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DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING ECO MODEL ON FARMSTAY BUSINESS REGARDING TO ORGANIC AGRICULTURE FOR YOUTHS TO BUILD FUTURE SKILLS LEADING TO OCCUPATIONAL BASIS

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the potential achievement factors in developing a learning eco model focused on the farmstay business, particularly about organic agriculture, of the Piyamit 3 Tunnel Community, Yala, Thailand. The findings of this research indicate that the farmstay business centered around organic agriculture possesses a commendable level of business potential. This success is attributed to internal and external factors that collectively support the growth of this initiative. The development of the learning eco model for the farmstay business emphasizes the management, skills, and values of entrepreneurial farmers. These farmers aim to construct a successful farmstay encompassing various factors, including residence, food, safety, and culture. This comprehensive model addresses multiple dimensions essential for creating a thriving farmstay environment. The transfer of the learning eco model related to organic agriculture also highlights that the satisfaction level among youths is notably high. This satisfaction is particularly evident in the knowledge gained and the benefits derived from applying organic agriculture practices within their business application

Keywords: Learning Eco Model, Farmstay Business, Organic Agriculture

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Introduction

National Strategy for 20 Years (2018-2038) determines the goal to develop the competitiveness of creative tourism to promote the growth and attractiveness of the tourism business. It focuses on developing tourism products and services by utilizing local wisdom, creativity, and cultural capital as the main principles. Furthermore, technology and innovation are employed to enhance business operations, marketing, and management of tourist sites that hold historical value, lifestyle significance, and cultural heritage. This strategy also promotes diverse forms of tourism, such as community-based tourism, agri-tourism, and conservation tourism. Moreover, it emphasizes seasonal tourism that highlights the uniqueness of each season and the potential of different areas to create unparalleled experiences for tourists. This approach aims to increase value and differentiate Thailand's tourism business.

Currently, farmstay tourism is becoming increasingly popular in the Asia region and around the world. In Europe, farmstays are widely accepted in several countries, such as Italy, which has officially recognized and legislated this type of tourism. Similarly, in Asia, both China and India are developing farm stay tourism to promote agricultural economies and tourism in their areas. Australia is also witnessing rapid growth in the farm stay industry due to its popularity among domestic and international tourists (Fortune Business Insights, 2020). Additionally, in Thailand, farm stay tourism that encompasses fruit farms in the mountains, dairy farms, and vineyards—with luxurious accommodations and opportunities for learning about animal care, coffee cultivation, tropical fruit farming, and organic vegetable growing—is also gaining popularity. Some farm stays, such as those in Saraburi province, often attract tourists who wish to learn about cattle farming methods. Tourists have the opportunity to feed the cows. Meanwhile, some farm stays in Lopburi province offer horseback riding activities around vegetable gardens. Various activities in Thailand's farm stays can serve as selling points for tourism. According to research by Đerčan et al. (2023), which studied farm stays in the outskirts of Novi Sad, Serbia, they found that the development of farm stay tourism must adopt a sustainable approach that emphasizes a balance between economic, social, and environmental factors. However, it is observed that farmstay tourism tends to focus more on economic outcomes.

The local people in the areas of Ban Piyamit 3 community are from the group of Thai National Development Group. The community is located at Moo 7, Aiyerweng sub-district, Betong district, Yala province, Thailand. It was established in 1988. The 4th Royal Thai Army was allowed to use the national forest areas to settle the village of The border strategy between Thailand and Malaysia (comprising Ban Piyamit 1-5) includes agreements for joint border protection and forest conservation in watershed areas. Specifically, Piyamit House 3 is located in a mountainous region with abundant water resources and heavy rainfall. Currently, this community can be considered a model community for self-sufficient sufficiency economy villages. The residents primarily engaged in agricultural activities, implementing new agricultural theories such as the "Khok Nong Na Model" to drive community activities through community enterprise management. In addition, the community has developed agricultural tourism management, particularly during the fruit season from July to October each year when fruits like durian, rambutan, and mangosteen are ripe. This attracts many tourists, especially from Malaysia, who come to experience the fruits. Furthermore, there are other tourism activities such as tasting local dishes that feature unique recipes from the community, like Soursop dishes, visiting the Soi Dao Waterfall, exploring fruit orchards, learning about sustainable living through integrated agriculture, and participating in nature walks for ecological studies, etc.

This indicates that tourists are interested in visiting this area as a historical and natural tourist attraction. Therefore, it is an appropriate area for developing a farmstay business model to promote the economy of the southern border communities.

The preliminary consideration of the fertility of the area that supports agricultural, historical, and conservation tourism leads to the development and creation of supportive learning resources in a model area, namely the Piyamit 3 Tunnel Community in Betong, Yala, Thailand. This initiative aims to enable youth and the community to develop their potential for using it as a guideline for creating quality occupations. The objectives of this research are as follows: to analyze the potential and success factors for developing the Learning Eco Model on farmstay business regarding organic agriculture for youths to build future skills leading to occupational basis: Piyamit 3 Tunnel Community, 2) to develop the Learning Eco Model on farmstay business regarding organic agriculture for youths to build future skills leading to occupational basis: Piyamit 3 Tunnel Community, and 3) to transfer the Learning Eco Model to the farmstay business regarding organic agriculture for youths, aiming to build future skills leading to occupational opportunities: the Piyamit 3 Tunnel Community. If the researcher conducts the research on the development of the Learning Eco Model related to the farmstay business in organic agriculture, it is expected that the youth and community in these areas will gain knowledge, create concepts for job and occupation building, generate income, and achieve sustainable self-sufficiency for themselves and their families. This initiative is anticipated to lead to stable economic expansion in the area.

Literature Review

External environments are crucial for enterprises' achievement. Therefore, managers have to enable themselves to adapt for survival in changeable environments by finding competitive strategies in various situations and adapting appropriately to those strategies. The SWOT analysis is a fundamental instrument used to analyze the organization's situation overall, such as comparing the operation of the business at different times, comparing with the competitors, and emphasizing the significance of changing strength points into competitive advantage by considering the strengths and weakness, including threats of the enterprise (Rugchoochip, 2022; Loukis et al., 2006) Furthermore, evaluating the internal environment is essential as it enhances customer value and promotes the effective use of resources. This evaluation also creates operational advantages for activities within the organization. Therefore, managers should encourage staff to consider the various factors and resources available to lead the business toward success. The McKinsey 7-S Framework consists of seven elements: Strategy, Structure, Systems, Shared Values, Style, Staff, and Skills (Peters & Waterman, 1982). This framework can serve as an effective tool for analyzing and improving the effectiveness of organizations such as those involved in homestay or farmstay management. Therefore, both SWOT analysis and the McKinsey 7-S Framework can be utilized together in this context. The Department of Tourism (2015) indicates that Thai homestay is a type of tourism where tourists stay together with their hosts in suitable accommodations within the host's home. Each homestay can have no more than four rooms available for guests, accommodating a maximum of 20 persons in total. Hosts must provide appropriate compensation and services to facilitate the guests' stay comfortably. This enterprise should serve as a secondary source of income for hosts and must be registered with the Department of Tourism according to established criteria (Adunnirat, 2018). The research conducted by Boonmee et al. (2018) suggests that homestay tourism strategies in the southern region should be developed by focusing on the potential to accommodate visitors to create a positive image based on a stable economy and sustainable social, cultural, and environmental practices. Similarly, Srisuwan & Detmit (2019) discovered that the approach to developing homestay accommodations while maintaining charm and uniqueness is through experiencing traditional rural cultural stays, as well as the simple lifestyle of the community (Sanedee, 2021). The local way of life, culture, traditions, food, clothing, games, and interesting wisdom can communicate and narrate the stories of the locality to tourists who visit. In addition, homestay development is another way to enhance the quality

of life in communities. According to Đerčan et al. (2023), farmers can create added value from their resources. Furthermore, farmers have demonstrated their ability to integrate knowledge with the resources they possess, resulting in attractions for tourism and meeting market demands. There are two crucial forms of farm-based tourism: 1) Farm Based Tourism, which involves agricultural activities that are central to tourism, allowing tourists to participate in agricultural processes, and 2) Tourism that Takes Place on Farms, which means that agriculture is merely a part of the tourism experience. Attractions and activities are what tourists need from this type of farm.

Research Conceptual Framework

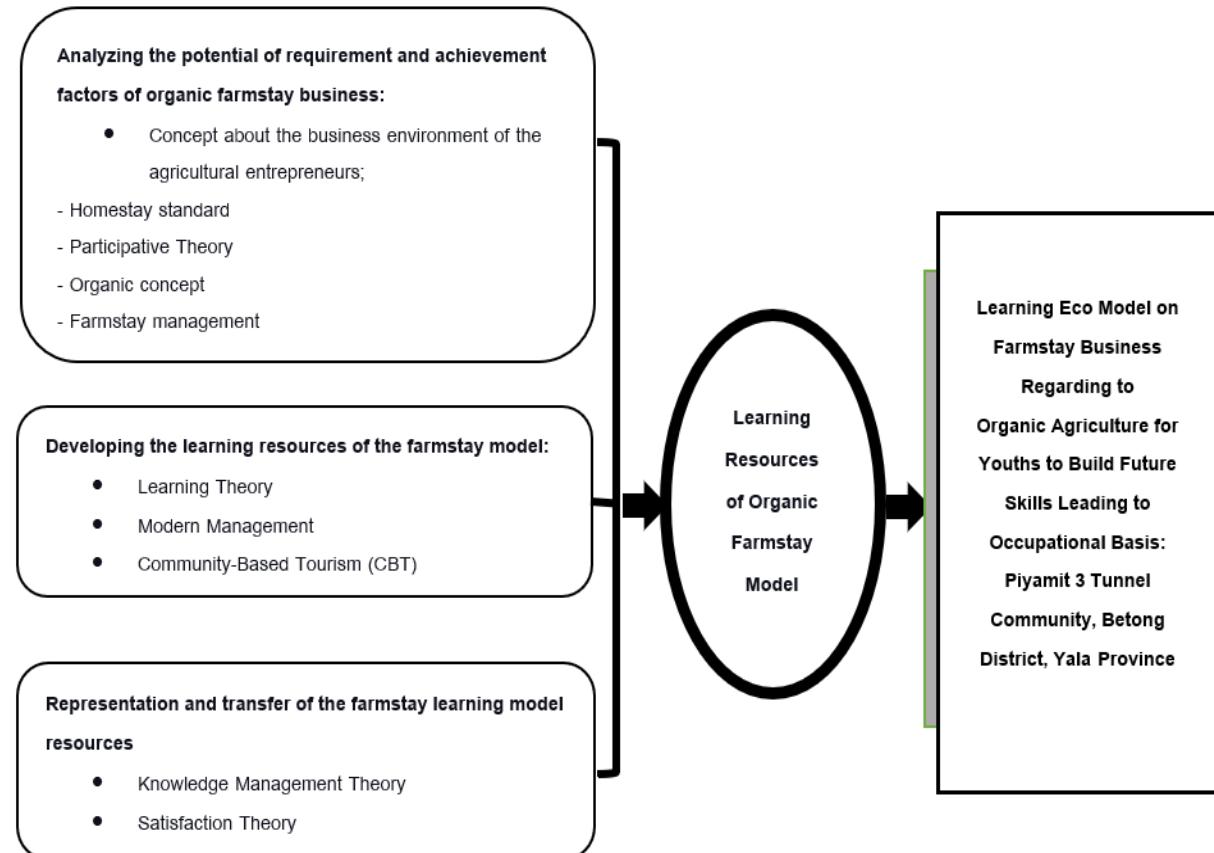


Figure 1 Research Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Population and Sample

This research involves a comprehensive analysis of the potential and achievements in developing a learning eco-model for the farmstay business within the context of organic agriculture. The study employs qualitative research methods, utilizing purposive random sampling and conducting in-depth interviews with 10 entrepreneurs who have successfully established farmstay and homestay businesses in the southern regions. This approach aims to develop a model for the farmstay business focusing on organic agriculture. In addition, quantitative research is incorporated through purposive random sampling involving 79 key informants. These informants are instrumental in transferring the learning eco-model related to the farmstay business in organic agriculture. Furthermore, purposive random sampling is also applied to gather data from 200 youths between 15 and 24 years old across three southern border provinces.

Data Collection

The research employs a variety of instruments, including questionnaires and semi-structured interview forms. The questionnaire is divided into three sets uniquely: Questionnaire for Entrepreneurs: This set focuses on gathering insights from entrepreneurs involved in the farmstay and homestay business. Key Informants Questionnaire: This section aims to identify and evaluate the informants within the context of the farmstay and homestay. Youth Satisfaction Questionnaire: This part targets youths to assess their satisfaction with the learning eco model related to organic agriculture in the farmstay business. Each questionnaire is designed with unique question items tailored to capture comprehensive information relevant to its specific focus area. To ensure content validity, an investigation was conducted using the Item Objective Congruence (IOC) technique, which involved three experts in the field. Following this, a trial run was performed to determine discrimination indices, which ranged between 0.67 and 1.00 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The instrument reliability was examined through the Cronbach's alpha coefficient method. The results identified high reliability for the questionnaire regarding the learning eco model on farmstay business related to organic agriculture, yielding coefficients of 0.854, 0.855, and 0.852 respectively.

To analyze the potential and achievement factors for developing the learning eco model in the farmstay business related to organic agriculture, the researcher organized a focus group discussion with entrepreneurs involved in farmstay and homestay businesses. The interviews were scheduled to last approximately one hour. For further data collection aimed at identifying the potential and achievement factors necessary for developing this learning eco model, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with key informants, categorizing them into specific groups. In addition, to facilitate the transformation of the learning eco model within the farmstay business context, the researcher distributed questionnaires. This process was designed to take about 10-15 minutes for participants to complete.

Data Analysis

For qualitative research, the researcher uses qualitative content analysis by bringing the information received by the audio record to transcribe as text, then sent to the information's owner to examine the correctness, and started to analyze the data, including the points by the objectives. After that, the researchers found the relations of each point to propose and describe the characteristics of such derived information.

Research Result

The analysis results on the potential of internal and external environmental factors for the farmstay business in the southern region, through a SWOT analysis, indicate that the strengths of the homestays/farmstays in Betong district include their location in high areas where the weather is cool and pleasant throughout the year. Additionally, there are tourist attractions that can attract visitors. The weaknesses reveal that, since these homestays have just started their operations, they need time for effective marketing communication. Furthermore, they do not have sufficient room to meet customer needs. Moreover, tourism management is not systematic; there is a lack of understanding regarding community tourism and insufficient cooperative networks among the homestays. Regarding opportunities, it is noted that the government has policies aimed at enhancing small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which presents a favorable chance for investment and tax benefits. Betong District possesses various natural tourism resources, including a favorable climate suitable for cultivating a wide range of vegetables and fruits. However, it faces threats such as uncertainties regarding security in the area, which may impact the reliability of both Thai and foreign tourists. This situation can lead to a slowdown in economic conditions.

Moreover, successful factors for developing an eco-learning model within the farmstay business related to organic agriculture include crucial strategies employed by entrepreneurs.

These strategies encompass practices in organic farming. Entrepreneurs believe that ensuring food production safety through natural methods not only benefits their health but also that of consumers. When consumers are healthy, they are more likely to support and purchase products from organic agriculture, contributing to a sustainable society and environment.

The design and creation of the model to develop the learning eco-model for the farmstay business in relation to modern organic agriculture can be summarized in Figure 1. In evaluating this learning eco-model for the farmstay business concerning organic agriculture, feedback was gathered from 200 tourists on various aspects, including residence, safety, hospitality of hosts and members, food quality, tour guides and cultural experiences, natural resources, environmental considerations, community product value creation, and publication. Onya (2021) indicates that tourists are satisfied with their stay at the homestay/farmstay at Ban Piyamit 3 due to appropriate pricing, an environment conducive to natural learning and local life, hygiene standards, cleanliness, safety measures, and proximity to tourist attractions. Tourists express interest in agricultural activities and emphasize the importance of cleanliness, safety, good service, and engagement with local culture. The satisfaction levels among residence regarding food, learning, safety, and service are high.

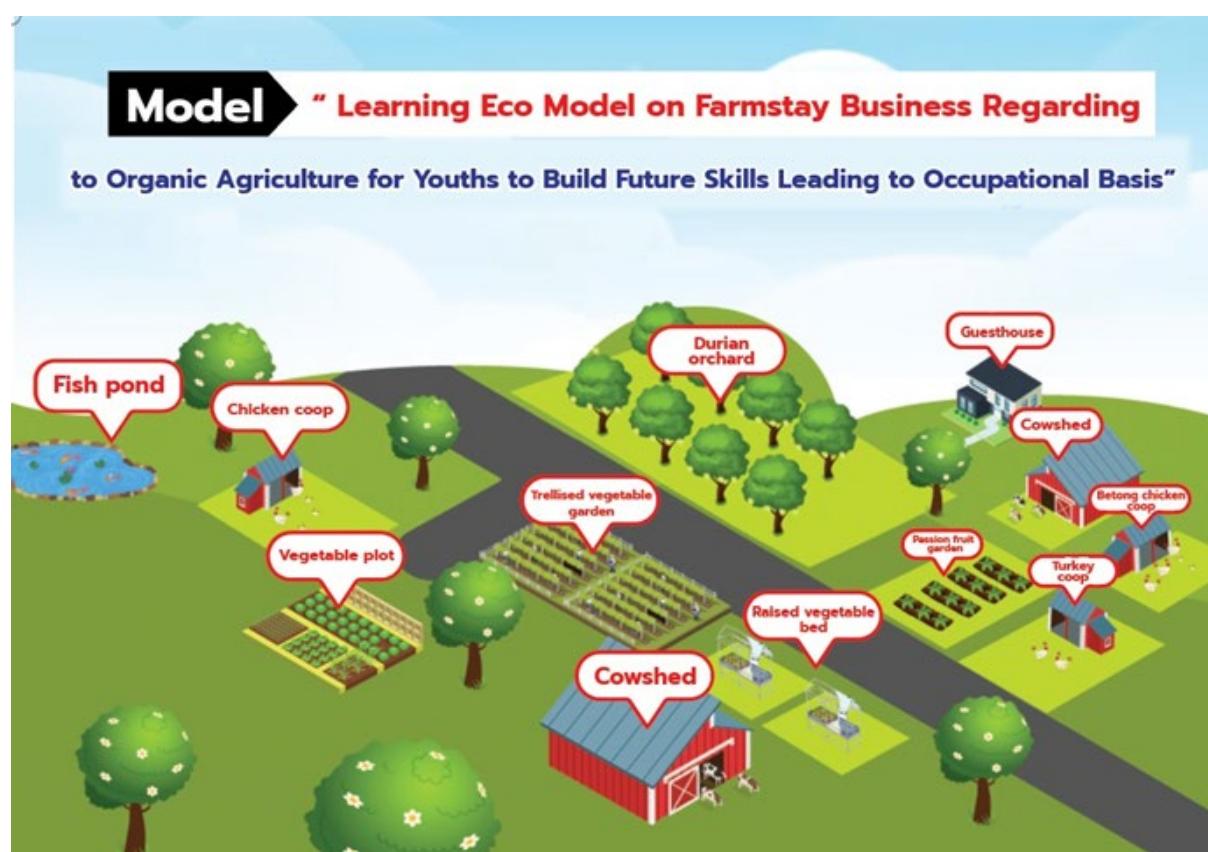


Figure 2 Learning Eco Model on Innovative Farmstay Business Organic Agriculture

The transfer of the learning eco model in the farmstay business regarding organic agriculture for youths to build future occupational skills can be concluded that the youths' satisfaction level toward the learning eco model in this context is high overall. Each aspect of satisfaction also reaches a high level, particularly in the following areas: first, the satisfaction with the knowledge received, which enables further extension of their understanding at an optimal level and highlights the benefits of applying this knowledge in the organic agriculture business. Secondly, there is a high level of satisfaction regarding the knowledge gained after transferring

the learning eco model, as well as with the methods used for transferring this learning eco model system.

Conclusion and Discussion

The SWOT analysis of the farmstays in Betong District reveals that the strengths include a favorable location and pleasant atmosphere, as well as nearby tourist attractions. However, weaknesses are evident in the management and preparedness of the residences. Opportunities arise from support provided by government sectors, while challenges include insecurity in the area. Furthermore, farmstays that adopt organic agriculture strategies can foster sustainability concerning health and environmental aspects. Evaluations from tourists and youths regarding the eco-learning model in the farmstay business focused on organic agriculture indicate a high level of satisfaction, particularly emphasizing the knowledge and benefits they have gained, which they can apply in the future.

Hosts and Members Hospitality: It has been found that farmstay entrepreneurs should encourage tourists to appreciate a lifestyle that relies on nature to meet their expectations for experiences that differ from their urban lives. This aligns with Onya (2021), who recommends that farmstays focus on the simplicity of rural life and its connection to farming, including the local food culture, to enhance tourism experiences that are unique and distinctive.

Culture: It shows that farmstay entrepreneurs should enhance the local uniqueness in developing their farmstays to maintain the culture and roots of communities. Additionally, using tourism as a method to preserve that uniqueness is essential for sustainability. Jantamaneechot et al. (2023) state that farmstays serves as a tool to preserve local wisdom and create careers and income from tourism by utilizing local resources and farming activities to attract tourists and provide unique experiences. Furthermore, Srisuwan & Detmit (2019) indicate that processing agricultural products on the farm can increase income; however, developing tourism without preserving local uniqueness may lead to the loss of cultural inheritance and diminish tourist interest.

Food from Farm: The food offered at the farmstay is a significant strength due to the freshness and hygiene of the materials cultivated on-site. This not only enhances the taste but also increases the reliability of safety for tourists. Such attributes create a distinctive experience that sets farmstay tourism apart from other types of tourism. According to Đerčan et al. (2023), tourists have the opportunity to savor local food derived from products they collect themselves, which adds an element of excitement and trust in the food's quality. Furthermore, learning how to cook these ingredients fosters a deeper connection with the culinary experience. In contrast, food sourced from unsafe origins can lead to poisoning and various diseases, highlighting the importance of fresh and hygienic produce in ensuring tourist safety.

Natural Resources and Environment: The research results indicate that buildings in farmstays, which are harmonious with nature, enhance tourists' feelings of being part of the area. It creates a strong appeal for farmstays, as tourists often seek to escape from the busy city to enjoy peaceful natural surroundings. It aligns with the findings of Jantamaneechot et al. (2023), who highlight the environmental benefits of sustainable farm tourism by focusing on the effective use of natural resources and minimizing environmental impacts. Farm tourism that emphasizes natural resource conservation can reduce the use of chemicals in agriculture and promote renewable energy.

Moreover, organic agriculture in farmstays enhances tourists' confidence regarding the safety and benefits of food, including reducing the cost of food production on the farm. This aligns with Sanedee (2021), who indicates that organic agriculture emphasizes managing the environment in harmony with nature, without chemicals or GMOs, and by utilizing organic materials and local wisdom for the health of both producers and consumers. These practices help farmstays establish stable incomes while avoiding modern agricultural techniques that

may degrade soil quality and overall health. Meanwhile, farmstay entrepreneurs suggest that the focus should not be solely on attracting a high number of tourists or maximizing profits, as most farmstays reach their capacity for supporting visitors. Furthermore, accommodating excess tourists can hinder proper care and attention to guests, potentially leading to dissatisfaction (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2022).

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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