

## **TOURIST SATISFACTION AND BEHAVIOUR THROUGH STREET FOOD FESTIVAL IN UDON THANI PROVINCE**

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### **Abstract**

This research aimed to study the behavior and satisfaction of food tourists. The research period was in December and January 2023. The sample consisted of 394 tourists, and data were collected from food tourist attractions in the street food festival in Udon Thani Province. A purposive sampling method was used, and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The research found that 1) The behavior of most tourists who traveled to travel or visit places. Tourists traveled to Udon Thani Province rarely once a month. Most of the vehicles used for travel were private cars. The travel cost was one thousand baht or less. They had information about the yearly street food festival attractions. Gastronomy tourism from the internet or social networks 2) There is the satisfaction of tourists' street food in Udon Thani Province towards consuming processed food products for original food in the marketing promotion factor. Overall, it is at a high level, with an average of 4.13. When considering each item, it was found that it was a sales promotion, such as the variety of food products, selling both in-house and takeaway food, etc., with an average of 4.40.

**Keywords:** Gastronomy Tourism, Tourist Behaviors, Tourist Satisfaction

### **Introduction**

Tourism in Thailand plays a vital role in generating income for the country. It can help the economy recover faster than other production and services. In 2015, Thai tourism was another driving force in the Thai economy. Government agencies have been intensively accelerating the marketing and public relations of Thai tourism, both organizing domestic activities and marketing in countries that are important target groups of Thailand, such as China, India, Japan, and many other countries in the European region. This is to generate income for tourism-related businesses (Chanwit, 2015). The Ministry of Tourism and Sports is the primary organization promoting and developing tourism as a mechanism to drive the country's tourism economy sustainably. Therefore, it has set the vision, mission, strategy, and development guidelines as follows: 1. Set policies and strategic plans for growth at all levels consistent with the country's development guidelines. 2. Promote, support, develop, and push for implementing tourism, sports, and recreation policies. 3. Integrate and manage participation from all sectors in developing tourism in all sectors to be effective. 4. Develop infrastructure and supporting factors for tourism, sports, and recreation. To have international standard quality 5. Develop the system and personnel in tourism, sports, and recreation to have potential (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2012-2016)

Tourism development should focus on developing sustainable tourism that is friendly to the environment, which is a future tourism trend supporting Thailand's development approach. There must be development, restoration, and improvement of deteriorated tourist attractions, including developing and creating tourist attractions that are friendly to the environment. Develop product and service standards to be able to compete sustainably. Give importance to preparing for crises, risks, and safety in tourism. Develop tourism personnel and technology to be ready to accommodate tourists. It is necessary to have a guideline for developing potential tourism marketing to publicize Thailand, create an image and confidence in tourists, develop modern marketing, promote sales in quality tourist markets, create new forms of tourism activities that are consistent with tourists' interests, and promote domestic tourism to spread to tourist attractions (11<sup>th</sup> National Economic and Social Development Plan)

The World Tourism Organization forecasts the global food tourism situation. Data shows that food tourism generates revenue worth up to 150 billion US dollars. The top 3 most popular forms of food tourism are international tourists in Spain, France, and Italy (World Tourism Organization, 2019). For the situation of food tourism in Thailand, according to the Tourism Economic Review, in 2022, Thailand had an income from food tourism of 456,0000 million baht or 20 percent of all tourism (Tsai and Wang 2017, Chua, Jin, and Goh, 2014). Gastronomic tourists are described by the concept of post-modernism, which states that food tourists are eco-tourists who want the authenticity of local food and simplicity. Culture and lifestyle (McKercher et al., 2008) Food and true culture can be known by the destination's food. Tourism, which searches for national and local food (Long, 2019), is considered food tourism and has been a popular trend from the past to the present, along with other types of tourism. However, most of the tourism industry's income comes from culture as an attraction. Therefore, many countries give it top priority, especially food culture. Thai people's lifestyle, food, and eating can drive and stimulate tourists' spending to expand to gastronomy tourism (Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), 2013).

A strategic plan is like using a compass to guide achieving the set goals. If we lack good strategic planning, it may cause the operation to go in the wrong direction, wasting time and reaching the goal late. Strategy is like a tool that can find a good way by planning to overcome such situations and achieve the set goals (Kriangsak, 2003). The preparation of a strategic plan for tourism development in Udon Thani Province by creating a sustainable integrated strategic plan has a process for participation of all sectors in the development according to the process starting from meetings, planning work, having clear goals, operations, and guidelines that will lead to success. Brainstorming is a framework for strategic planning that is consistent with government policies, which will lead to the preparation of an effective strategic plan (Matte, 2013). Udon Thani Province has set a vision: “A livable city, the center of the Mekong Subregion” and its mission as follows: 1. Strengthen society to support cultural and technological changes two and develop agricultural products to meet standards in the form of safe agriculture 3. Developing transportation systems and trade potential to support the development of the Greater Mekong Subregion as a center 4. Developing tourism, services, and promoting local arts, cultures, and traditions to increase income for people in the province 5. Managing natural resources and the environment for sustainable use 6. Applying technology to government management (Udon Thani Provincial Office, 2015) According to statistics in 2015, there were 2,240,664 Thai and foreign tourists visiting Udon Thani Province (Source: Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2015)

In addition to visiting tourist attractions, staying at accommodations, buying souvenirs, and doing other activities, tourists also like to spend time doing food activities while traveling.

(National Research and Innovation Policy Office (NRCT), 2022). The Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) revealed that TAT has publicized and created awareness of the selection of restaurants covering the northeastern region of Thailand through the 'Michelin Guide 2023, which is considered an expansion of the choice of recommended restaurants to 4 northeastern provinces, namely Nakhon Ratchasima, Ubon Ratchathani, Udon Thani, and Khon Kaen, to promote gastronomy tourism, promote outstanding identity in terms of food and culture, and prepare for entrepreneurs in the area. Supporting tourists from around the world While TAT has seen the readiness of 4 provinces that can reflect the food culture of Thai people and create income distribution from tourists to entrepreneurs in the area between January - May 2022 of Nakhon Ratchasima, Ubon Ratchathani, Khon Kaen, and Udon Thani provinces, totaling more than 30,511.47 million baht, with the spending value of both Thai and foreign tourists on food and beverages totaling approximately 7,442.19 million baht to create momentum Continuing to the tourist season at the end of the year and continuing until the beginning of next year, the selection of restaurants covers the northeastern region of Thailand. The 'Michelin Guide' will be one of the crucial activities to drive the country's economy going forward (Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), 2013).

#### State of Problem

Gastronomy tourism is gaining popularity among specific tourists who enjoy food experiences that involve learning about local cultures (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). The Global Report on Food Tourism reported that in 2015, food tourism generated a total income of 150 billion US dollars and is expected to grow further (Chanin, 2017). In Thailand, food tourism generated revenue of 480 billion baht in 2016, an increase from 456 billion baht in 2015. Food is also the third-highest income source after accommodation shopping and souvenirs. The top 3 tourists who generated the highest income from food tourism were China, with a value of 83,313 million baht and an increase of 19 percent; Russia, with a value of 20,818 million baht and a rise of 32 percent; and the United Kingdom, with a value of 18,409 million baht and an increase of 10 percent. In addition, most tourists also enjoy Thai, street, and local food (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017). Therefore, food tourism is essential for tourism development, especially for foreign tourists who enjoy experiencing local lifestyles and cultures.

#### Research Objectives

1. To study tourist behavior of the Street food tourism in Udon Thani Province
2. To study tourist satisfaction with the Street food festival in Udon Thani Province

#### Research Methodology

This mixed-method research uses qualitative and quantitative research to obtain complete and accurate data. The researcher has conducted the research according to the following process:

1. Qualitative research

The researcher has determined the sample group of key informants by using in-depth interviews. Key informants include representatives from the government sector, private sector, and local people in tourist attractions who are involved in tourism management in Udon Thani Province through in-depth interviews as follows:

2. Data collection tools

The researcher used in-depth interviews, observations, and meetings by inspecting the environment and resources of tourist attractions to analyze the internal environment by finding weaknesses and strengths of tourism development in Udon Thani Province and

analyzing the external environment to find opportunities and obstacles for future development using the SWOT Analysis technique using the SWOT Matrix table to lead to the determination of strategies for tourism development in Udon Thani Province. Triangulation was used to confirm the reliability of the data by examining data from data sources in terms of time, place, and person to consider whether data collection at different times, locations, and with different informants will still yield the same data. If the results of data collected by triangulation yield the same findings, it means that the data obtained by the researcher is correct (Chai Phothisita, 2013). Regarding reliability, the researcher used an interview form that passed the content validity test as a criterion for systematic interviews. In addition, the primary informants were experts who were working and had knowledge and skills, resulting in higher instrument validity for the interview form.

### 3. Data collection and analysis

The researcher requested a letter from the College of Management to collect data by interviewing 33 key informants and analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and obstacles (SWOT Analysis) of the potential tourist attractions in Udon Thani Province.

## Literature Review

### Gastronomy Tourism

Tourism entrepreneurs often use local food as a tool to create cultural tourism experiences (Scarpato, 2002), which is an incentive for tourists to travel to destinations to learn about local food. At the same time, gastronomy tourism has been developed as alternative tourism for niche markets to lead to the exchange of food culture between tourists and local communities, the preservation of local culture, and the promotion of income for local communities (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Food tourism is therefore related to traveling to experience local food, whether it is eating food, learning how to cook, visiting food places, participating in food festivals, participating in food demonstrations and shows, visiting and buying food from markets, and participating in food tourism activities (Yada & Narin, 2019). For this research, food tourism is defined as tourism that aims to taste, visit, buy, and learn about food in food service areas.

### Consumer Behavior

The study of consumer behavior is related to the motivations that lead to the decision to buy a product, starting from marketing stimuli or others that enter the buyer's mind or black box, which is difficult to predict because it depends on the buyer's characteristics and the decision-making process. Then, there is a buyer's response or a decision to choose a product (Buyer's Purchase Decision) (Siriwan et al., 1998). Therefore, the analysis of consumer behavior helps manage the market to be consistent with the needs of the target group by searching for those in the target market (Who), products or services purchased (What), reasons for buying (Why), participants in the purchase decision (Participants), purchase method (How), time or opportunity (When), and place of purchase (Where) (Kotler et al., 2002). This research focuses on finding the behavior of tourists when choosing food tourism.

## Research Results

From the study of tourist data on food tourism in Udon Thani Province, it was found that most tourists were female (62.7 percent), aged between 51-60 years, 44.5 percent were married (41.7 percent), had a bachelor's degree (38.5 percent), had an average monthly income of 10,001-15,000 baht, 54.5 percent were civil servants or worked in government agencies (31.5 percent), and were domiciled in the Northeast (68.0 percent). For tourist behavior data on food tourism, it was found as follows:

Table 1: Tourist behavior data on food tourism in Udon Thani Province

Detail	N	%
Traveling Purposes		
Travel or visit places	274	72.8
Travel for educational activities	76	14.1
Travel to participate in an event or festival	25	6.0
Travel to visit relatives or meet friends	14	4.3
Travel for a meeting/training/conference/study tour or contact about company work or government agencies	10	2.0
Frequency of Traveling monthly		
Travel occasionally	148	37.4
Travel 1 time/month	176	53.3
Travel 2 times/month	45	12.0
Travel 3 times/month	11	2.0
Travel 4 times/month	19	4.3
Type of Fellow Travelers		
Solo Traveler	107	38.0
Travel with relatives and family	78	9.7
Travel with friends or colleagues	154	52.6
Travel with a tour agency or with couples	18	2.4
Others	33	4.5
Number of travelers		
No travel companions	37	9.5
Traveling for two people	101	27.6
Traveling for three people	110	25.1
Traveling for four people	19	5.5
Travelling with five or more people	66	18.0

## Conclusion

Discussion of the research results: From the study Food Tourism: behavior and Satisfaction of tourists in Udon Thani Province, it can be concluded that most tourists have the purpose of traveling for tourism or visiting various places, 72.8 percent. Most tourists have a frequency of traveling once a month, 37.4 percent. Most tourists travel with one other person, 52.4 percent. Most tourists travel by private car, 54.7 percent. Most tourists travel for less than 1 day, 48.9 percent. They have a travel expense of one thousand baht or less, 39.2 percent, and most tourists know Information about tourist attractions in this province from online channels 36.3 percent.

For the satisfaction of food tourists (Gastronomic tourists) in Udon Thani Province, the overall product factor is at a high level, with an average value of 3.92. When considering each item, it was found that the highest level of tourist satisfaction is maintaining the identity of local herbs with an average value of 4.60, and the satisfaction of food tourists in Udon Thani Province in the marketing promotion factor overall is at a high level with an average of 4.13. When considering each item, it was found that the highest level of tourist satisfaction is the item with activities, sales promotions, or promotions, with an average of 4.40. The research is consistent with those (Attanat, 2021), who studied Thailand's development guidelines for food tourism. It was found that tourists in this format tend to do activities such as visiting and tasting food, learning to cook, eating local food, and visiting food festivals. Therefore, the

development of food tourism relies on the cooperation of the public and private sectors in organizing food-related events and special activities by using famous people to guarantee the deliciousness and fun of the activities. Finally, it must be clean and hygienic, including maintaining the area's quality standards and cleanliness to attract tourists in this form. The research is also consistent with the work of (Chawarin, 2022), who found that tourism is a service industry continuously generating massive economic income. Income from food is part of the food tourism industry. It is a new form of tourism that helps to pass on the local food culture of each area to sustainable tourism, as well as preserving the culture and way of life of the local people. In addition, some groups of tourists choose tourist destinations from local food. Lanna's local food tourism will allow tourists to study the food route, from finding raw materials and production to tasting the food. In addition, the one dish incorporates lifestyle and culture and the introduction of inherited food recipes to improve and develop by adapting traditional Lanna food menus with modern innovations to create a beautifully arranged menu on the plate while maintaining the original taste. It focuses on studying the concept of food tourism, Lanna local food, types of Lanna local food, Lanna local food tourism formats, Lanna local food that is popular among tourists and gastronomic tourists, and developing innovations in Lanna local food to be more modern to use it as a selling point and create added value in tourism development, which will have a positive effect on the economy and the development of quality of life for local people, leading to sustainability local food. The research is also consistent with the work of (Chaithawat, 2021), who conducted a study of Travel behavior on the new normal of tourists in Udon Thani Province. It was found that most tourists have planned to travel to natural attractions in the future at the highest level ( $X = 4.98$ ), followed by tourists who are concerned about cleanliness at the highest level ( $X = 4.81$ ) and the factor with the lowest level of opinion. Tourists want to travel to festival areas with many people, still at a low level ( $X = 2.20$ ).

The research is also consistent with the work of (Phanuwat & Pathummalai, 2021), who conducted this survey research with the primary objective to the analysis of foreign tourists' motivations for food tourism in Phuket Province found that most tourists were Western males aged 21-30 years old, had a bachelor's degree, and mainly were first-time tourists who traveled to Phuket by themselves and stayed in Phuket for 1-2 weeks. The results of the motivation analysis using the survey factor analysis found that foreign tourists had five main motivations in order of importance: 1) local food experience, 2) food parties and activities, 3) gaining and sharing food knowledge, 4) social and leisure, and 5) cultural knowledge and satisfaction. The study's findings led to recommendations and guidelines for developing the food tourism market. The research is also consistent with the work of Natthaphat et al. (2022), who studied the behavior of Exposure to digital marketing communication by self-planned tourists: A case study of ASEAN tourists found that tourists are interested in traveling because they want to open up new experiences in traveling.

### **Recommendations**

1. The behavioral intention data on the development of gastronomy tourism in Udon Thani Province is currently helpful in planning future gastronomy tourism in the province to accommodate tourists' evolving travel patterns.
2. The relevant government and private agencies can apply the research results to develop economic policies for gastronomy tourism in the province.

## Recommendations for future research

1. In the subsequent study, the researcher believes in examining marketing factors,
2. Tourism drivers and internal obstacles to food tourism in Udon Thani Province are necessary.

Further research should explore other aspects of food tourism behavior beyond those examined in this study, such as tourism purposes, activities, accommodation choices, and tourism formats. A comparative study of the factors influencing satisfaction and intention to travel to Udon Thani between Thai tourists and foreign tourists should be conducted to understand the differences and similarities in gastronomy travel behavior, as well as to study the long-term impact of COVID-19 on travel behavior in Udon Thani of this group of tourists, including the use of Digital Marketing about promoting (Weera, 2024).

3. The sample group studied in this research is only one in Udon Thani Province. In the future, if a more diverse data set is needed, the population should be expanded to be different from the original, or similar areas should be added to obtain more diverse data, such as research at the cluster or regional level.

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