creative cities network. Therefore, the issue of food and tourism is interesting to culinary academics and researchers. According to their studies, food is part of creative tourism activities and value to artistic, cultural and social expressions. Values can be easily seen in society especially local food that can be used as an incentive for tourists from different cultures to enjoy learning from food (Scarpato, 2002; UNESCO, 2008). In other words, food can greatly enhance one’s travel experience. Food can act as a medium to stimulate tourists' interest in a tourist destination (Cohen & Avieli, 2010). Often, the uniqueness of the local cuisine is used to create a “brand” of tourist attractions. Food can serve as a tool to develop strategies to attract local and international tourists (Hall & Mitchell, 2000; Hall & Sharples, 2003).

Gastronomy tourism has become a hot topic these days as well as one of the components of such a rapidly growing tourist destination as Thailand in recent years. Tourism businesses in many countries are well aware of the importance of food as a major attraction to tourists. It is not only the consumption of food in a meal, but also the creation of a new experience through tasty food to learn about culture, society and way of life of local people in tourist attractions (Booparkob et al., 2017).

## **3. Elements of Gastronomy Tourism**

Chunkajorn & Na Thalang (2021) emphasized attraction and incentives as main causes for tourists to make travel decisions. There are three considerations:

(1) *Behavior of tourists.* The type of tourism as gastronomy attracts tourists with a passion for new local food ingredients or those they have experienced before. Months and seasons are therefore deciding factors for travelers to visit to try their favorite dishes at particular time of the year. Many food cultures affect tourists’ interest in gastronomy tourism. In addition, accessibility to gastronomy tourism via promotion of famous restaurants online has become an important marketing tool to determine today's travelers’ decision on gastronomy destinations.

(2) *Food perception.* Local products or ingredients show distinctiveness of special dishes and the cooking method is the strength in presenting the diversity of food in gastronomy tourism. Creating food cultural awareness through gastronomy tourism activities will immerse tourists in a memorable experience with words of mouth. Local food ingredients with unique presentation of famous restaurants in the designated area, which

have been continuously promoted online, will keep tourists' craving to visit the target destination, and later on share experiences to their family members and friends. As a result, the word of mouth through online media can reach other potential tourists quickly and efficiently.

(3) *Image of food.* The image of food comes from unique ingredients, health attributes, food activities, service experience, seasons and meal times in creating pleasant memories for tourists to remember and revisit. Along with the experience of food activities, tourists can easily and quickly communicate the food image they remembered to their friends via social media and in turn stimulate viewers' interest in gastronomy tourism as shared in the pictures.

#### **4. Model of Food Tourism in Thailand**

Santawee (2019) summarized guidelines for promoting gastronomy tourism and creating an appealing image of gastronomy tourism.

##### **A. Guidelines for promoting gastronomy tourism**

- (1) Establishing a clear policy to promote food tourism
- (2) Integrating the collaboration of organizations related to food tourism
- (3) Having strategies for management and marketing of gastronomy tourism
- (4) Creating knowledge and developing personnel for gastronomy tourism
- (5) Inviting communities and private businesses to participate in promoting gastronomy tourism

##### **B. Guidelines for creating an appealing image of gastronomy tourism**

- (1) Controlling food hygiene
- (2) Establishing standards of Thai food
- (3) Overturning objectionable excuses and the culture of Thai people
- (4) Promoting street food in gastronomy tourism
- (5) Interpolating food stories in various public and online media
- (6) Communicating signature dishes via popular social media

The guidelines for creating an image of gastronomy tourism during and after the Covid-19 condition require strict cleanliness and hygiene control measures. Gastronomy tourism safety can boost confidence for tourists in both food and places of visit.

#### **5. Guidelines for the Development of Gastronomy Tourism in Thailand**

Yokkhun, Ratchaphakdee & Phitchayaron (2020) asserted that gastronomy tourists would prefer four activities:

- (1) Visiting and tasting
- (2) Learning to cook
- (3) Eating local food
- (4) Visiting food festivals

Obviously, the development of gastronomy tourism requires that local identity be created via a story telling. Tourists want to be involved in cooking to create new experiences. Their attendance at and participation in a food festival serves as a good publicity through social media; recipes can be passed as local wisdom down from one generation to the next. Tourists also prefer a tour program with activities about food and sightseeing. Food business operators in the private sector can be referred to by the Tourism Authority of Thailand for food-related events in order to attract tourists.

## 6. Gastronomy Tourism Potential

Chunkajorn & Na Thalang (2021) reported that gastronomy tourism will be effective when covering all aspects of gastronomy tourism. Entrepreneurs involved in gastronomy tourism need to understand gastronomy tourism in many dimensions, such as local food tourism activities, way of life as part of natural resources, food processing, marketing products, and the like. It is vitally important to link or formulate a strategy together with the service marketing mix, including:

- (1) Product: ingredient, taste, cleanliness, quantity, quality, decoration, outstanding menu and food hygiene
- (2) Price: money that consumers have to pay to service providers, compatibility with quantity and quality and price tags
- (3) Place: location, orderliness, ease of access to distribution
- (4) Promotion: public relations in tourist attractions, festivals, online media for customers to access services and provide necessary information to customers, ease of communication and customer retention activities
- (5) Process: the customer service process as efficient, accurate, fast, quality and orderly
- (6) Productivity and Quality: the ability of entrepreneurs to be ready to serve customers quickly and consistently with quality
- (7) People: ability of staff, dress, human relations, customer recognition and customers' satisfaction
- (8) Physical evidence: the internal and external environment, the atmosphere in the shop, cleanliness, including the area for organizing activities
- (9) Particularity: uniqueness and worth value of the product. It is a product that tourists buy for relatives and friends that will satisfy both the giver and the receiver
- (10) Publicity and Public Relations: credibility, images of products and services for consumers' acceptance

Gastronomy tourism business operators or government officials, private organizations, independent organizations need to be involved in the development of gastronomy tourist attractions on the basis of service marketing mix in all dimensions.

## 7. Measures for Gastronomy Service Establishments during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Wattanayingcharoenchai (2021) suggested preventive measures during the Covid-19 pandemic to the Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health Thailand that restaurant service areas be monitored as follows:

- (1) Screen employees before entering the work area.
- (2) Define clearly screening points, registration, entrances and exits.
- (3) Keep a distance of at least 1-2 meters between people to reduce congestion.
- (4) Ventilate the whole work and service areas.
- (5) Employees and customers wear medical masks at all times.
- (6) Clean tables immediately after service, including the bathroom common touch points and waste bins.
- (7) Organize sole personal food equipment without sharing.
- (8) Evaluate the restaurant's service procedure via *Thai Stop COVID-19 Plus App* and clearly post a Covid-19 measure notice for employees to observe, followed by assessment scanned and sent through *Thai Safe Thai App* before starting work and upon leaving the workplace.
- (9) Use the online queue booking system for onsite and take-out service, as applicable.

In case of finding infected guests at the entry check-point, the restaurant needs to notify the Covid-19 emergency call number immediately. The required action is to close the shop or service place immediately for at least 1-3 days to clean and disinfect thoroughly according to the virus control measures imposed by the Ministry of Public Health Thailand. If the store or service place is to be reopened, the manager needs to assess all specified measures to ensure confidence for customers or gastronomy tourists to revisit the restaurant with trust in its hygiene safety precautions.

## 8. Conclusion

Gastronomy tourism deals with a journey to experience food after the Covid-19 pandemic for entertainment and recreation purposes at culinary sites, food festivals, food markets, cooking shows and demonstrations, and other related activities that have been interrupted at the times of infection waves of one to four from 2019-2021—rather a long time after the first outbreak. Currently, tourists are longing for resuming the experience they used to enjoy during their previous visits.

Based on the information from other preceding researchers or specialists reported so far, the authors of this paper would like to propose guidelines to promote gastronomy tourism in Thailand after the Covid-19 pandemic. The promotion plan includes (1) components of gastronomy tourism, (2) types of gastronomy tourism, (3) guidelines for the development of gastronomy tourism in Thailand, and (4) measures of food service establishments for hygiene safety from COVID-19. The guidelines are to provide an effective approach to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 by hygiene safety measures to satisfy customers' needs and boost confidence in tourists when planning and selecting their gastronomy trips to Thailand. The guidelines integrate four considerations in the promotion plan into eight perspectives as follow:

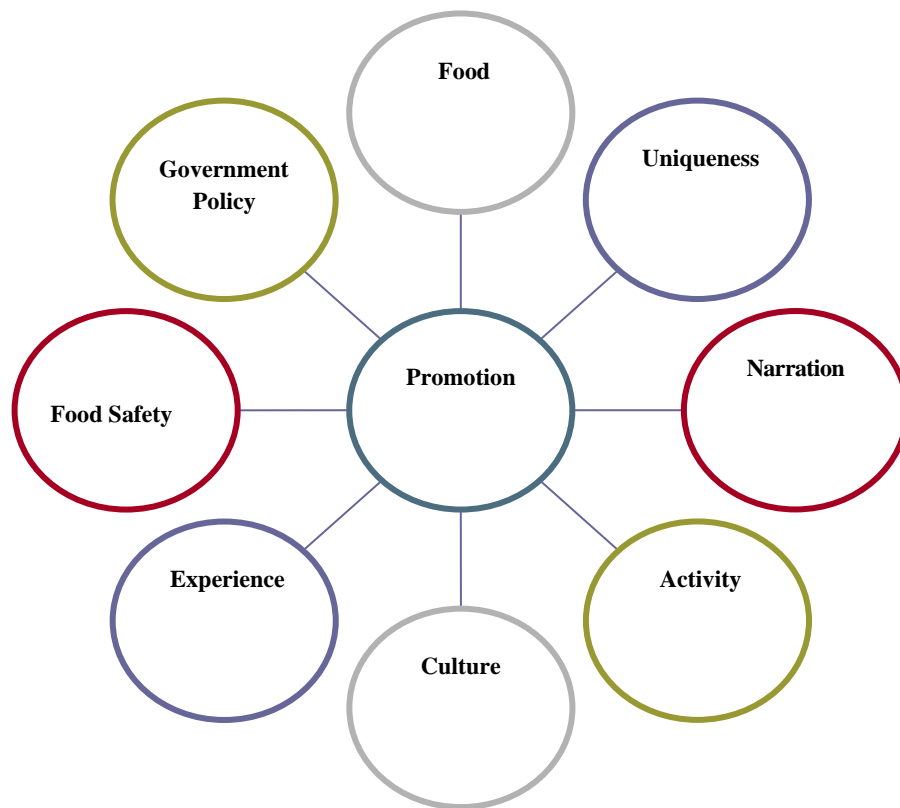
- (1) Nature of Thai food: the focus is on ingredients for health and outstanding presentation of dishes
- (2) Uniqueness: There are unique cultural stories related to Thai culture and the communities involved in growing herbal plants for ingredients and beautiful scenery of the local areas for herb gardens or plantations as tourist attractions.
- (3) Narration. Storytelling or food presentation creates a mood for tourists to feel indulged into the beauty and aroma of tasty dishes. Food stories are told by local people of the community concerned how special dishes were created to signify persons or celebrate festivities. All these can be communicated to potential customers and tourists via social media. Their shared photos and words of mouth by personal comments can further disseminate information on uniqueness of authentic Thai food experience to other potential gastronomy tourists.
- (4) Activity. Tourists enjoy learning local culture by visiting places or participating in various trips on the tour and local food activities according to their interests. Tourists tend to be interested in cooking activities as part of creative tourism.
- (5) Culture. Local communities can clearly reflect Thai culture and life with natural selling points in history, tradition, ways of daily life, and food preparation for cooking into delicious dishes as culinary identities of the community concerned.
- (6) Experience. Tourists are interested in gastronomy tourism from their past visit to gastronomy destinations and are curious to try new experiences to enrich their gastronomy solicitation.
- (7) Food Safety. Cleanliness of food is the first in priority to reduce contamination from various pathogens. Established cleanliness standards and systematic inspection of

food operators and food handlers to consumers are required to ensure meticulous measures of hygiene safety.

(8) Government Policy. The government’s policy and its implementation on hygiene safety precautions for gastronomy tourism is a national agenda. This is to assist and support entrepreneurs, food service providers, and those food business operators in gastronomy tourism to gain public recognition and trust in hygiene safety measures as monitored by the authority concerned.

The researchers summarized the proposed guidelines for promoting gastronomy tourism in Thailand after the Covid-19 pandemic in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Guidelines for Promoting Gastronomy Tourism in Thailand after the Covid-19 Pandemic



**9. Suggestions**

The researchers have the following suggestions based on the proposed guidelines:

- (1) The guidelines for promoting gastronomy tourism in Thailand must be mutually justified by the government and the gastronomy tourism industry in terms of necessity to ensure tourists' safety for sustainable food business operations in creating both income and reputation for Thailand.
- (2) Gastronomy tourism in Thailand requires the government’s clear-cut policy on food safety measures and a good system of follow-up inspections, including travel safety. Public relations can be done through social media that focus on specific groups of tourists from designated countries.
- (3) Gastronomy tourism activities need to be routed in a clear format, with calendars, seasons, events and festivals related to food variety in different areas of

Thailand. Scheduled public relations can help create tourists' awareness of the culinary events and food festivals throughout the year.

(4) Small food business entrepreneurs need support from the government for loans with low interest rates or loans free of interest for a specific period of time for their daily operations. They also need help with *online marketing for a digital distribution channel of value-added products and services* for effective contacts with their customers (Anukul & Singporn, 2020; Chamnanna, 2020).

With the proposed promotion guidelines and the given suggestions, the researchers expect that gastronomy tourism can definitely bring tourists back to Thailand to enjoy their unique culinary experience as desired in selecting Thailand as one of their favorite tourist destinations.

## 10. The Authors

The first author Puri Chunkajorn is a renowned chef in Thailand and now in charge of the Culinary for Health Program, College of Integrative Medicine, Dhurakij Pundit University, Bangkok, Thailand. The co-author Amphai Booranakittipinyo is the Director of the International Creative Industry Entrepreneurship Program at Rattanakosin International College of Creative Entrepreneurship (RICE), Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin (RMUTR), Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. Both authors share academic and research interest in the areas of tourism and hospitality business operations, gastronomy tourism, and creative entrepreneurship and management.

## 11. References

- Anukul, N. & Singporn, P. (2020). Construction of multi media to add value to nostalgic tourism for aging clients. *RICE Journal of Creative Entrepreneurship and Management*, 1(2), 53-59. doi: 10.14456/rjcm.2020.11.
- Booparkob, Y., Khetjenkarn, S., Sawangdee, Y. & Wongmanee, J. (2017). The role of local cuisines in creative tourism process: a case study of Lao Khrang Ethnic Group in Chai Nat Province. *Dusit Thani College Journal*, 11(special), 93-108.
- Chamnanna, P. (2020). Forecasting future tourism market trends. *RICE Journal of Creative Entrepreneurship and Management*, 1(1), 41-54. doi: 10.14456/rjcm.2020.4.
- Chunkajorn, P. & Na Thalang, C. (2021). Gastronomy tourism components and service marketing mix factors of Thai tourists in gastronomy tourism to Thailand Riviera. *Dusit Thani College Journal*, 15(1), 66-82.
- Cohen, E., & Avieli, N. (2010). Food tourism: attraction and impediment. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(4), 755-778.
- Hall, C.M. & Mitchell, R. (2000). We are what we eat: food, tourism and globalization. *Tourism Culture and Communication*, 2, 29-37.
- Hall, C.M. & Sharples, L. (2003). The consumption of experiences or the experience of consumption. (Online). <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780080477862/chapters/10.4324/9780080477862-9>.

Kasikorn Research Center. (2020). Covid-19 dragging the Thai economy in year 63. (Online). <https://www.kasikornresearch.com/th/analysis/k-econ/economy/Pages/Covid-ThaiEco-050363.aspx>.

Ministry of Tourism & Sports, Thailand. (2021). Tourism situation in May 2021, 1-7.

Santawee, K. (2019). Guideline to creating Thailand's image as a food tourism destination among ASEAN countries. *The Journal of Social Communication Innovation*, 7(2), 59-70.

Scarpato, R. (2002). Gastronomy as a tourist product: the perspective of gastronomy studies. In Hjalager, A.M. & Richards, G. (Eds.), (2020), *Tourism and Gastronomy*. (Online). [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305386515\\_Gastronomy\\_as\\_a\\_tourist\\_product\\_The\\_perspective\\_of\\_gastronomy\\_studies](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305386515_Gastronomy_as_a_tourist_product_The_perspective_of_gastronomy_studies).

Wattanayingcharoenchai, S. (2021). Anamaimedia. Department of Health: Recommends restaurants in dark red areas, Enhanced security after unlocking. (Online). <https://multimedia.anamai.moph.go.th/news/230664-01/>

Winaisathien, T. (2021). What's up with "Thai tourism" in a coma until 67. *Thansettakij Newspaper*, 15.

Yokkhun, A., Ratchaphakdee, C. & Phitchayarom, T. (2020). The approach of gastronomy tourism development for Thailand. *Eau Heritage Journal Social Science and Humanity*, 11(1), 60-68.