

The Circumstances Pertaining to the Behaviors, Demands and Gratification in Tourist Engagement in Coffee Tourism

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Abstract

“Coffee tourism,” revolving around first-hand experiences and accumulation of insightful knowledge in coffee plantations, allows tourists participate in activities of their interest, as well as to visit nearby attractions. The aim of this research was to investigate behaviors, demands, and the gratification level of tourists who engaged in coffee tourism across Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son, and Lampang provinces. The research was carried out by inviting 400 Thai and foreign coffee tourists to complete a questionnaire. It was found that the majority of the Thai coffee tourists visited coffee tourism destinations for the first time for recreational purposes. Not only did they aim to gain insight into coffee farming and production directly from the farmers, but they were also attracted by a tour of coffee plantations. Overall, the results suggested that the Thai coffee tourists were highly satisfied with the coffee tourism management in northern Thailand (mean = 3.80). Similarly, the responses from foreign coffee tourists also highlighted their first visits to coffee tourism destinations for recreational purposes. Apart from their demand for coffee-related product in the form of local produce and handicrafts, they were interested in extending their knowledge of coffee tourism with the assistance of local tourist guides. The overall results suggested that the foreign coffee tourists were highly satisfied with the coffee tourism management in northern Thailand (mean = 3.93).

Keywords: Tourists Behaviors, Tourists Demands, Tourists Satisfaction, Coffee Tourism

Background and Significance of the Study

Tourism is one of main sectors of the Thai economy which has shown constant potential and growth over the years. Based on tourism statistics in 2017, Tourism contributed 2.754 trillion baht to the Thai economy consisting of 930 billion baht from Thai tourists and 1.824 trillion

baht from international tourists (Department of Tourism, 2018). Taking into account the current tourism situation, it is of note that tourist behaviors have changed in favor of special interest tourism (Akinci and Kasalak, 2016). With their appetite for coffee, a number of tourists are seeking to fulfill their need for a coffee-related experience. Such tourist needs offer Thailand an opportunity to create a unique brand identity of its tourism products, to promote its cultures and traits, as well as to strive towards international recognition (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2011).

Coffee is irrefutably one of the world's most influential cash crops. According to the Department of Business Development (2017), Thailand in 2016, with approximately 5 to 6 million tons of green coffee produce, contributed 0.5% of the world's total green coffee produce of 10 million tons. It was also predicted that there would be a higher demand from green coffee consumers in both domestic and international markets. Novelli (2005) argued that coffee is considered a sector of gastronomic tourism. Brand development of the destinations was encouraged by the different forms of cultural experience, intriguing coffee-related cultures and ways of life specific to each region, unique coffee processing facilities and extended history of the regions. The highlights of coffee tourism lie upon collecting and accumulating coffee-related experiences (Joliffie and Bui, 2006). 80 to 90% of Thailand is blessed with climate and geography suitable for producing excellent quality coffee beans; especially the Arabica coffee which is inclined to grow well at the altitude of 1,200 to 1,600 meters above sea level. Such location plays a pivotal role in operating the business and in encouraging Arabica coffee farming in the North of Thailand. The region enjoys both geographical advantage and ideal temperature for fruitful Arabica coffee harvests that provide unique, region-specific taste (National Food Institute, 2015).

Based on the before mentioned factors relating to the unique features of coffee tourism, the researcher aspires to study behaviors, demands, and the gratification level of tourists who participated in coffee tourism in the North of Thailand in order to inspire those who are involved in the tourism industry to work together towards enhancing their potentials as well as to take initiatives in tourism management and in accommodating both Thai and foreign tourists. Coffee-related tourism is a newly developed type of tourism in Thailand which responds to tourists' special interest in coffee. With the support and encouragement it deserves to fulfill its true potential, coffee tourism will definitely thrive and substantially boost Thai tourism. On top of that, it can be rendered an effective economic and social development tool for the country in the long run.

Literature Review

Tourism and Special Interest Tourism: Tourism is to travel for recreational or business purposes, and it involves service provision. By realizing the true potential of the tourism sector in social development and in stimulating the economy of developing countries, it plays a significant role in boosting the economy, creating employment for the locals, and improving quality of life. Also, it helps the country to cultivate international relations and brings about peace and prosperity (World Tourism Organization, 2012). Buhalis (2000) purported that another essential factor in developing tourism is the needs of tourists. The ability to identify those needs contributes to the most effective tourism plans and strategies. To incorporate the 6As framework which consists of Attractions, Accessibility, Amenities, Available Package, Activities, and Ancillary Services when interpreting the behaviors and needs of tourists visiting coffee tourism destinations will shed light upon their variety of needs. The insightful information regarding this matter will help ensure efficiency and success of coffee tourism management that meet tourist demands. Also, classification of tourism by purposes of travel has to be taken into consideration as it divides tourism into three main categories: Leisure Tourism, Business Tourism, and Special Interest Tourism.

Tourist Behavior is important in tourism administration and to various businesses in the service industry such as hotels, transports, tour agencies, restaurants, and other businesses that engage in providing services to tourists. Therefore, with a profound understanding of tourist behaviors in terms of both their backgrounds and attitudes, effective tourism strategies can be designed and implemented in order to address their needs. Once their needs and behaviors are recognized, marketing and promotion of the tourism sector in each province will be more constructive and are able to achieve the goals established. The ability to explore the backgrounds and behaviors of tourists is crucial in both hospitality and tourism industries which are the core areas of the tourism sector. It is advisable that those whose professions center around tourist-related activities hold insights into tourists' cultures, lifestyles, characteristics, and behaviors. Such comprehension prepares professionals, providing them with reliable guidelines on interpreting tourists' agency and analyzing impacts of their behaviors. Recognizing behavioral disparities among tourists from different countries assist those concerned with the tourism sector in adjusting and fulfilling tourist needs as well as in performing their duties with ease. However, employers or owners of tourism-related businesses must clearly demonstrate their customer service mindset. In the endeavor to win customer satisfaction and positive impression, service providers are obligated to have adequate understanding of their clients. On top of that, it is necessary to always remind oneself that the perception of clients determines the success of a business. Clients are offered an extensive selection of service providers and have no need to remain loyal to a particular operation; whereas clients' approval is of paramount importance for the survival of businesses. Consequently, service providers who pursue professional achievements must keep in mind tourist behaviors and reasons behind their buying decision. Apart from understanding the kinds of product or service they purchase and what influence their purchase decisions, it is important to consider when, where, and how often they purchase the service as well as the way which they evaluate the service received (Vuuren and Slabbert, 2011).

Allenby (2000) defined special interest tourists as tourists who demonstrate detailed and specific needs with an aim to acquire first-hand experience in their desired destination without shedding any negative effects on the community. Special interest tourists, filled not only with curiosity but also eager for knowledge and hands-on experience, aim for opportunities to express aesthetic appreciation, to build up a collection of mementos, to express individuality, to gain social acceptance, as well as to be among the pioneers who can share their unique travel experiences with others. The kind of tourism experience that will satisfy special interest tourists must offer value for money and the ability to fulfill their expectations of service standard and avant-garde tourism-related activities that lead to a sense of pride. The needs of special interest tourists have become determining factors in indicating the market trends which, nowadays, center around the egocentric nature of many individuals, contributing to their decisions about lifestyles, social status, and cultures. In some occasions, 'special interest tourism' is also referred to as 'alternative tourism' which is essentially distinct from mass tourism and mainstream tourism especially in terms of incentive, drives, and purpose of travel (Douglas et al, 2001). Special interest tourism is not limited entirely to tourists' journey to the destination of their interest. They are also welcome to participate in a variety of special interest activities.

In conclusion, special interest tourism connotes travel or spending of leisure time on special interest activities that hold a fascination for tourists who are provided with services they need. In response to the issue of tourists whose specific needs failed to be addressed by common tourism revolving around sightseeing of cities or natural attractions, special interest tours that feature activities such as forest trekking, diving, golfing, attending sporting events, exploring archaeological heritages have been introduced and developed. Tourists can also

decide to take part in such special interest activities during a regular holiday excursion or to undertake several activities within a single trip. All things considered, coffee tourism is a type of special interest tourism developed to fulfill the needs of tourists whose interest lies in coffee and coffee consumption. These tourists aspire to travel and broaden their knowledge of coffee as well as to familiarize themselves with travel experience concerning coffee, and to ultimately increase their travel-related values. Therefore, in organizing coffee tourism activities, careful consideration of tourists' travel objectives of the destination, behaviors, and needs of both Thai and international tourists will bring about the accurate responses to their needs and, ultimately their satisfaction.

Coffee Tourism: Joliffie (2010) described Coffee Tourism as relates to coffee consumption, history, tradition, products, and culture. Coffee Tourism usually involves a visit to coffee farms or coffee cooperatives so that tourists can explore the regional history of coffee, and gain fundamental knowledge regarding the coffee market, coffee makers, farming and harvesting, and selection of coffee beans. A coffee tour always culminates in a coffee tasting as well as shopping for products and souvenirs made from coffee (Tucker, 2011). Tourism mostly centers around tour programs, and coffee tours will enable an increase in coffee cultivation which can help reduce risks in the the local economy. Development of brand identity and logo also contribute to an increase in brand recognition among tourists and visitors (Almeyda-Ibáñez and George, 2017). The geographical standard of coffee tourism destinations can be guaranteed by Geographical Indicators or GI with an emphasis on the great taste of coffee, local cuisine, cultural diversity, and history which capture a great deal of attention from tourists (Lyon, 2011). The definition of Coffee Tourism suggests that it involves travel experiences in coffee plantations. Coffee tourists enjoy visiting coffee tourism destinations and gaining educational experience regarding coffee farming and production (Karlsson and Karlsson, 2009), then they are able to join activities that they find most appealing which range from a tour of coffee plantation and study of coffee harvesting and processing to shopping for products and souvenirs made from coffee and traveling to nearby tourist attractions.

Classification of coffee tourism destinations underlines the periods of travel and diversity of coffee tourist attractions. Coffee tourism destinations can be classified into 4categories. First, natural attractions which encompass coffee plantation and its landscapes; these are the primary attractions for coffee tourists who are appealed to traditional coffee farming area showcasing the growth of coffee produces and beautiful views. Second, attractions that are human-made but not originally designed to attract coffee tourists; attractions of this kind such as modern coffee houses that as well present history and traditions of coffee do not target only coffee tourists but also other groups of visitors. Third, human-made tourists attractions built deliberately to attract coffee tourists; attractions of this kind such as coffee museums were founded to educate tourists on coffee in specific regions. Some of the world's most reputable coffee museums are the Burg Coffee Museum in Hamburg, Germany and the Chiccod'oro Coffee Museum in Balerna, Switzerland. Lastly, coffee-related festivals and special events; coffee festivals are one of the highlights that attract coffee tourists. Such festivals usually take place in urban and suburban areas. One of the internationally famous coffee events is the Tea and Coffee World Cup Exhibition and Symposium held in various countries in collaboration with Tea & Coffee Trade Journal (Swarbrooke, 1995).

Based on the four categories of coffee tourism destinations, it can be inferred that Thailand possesses in abundance the potential to accommodate tourists and manage its coffee tourism resources which will generate to the development of coffee tourism; especially in the North of Thailand. The region has been enjoying popularity among Thai and international tourists. It is undoubtedly able to cater to tourist needs of exploring different types of attractions. A number of destinations can be nominated for all four categories of coffee tourism attractions;

for natural attractions: Doi Chang Village, Wawee Sub-district, and Mai Suai District in Chiang Rai, Mae Kampong District and Mae On District in Chiang Mai, for human-made attractions that were not originally design to attract tourists: Doi Tung Development Project, Mae Fah Luang District in Chiang Rai, Doi Ang Khang Royal Project, Fang District in Chaing Mai, for human-made attractions purposely built to attract tourists: Doi Chaang Coffee Estate, Wawee Sub-district, Mae Suai District in Chiang Rai, and Baan Huay Hom, Mae La Noi District in Mae Hong Son, for festivals and special events: Wawee Tea and Doi Chaang Coffee Tastings Festival held every year in Chiang Rai at the end of December.

Research Methodology

The population for this study comprised 6,485,791 Thai and foreign tourists who traveled in Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son, and Lampang provinces (Department of Tourism, 2014). A sample in this study, chosen using Accidental Sampling and Convenience Sampling (Naiyapatana, 2005), is Thai and foreign tourists who were on their vacations in coffee tourism destinations across Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son, and Lampang provinces who have undertaken coffee-related tourism activities offered in the destinations such as a tour of coffee farming and production area, or coffee tasting. However, it is not necessary that the sample must be coffee drinkers. Using Yamane (1973), the sample size was calculated at 95% confidence level with a margin of error equal to 0.05 (Hickey et al, 2018). The output was 398; however, to facilitate the data collection, it was rounded up to 400. The number of respondents in each province is also demonstrated in percentage. The questionnaire was available in both Thai and English; the former was used with Thai tourists and the latter with foreign tourists who have an adequate command of English. See Table 1 below for details of sample group acquisition.

Table 1 Number of Tourists in the Sample Group in Each Province

Province	Number of Tourists (persons)	Percentage	Sample Group (persons)	Number of Respondents (persons)
Chiang Rai	Thais 1,553,663	24	95.82	96
	Foreigners 316,025	5	19.49	19
Chiang Mai	Thais 2,463,541	38	151.93	152
	Foreigners 1,624,755	25	100.20	100
Mae Hong Son	Thais 131,218	2	8.09	8
	Foreigners 50,866	1	3.14	3
Lampang	Thais 312,534	5	19.28	19
	Foreigners 33,189	1	2.05	2
Total	6,485,791	100	400.00	400

Source: Department of Tourism, 2014

Research Instruments: A questionnaire was designed to inquire about the tourists who participated in coffee tourism and their behaviors, needs, and satisfaction of coffee tourism management in the North of Thailand. The questionnaire consists of close-ended questions, concerning general information of the respondent, his/her behaviors, needs, and satisfaction towards the coffee tourism destination(s) in terms of their potentials with an emphasis upon Attractions, Accessibility, Amenities, Available Package, Activities, and Ancillary Services according to Buhalis' 6As framework. Multiple choices (based on a five-point rating scale) were provided in the questionnaire to allow respondents to accurately respond to the close-ended questions.

Development and Validation of Research Instrument: The validity of the questionnaire was studied at length. Five experts were asked to examine the validity of each item in the questionnaire which was also primarily reviewed by the thesis advisor. Content validity and language appropriacy was determined through an Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC). The IOC score of 0.926 is within the acceptable range (Teerasorn, 2009). The questionnaire was then adjusted according to the experts' suggestions, before being presented to the thesis advisor for the final revision. The finalized questionnaire was then tried out with 30 tourists who were not in the sample group to respond to the complete questionnaire. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The resulting output was 0.948 which is considered statistically acceptable (Kaiwan and Palaprom, 2010).

Procedures: From April 2016 to March 2017, the researcher carried out the data collection from the samples using the validated questionnaire. The data was collected in several districts across Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son and Lampang provinces in which coffee tourism activities were organized including Mae Fah Luang District and Mae Suai District in Chiang Rai, Doi Saket District, Mae On District, Chom Thong District, Fang District, and Mueng Chiang Mai District in Chiang Mai, Mae La Noi District in Mae Hong Son, and finally, Mueng Pan District, Lampang.

Data Analysis: The completed questionnaires were reviewed to ensure validity. The data were then encoded and analyzed using statistical analysis software.

Results

After the sample group which comprises of both Thai and foreign tourists who participated in coffee tourism in the northern region of Thailand were successfully studied, the results can be concluded as follows:

First, a total of 275 Thai coffee tourists completed the questionnaire. In terms of the demographic information, the responses show that out of all the respondents, more than 59% of them were female. About 60% were aged between 21 and 30. About 58% had a bachelor's degree. Nearly 75% were single, and about 29% were students or university students. About 38% stated that it was their first visit to the coffee tourism destinations in the North of Thailand. 40% were based in Bangkok, and 28% earned about 10,001 to 20,000 baht per month.

With respect to tourist behaviors, approximately 52% learned about the destinations from the Internet, while more than 92% encouraged an online promotion of the destinations. 48% traveled to the coffee processing facilities by means of private cars. 52% spent between 1,000 to 5,000 baht on transportation. Over 75% spent a maximum of 1,000 baht to participate in activities in the area. Nearly 56% spent a maximum of 1,000 baht on food and beverage. About 53% spent a maximum of 1,000 on accommodation. More than 64% spent a maximum of 1,000 baht on souvenirs. About 68% spent a maximum of 1,000 baht on other expenses. On the subject of tourist needs, the majority of Thai tourists studied (67%), traveled to the destinations for recreational purposes, followed by nearly 22% whose intentions were to gain educational experience and to taste fresh coffee directly from the coffee processing facilities. Almost 54% spent one to two days in the destinations. About 77% desired a visit in winter, during the coffee harvest season. Approximately 75% expressed their needs in coffee-products; particularly instant coffee. Almost 47% aimed for insight into coffee tourism by exploring coffee farming and producing in the facilities. The great majority (81%) were attracted by a tour of coffee farms.

Relating to their satisfaction, more than 84% showed an intention to revisit the coffee tourism destinations. On top of that, almost 90% of the studied tourists stated that they would further recommend others to participate in coffee tourism.

Secondly, the results obtained from the total 125 foreign coffee tourists who completed the questionnaire shed light on their demographic information, behaviors, needs, and satisfaction. Concerning demographic information, the responses showed that the majority of the respondents were female, accounting to more than 57%. Almost 45% were aged between 21 and 30. About 33% were high school graduates. The vast majority of 80% were single. Approximately 41% were students or university students. About 23% were based in the United States of America. 44% earned less than 2,000 USD per month. Nearly 65% stated that it was their first visit to a coffee tourism destination. Almost 33% learned about the destinations from their tour guides. Nearly 37% traveled to the destinations by plane.

Regarding questions about expenses, almost 36% of the studied foreign tourists stated that they spent between 501 to 1,000 USD on transportation. Approximately 48% spent a maximum of 100 USD on activities in the destinations. Almost 42% spent a maximum of 100 USD, and between 101 to 500 USD on food and beverage. 45% spent between 101 to 500 USD on accommodations. Half of them spent a maximum of 100 USD on souvenirs. About 18% spent a maximum of 100 USD, and between 101 to 500 USD on other expenses. About 35% traveled to the destinations for recreational purposes. More than 47% spent one to two days in the destinations. Over 56% desired a visit in summer during the coffee pruning period. Nearly 54% expressed their needs for coffee-related products in the forms of local produces and handicrafts. 56% showed interest in extending their knowledge of coffee tourism under the guidance of local tourist guides. Nearly 54% stated that they were keen to explore coffee farming and producing facilities. Finally, those who were attracted by local ways of life, cultures, and tradition, amounted to 48%.

With reference to satisfaction, over 54% of the studied foreign coffee tourists expressed their interest in revisiting the coffee tourism destinations. Besides, nearly 73% stated that they would further recommend the coffee tourism destinations they visited to others.

Table 2 Overall Tourist's Satisfaction towards Coffee Tourism in the North of Thailand

Coffee Tourism Destination	Thai Tourists			Foreign Tourists		
	\bar{x}	SD	Satisfaction Level	\bar{x}	SD	Satisfaction Level
Attractions	4.08	.546	High	4.13	.623	High
Accessibility	3.81	.654	High	3.91	.728	High
Amenities	3.79	.623	High	3.94	.631	High
Available Package	3.73	.756	High	3.66	.990	High
Activities	3.73	.756	High	3.67	.958	High
Ancillary Services	3.28	.785	Average	3.79	.855	High

Overall, the results suggest that Thai tourists are, in general, highly satisfied of coffee tourism management in northern Thailand as indicated in the average score of 3.8. In a similar fashion, the studied foreign tourists are, for the most part, also highly satisfied with coffee tourism management in northern Thailand (mean = 3.93).

Discussion

Thai Coffee Tourists' Behaviors, Demands and Gratification in Coffee Tourism: The responses from the studied Thai tourists elucidated various aspects of their travel behaviors which range from the number of visits, how they learned about the destinations, promotion channels, means of communication, expenditure, purposes of visit, and period of stay. The majority of the studied group stated that it was their first visit to the coffee plantations in northern Thailand, followed by those who had visited the destinations for two or three times, and finally those who had visited the destinations for more than five times. Most of the

studied tourists learned about the coffee tourism destinations from the Internet, followed by from family and friends, from Facebook, from travel magazines, and from TV, respectively. In terms of publicizing and promotion, most of the studied Thai tourists encouraged online promotion, followed by promotion on radio, TV, or newspaper, and brochures. Concerning means of transportation, the majority traveled to the destinations by their private cars, then by plane, and lastly by rental cars. In conclusion, the results suggested the need for coffee tourism destinations to launch their own websites as it is believed to be an effective means of communication between the communities and tourists. Moreover, it would appear that an ability to accommodate tourists by initiating attractive coffee tourism activities that would cater to known data regarding tourist satisfaction in this niche will probably win their gratification and ensure repeat visits. The results of the study concur well with Juvan, Omerzel and Maravić (2017)'s concept of tourist behavior in terms that the awareness of tourist behaviors and needs will contribute to design and implementation of effective marketing plans to promote tourism in each province, and to ultimately achieve the desired goals.

The average travel expenses revealed by the studied Thai tourists implied a frugal spending behavior, which probably resulted from economic conditions in 2008 and 2009. Also, the expenses in coffee tourism destinations are not particularly high since they are viewed as alternative tourism destinations. The tourists who traveled to Chiang Rai were primarily keen to visit reputable attractions such as Wat Rong Khun or Choui Fong Tea Plantation. However, to beguile their remaining holiday time, they did some research and finally agreed to a one-day visit to Doi Chang Village. They planned only a one-day visit because of inadequate information regarding activities offered in the coffee tourism destinations. Most of the tourists visited the coffee tourism destinations for recreational purpose, while some were interested in exploring and tasting fresh coffee from coffee processing facilities. The findings suggested consistency with the way which the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2012) defined tourism that tourism comprises the activities of people traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not over than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes.

The results also suggested that most of the studied Thai tourists spent one to two days in the coffee tourism destinations in northern Thailand, followed by those who spent three to five days, then those who spent one week. Moreover, the majority desired a visit in winter during the coffee harvest season, followed by those who wanted to visit during the crop rotation period in the rainy season. Such results were concurrent with the fact that most of the tourists who visited the coffee tourism destinations were based in the central region; especially in Bangkok. Geographical features and weather in central Thailand, characterized by lowlands, a humid climate, and short winter period, drove most of its inhabitants to seek a change of atmosphere and experience tourist attractions in other regions during the winter time. The results; accordingly, correlate favorably well with what Cohen (1972, cited in Prince, 2017) stated regarding tourist behaviors that tourists pursue travel styles that differ from their day-to-day experiences. Therefore, it is advisable that the local communities or coffee tourism destinations enhance the capacity of their tourism facilities to guarantee tourists' comfort, safety, and positive impression; which will ultimately encourage them to spend longer time travelling within the attractions.

The majority expressed their demands for coffee-related products in the form of instant coffee, followed by the need for souvenirs, and finally for local handicrafts. Such product needs are consistent with Cheng et al. (2010)'s research study titled "Tourist's Attitudes toward Tea Tourism: A Case Study in Xinyang, China. The study suggested that tea tourists and non-tea tourists show apparent discrepancies in terms of their attitudes toward tea drinking as well as their needs of buying tea products for souvenirs. Tea tourists, equally

likely to be male or female, are primarily tea lovers driven by their high interest in tea and tea culture. They frequently drink tea, and have favorable attitude towards tea drinking. Niche marketing strategies are recommended to target this specific group of tourists. Coffee tourists and tea tourists share similarities in their tourism needs with an emphasis upon an interest in the beverage they enjoy. The mere difference lies upon the two types of beverage: tea and coffee.

The greatest percentage of the studied Thai tourists also expressed their need for increasing their coffee-related knowledge through exploring coffee farming process and coffee processing directly from coffee plantations. A section of the study group expressed their need for learning local cultures and traditions with local tourist guides. According to the tourists, the kinds of activities they were keen to join in coffee tourism attractions included tours of coffee farms, coffee making demonstrations and coffee tastings, a visit to nearby attractions, a tour of coffee processing facilities, and a study of local lifestyles, cultures, and traditions. Most of them shown intention in a revisit to coffee tourism attractions, as well as their intention to recommend the coffee tourism destinations to others.

Such tourist needs for coffee tourism activities indicate a form of special interest tourism in which coffee is featured as the high point. As proposed by Poon (1997), the results obtained pointed to the fact that special interest tourism centers around participation of a person or a group of people in certain activities which derives from their drives and interests in certain areas. Those specific interests can be addressed through providing relevant services and activities. Sometimes special activities are designed for a small group of people as an alternative. However, in reality, special interest tourism is not only restricted to a small group of tourists. Furthermore, it is not mandatory that these tourists are required to spend all their vacation time participating in special interest activities. Allenby (2000) also provided an input that is consistent with the results obtained from this study. It was postulated that a special interest tourist is a tourist who demonstrates detailed and specific needs with an aim to acquire first-hand experience in his/her desired destination without exerting negative impacts on the community.

Based on the results, the overall satisfaction of the studied Thai tourists towards coffee tourism management in northern Thailand in terms of Attractions, Accessibility, Amenities, Available Package, Activities, Ancillary Services was high. In agreement with a research study entitled “Coffee in Vietnam: International Tourist Experience” by Joliffie, Kwan, and Yen (2008), the results highlighted the known trends of coffee tourism in which coffee lovers like to travel, and at the same time, many travelers like to drink coffee. Tourists also realize the potential of coffee in improving tourism such as a development of coffee-related souvenirs, coffee tour programs, and coffee history.

Foreign Coffee Tourists’ Behaviors, Demands and Gratification in Coffee Tourism:

According to the responses of foreign coffee tourists, the majority stated that it was their first visit to the coffee tourism destination, followed by those who stated that it was their second visit. With reference to the source of information, most of the studied foreign tourists learned about the destinations from their tour guides. The next most substantial group was those who learned about the destinations from Internet searches, family and friends, tour agencies, and by themselves, respectively. Most of the respondents encouraged online promotion, followed by using brochures, then posters and signs. Concerning means of transportation, the majority traveled by plane, followed by those who traveled by bus. Therefore, the local communities and the coffee tourism destinations are advised to establish a network with tourist guides as well as to publicize their information on the Internet in order to ensure that tourists receive accurate information. Furthermore, airline companies that offer flights to the Northern provinces with coffee tourism destinations are recommended to help accommodate tourists through a collaboration with bus and car rental companies that have counters in airports.

The results regarding the average spend of the studied foreign coffee tourists also showed that most of them spent less than 1,000 USD on every category of costs: transportation, activities in the attractions, food and beverage, accommodations, and mementos. It can therefore be inferred that foreign coffee tourists were somewhat frugal. Their primary concerns were personal needs, value for money, and suitability of tourism activities offered. The results were in line with one of the tourist types proposed in Perreault, Dorden, and Dordon's (1979, cited in Manirochana and Suwanno, 2018) four-group typology of tourists. In general, budget travelers refer to tourists who earn an average income but prefer highly affordable vacations. The majority of foreign coffee tourists traveled to the coffee tourism destination for recreational purpose, followed by those who had to attend meetings, seminars, workshops, and those who wanted to learn about coffee, and to taste fresh coffee from coffee processing facilities. Thus, it can be seen why the results support the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2012)'s definition of tourism as people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes."

Most of the studied foreign coffee tourists spent one to two days within the coffee tourism destinations, followed by the tourists who spent three to five days, and finally those who spend one week. Similar to the studied Thai coffee tourists, local communities and coffee tourism destinations are advised to provide foreign coffee tourists with adequate and appropriate tourism facilities. With their comfort, safety, and positive impression guaranteed, foreign tourists will be attracted to spend longer time within the attractions.

Their responses to questions regarding period of visit showed that the majority of studied foreign tourists were appealed by the coffee pruning period in summer, followed by those attracted to coffee harvest season in winter. Their preference in visiting coffee tourism attractions during summer suggested a connection with the long winter period in European countries where many of the studied foreign tourists were from. On top of that, the results confirmed what Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2016) stated in Tourism Economic Review that a large number of European tourists travel outside of their countries during the summer holidays in July and August.

Most of the foreign tourists expressed the need for coffee-related products in the form of local produces and handicrafts, followed by the need for instant coffee products, and finally souvenirs. The majority of responses reflected the need for an educational visit that helps extend the knowledge about coffee under the guidance of local tourist guide. Also, some responses showed that the foreign tourists' interest in a tour of coffee plantation, as well as interest in experience local ways of life, cultures, and traditions. The activities that were the most appealing to the studied foreign tourists comprised of taking a tour of the visited coffee plantation, experiencing local ways of life, cultures, and traditions, exploring coffee processing facilities, participating in local festivals and events, and attending a coffee making demonstration and coffee tasting. These findings are in line with those discussed in a previous study by Karlsson and Karlsson (2009) which underlined an increasing interest of people in experiencing different local cultures worldwide. Such interest is often fulfilled by a visit to local areas to experience their food and beverage tradition which is commonly known as culinary tourism.

Most of the tourists were keen to revisit the coffee tourism attractions. More importantly, they stated their intention to recommend the coffee-related attractions to others. According to Poon (1997, cited in Ivanovic, 2008), special interest tourism features activities initiated as a response to specific needs of a person or a group of people. Services that are tailored to such needs then provided as well as some activities that provide special interest tourists with more options. Nevertheless, special interest tourism, in fact, is not merely limited to a small group of people. Also, it is not necessary that these special interest tourists only take part in

activities of their interest. The results, turned out to solidly support Kleidas and Joliffie's (2010) argument in their research study titled "Coffee Attraction Experiences: A Narrative Study." It was suggested that diversity in coffee-related tourist attractions probably derived from the need of coffee consumers who pursue opportunities to obtain knowledge regarding the defining beverage of their daily lives.

There are many reasons why it is important to harness existing resources and attractions, which will lead the growth of coffee tourism. Firstly, coffee tourism strengthens collaboration and connection within a community. Also, coffee tourism can contribute to an advancement of linkage areas and developing countries. Furthermore, coffee tourism encourages business investment in developing countries. Finally, coffee tourism activities also appeal to tourists traveling in nearby attractions and may ultimately increase their stays and spending. Taking everything into account, coffee tourism is totally unique. Through different coffee tourism activities such as a coffee tours, tourists can potentially learn about the long history of coffee as well as local ways of life.

The overall satisfaction of the foreign coffee tourists towards Attractions, Accessibility, Amenities, Available Package, Activities, Ancillary Services of the coffee tourism destinations they visited was high. The results corresponded to Buhalis (2000)' view on tourism development stated that tourist needs must be considered in order to plan the most impeccable tourism management. The overall results indicate that Thai and foreign tourists are highly satisfied with their visits to coffee tourism destinations in the North of Thailand. The participants were tourists with a specific interest in coffee. On some occasions, coffee tourism might not be the primary reason for their journeys. On the other hand, coffee was the major attraction for business owners and entrepreneurs in the coffee industry as well as for tourists who had visited websites that offer information regarding coffee (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002; Ignatov & Smith, 2006).

As a result, Thailand needs to take advantage of the coffee tourism trend and develop a type of coffee tourism that targets both Thai and foreign tourists traveling within the country. Moreover, market potentials for coffee-related souvenirs need to be exploited. Coffee producers should also welcome the business prospects by developing their own coffee tour programs, and encouraging coffee farming and processing facilities in the northern region of Thailand to become coffee tourism destinations in which tourists are offered an opportunity to experience the process of how coffee is farmed and processed into beverage.

Recommendations

1. With regards to coffee tourism destinations, the findings pointed to the likelihood that the communities design and install public display signs in major tourist attractions so as to provide information about their coffee tourism attractions and natural resources. Maintenance of hygiene, capacity to accommodate tourists, as well as services and facilities may also need to be taken in to account. Availability of at least two coffee tourism programs with entry fees clearly stated is advisable. Whereas the former could be designed for Thai and international tourists who travel to the destination for recreational purpose, the latter might responds to the needs of special interest tourists who are attracted by an educational visit to coffee producing facilities.

2. Concerning coffee tourism activities, it is recommended that the communities endeavor to achieve their maximum capacity in accommodating tourists continually. For sustainable development of coffee tourism in the northern region of Thailand, a coffee tourism network in northern Thailand should be established. Such a network will probably assist not only in securing uninterrupted operation, but also in exchanging tourism news and information.

Recommendations for Further Research: Research study concerning guidelines for coffee tourism management for local communities, assuming coffee tourism related identities such

as Robusta Coffee in the South of Thailand, and comparative study of coffee tourism administration among countries in ASEAN and Asia.

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